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ARJ SSKGDC

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From Principal's Desk



Dear Esteemed Readers,

Another year brings forth a fresh collection of scholarly voices, and I proudly present Anveeksha, a journal where the everlasting passion for academic pursuit harmonizes with the gentle currents of intellectual curiosity. Born from our college's sacred vow to foster sincere dialogues between students and faculty, Anveeksha—whispering the ancient Sanskrit call "to meditate deeply" and "to explore boundlessly"—emerges once more as a vibrant platform of multilingual scholarship. Each year, Anveeksha emerges anew, cultivating connections across disciplines, encouraging collaborations, a new and shedding light on diverse areas of knowledge.

In an era of rapid global changes, where cultures intersect and challenges arise in interconnected ways, multidisciplinary scholarship serves as a vital link between understanding and practical action. The papers in this volume explore a diverse array of themes, encompassing history, gender studies, literature, music, spirituality, politics, ecology, and cultural heritage—like vibrant pieces contributing to a rich intellectual mosaic.

The volume begins with meditations on the shadowed price of honour in Partition's gendered wounds and healing, paralleled by the strategic symphony of India-Israel defence ties since 2014. Ecofeminism blooms anew, rooted in the sacred soil of spirituality; while literary cartographies chart the fragile borderlines of belonging amid South Asian tempests of conflict and identity. This edition also includes explorations of digital storytelling as a means to preserve endangered cultures, alongside studies on women's education during the Buddhist period and the influence of Tantra on Bengal's temple architecture. Thereafter, poetry reclaims humanity through the voice of Brahmarakshas, while a sociological study examines the impact of dowry prohibition on the holistic and sustainable development of women, based on youth in the Naini area of Prayagraj. Historical accounts reflect upon the tribal resistance in Nayagarh against British rule, and track down the origins, influence, and unfaltering relevance of Ramleela. Contributions also explore Hindu religious activities in Ayodhya during the early Nawabi period, a reflection on our environmental responsibilities, and portray Sarla Devi Chaudharani as a luminous intersection of literature, women's consciousness, and nationalism.

A literary analysis examines the theme of women controlling other women—acting as both guardians and restrainers—in Dilip Kaur Tiwana's novel *Eho Hamara Jeevana*. The short story collection *Aapka Bunty* serves as a document of the pain caused by family disintegration, while the study on the novel Murdahia depicts facets of social life. Another comparative study explores gender and genre representations in Hindi cinema posters, showcasing the differences between male and female protagonists. An analysis then engages in the conceptual debate surrounding populism, welfarism, and the phenomenon of freebies.

Melodies ascend in meticulous voyages of Raga Vivek and the rhythmic cosmos of Sangeet Ratnakar's *Taal Adhyay*; bhajan tradition of India flows richly through music, pedagogy, spirituality, society, and Tagore's ethereal aesthetics. One of the studies explores the gentle integration of yoga and Ayurveda into the flow of daily life. Other contributions throw light on the sacred, spiritual, and societal renewal unfolding around the Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham Corridor; trace the threads of devotion woven by the Chishti Sufi Order through medieval India; and provide a preliminary view of the historical traditions embedded in the ancient Vayu Purana.

Thus, this edition of Anveeksha stands as a celestial constellation—bridging tongues, disciplines, and epochs—offering provocations that stir the spirit and insights that resonate and persist long after reading. Each contribution reflects the authors' intellectual rigour, dedication, and intuitive vision, emerging from their scholarly commitment, expanding the horizons of knowing. In our ever-shifting cosmos, these pages capture the prevailing spirit of foresightedness in scholarly pursuit.

Our earnest admiration flows to the authors whose brilliance adorns this volume, to the peer-review and advisory guardians who maintain its sanctity, and to the University Grants Commission (UGC) for nurturing the flame of excellence.

As you turn these pages, dear reader, embark upon this odyssey of the mind and heart. May Anveeksha kindle the quiet flame of reflection, ignite dialogues that echo through time, and renew our shared pilgrimage toward knowledge as the eternal architect of transformation.

Together, let us wander further into the boundless realms of discovery and brilliance.

With the warmest gratitude for one and all,

Prof. Lalima Singh,
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चेतना की उच्चतम अवस्था उन्नति पथ का गंतव्य



भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा में दर्शन की भूमिका मार्गदर्शक की है, क्योंकि भारतीय दर्शन में सम्पूर्ण ज्ञान समाहित है। कौटिल्य ने कहा था- दर्शन अन्य सभी विषयों के लिये प्रदीप का कार्य करता है। दर्शन यानी 'दृश्यते अनेन इति दर्शनम्' अर्थात् जिसके द्वारा देखा जाए, दर्शन सत्य की खोज है जिसके अन्तर्गत चिन्तन मनन और विश्लेषण किया जाए। चिन्तन की एक संज्ञा मीमांसा भी है। मीमांसा का अर्थ है गहन विचार, परीक्षण एवं अनुसंधान आदि। इस दृष्टि से ज्ञान परम्परा का दार्शनिक चिंतन तीन अनुभाग में वर्गीकृत है। तत्वमीमांसा, ज्ञानमीमांसा एवं नीति मीमांसा । सत्, प्रकाश एवं अमरत्व क्रमशः इनके लक्ष्य हैं। सत् या तत्व सृष्टि का मूल कारण, ज्ञान या प्रकाश सत् को जानने की प्रक्रिया तथा अमरत्व परम शुभ हेतु निर्धारित आचरणगत नीति या नियम, यह तीनों भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा का सार है।

भारतीय वाङ्गमय के अनुसार ज्ञान और नीति के द्वारा सत् की खोज मानव जीवन का परमशुभ या उद्देश्य है। चेतना की उच्चतम अवस्था उन्नति पथ का गंतव्य है। ज्ञान मात्र भौतिक जीवन को सुखी बनाने का हेतु नहीं बल्कि शरीर में निबद्ध चेतना को ब्रह्माण्डीय चेतना के स्तर पर प्रतिष्ठित करना है। उपनिषद भारतीय ज्ञान परंपरा का सार हैं। मुण्डकोपनिषद में ज्ञान का स्पष्ट एवं उत्कृष्ट वर्णन प्राप्त होता है। मुण्डकोपनिषद में ज्ञान को विद्या कहा गया है। इसके दो प्रकार है। (1) परा विद्या (2) अपरा विद्या । शौनक ऋषि व महर्षि अंगिरा के प्रश्नोत्तर में अंगिरा कहते हैं- मनुष्य के जानने योग्य दो विद्याएं है परा एवं अपरा विद्या । जिसके माध्यम से लोक तथा परलोक संबंधी समस्त ज्ञान प्राप्त किया जा सकता है। विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी के द्वारा व्यक्ति भौतिक सुख सुविधाओं के साधन का आविष्कार कर सकता है लेकिन उससे आत्मिक शांति नहीं प्राप्त हो सकती। आत्मिक शांति हेतु व्यावहारिक जीवन को सुव्यवस्थित करते हुए निरन्तर प्रयासरत रहना आवश्यक है। इसीलिए उपनिषद में प्रार्थना की गई है- हे परमात्मा हमें असत् से सत् की ओर अंधकार से प्रकाश की ओर, मृत्यु से अमरत्व की ओर ले चलो-

असतो मा सद्गमय, तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय, मृत्योर्मा अमृत गमय

चिंतन की प्राचीन परंपरा में गुरु के समीप बैठकर अज्ञान नष्ट कर ज्ञान को निरन्तर संवाद द्वारा प्राप्त करने की परंपरा रही है। ज्ञान, तर्क, मूल्य आचरण सापेक्ष है। वह जिज्ञासामूलक हैं, सामाजिक कल्याण जिसका निहितार्थ है। ज्ञान या विद्या सभी प्रकार के बंधनों से मुक्त करती हैं- 'विद्या सा या विमुक्तये।' श्रवण, मनन् निदिध्यासन जिसके मुख्य बिन्दु है। भारतीय चिंतन परंपरा में शिष्य के अनुभव और मानवीय विवेक की भी प्रमुखता है। महात्मा बुद्ध के अनुसार- 'मनुष्य की बुद्धि परीक्षणात्मक होना चाहिए। उसे किसी सिद्धांत पर पूरा विश्वास न करके स्वयं मत का परीक्षण करना चाहिए। चिन्तन के मूल्यनिष्ठ लोकवादी पक्ष की यह धारा वेदों उपनिषदों, महाकाव्यों तथा बौद्ध ग्रन्थों से आगे बढ़ती हुई धर्मशास्त्रों तक चली आई हैं। जिससे पारिवारिक और सामाजिक सद्भाव में वृद्धि करने वाले अप्रतिम मूल्यों की शिक्षा प्राप्त की जा सकती है। भारतीय दृष्टिकोण के समानान्तर अन्य मतों सिद्धान्तों और दर्शन को एक साथ विकसित होने की सुविधा है लेकिन सबका दृष्टिकोण परीक्षणात्मक होना आवश्यक है। इसीलिए उपनिषदों में एषणा और बौद्ध दर्शन में परिएषणा को बहुत महत्व दिया गया है। असंग ने लिखा-ज्ञेय केवल परीक्षणीय है। वसुबंधु कहते हैं कि विद्या और अविद्या दोनों सत्य के प्रति दृष्टिकोण हैं। अविद्या विद्या का अभाव मात्र न होकर सत्य तक पहुंचने का एक मार्ग है, जिसके आलोक में हमें विद्या का गहरा परीक्षण करना चाहिए। यह परीक्षणात्मक दृष्टिकोण ही मत को वैज्ञानिकता प्रदान करता है। भारतीय ज्ञान परंपरा व्यक्ति को संवादमूलक, विवेकमूलक, ऐच्छिक और मूल्यनिष्ठ बनाने पर बल देती है। उसका बल व्यक्ति और समाज के विकास के अनुकूल बनकर व्यक्ति के भीतर की असीम सृजनात्मक शक्ति को तर्कमूल मानवीय दिशा देने पर है। वर्तमान सदी भौतिकता की पराकाष्ठा है। वैज्ञानिक आविष्कारों से भौतिक जीवन तो आसान हुआ किन्तु आध्यात्मिक और नैतिक मूल्यों के अवमूल्यन से समकालीन परिदृश्य विविध समस्याओं से ग्रस्त है। आतंकवाद, युद्ध, अशांति, असुरक्षा, वैमनस्य, अपराध, चोरी, हिंसा, वर्ग संघर्ष, विभेद, शोषण, बलात्कार एवं अत्याचार आदि संकट है। आज पुनः उन मूल्यों के अनुगमन की आवश्यकता है जिनके द्वारा भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा में विश्व कल्याण का पाठ प्रशस्त किया गया। 'सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामया' जैसी मंगलकामनाओं से युक्त भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा को समझने एवं उसमें निहित नैतिक मूल्यों को अपनाने से ही विश्व कल्याण संभव है। भारतीय ज्ञान प्रणाली में विज्ञान, कला, दर्शन, गणित, खगोलशास्त्र, चिकित्सा और व्याकरण जैसे अनेक क्षेत्रों का महत्वपूर्ण योगदान है।

जिनकी प्रासंगिकता सर्वकालिक है। भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा में पर्यावरण संरक्षण, आयुर्वेदिक स्वास्थ्य प्रणाली और सतत् विकास की अवधारणाएं निहित है। आधुनिक भारत में आत्मनिर्भरता के उद्देश्य को साकार करने में भी यह ज्ञान सहायक होगा क्योंकि इसमें स्वदेशी तकनीक और आत्मनिर्भरता की परंपराएं निहित है। भारतीय ज्ञान प्रणाली के गहन, वैचारिक ज्ञान पर शोध करना आज के युवाओं को सशक्त बनाने, सामाजिक सद्भाव स्थापित करने की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण है। इसीलिए नई राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020 के अन्तर्गत भारतीय ज्ञान परंपरा को पाठ्यक्रम में शामिल करने पर बल दिया गया जिससे छात्रों में अपनी सांस्कृतिक पहचान के प्रति गर्व और आत्मविश्वास का विकास होगा।

आधुनिक विकास और प्रौद्योगिकी के साथ पारंपरिक ज्ञान का समन्वय शोध और नवाचार के नये अवसर प्रदान करेगा। भारतीय ज्ञान परम्परा की समूह विरासत में शोध-अनिवार्य तत्व के रूप में निहित है। ज्ञान के सृजन, विकास और उपयोग के सभी सोपान पर अन्वेषण वृत्ति प्राप्त होती हैं भारतीय परम्परा में अनुसंधान दृष्टि विस्तृत सूक्ष्म और अत्यन्त गहन है। संत महात्माओं के उपदेशों में सहजता के साथ शारीरिक और मानसिक स्वास्थ्य, सामाजिक राजनीतिक व्यवस्था, पर्यावरण, कला-विज्ञान के विविध विषयों पर शोध परक विवरण संकलित है। इसी पृष्ठभूमि की अपेक्षाओं के साथ प्रस्तुत हैं अन्वीक्षा रिसर्च जनरल ऑफ एस.एस. के.जी.डी.सी. का यह अंक -

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The Price of Honour: Gendered Dimensions of Violence and Recovery in Partition

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Abstract

The Partition of India in 1947 was marked by unprecedented violence—killings, rapes, abductions, and brutal displacements that profoundly shaped women's lives. Women's vulnerabilities were central to this upheaval, yet in the official historiography the gendered aspects of it has been long overlooked. This paper examines how women were rendered agency-less under the weight of communal and national honour. The triple burden—honour as duty, purity as obligation, and pollution as consequence—objectified women, making their bodies sites of both external aggression and internal regulation. Violence was not only inflicted by rival communities but also by families and states, who justified control over women as protection of collective identity.

Challenging binary portrayals of women as either victims or heroes, this study calls for a nuanced understanding of women's agency during Partition. Some women participated in or colluded with violence, but their choices were often shaped by coercion, survival, and patriarchal codes. Revisiting these complexities through feminist perspectives highlights the

continued burden of honour on women's bodies in contemporary societies. Ultimately, the paper argues for a more inclusive historical reckoning—one that acknowledges trauma, restores women's voices, and opens possibilities for gender justice and healing.

Keywords

Partition, Women, Honour, Violence, Community, Nation

Introduction

"It was all about honour. Honour was a boulder that men placed on the shoulders of their daughters, their sisters, and their wives."

– *A House Without Windows*, Nadia Hashmi

The Partition of British India in 1947 fractured the subcontinent into newly formed nation-states, each defined by religious identity. While early scholarship often framed this rupture as an unavoidable historical outcome, Partition like many conflicts also reveals how women's bodies became symbolic battlegrounds of the nation. Both communities and states sought to regulate women as a way of safeguarding collective honour, turning them into repositories of cultural, religious, and political identity. As Urvashi Butalia observes, women's experiences of Partition remain underrepresented because historical narratives are overwhelmingly male-centered. Poet Fatimah Asghar likewise notes that while countless Partition stories exist, those most often highlighted are men's, even though women endured disproportionate violence—including rape, abduction, and honour killings (BBC, 2022). Shruti Kapila, Professor of Indian History at Cambridge, explains that such violence was deeply personal: women were viewed as carriers of nationalism, embodying religion, family, and community, making them simultaneously revered symbols and prime targets of destruction (BBC, 2022). This symbolic burden of honour [izzat] exposed women to violence from both outsiders and their own kin. As Menon and Bhasin note, husbands, fathers, brothers, and even sons at times became perpetrators, killing women to prevent any perceived stain on familial or religious reputation (Chawla, 2023). Butalia's collection of oral testimonies, including those of survivors like Bir Bahadur Singh and Basant Kaur, demonstrates how memory has preserved women's sacrifices in rituals and memorials. Yet these remembrances often romanticize their deaths as "heroic martyrdom," silencing the tragic realities of coercion

and violence. The massacre at Thoa Khalsa in Punjab is a striking example. In March 1947, nearly ninety women leapt into a well to avoid capture by the enemy. While some may have chosen this path, Butalia emphasizes that many were compelled by the immense pressures and dangers of the moment (Chawla, 2023). Such acts, however, were later reframed as noble sacrifices for community honour rather than acknowledged as forced tragedies.

The post-Partition years brought another layer of violence through the Central Recovery Operation (1948–1956). India and Pakistan jointly sought to repatriate abducted women to their original families. Yet, by then, many had converted, married, and had children with their so-called abductors, often settling into new lives. For these women, "recovery" meant being uprooted again—torn away from homes they had chosen or built. Butalia points out that while women's sacrifices were remembered in public discourse, the trauma of abduction and forced repatriation remained largely erased. She argues for a broader understanding of women's agency, one shaped by family, class, community, and religion, rather than reduced to the narrow frame of honour (Butalia, 1993). Women thus bore a double burden: the physical danger of assault and the pressure of upholding family and community honour. Men were cast as "protectors," but when they failed, women were expected to "sacrifice" themselves. As Butalia observes, "The honour of the community lies in 'protecting' its women from the patriarchal violence of an alien community" (Butalia, 1994, p. 42). Women's lives and deaths became essential to preserving male and communal pride. Memorials that commemorate these deaths as "heroic" strip women of real agency, reducing them to symbols rather than acknowledging them as individuals. Even state-led "rescues" reinforced patriarchy by forcing women back into "proper homes" along community and religious lines, disregarding their personal choices. Partition, therefore, must be understood not only as a political rupture but also as a profoundly gendered tragedy. Women's suffering was central to the event, yet it was continually obscured—transformed into tales of sacrifice rather than recognized as evidence of systemic violence and silenced agency. This paper will argue that women were unfairly burdened with carrying the honour of both community and nation, a burden that exposed them to violence from enemies and allies alike. Partition was thus not only the

birth of new nation-states but also a gendered crisis in which women's bodies became the battlegrounds of identity, memory, and power.

Honour, Community and Women's Lives

During Partition, the rape and molestation of Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim women often followed chillingly similar patterns, unfolding in cycles of assault, retaliation, and revenge. What made these acts particularly striking was the sense of triumph that accompanied them. Testimonies describe women being stripped "like bananas are peeled," forced to walk naked in public, made to dance unclothed in gurudwaras, and raped before their male relatives (Menon & Bhasin, 2022, p. 41). One report from the Civil Surgeon of Sheikhupura to a Fact-Finding Team recorded how, on August 26, 1947, women and young girls—some from highly respected families—arrived at his hospital in varying states of nakedness after such brutal assaults (Menon & Bhasin, 2022, p. 41). Faced with the constant threat of sexual violence, large numbers of women chose death as a means of preserving personal, familial, and communal "honour." Methods included jumping into wells or setting themselves on fire, often in groups with relatives or children. The Fact-Finding Team reported that during the Rawalpindi massacres of March 10, 1947, in Bewal village, "many women and girls saved their honour by self-immolation. They gathered their bedding and cots into a heap, set it on fire, and leapt into the flames shouting 'Sat Sri Akal!'" (Menon & Bhasin, 2022, p. 42).

Partition inscribed its violence directly onto women's bodies, treating them as symbolic territory of the 'Other'. Marks such as the crescent moon or trident carved onto breasts and genitals rendered the violation permanent and metaphorically extended it to future generations. Mutilation—such as amputating breasts—desexualized women, stripping them of their roles as wives and mothers. Survivors of such assaults were branded permanently inauspicious, akin to barren women (Menon & Bhasin, 2022, pp. 43-44). This fixation on women's sexuality was central to the "contract of war" between communities, arguably more pronounced than practices like circumcision, forced conversion, or coerced marriage. The belief that women embodied community honour created a distinct form of violence: men killing their own female relatives or women killing themselves and their daughters to avoid dishonour (Menon & Bhasin, 2022, pp. 44-45).

These killings were often framed as martyrdom, with prayers said beforehand, transforming acts of murder or suicide into noble sacrifice. Feminist scholars, however, argue that suicides—such as jumping into wells—were violent acts too, obscuring women's potential for active resistance. The tragedy at Thoa Khalsa illuminates the complex overlap between agency and victimhood. Survivors recall that the women, led by Gulab Kaur, made a collective decision to drown themselves "to save Sikhi" (Butalia, 1994, pp. 37-38). As feminist scholars like Urvashi Butalia, Kamala Bhasin, Ritu Menon, etc, has argued that, this "choice" was shaped by extreme pressure: the village was under siege, families had already killed some women, and rape or conversion was seen as worse than death. Thus, women's agency was never free of patriarchal constraint; their bodies represented community purity, and decisions were made within that framework.

Women's suffering, though routine in communal riots, had a deeper symbolic impact—reinforcing ideas of purity, honour, and martyrdom. Families often sought to protect women by disfiguring attractive daughters with ash or mud to deter assaults. As recorded, most interviewees acknowledged that honour—whether lost or preserved—was located in women's bodies (Menon & Bhasin, 2022, p. 59). Within this Partition-specific context, killing one's own women was recast as an act of compassion, fitting into a narrative where literal death was seen as preferable to a "living death" through rape, abduction, or conversion (Menon & Bhasin, 2022, p. 59). Yet women's narratives complicate these patriarchal accounts. Men often insisted suicides were voluntary, normalizing them as collective decisions, while speaking on behalf of the deceased in alliance with their kin (Menon & Bhasin, 2022, p. 56) Women's voices, by contrast, reveal ambiguity, resistance, and critique. Some accounts undermine the "facts" presented by husbands, suggesting women were urged or pressured. Others highlight hesitation, reluctance, or outright defiance—women refusing poison, refusing to give up life, or questioning the demand for sacrifice. Such testimonies disrupt linear male narratives and expose the silences surrounding women's lack of choice. The consensus that emerged around honour killings and suicides thrived on framing women's deaths as "bravery" or "sacrifice," absolving men of responsibility. Personal and oral histories are replete with men proudly

recalling, "They chose death," a narrative that sealed women's fates and erased their voices. Families' intense protection efforts during riots, combined with the post-Partition erasure of "tainted" women through mass abortions or rejection, reinforced this silencing. Over time, the taboo around remembrance further pushed women into quiet forgetfulness. This consensus extended into the state's recovery programs, where the forced "rescue" and repatriation of abducted women replicated the same patriarchal logic—disguised as protection while disregarding women's desires. As Menon and Bhasin argue, women's lives and bodies became sites where family, community, and state converged, their "honour" endlessly negotiated, defended, and violated (Menon & Bhasin, 2022, p. 60)

Women as Symbols of Honour and Nationhood

By December 6, 1947—barely three months after Partition—India and Pakistan reached an accord to locate abducted women and reintegrate them into society. To formalize this process, both states issued ordinances in 1948, and in 1949 India enacted the *Abducted Persons (Recovery and Restoration) Act* (Butalia, Women, 2017). The language of "retrieval" and "restoration" framed the operation in strictly communal terms: Hindu and Sikh women were to be returned to their communities, and Muslim women to theirs. Even for India, which officially claimed a secular identity, women's rightful place and homeland were imagined through religious boundaries. The task of inclusion or exclusion was determined by male political leaders, while women themselves were denied any say in their futures (Butalia, 1994, pp. 44-45). The anxieties of women were real and pressing. Many had married, borne children, or adjusted to new circumstances. In her book *Azadi Ki Chhaon Mein*, Anis Kidwai noted that a new difficulty arose during the recovery programme, as most of the girls were unwilling to return to their families. Families, however, faced their own dilemmas: women who had lived with, married, or had children with men of the "other" community were often regarded as tainted, raising questions of reintegration. Their children, as visible reminders of these unions, intensified fears of communal dishonour. Both Gandhi and Nehru repeatedly urged families to accept abducted women back, condemning the notion of impurity. Gandhi argued: *"These women are as pure as the*

girls who are sitting by my side. And if any one of those recovered women should come to me, then I will give them as much respect and honour as I accord to these young maidens" (Butalia, Women, 2017, p. 160). Despite these appeals, the recovery operation quickly became politicized. Women were claimed as national subjects—"Indian" or "Pakistani"—tying their fate to the Partition's religious and political divides. Social worker Kamlaben Patel noted that women were identified primarily by nationality, their lives subordinated to diplomatic and communal concerns. Recovery operations formally ended in 1952, though cases continued until 1956. Resistance persisted: many women feared rejection, while families often refused to accept them. In response, the government and organizations like the All India Women's Conference launched campaigns using pamphlets and public meetings. One pamphlet likened a woman's purity to a self-cleansing stream, while speeches in 1948 framed the women as "daughters of India," promising state care in recovery camps (Menon & Bhasin, 1993, p. WS 7).

The Government of India portrayed its Recovery Operation as both a humanitarian initiative and a diplomatic responsibility. It claimed the role of *parens patriae*—guardian of abducted women—while simultaneously presenting itself internationally as a "civilised" nation reclaiming its citizens. In this narrative, Pakistan appeared as the "abductor nation," while India cast itself as the parent-protector defending family, community, and national honour (Menon & Bhasin, 1993, p. WS 8). Yet this framing ignored the complexity of women's lives. Parliamentarians and social workers like Renuka Ray and Purnima Banerji questioned forced recovery, arguing that women's choices—particularly in cases of legal marriages or new family bonds—should be respected (Butalia, Women, 2017, p. 180). Rameshwari Nehru also opposed coercive measures, seeing them as violations of women's agency. Receiving little official support, she resigned in 1949. Some social workers even covertly assisted women in evading forced repatriation (Menon & Bhasin, 1993, p. WS 8).

The recovery process treated women less as citizens than as symbols of community and national honour. Restoring the "legitimate family" required dismantling the "illegitimate" one: removing women from marriages or motherhood in their new homes and placing them back where their

"honour" could be protected (Menon & Bhasin, 1993, p. WS 11). This reconstruction denied women agency, portraying them only as humiliated victims in need of redemption. In effect, the state itself adopted an abductor's role, forcibly removing women from new households and returning them across borders. While claiming impartiality, the state reinforced patriarchal authority, privileging religious identity and communal honour over women's rights. Repatriation, framed as national duty, entrenched control over women's bodies and sexuality rather than delivering justice (Butalia, Women, 2017). In both India and Pakistan, women came to embody national honour. Their abduction by the "other" was seen as an assault on the nation, and their recovery as restoration of dignity (Das, 1997). Drawing on feminist scholars like Deniz Kandiyoti and Floya Anthias, abducted women can be seen as "boundary markers" between nations, the trope of *woman-as-nation* positioning them as symbols of the violated motherland. Their recovery was thus essential to reassert communal and national honour, but it curtailed women's possibility of full citizenship. Instead, their repatriation was framed by patriarchal codes of purity and community identity (Menon & Bhasin, Borders and Bodies, 2022, pp. 108-109).

Conclusion

Amidst the chaos of Partition, violence against women took many forms, ranging from death at the hands of their own relatives to rape and abuse by outsiders. In between were self-inflicted deaths, reframed as acts of heroism (Butalia, 1994, p. 57). Also intermediary was the state's subtle violence through its recovery initiative, which forcibly retrieved abducted women from the "other" community. Intended to resettle them, this often caused further uprooting and trauma (Butalia, 1994, p. 57).

In Sikh remembrance, women's suicides or "martyrdoms" were elevated as symbols of valour and purity. By glorifying self-sacrifice while glossing over abduction and rape, these rituals perpetuated patriarchal ideals and silenced the violence inflicted on women—both by aggressors and by kin enforcing "protection" through death. The later emergence of booklets and comics for children reflects how these gendered ideologies were transmitted, teaching younger generations to view such deaths as inspirational rather than tragic outcomes of systemic oppression.

In *Borders and Boundaries*, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin questioned why national honour was so closely tied to women's bodies and to children born from so-called "illegitimate" relationships. Similarly, Urvashi Butalia observed that although the Assembly debated the Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration Act at length, the voices of women themselves were largely absent. This raises a central question: why did both nations insist on the recovery of abducted women? The rationale mirrors the reason they were targeted in the first place—they were seen as embodiments of their communities and nations. Families became extensions of the nation, representing its religious identity, which defined citizenship in 1947. Menon notes that these "missing women" were essentially missing members of religious and cultural communities, valued also for their reproductive role in sustaining them. Their repatriation, therefore, was less about reuniting families than about reinforcing the demographic and cultural makeup of the new states (Dandona, 2023).

Historical accounts also highlight tensions between family practices and government actions. During riots and violence, women were treated less as individuals than as symbols of national and family honour (Das, 1997, p. 83). The state reinforced this by classifying them as "abducted" and mandating their return to their original communities based on religion, often disregarding their wishes. While meant to deliver justice, this policy caused further suffering, forcing many women to abandon their children or new families. Veena Das notes that families sometimes adapted differently—accepting abducted women and their children through marriage or care—yet the state continued to see them as markers of national pride, controlling their lives and choices, especially regarding their bodies and children. Thus, despite intentions to "help," the state deepened trauma by ignoring women's own desires. Das concludes that no simple solutions exist, as gender relations in such crises are marked by profound emotional struggles and complexities (Das, 1997, p. 83).

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Indian and Israel Defence Cooperation Since 2014

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Abstract

Since 2014, India and Israel have significantly deepened their defense cooperation, driven by shared security concerns and technological advancements. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the partnership has evolved through landmark agreements facilitating joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and technology transfer. Israel has become a key defense supplier for India, providing advanced systems like anti-tank missiles and UAVs, while joint R&D initiatives align with India's "Make in India" initiative to promote local production. The geopolitical context, marked by common threats such as terrorism, further strengthens their collaboration in counter-terrorism and cyber defense. Despite some political sensitivities within India regarding relations with Israel, the commitment to enhance defense ties remains strong.

Looking ahead, the partnership is positioned for continued growth, fostering innovation and mutual security. Overall, the India-Israel defense cooperation has become a cornerstone of their bilateral relationship, promising a secure and technologically advanced future for both nations.

Keywords
HERON, LRSM, SRSM, UAV, DRDO, AWACS, NDA, HAL, RAFAEL, ELBIT, ATGM, SIPRI ,KRAS, ELTA, IAI.

Introduction

India and Israel relations after 1950, after their recognition, they could not get the desired harmony in the relationship between the two countries because before India's independence movement, India's stand was on the side of Palestine. Due to Gandhi and Nehru's perspective, India's stand had always been less with Israel. Mohammed Nasir of Egypt was also there in the formation and establishment of NAM in 1955, India's stand remained towards Arad. India also took oil from economic point of view to fulfill its needs and the large number of Indian expatriates working in Arab countries also played a role in the risky maritime conflict with Israel in India's foreign policy, which India kept a distance from. But after the Indo-China war and Indo-Pak war, India did not get the support it was expecting from Arab or Muslim countries. While in both these wars, India got open support from Israel and intelligence support of the armed forces, in the 1999 Kargil war, Israel's UAV and radar mortar and intelligence forced India to think about its war and security policies[1].

In 1992, diplomatic relations between India and Israel had started, which led to India's nuclear war. Even during the explosion, Israel's support was openly given to India on the international front, which marked the beginning of a new dimension of friendship between India and Israe (israel Aircraft Industries 'Heron-TP', 2021) (israel Aircraft Industries 'Heron-TP', 2021) (israel Aircraft Industries 'Heron-TP', 2021) (Placeholder1) l. In 2003, under the NDA government, Israeli Prime Minister Araial Sheron became the first Prime Minister to visit India. After that, even during the UPA rule in India, intelligence continued to build support from behind the curtain, but on the issues of Gaza and Palestine, the UPA's allied government always kept a distance from open forums with Israel due to the sympathy of Indian minorities with the Palestinian people. In 2014, once again, there is a return of the crisis in which BJP forms the government of the whole country in which Modi comes in the form of nationalism and Hindu identity of Magic India and a new chapter of relations between India and Israel begins in which Modi ji becomes the first Prime Minister,

who visits Israel in 2017 without any pressure and after that, Benjamin Netanyahu visits India in 2018 in which many things are included in the areas of UAV, agriculture and economics under strategic strategy in the area of defence between the two countries.

This article will examine the key drivers, manifestations, and implications of the burgeoning India-Israel defence partnership since 2014 a range of scholarly sources, government reports, and media analysis.

India Israel Defence Cooperation : A strategic Partnership since 2014

After the establishment of full political relations in 1992, the strategic alliance between India and Israel, which had been a diplomatic back-channel strategy, began to gain political recognition in the open, with India's need to fill its security gaps after the Kargil War and Israel's precision radars and drone munitions drawing attention to India's own military needs. In the early 2000s and 2010s, India began regular dialogue with Israel on the subject of terrorism within the framework of the Joint Working Group in 2000[2].

Subsequently in 2004, India signed its biggest defence deal with Israel, three Falcon AWACS deal worth $1.3B, which it received in 2009[3]. The return of the NDA government in 2014 under the BJP government led by Narendra Modi marked the beginning of a golden chapter in India-Israel relations. In 2017, Narendra Modi became the first Prime Minister of India to visit Israel for the first time. After this, in 2018, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited India. This led to the start of defence technology between the two countries, in which both countries made many agreements, such as unmanned aircraft, missiles ATGM Israel is a global leader in the field of UAV, whose advanced technology has no parallel in the world.

In 2018, India decided to buy at least 10 HERON TP drones at a cost of $400m to enhance military capabilities along the border[4].Heron is a long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle for strategic missions that India has deployed along its eastern border after the Galwan Valley incident[5]. The 176 unmanned aircraft imported by India include 108 Searcher unmanned aircraft and 68 Heron UAV[6].

- **Missile Defence System:** The Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy

had signed a Rs 2,600 crore contract for the joint development of the LRSM long-range missile in 2006. DRDO had supplied a batch of five LRSM missiles to the Indian Navy in 2017. The DRDO delivered a batch of five LRSM missiles to the Indian Navy in 2017, while the Indian Air Force signed a $1.6 billion deal for the joint development of the medium-range SRSM in 2017, which was unveiled in 2020[77]

Samuel,S. Rajiv C(2023).India-Israel Strategic Partnership.New Delhi;Pentagon press

- The Indian Air Force signed a Rs 875.49 crore deal with Rafael Advanced Defence Systems for Barak 8 missiles in October 2014[8].
- In 2019, KRAS was given a $100 million order to produce the Barak 8 long-range surface-to-air missile for the Indian Navy[9].
- **Anti-tank guided missiles and ammunition:** Israel-imported anti-tank guided missiles and small ammunition weapons played an important role in the Indian Army's victory in the Kargil war. For which in October 2014, the Defence Acquisition Council of India headed by the Defence Minister approved the purchase of 8000 Spike anti-tank guided missiles[10]. Because the delay in indigenous development of India's anti-tank guided missile had created a serious problem for the armed forces. The Indian Air Force had used the Spike bomb to destroy terrorist camps across the border in Balakoat under 'Operation Bandar', which has been tested with accuracy.
- **Technology Transfer and Make in India Campaign-Institutional Partnerships:** A Framework for Collaboration: Under Make in India, the IDEX portal was launched by the Government of India in 2018 to promote new innovations in the defence and aerospace sector and the FDI limit in the defence sector was increased from 49% to 74%.In November 2020, 23 agreements were signed with 9 Indian companies and 4 Israeli firms IAI, Rafael, Elbit and Elta Systems[11]. As is well known, the Indian government has set a target of $5 billion arms export by 2025. Companies like Bharat Dynamics Limited and Elbit Systems IAI along with India's HAL have been listed to manufacture several equipments simultaneously at the Korwa factory.

Modi and Netanyahu had agreed to set up a $40 million India Israel R&D

and Innovation Fund with the two countries aiming to double their joint weapons production in five years as part of their strategic partnership[12]. According to SIPRI, there has been a 175 percent increase in arms supplies from Israel to India between 2015 and 2019. After the NDA government came to power in 2014, about 42% of arms exports from Israel came to India, making Israel one of the top three arms suppliers to India[13]. Along with this, in 2017, Kalyani Strategic Systems Limited and Rafael Advance Systems started manufacturing Spike Guided Missile simultaneously[14]. Additionally, a joint venture between Adani Defence and Aerospace and Elbit Systems set up an advanced unmanned aerial vehicle manufacturing facility in Hyderabad.

"Make in India" and the Rise of Joint Working Group:

India and Israel signed an intelligence-sharing agreement in 2014 to combat radical Islamist extremism in their respective countries. India and Israel hold regular dialogue with Israel on counter-terrorism within a working group established in 2000. IAI CEO Joseph Weeks said that over the past 25 years, IAI has worked with Indian defence industries and armed forces in many areas as part of our strategic partnership, which has been both commendable and challenging[15]. Recently, the 15th meeting of defence Cooperation was held in Tel Aviv in which both the countries agreed to form a task force to identify new areas and to prepare a framework for proper cooperation on 10 year defence plans. Along with this, Indian and Israeli army participated in the **Blue Flag** multilateral military exercise being held since November 2013 in which Indian Air Force Garud Commandos along with C-130 Air Force aircraft participated under special operations.

'Modi Factor': A New Era of Open Engagement-

After laying the foundation of India-Israel defence cooperation in 2014, which laid the foundation for Prime Minister Modi's pragmatic approach to foreign policy and strong personal relations with Israeli leaders, Netanyahu, while meeting the Indian had said that "the sky's the limit' for Indo-Israeli collaboration[16]. Ideological similarity, common domestic challenges and nationalistic outlook deepen the relationship between the two countries, with Prime Minister Modi's key objective in his foreign policy being to ensure that his domestic transformative agenda does not

hinder diplomatic or military actions by any of India's adversaries[17]. India's traditional stance on the Palestine issue and its foreign policy advisors correctly predicting that the current political and sectarian differences between India and Arab countries and its participation in I 2 U 2 with Israel have posed challenges to relations with Israel in the current context. After having changed to an optimistic thinking.

Looking Ahead : A Strategic Partnership in a Complex World-

As the partnership between the two countries evolves, a number of key trends and challenges are emerging; the dynamics of the Middle East, a complex geopolitical situation, require India to carefully balance its regional relations with the Gulf countries is needed. India Israel defence partnership requires both governments to have a strong political commitment and India has a high technical need and Israel sees India as a reliable market for defence technology. India Israel co-production outlines a roadmap for deeper cooperation on defence production to be signed in 2021[18]. China's rise in emerging global power dynamics; changing alliances in the Middle East will also impact the India-Israel partnership.

Conclusion

Despite the above mentioned challenge, both the countries are taking forward their defence partnership, fulfillment of strategic interests, common commitment in defence industry and efforts to combat terrorism. Relations between the two countries are rapidly progressing in an uncertain and volatile global environment. It is clear that both the countries would not want their defence agreements to be weakened by any third party[19].

Therefore, we can say that from 2014 till now, it has been an overall successful journey in terms of relations for both the countries with strong and certain hope for many more possible positive developments in the future.

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Transforming Ecofeminism through Underpinning Spirituality and Sacredness : A Sociological Review

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India, as a multi-religious country, embodies a unique coexistence of diverse faith traditions, each with profound implications for the environment. Religious worldviews shape how communities perceive and interact with nature either revering it as a sacred gift to be protected, or exploiting it through practices of domination. This nexus between religion and the environment becomes particularly salient when examined through the lens of gender. Religious practices and beliefs are deeply intertwined with gendered roles, prescribing specific duties and responsibilities for men and women within the social sphere. At the same time, gender also actively shapes religious practices through ritual participation and cultural performance, thereby contributing to the construction and consolidation of belief systems. Within these traditions, women's positions vary considerably. In certain contexts, women are assigned significant religious authority, while in others, they are excluded from religious domains and subordinated to men. Thus, religion plays a central role in establishing and legitimizing the dichotomy of gendered roles, codifying them into socially accepted norms. This dynamic reveals a paradox. While religious influence extends equally to both men and women in theory, in practice, women's status within religious systems is often markedly different from that of men. Across traditions, women are generally observed to be more

engaged in religious practices and are often tasked with maintaining and transmitting belief systems through ritual performance and devotion. These roles, assigned through processes of socialization, not only reinforce women's proximity to religion but also render them more vulnerable to the socio-environmental consequences of religious worldviews. Furthermore, in many religious traditions, nature is imbued with sacredness, and women are symbolically linked with nature itself. This symbolic association positions women as both protectors of and participants in environmental practices, while simultaneously exposing them to environmental vulnerabilities. Consequently, religion, gender, and the environment are deeply interwoven. Religious beliefs influence ecological attitudes, women play a vital role in sustaining these belief systems, and their lives are, in turn, profoundly shaped by environmental transformations. In this context, ecofeminism particularly when underpinned by spirituality and sacredness offers a critical framework for examining these intersections. By situating women at the heart of both religious and ecological discourses, ecofeminism provides a lens to understand how spiritual traditions can simultaneously reinforce and transform environmental ethics.

Gender and religion, both complex systems of belief, deeply shape the lived experiences of individuals. Examining religion through a feminist lens is, however, a conflict-ridden endeavor. In the Indian context, this exercise becomes even more intricate because of the intersectional realities of class, caste, region, multilingualism, and cultural as well as religious diversity. Religious feminists attempt to re-read religious traditions by tracing the historical roles of women in shaping religious and cultural practices. They reinterpret rites, rituals, scriptures, and theological discourses from a feminist perspective, asking critical questions about how religious texts construct women's identities in relation to motherhood, family, and career, and how they portray the image of women in sacred narratives. Ecofeminism, situated at the intersection of gender, ecology, and spirituality, extends this critique further by linking the subjugation of women with the exploitation of nature. In contexts such as India where religion, gender, and environmental consciousness are deeply interwoven, the ecofeminist perspective highlights the spiritual and sacred dimensions of women's lived experiences and ecological practices. Ecofeminism not only critiques patriarchal domination over women and the environment

but also recovers spiritual traditions that recognize women's ecological knowledge and agency. Historically, feminist engagements with religion can be traced back to early Western critiques. Thinkers such as Abigail Adams and Mary Wollstonecraft in the late eighteenth century challenged the traditional Christian stereotypes that portrayed women as weak or morally inferior, instead positing women's moral authority as superior to men's. Although religion was not central to the nineteenth-century feminist movement, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Declaration of Sentiments (1848) invoked religious language to argue for women's equality, declaring that "all men and women are created equal" and endowed with inalienable rights. This demonstrates the early tension between feminist thought and religious discourse, where women sought to negotiate, critique and reclaim of sacred traditions. Despite such interventions, women's religious experiences historically received little scholarly attention. The study of religion was largely shaped by androcentric perspectives, neglecting women's roles, behaviors, and images in sacred practices. Feminist scholars later sought to recover these dimensions. Gimbutas (2001) highlighted the female personification of sacred power and the centrality of Goddess traditions, while Gross (1996) revealed how Western scholars dismissed feminine symbols of the divine as primitive or insignificant. These studies exposed the erasure of women from dominant religious narratives and the systematic marginalization of female-centered spiritual traditions. Ecofeminism builds upon such feminist critiques by recognizing the inseparable relationship between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. Vandana Shiva's Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development (1988) was groundbreaking in highlighting how women, especially rural women in India, experienced ecological destruction firsthand. Shiva demonstrated how their ecological knowledge and activism are essential for sustainable development. Later works, such as Ecofeminism (1993), co-authored with Maria Mies, expanded this critique to industrialization, globalization, and capitalist development, emphasizing the interconnected domination of women and nature. In Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge (1997), Shiva critiqued the theft of biodiversity and indigenous knowledge by corporations, underscoring how such practices disproportionately harm women, particularly indigenous communities. Maria Mies, a Marxist feminist scholar, further illuminated how patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism collectively exploit both women and the environment. Her

collaboration with Shiva in Ecofeminism (1993) provided an alternative epistemology one rooted in non-violence, inclusivity, and ecological sustainability against the dominant reductionist and male-stream paradigms of development. Together, their works redefined ecofeminism as both a theoretical critique and a grassroots movement. Thus, ecofeminism situates women not only as victims of environmental degradation but also as custodians of ecological wisdom, drawing upon spiritual and sacred traditions that affirm the interconnectedness of life. By bridging gender, religion, and environment, ecofeminist scholarship provides a powerful sociological framework to critique systems of domination while envisioning pathways toward ecological justice.

Foundational texts and anthologies

The debate on feminism and the environment in India first surfaced through grassroots struggles rather than abstract theory, most famously in the Chipko movement of the 1970s, where rural women under leaders like Gaura Devi embraced trees and resisted logging, framing forests not merely as resources but as sacred life-sustaining entities. Their actions drew on local Hindu cosmologies in which trees, rivers, and mountains are revered as divine manifestations—Gaura Devi herself invoked the forest as a "mother" deserving protection. Similar currents shaped the Appiko movement in Karnataka and the Narmada Bachao Andolan, where women resisted deforestation and large dams, often expressing their claims through idioms of sacred rivers and Goddess traditions. Academic theorization followed in the late 1980s and early 1990s: Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1988/89) and her collaboration with Maria Mies in *Ecofeminism* (1993) advanced a spiritual ecofeminism, arguing that patriarchal science, capitalist exploitation, and colonialism jointly oppressed both women and nature, and that women's traditional ecological knowledge—often mediated through rituals, seed-keeping, and Goddess worship—offered non-violent, sacred alternatives. Yet, Bina Agarwal (1992) critiqued this essentialist "women–nature" link, proposing instead a feminist environmentalism rooted in material realities: women's unequal access to land, caste- and class-based exclusion from natural resources, and the structural divisions of agricultural labor. Her later work, *Gender and Green Governance* (2010), demonstrated empirically how women's substantive participation in community forest governance significantly improved conservation outcomes, thereby institutionalizing gender–ecology linkages beyond symbolic or spiritual registers. The debate has since widened to

religious-environmental ethics: Hindu Goddess traditions (Durga, Kali, and local Gram Devis) embody women–nature power and are often invoked in eco-activism; Buddhism's principle of ahimsa and compassion for all sentient beings provides a gender-inclusive ethic of ecological care; Islamic eco-ethics, especially the Qur'anic notion of humans as khalifa (trustees of God's creation), is increasingly interpreted by Muslim feminists as a call for stewardship that challenges both environmental exploitation and gender subordination; and Ambedkarite and Dalit feminist perspectives critique how dominant-caste ecofeminism often erases caste oppression, foregrounding instead the struggles of Dalit and Adivasi women whose religious-cultural practices of land and water stewardship resist both patriarchy and caste hierarchy. Taken together, the Indian trajectory of ecofeminist thought tells a coherent story: beginning with women-led grassroots resistance, moving to spiritual ecofeminist theorization, tempered by materialist feminist critiques, and now evolving into intersectional frameworks that situate gender, religion, caste, and ecology within broader struggles for justice.

The intellectual foundations of ecofeminist spirituality were laid in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with works that explored the symbolic, historical, and cultural linkages between women and nature. Susan Griffin's Woman and Nature: *The Roaring Inside Her* (1978) offered one of the earliest and most poetic articulations of this connection, depicting how patriarchal culture had systematically silenced both women's voices and nature's vitality. Although not sociological in method, Griffin's evocative text provided a philosophical and imaginative grounding for ecofeminist spirituality, setting the stage for more critical analyses. Building on and contextualizing this cultural imagery, Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980) traced the historical shift from an organic, life-centered worldview often represented in feminine metaphors of Earth as mother to the mechanistic, exploitative paradigm of the Scientific Revolution. Merchant's work was pivotal in showing why ecofeminists turned to the sacred: the loss of reverence for nature was not accidental but tied to broader patriarchal and scientific transformations that subordinated both women and the environment. As the movement developed, ecofeminist spirituality was expressed not only in theory but also in imaginative visions of alternative societies. Starhawk's *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1993), though fictional, translated ecofeminist ideals into a narrative of a spiritually grounded, ecologically

harmonious community, and has since been studied sociologically as a vision of ecofeminist praxis. Around the same time, anthologies began to consolidate and diversify the discourse. Carol J. Adams's *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (1993) brought together essays that directly interrogated the spiritual and religious dimensions of ecofeminism, ranging from goddess traditions and witchcraft to feminist reinterpretations of Abrahamic faiths. This collection demonstrated that ecofeminist spirituality was not monolithic but encompassed multiple religious and cultural frameworks. Yet, alongside this emphasis on the sacred, some scholars cautioned against neglecting materialist critiques. Greta Gaard's anthology, *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (1993), expanded the conversation by integrating perspectives from socialism, animal rights, and political ecology. By juxtaposing spiritual-cultural approaches with structural critiques of capitalism and patriarchy, Gaard underscored the diversity and sometimes tensions within ecofeminism. Taken together, these works illustrate the trajectory of ecofeminist thought: Griffin's poetic vision provided the emotional ground, Merchant historicized the loss of the sacred, Starhawk imagined its recovery, Adams gathered diverse spiritual practices into dialogue, and Gaard insisted on grounding spirituality within broader struggles against domination in all its forms.

While early ecofeminist writings such as Griffin (1978) and Merchant (1980) emphasized the symbolic and historical devaluation of women and nature within patriarchal culture, later studies extended and complicated this foundation by situating spirituality within wider political, economic, and cultural contexts. Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1988) exemplifies this shift: rooted in Indian grassroots struggles, her work critiques Western science and development while affirming women's traditional ecological knowledge as both sacred and pragmatic. Unlike the Western cultural ecofeminists, Shiva grounds the sacredness of nature in lived, non-Western practices, thereby globalizing the discourse and underscoring ecofeminism's activist dimension. At the same time, other scholars sought to interrogate the religious and political underpinnings of ecofeminist spirituality more systematically. Rosemary *Radford Ruether* (2005) examined how world religions simultaneously reinforced domination and offered resources for liberation, providing a theological-sociological framework that broadened the scope of ecofeminist analysis beyond Euro-American cultural traditions. This theological turn resonates with Adams's earlier anthology (1993), but

with sharper sociological critique of institutionalized religion. Yet, by the mid-1990s, a growing body of socialist and materialist ecofeminists pushed back against what they saw as the depoliticizing risks of a purely spiritual framework. Mary Mellor (1997) argued that essentialist notions of women's "natural" affinity with the environment obscured the structural realities of capitalism and patriarchy. Similarly, Ariel Salleh's *Ecofeminism as Politics* (1997) advanced a materialist ecofeminism that recognized women's embodied, reproductive, and subsistence labor as central to both social reproduction and ecological sustainability, thus offering an explicitly political alternative to cultural-spiritual ecofeminism. These critiques returned, in some sense, to the radical call of Françoise d'Eaubonne's Le Féminisme ou la Mort (1974), which had first coined "ecofeminism" as a revolutionary project against patriarchy and ecological destruction, reminding scholars that ecofeminism's origins were as much political as spiritual. In the Indian context, sociological analyses of the Chipko movement have demonstrated how spirituality and activism were not opposed but deeply intertwined: women's acts of hugging trees were both cultural rituals of reverence for nature and material struggles for survival in fragile mountain ecologies. This fusion of sacred symbolism and material necessity complicates the binary between "spiritual" and "political" ecofeminism. Likewise, studies of Indigenous ecofeminism worldwide emphasize that spiritual connections to land cannot be abstracted from historical and cultural contexts of colonization and resistance. These perspectives challenge Western ecofeminism to account for diverse epistemologies and warn against appropriating spiritual traditions without recognizing their socio-political embeddedness. Taken together, these works illustrate ecofeminism's intellectual trajectory: from Griffin's poetic and Merchant's historical explorations of the sacred, through Shiva's activist reframing of non-Western ecofeminist spirituality, to Mellor and Salleh's materialist critiques, Ruether's theological interventions, and the lived activism of Chipko and Indigenous women. The result is not a singular "ecofeminism" but a plural and contested field, where spirituality functions as both a source of empowerment and a site of critique, depending on cultural, political, and sociological context.

The Sociological Roots of Ecofeminism and its Spiritual Dimension

Ecofeminism crystallized as both a critique of patriarchal social formations and a radical epistemology linking the subjugation of women to the

exploitation of nature. Its central category, the "logic of domination" (Warren 1994), demonstrates how culturally produced dualisms mind/body, culture/nature, male/female—legitimate hierarchies that naturalize the subordination of the "feminine" and the "natural" to the "masculine" and the "cultural." This critique is sociologically significant because it destabilizes the assumption that the woman–nature nexus is biologically given; rather, it is a socially constructed conceptual trap that authorizes exploitation across multiple registers like gender, class, race, and caste. Within this framework, cultural ecofeminism has been criticized for essentializing women's closeness to nature, while materialist and political ecofeminists argue that both women and ecosystems are "othered" under patriarchal capitalism and thereby rendered resources for extraction (d'Eaubonne 1974; Shiva 1988). The religious and spiritual dimensions of ecofeminism further deepen this debate: while traditional patriarchal religions are indicted for anthropocentric cosmologies that reinforce hierarchical domination (White 1967; Eliade 1987), ecofeminist theologies and goddess-centered or indigenous spiritualities articulate counter-worldviews grounded in immanence, interconnectedness, and reverence for the Earth as a living subject (Nasr 1968; Taylor 2001). These "new spiritualities" are not merely private belief systems but, sociologically, function as cultural resistance and as mobilizing forces for collective ecological activism. Feminist theologians such as Rosemary Radford Ruether and ecofeminist theorists like Francoise d'Eaubonne expose how patriarchal theology and capitalist profit imperatives collude in sustaining both gendered hierarchies and ecological degradation. Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1988) exemplifies how women's subsistence practices and indigenous knowledges preserve biodiversity against the homogenizing logic of capitalist patriarchy, while grassroots mobilizations such as the Chipko movement materialize ecofeminist praxis by fusing spiritual symbolism with ecological defense. Across these literatures, the thrust remains clear: ecological crises are inseparable from structures of domination, whether expressed through theology, political economy, or cultural ideology. Thus, the transformation of ecofeminism into "ecowomanism" is not merely a theoretical gesture but an epistemological imperative, offering an alternative mode of knowing and being that dismantles dualistic hierarchies and generates pathways toward socially just and ecologically sustainable futures.

Critical Debates and Challenges from a Sociological Perspective

The literature also presents significant critiques of ecofeminism's emphasis on spirituality, especially when examined through a sociological lens. The most prominent is the essentialism critique, voiced largely by socialist and materialist ecofeminists, which argues that valorizing women's "natural" or "maternal" affinity with nature risks reinforcing the very gender stereotypes ecofeminism seeks to dismantle. By celebrating women as inherently nurturing or closer to the earth, spiritual ecofeminism inadvertently re-inscribes the patriarchal logic that naturalizes women's subordination. A parallel line of critique emerges from intersectional sociology, which highlights how early feminism rooted primarily in white, Western, middle-class experiences excluded the realities of women of color, Indigenous women, and women in the Global South. This body of work stresses that ecofeminism must attend to how race, class, caste, and coloniality intersect with gender in shaping ecological relations, since women's engagements with "nature" are far from uniform. Equally, sociological studies emphasize that ecofeminism is not a monolith but takes different forms across global and local contexts. Western ecofeminism often critique the Enlightenment's dualism of nature and culture, whereas Indian ecofeminist thought, exemplified in Vandana Shiva's writings and grassroots struggles like Chipko, foregrounds the material realities of women's subsistence labor, their dependence on natural resources, and their resistance against corporate environmental destruction. Thus, concepts such as "sacredness" or "spirituality" are not transhistorical truths but culturally and politically contingent categories that take shape through specific traditions, cosmologies, and social structures.

This contingency is best illuminated through post-structuralist approaches, particularly Derrida's notion of binary oppositions and deconstruction. Western metaphysics, as Derrida shows, privileges one side of a dualism which is male over female, reason over emotion, culture over nature while subordinating the other. Ecofeminism, especially its spiritual variants, seeks to invert these hierarchies by revalorizing the repressed terms: spirituality, embodiment, care, the sacred. Yet Derrida's concept of différance demonstrates that these terms have no stable, universal meaning; rather, they are discursively constructed and constantly deferred. Hence, ecofeminism's attempt to reclaim "spirituality" risks reinscribing

essentialisms (woman = nature = sacred) even as it contests patriarchal binaries. In this light, spirituality and sacredness emerge not as fixed ontological truths but as unstable signifiers, shaped by colonial, religious, and gendered discourses. Scholars have extended these insights into diverse contexts. Maheshvari Naidu (2005), in *Queering Women and Hinduism: Disembedding the Maternal Script from Woman and Earth,* interrogates the symbolic inscription of women's bodies and the earth body within Hindu cosmologies. Drawing on queer theory, she challenges the maternal script that conflates femininity with nurturance, arguing that masculine constructs simultaneously objectify women's bodies and the earth body. Similarly, *Karin Mackay's Reclaiming the Sacred: A Festival Experience as a Response to Globalisation* (2003) examines the Earth Spirit Festival in Australia, where women's performances, arts, and narratives disrupt patriarchal and neoliberal discourses by reimagining spirituality as a space of resistance and cultural negotiation. These works exemplify how ecofeminism's spiritual dimensions, far from being merely private or essentialist, operate as contested terrains where gender, power, culture, and globalization intersect. Taken together, this literature demonstrates that the debate over spirituality within ecofeminism is not simply about belief or essence but about the politics of representation, the instability of meaning, and the cultural struggles to redefine the sacred in socially just and ecologically sustainable ways.

Conclusion

A sociological review of ecofeminism, particularly in the Indian context, reveals that religion and spirituality play contradictory but powerful roles. On the one hand, patriarchal religious institutions have legitimized the domination of women and nature. On the other hand, reclaiming spiritual traditions, rituals, and sacred knowledge offers a profound source of resistance, identity, and ecological ethics for women. Ecofeminism's transformative potential lies in its ability to integrate spirituality, environmental ethics, gender justice, and socio-economic critique. As shown by Vandana Shiva, Rosemary Ruether, Carolyn Merchant, and others, ecofeminist spirituality is not a retreat from politics, but a reimagining of the sacred as an inclusive, life-affirming force that challenges both religious orthodoxy and ecological destruction. By analyzing the intertwined oppression of women and nature, and by

drawing from diverse spiritual and cultural traditions, ecofeminism continues to evolve as a powerful framework for ecological and gendered transformation. In conclusion, a sociological lens of transforming ecofeminism through spirituality and sacredness reveals a dynamic and critical field of study. It examines how these ideas emerge from and challenge existing social structures, how they function as a basis for social movements, and the internal debates and critiques that shape their evolution. By using a sociological lens, we can understand not just what ecofeminists believe, but why they believe it and how these beliefs are embedded within broader social, political, and cultural landscapes.

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Borderlines and Belonging: Literary Cartographies of Conflict, Infiltration, and Identity in South Asian Narratives

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Abstract

In South Asia, where the legacy of Partition and border creation continues to shape regional politics and lived experiences, literary texts become powerful cartographies of conflict and belonging. This paper explores how literary narratives from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Northeast Indian frontier critically engage with the themes of cross-border infiltration, migration, statelessness, and identity crisis. By examining novels such as Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, alongside select poetry from Meena Alexander and voices from Northeast India like Temsula Ao, the paper reveals how borders are simultaneously geographical constructs and emotional landscapes. These texts dismantle the state-centric portrayal of infiltration and instead foreground the human cost of displacement, fractured kinship, and cultural alienation. The metaphor of the border, often viewed through the lens of national security and legality, is reimagined in these works as a site of trauma, resistance, and longing. Drawing upon postcolonial theory, subaltern studies, and spatial theory, the paper argues that literature from the region not only critiques political boundaries but also offers affective maps of identity, loss, and rootedness. The study contributes to the examines broader aim by examining how literary voices from contested geographies interrogate the socio-political fallout of infiltration and reflect on the urgency of rethinking national belonging in pluralistic and historically complex ways.

Keywords

Partition literature; border studies; cross-border infiltration; South Asia;

migration; identity; postcolonialism; The Shadow Lines; Train to Pakistan; Northeast Indian literature.

Introduction

In South Asia, the question of borders is not merely cartographic—it is civilizational, psychological, and deeply literary. The violent carving up of the subcontinent in 1947, and the continued contestation of its peripheries, has given rise to a unique body of literature in which borders are not simply lines of demarcation but conceptual thresholds. These thresholds separate not just citizens from non-citizens, but memory from forgetting, the self from the nation, and language from silence.

This paper explores South Asian literary responses to cross-border infiltration, partition, and identity crises through a conceptual framework rather than a historical or narrative lens. It investigates how literature critiques the ideology of borders and reconfigures concepts like belonging, nationhood, and subalternity. Using novels like *Kitne Pakistan*, *The Shadow Lines*, and *Train to Pakistan*, alongside Northeast Indian and diasporic voices, the study argues that the literary border is not a territorial limit but a contested space of imagination.

Drawing upon postcolonial spatial theory, border studies, and subaltern historiography, this paper considers how infiltration—typically rendered as a security threat in political discourse—is transformed in literature into a symbol of epistemic violence, identity fragmentation, and the failure of modernity to contain plurality. In such literary cartographies, the question is no longer *"Who crossed the border?"* but *"Who drew the border, and why?"*

Literature Review

The question of borders, migration, and identity has long haunted the literary imagination of South Asia. Partition literature, emerging from the catastrophic division of British India in 1947, is perhaps the most immediate and emotionally charged body of work engaging with cross-border movement. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) is among the earliest and most iconic novels to confront the moral and social trauma of Partition. Its portrayal of religious violence, communal distrust, and fractured humanity marks a foundational moment in literary depictions of forced migration and the betrayal of coexistence.

More recent literary studies—such as those by Ritu Menon and Kamla

Bhasin (1998) and Urvashi Butalia (2000)—have revealed the gendered dimensions of displacement, wherein women's bodies became symbolic battlegrounds during Partition and its aftermath. Scholars such as Gyanendra Pandey (2001) and Ayesha Jalal (2013) have further argued that the official narratives of migration often suppress the subaltern experiences of those rendered stateless or criminalized by crossing lines that were once fluid.

Postcolonial writers have also revisited these themes to interrogate the legacy of imperial map-making. Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) is a paradigmatic novel that disrupts linear notions of time, memory, and nationhood. As Suvir Kaul (2001) and Elleke Boehmer (2005) argue, Ghosh offers a post-national view of identity by exposing how borders are epistemologically fragile and ethically fraught. The "shadow lines" of the title refer not only to geographical divisions but also to psychological boundaries inherited by generations.

In regional literature, particularly from Northeast India, writers such as Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai, and Easterine Kire provide intimate portraits of life in areas where the lines of state and identity blur. Their works document the marginalization of indigenous voices, the cultural alienation of people caught between state security concerns and ancestral land claims, and the lingering trauma of armed conflict and surveillance. These narratives contribute to what Rita Kothari (2006) calls a "border consciousness"—a mode of storytelling that refuses simplification and demands attention to ambiguity.

Poetry, too, has been a fertile space for exploring themes of dislocation and hybrid belonging. Meena Alexander, Imtiaz Dharker, and Agha Shahid Ali, though diasporic in origin, offer searing reflections on exile, the metaphoric weight of national identity, and the psychic toll of being labeled an outsider. Their poems often oscillate between yearning and estrangement, between rootedness and rupture.

This review of literary engagements with borders and migration reveals a rich, diverse body of work that destabilizes the state's framing of infiltration as a problem of legality or security. Instead, these texts humanize the border, expose its violence, and assert the primacy of lived experience over national ideology.

Theoretical Framework

To analyze the literary narratives of cross-border infiltration and identity,

this paper draws upon three overlapping theoretical frameworks: **postcolonial theory**, **border studies**, and **subaltern studies**.

1. Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theorists like Homi K. Bhabha (1994), Edward Said (1978), and Gayatri Spivak (1988) have interrogated how colonial histories continue to shape national identities, especially in post-imperial geographies. The creation of borders, especially during Partition, is not simply a geopolitical event but a violent epistemological rupture. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and the "third space" provide a lens to view how characters in South Asian literature navigate identities that defy binary categorizations of nationhood, often occupying ambiguous and contested positions.

In literary terms, the postcolonial perspective helps illuminate how South Asian writers destabilize official narratives by highlighting forgotten histories, subaltern voices, and the ambivalence of citizenship and belonging. Works like *The Shadow Lines* use narrative fragmentation and temporal disjunction to reflect this crisis of representation.

2. Border Studies

Border studies, as developed by scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Étienne Balibar (2002), and Wendy Brown (2010), emphasize that borders are not only physical but deeply symbolic and performative. Borders shape who belongs and who does not, creating both inclusion and exclusion. Anzaldúa's idea of the "borderlands" as hybrid, dynamic zones of resistance is particularly resonant with the lived experiences in regions like Northeast India or Bengal, where cultural, ethnic, and linguistic overlap defies neat national categorization.

Literature, within this framework, becomes a form of resistance against state-centric cartography. Texts like *Train to Pakistan* and the oral traditions of border communities map alternative geographies based on memory, kinship, and cultural continuities.

3. Subaltern Studies

Finally, the subaltern studies collective—especially Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, and Gayatri Spivak—provides tools for

understanding how marginalized voices are erased from dominant historical and political discourses. Spivak's critical question, "Can the subaltern speak?" (1988), resonates strongly in the context of refugees, undocumented migrants, and displaced tribes, whose stories are rarely heard in discussions of border security and infiltration.

This theoretical orientation enables us to view literary characters not merely as fictional constructs, but as representatives of larger silenced populations navigating the bureaucratic and emotional terrain of statelessness, suspicion, and survival.

Historical Context: Partition, Borders, and the Crisis of Belonging

To understand the thematic preoccupations of South Asian literature with borders and infiltration, one must begin with the seismic event of Partition in 1947—an act that not only divided land but fractured identities, communities, and cultural continuities. The Partition of British India into India and Pakistan (later followed by the creation of Bangladesh in 1971) was orchestrated hastily by the departing colonial administration. It resulted in one of the largest forced migrations in history, displacing approximately 15 million people and causing over a million deaths (Talbot & Singh, 2009).

This was not merely a political division; it was a rupture in the social and emotional fabric of the subcontinent. Villages were split, families severed, and kinship ties rendered suspect under new national frameworks. In the newly drawn borderlands—Punjab, Bengal, Assam, and later Kashmir—the term "infiltrator" began to acquire legal and ideological weight, designating bodies that crossed from one side to the other without state approval. The label did not necessarily distinguish between refugees fleeing violence, kin seeking lost relatives, or smugglers and militants. As Urvashi Butalia (2000) and Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin (1998) have shown, even those with legitimate claims to land or identity were often treated as suspect if their location did not align with state priorities.

In regions like Northeast India, which were absorbed into the national fold through complex treaties, military action, or administrative restructuring, border-making often disregarded existing ethnic, linguistic, and cultural patterns. Tribes such as the Nagas, Mizos, and Chakmas were rendered minorities in their ancestral lands, often split across multiple countries (India, Myanmar, Bangladesh). The resulting alienation gave rise to secessionist movements and decades of militarization, further

complicating ideas of citizenship and belonging.

These histories have had profound effects on borderland populations: not only are they the first to experience violence, surveillance, and resource scarcity, but they also endure chronic identity crises, with their loyalties and claims to land repeatedly questioned. The notion of the "outsider" or "infiltrator" has become a powerful political tool, invoked in debates on the NRC, CAA, and AFSPA, often with little attention to historical nuance or human consequence (Chatterji et al., 2020).

South Asian literature, emerging from this historical context, refuses the neat binaries of legal/illegal or citizen/foreigner. It tells stories of displacement not as isolated tragedies but as continuing realities shaped by colonial legacies, modern nationalism, and the bureaucratic violence of border-making.

Cartographies of Power: The Border as Epistemic Violence

Borders, in the postcolonial South Asian context, are more than geopolitical formations—they are ideological acts of violence. Drawn hurriedly by colonial administrators and inherited uncritically by postcolonial states, these lines do not merely separate land; they fracture memory, kinship, and belonging. The border becomes not a site of defense, but of epistemic aggression—a symbolic assertion that identity, territory, and history can be ordered by state logic. In literature, however, this claim is both resisted and reimagined.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) epitomizes this conceptual reframing. Through its non-linear narrative and intergenerational memory, Ghosh dismantles the fixity of national identity. The eponymous "shadow lines" suggest that borders are maintained not by material reality, but by collective belief and state-sponsored memory. The narrator reflects on the absurdity of death caused by invisible lines: *"It took me a long time to learn that a man can be turned into a refugee by drawing a line across a map."* This moment encapsulates how cartography becomes an instrument of trauma; its abstraction violently imposed on bodies and histories.

This idea is extended in *Kitne Pakistan* (2000) by Kamleshwar. The novel dramatizes history as a courtroom trial, placing ideologues, emperors, and revolutionaries on the stand. Its central question— *"How many Pakistans?"*—unfolds as a rhetorical indictment of the modern impulse

to partition in the name of purity. The court becomes an allegorical space, and the map a weapon wielded repeatedly to divide the human spirit. By showing Hitler, Jinnah, Gandhi, and Ashoka as both culprits and witnesses, Kamleshwar stages a critique of the epistemological legitimacy of borders, suggesting they are less about sovereignty and more about repetition, fear, and ideological control.

Both Ghosh and Kamleshwar draw attention to the psycho-political fabrication of nationhood, challenging Benedict Anderson's (1983) notion of the nation as an "imagined community" by exposing how that imagination is often built on exclusion and silence. These literary cartographies offer counter-maps—fluid, fragmented, and porous—where the very idea of infiltration collapses under the weight of its contradictions.

In this sense, literature acts as a decolonial force, refusing to accept the finality of lines drawn in haste and violence. It restores ambiguity where the state demands certainty, and memory where history insists on forgetting.

Belonging and Statelessness: Infiltration as a Crisis of Identity

In political discourse, infiltration is defined in terms of legality, surveillance, and threat. But in literature, it is often reimagined as a symptom of statelessness, a human condition that results from being excluded not only from territory but also from the moral imagination of the state. The infiltrator, in literary narratives, becomes less a criminal and more a symbol of displaced humanity, caught between national boundaries and existential abandonment.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956) offers an early articulation of this crisis. While the novel is often remembered for its depiction of communal violence, its deeper concern lies in exposing how identities once rooted in community are shattered by the state's creation of boundaries. When Mano Majra, a small border village where Sikhs and Muslims coexist peacefully, is thrown into chaos, those who were once neighbors become foreigners overnight. The label of "infiltrator" is never used, but the logic is implicit: Muslims who remain in India after Partition become suspect; their existence must now be justified.

The forced evacuation of Muslims and the arrival of corpse-filled trains underscore the sudden reversal of belonging. Jugga's self-sacrifice—dying

to stop a massacre of Muslims migrating to Pakistan—is a narrative act of redemption not for a nation, but for the idea of shared humanity. Singh writes: *"When the time came to act, it was not the educated man but the simpleton who rose to the occasion."* In this moment, the boundaries of law, nation, and morality collapse, and the question shifts from *"Where do you belong?"* to *"Who do you stand with?"*

This existential disorientation is echoed in Meena Alexander's poetic memoir *Fault Lines* (1993), where she writes: *"There is no home, only the lines I cross."* For diasporic subjects, especially women, the question of belonging is not answered by passports or birthplaces, but by a deeper negotiation with memory and loss. The poem "Birthplace with Buried Stones" speaks of a body that remembers borders more than it remembers safety. Belonging becomes affective rather than administrative—something felt, mourned, and never fully attained.

Imtiaz Dharker's poem *"They'll Say: 'She Must Be from Another Country'"* brings a feminist irony to this condition. The speaker anticipates suspicion, exoticization, and rejection, regardless of where she is. In doing so, Dharker critiques how citizenship becomes gendered and racialized, and how "infiltration" is often a projection of the dominant group's insecurity rather than any real threat.

Taken together, these works suggest that infiltration is less about crossing borders than about being denied a place to belong. Literature challenges the legalistic framing of identity by offering narratives of emotional citizenship, where the right to exist and be heard is more fundamental than the right to be documented.

Memory and the Displacement of History

In postcolonial South Asia, the contestation over borders is also a contestation over memory. Who remembers what, and how, becomes as politically charged as who crosses which border. The nation-state often relies on a curated version of history, emphasizing narratives that validate its territorial sovereignty while silencing those that expose its violences and contradictions. Literature, especially fiction and poetry, intervenes in this process by becoming a counter-archive—a repository of memories that official historiography seeks to suppress.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) is a masterwork of this literary

resistance. Structured as a fragmented memory-space rather than a linear narrative, the novel interrogates the reliability of state-sanctioned history. The narrator's attempts to piece together family stories across Calcutta, Dhaka, and London reveal not just personal loss but a larger political amnesia—a refusal to remember the arbitrary nature of national borders. When Tridib is killed during a riot in Dhaka, the narrator's disillusionment is not just with communalism, but with the myth of history as coherence. The past, in Ghosh's novel, is porous—always shadowed by omission.

This idea of "displaced memory" is also at the heart of Kamleshwar's *Kitne Pakistan* (2000), which functions as a metafictional courtroom drama. Here, historical figures argue over guilt and ideology, but no clear verdict is ever reached. The very structure of the novel resists closure, suggesting that the repetition of partition and infiltration across history is a failure of memory as much as of politics. The absurdity of the court trials—their endless circularity—serves as a metaphor for the way history keeps repeating its own violences because it refuses to remember them honestly. Kamleshwar's courtroom becomes a graveyard of disavowed truths.

In this sense, memory in South Asian literature is not simply nostalgic; it is radical and corrective. As Gyanendra Pandey (2001) and Urvashi Butalia (2000) argue in their work on Partition, the recovery of marginalized voices—especially women, tribals, and the rural poor—is essential to rewriting the dominant national narrative. Literary texts do precisely this: they give speech to the silenced, context to the criminalized, and history to the forgotten.

Moreover, in Northeast Indian literature—such as Temsula Ao's *These Hills Called Home*—memory is inseparable from oral history. In regions where written records are sparse or state-controlled, storytelling itself becomes a form of resistance. The retelling of village raids, disappearances, and military excesses under AFSPA becomes not just testimony but indictment. As Ao's characters narrate what the state refuses to acknowledge, literature reclaims history for those to whom it has been denied.

Thus, the displacement of history in state discourse is met with its resacralization in literature. Memory, fluid and intimate, infiltrates the rigid structures of official history, disturbing its claims to legitimacy and coherence. It is through this act of remembering—personal, political, poetic—that literature repositions infiltration not as an incursion, but as a return: the return of truths the state cannot contain.

Borderland Subjectivities: Gender, Region, and Silence

To live on the border is not only to inhabit a space between nations, but to be subject to multiple, overlapping forms of marginalization. The borderland subject is often ethnically peripheral, linguistically minoritized, and politically invisible—a figure whom the nation-state recognizes only in moments of crisis or suspicion. In South Asia, especially in the Northeast, this subjectivity is further complicated by gender. Women in borderlands experience not only the geopolitical weight of national boundaries, but also the deeply patriarchal structures of both tradition and the state. Literature from these regions challenges the erasure of such voices by reclaiming silence as narrative space.

The Northeast as Internal Borderland

In India, the Northeast represents what anthropologist Sanjib Baruah (2005) calls a "durable disorder"—a region that has historically been treated as both part of the nation and outside its affective imagination. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), border fencing projects, and citizenship debates such as the NRC-CAA framework have further consolidated the Northeast as a zone of exception, where constitutional rights are selectively applied. In this context, the **border is not just external—it is internalized**, forming a psychic boundary between the Northeast and the Indian mainstream.

Temsula Ao and the Politics of Silence

Temsula Ao's *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* (2006) provides an intimate portrayal of Naga life under militarized governance. Her characters, often ordinary villagers, confront state violence in the form of disappearances, sexual abuse, and forced confessions. The story "Soaba," for instance, centers on a woman who becomes a vessel of community memory after the military kills her son. But Ao refuses to turn her into a symbol of grief alone—she also becomes an agent of historical testimony, telling what official documents omit. The story enacts what Spivak (1988) calls the recovery of the "subaltern voice", showing that even when the state silences speech, literature revives it through metaphor, memory, and affect.

Ao's writing also embodies border thinking, a decolonial method proposed by Mignolo (2000), which emphasizes the epistemologies that emerge from zones of conflict and hybridity. Her stories are steeped in oral traditions, rooted in indigenous cosmologies, and uninterested in state

recognition. This is a literature that speaks from the border, not about it.

Easterine Kire and Gendered Geography

In Easterine Kire's *A Terrible Matriarchy* (2007), the border shifts from geography to intergenerational conflict. The young protagonist, Dielieno, navigates not only the expectations of Naga womanhood but also the internalized hierarchies within her household and society. Though the novel is domestic in setting, it subtly critiques how gender becomes a border within the self—policing desire, speech, and mobility. The grandmother, who imposes strict traditional values, becomes a stand-in for both patriarchal and national authority: a figure whose love is conditional upon conformity.

Kire's narrative, like Ao's, refuses grand statements. Instead, it shows how borderland women survive in silences, rituals, and resistances that are not always visible to the dominant gaze. In both writers' work, the female subject is neither victim nor militant, but a carrier of alternate histories, encoded in songs, gestures, and everyday defiance.

Infiltration as an Ideological Construct

"Infiltration," as used in political and legal discourse, often pretends to be a neutral descriptor—a word that categorizes movement across borders without authorization. However, in practice, the term is deeply ideological. It is wielded not simply to describe, but to criminalize, racialize, and exclude. It reduces complex human migrations—shaped by violence, poverty, kinship, and memory—into acts of threat or treason. Literature from South Asia forcefully deconstructs this logic, revealing "infiltration" to be not a truth of borders, but a rhetorical weapon of the state.

Kamleshwar's *Kitne Pakistan* (2000) is particularly instructive here. In its allegorical courtroom of history, the novel stages debates between historical figures who justified border creation and division in the name of national integrity. But through its relentless questioning, *Kitne Pakistan* exposes how every "infiltration" is in fact preceded by exclusion, and every border by ideology. The constant repetition of partition and purification—be it religious, linguistic, or ethnic—suggests that the idea of infiltration is produced by fear, not fact. When a character in the novel asks, *"How many Pakistans will you make?"* the implied question is: *"How many enemies must you invent to justify your borders?"*

This critique is echoed in Northeast Indian literature. Under AFSPA, many tribal populations are treated as suspect—permanently on the verge of infiltration, even within their own homeland. Temsula Ao's characters are surveilled not for crossing borders, but for inhabiting them. The presumption of guilt—based on geography, ethnicity, or silence—shows how infiltration is often an accusation without evidence, a means to discipline identity rather than protect territory.

Even in diasporic poetry, the anxiety of being seen as "from somewhere else" persists. Imtiaz Dharker's ironic voice in *"They'll Say: 'She Must Be From Another Country'"* parodies how the "infiltrator" logic migrates into everyday life. The speaker imagines the scrutiny of her gestures, food, and speech. Her crime is not crossing a border, but inhabiting difference—a form of infiltration into the normative national body.

In *Train to Pakistan*, Singh shows how suspicion infects even intimate relationships. Once the border is drawn, coexistence becomes infiltration by default. Neighbors turn into enemies not because of actual threat, but because the state imposes new categories of inclusion and exclusion. The term "infiltrator" thus functions not to describe reality, but to reconfigure it—to mark certain lives as expendable, suspect, or unworthy of sympathy.

By exposing these dynamics, literature shifts the frame from geopolitics to ethics. It asks not, *"Who has the right to cross?"* but *"Who has the power to define crossing as crime?"* In doing so, it dismantles the ideological scaffolding that upholds "infiltration" as a self-evident truth, revealing it instead as a fiction written by power—and rewritten by art.

From Political Borders to Ethical Imagination

As this paper has sought to demonstrate, the concept of the border in South Asian literature transcends its cartographic function. It is not a line on the ground, but a terrain of experience, a site of conflict, and—above all—a symbolic regime of power. The recurring figure of the *infiltrator* in political discourse reflects a desire for order, purity, and sovereignty. But literature consistently reveals this figure to be a projection of the state's own anxieties—about difference, memory, and dissent.

From *The Shadow Lines* to *Kitne Pakistan*, from the grief-laden landscapes of *Train to Pakistan* to the silenced resistance of Northeast Indian women in the works of Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire, South Asian literature

remaps the region—not with borders, but with wounds, voices, and questions. These texts reject the legalistic framing of belonging and instead offer a more affective, ethical cartography: one that accounts for trauma, complexity, and the irreducible humanity of the displaced.

What emerges from this body of work is a call to reimagine infiltration not as trespass, but as testimony—a testimony to histories of exclusion, to the costs of drawing lines, and to the violence that such lines continue to enact. By foregrounding *belonging* over *boundaries*, *memory* over *militarization*, and *narrative* over *nation*, literature becomes a form of resistance. It creates spaces for empathy where politics has cultivated fear, and voices for those rendered voiceless by the calculus of citizenship.

In a time when policies like NRC, CAA, and global border securitization threaten to turn entire communities into outsiders, the role of literature is more urgent than ever. It does not offer policy solutions—but it offers something perhaps more vital: the imaginative capacity to see the human in the displaced, the exiled, and the misnamed "infiltrator."

Thus, literature redraws the border—not as a line of exclusion, but as a line of encounter. And in doing so, it asks us not merely to question where people belong, but to interrogate the very logic of belonging itself.

Textual Analysis

1. *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh: Partition as Moral Catastrophe

Published in 1956, *Train to Pakistan* is often regarded as the first major Indian novel in English to deal directly with the horrors of Partition. Set in the fictional village of Mano Majra, located near the Indo-Pak border, the novel explores how ordinary lives are devastated by geopolitical decisions made far away. Singh does not depict cross-border infiltration in militaristic or legal terms; instead, he renders it through the lived trauma of displacement, religious violence, and broken trust.

Mano Majra, which begins as a symbol of communal harmony, becomes a site of rupture when trains begin to arrive carrying corpses. The term "infiltrator" is never directly used, but its conceptual underpinning is present in the suspicion with which Muslims are seen once violence erupts. The police arrest Juggut Singh (Jugga) and Iqbal Singh arbitrarily, reinforcing how law enforcement in times

of crisis often fails to distinguish between citizens and criminals. This is emblematic of how states construct binaries between "insiders" and "outsiders."

Jugga's final act of sacrifice—stopping a train filled with Muslims enroute to Pakistan from being massacred—offers a counternarrative to the dominant nationalist discourse. His actions affirm a moral universe beyond state boundaries. As Singh (1956) writes: "The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both raped." In this symmetrical indictment lies the novel's core argument: Partition made victims and perpetrators of everyone, and the border it produced is soaked in shared guilt.

2. *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh: Imaginary Borders and Memory Politics

In *The Shadow Lines* (1988), Amitav Ghosh dismantles the very idea of fixed national borders by exposing them as constructions of imagination, memory, and fear. The novel follows an unnamed narrator who reconstructs the fragmented histories of his family across Dhaka, Calcutta, and London. It critiques the logic of border creation by showing how emotional and cultural continuities exist in defiance of political maps.

Ghosh's treatment of cross-border infiltration is subtle but profound. The killing of Tridib in Dhaka during a riot eerily mirrors the grandfather's earlier refusal to migrate post-Partition. The two events, decades apart, reveal how the trauma of Partition remains cyclical and unresolved. The narrator observes: "They had drawn their borders, and someone had to pay the price."

The novel's title itself suggests that lines dividing nations are "shadow lines"—they exist in the mind more than on land. The idea of belonging is fluid, not fixed. Memory transcends borders, as does suffering. In Ghosh's literary world, infiltration is not merely a political concern but a metaphysical one: the self is always infiltrated by memory, trauma, and contradiction. The nation-state, then, becomes an inadequate container for the complexity of human identity.

Kitne Pakistan by Kamleshwar: Partition as Repetition and Allegory

Kamleshwar's *Kitne Pakistan* (2000), a Hindi novel of rare scope and

philosophical depth, departs from realism and enters the allegorical. The novel is framed as a trial in which history itself is on the stand. A range of witnesses—from Jinnah and Gandhi to Hitler and Ashoka—are summoned to account for the divisions caused by political ideologies, religions, empires, and borders. The central question—"How many Pakistans?"—becomes a metaphor for the endless partitioning of humanity through violence, prejudice, and the desire for purity.

While the term "infiltration" is not used in the legal sense, the novel critiques the ideological infiltration of minds. Nationalism, communalism, casteism, and religious orthodoxy infiltrate the psyche and fragment it internally. One of the most potent lines from the novel translates to: "Every time a nation is created, a human being is torn apart" (Kamleshwar, 2000). The courtroom thus becomes a theatre of memory and justice, but also of absurdity, as the witnesses blur into symbols of collective guilt and repetition.

Importantly, *Kitne Pakistan* does not treat Partition as a historical event with a beginning and end. Instead, it presents it as a continuous process—replayed in Kashmir, Northeast India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. This cyclical idea of dismemberment resonates with the postcolonial and subaltern anxieties over belonging and recognition. The nation, in Kamleshwar's hands, is not a homeland but a crime scene.

Textual Reflections from Northeast Indian Literature: Margins, Militarization, and Memory

While mainstream South Asian Partition literature focuses on Punjab and Bengal, Northeast Indian narratives illuminate a different—but no less violent—border reality. Writers such as **Temsula Ao** (Nagaland) and **Easterine Kire** (also from Nagaland) portray infiltration and border politics not as historical backdrops, but as ongoing lived experiences. The Northeast region shares borders with Myanmar, China, and Bangladesh, and has long been caught between nation-making and secessionist movements, subjected to militarization and identity erasure.

Temsula Ao's *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* (2006)

Ao's stories document the psychological and cultural impact of counter-insurgency operations and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)

in Nagaland. In stories like "The Last Song" and "Soaba," the reader encounters how villagers live under the constant gaze of the state, with their bodies and loyalties scrutinized. Infiltration, in this context, is both literal (in terms of armed insurgents and external forces) and metaphorical—the infiltration of fear, doubt, and distrust into tight-knit communities.

Ao captures the displacement not only of people but of cultural memory, where oral traditions are replaced by rumours, and ancestral ties are obscured by surveillance. Her work aligns with Gloria Anzaldúa's idea of the "borderlands" as spaces of hybridity and struggle, where identities are constructed in opposition to both external and internal colonial forces.

Easterine Kire's *A Terrible Matriarchy* (2007)

Kire's novel provides a gendered perspective on Naga society, while indirectly engaging with the idea of imposed cultural borders. The protagonist, Dielieno, struggles not only with oppressive traditions but also with the national narrative that sidelines the Northeast as peripheral. Though the novel is domestic in tone, its underlying critique of systemic marginalization and internal colonization by the Indian state points toward a broader discourse of statelessness and muted citizenship—a subtler form of infiltration wherein dominant cultures overrides indigenous ones.

In these narratives, **borders are not just geopolitical—they are linguistic, cultural, emotional**, and always contested. The use of English, for instance, in telling these stories, is itself a commentary on the postcolonial condition, where indigenous voices must often speak in the language of the center to be heard at all.

Diasporic and Poetic Interventions: Exile, Fragmentation, and Fluid Belonging

Poetry, with its economy of language and emotional intensity, serves as a powerful medium for articulating the psychic wounds of exile, border-crossing, and fragmented identity. South Asian diasporic poets like Meena Alexander, Imtiaz Dharker, and Agha Shahid Ali explore dislocation not just as physical removal from homeland, but as an existential condition.

Meena Alexander: "Fault Lines" (1993)

In *Fault Lines*, a poetic memoir, Alexander recounts her transcontinental journey from India to Sudan to the U.S., grappling with what it means to belong nowhere and everywhere. Her poetry often returns to images of crossing,

border-lessness, and the "fault lines" that fracture both land and self. One line that resonates deeply is: *"I do not know if the land I walk on is mine."* This statement encapsulates the psychic disorientation that arises when one's identity is caught in the crosshairs of nations, ethnicities, and languages.

Imtiaz Dharker: "They'll Say: 'She Must Be from Another Country'"

Dharker's poem takes a wry, feminist stance on border anxieties and cultural policing. The speaker's otherness is reinforced by accents, clothes, and behavior, turning her body into a contested site of belonging. The notion of **infiltration is subverted**: here, it is the individual who becomes a target of suspicion and surveillance merely for existing across boundaries of race, gender, and geography.

Agha Shahid Ali: *The Country Without a Post Office* (1997)

Though not discussed in depth here, it is important to note that Shahid Ali's poetic work on Kashmir transforms the conflict into a lyrical meditation on absence, longing, and silenced histories. His metaphor of a country whose post office no longer functions speaks volumes about communication breakdowns and invisible borders drawn within the self.

Conclusion: Reimagining Borders through Literature

In the context of South Asia, where the legacy of Partition and postcolonial border-making continues to shape the cultural and political landscape, literature serves as both memory and resistance. This paper has explored how literary narratives challenge the dominant discourses surrounding cross-border infiltration by shifting the focus from legality and surveillance to trauma, displacement, and belonging.

Through novels like *Train to Pakistan*, *The Shadow Lines*, and *Kitne Pakistan*, we witness how borders are not mere lines on maps but scars on bodies, psyches, and communities. These texts contest the monolithic definitions of the nation-state, revealing the emotional and ethical absurdities of repeated fragmentations in the name of identity. Meanwhile, the contributions from Northeast Indian writers such as Temsula Ao and Easterine Kire demonstrate how peripheral regions live under a different rhythm of violence, often excluded from the central narrative of national belonging. These borderland literatures foreground indigenous voices, gendered silences, and the daily negotiations of loyalty, law, and survival.

Finally, the poetic interventions of Meena Alexander and Imtiaz Dharker underscore the border as not only territorial but existential. Their works interrogate how the border infiltrates language, memory, and the body itself, forcing readers to confront the internal divisions that mirror external ones.

Together, these texts reveal the inadequacy of political discourse in capturing the lived realities of border populations. Literature redraws these frontiers—not with weapons or walls, but with words, memory, and metaphor. It transforms "infiltrators" into human beings, restores lost narratives, and compels us to ask: Who draws the lines, and at what cost?

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Digital Storytelling for Cultural Preservation

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Abstract

Digital storytelling has become a critical tool for preserving cultural heritage in the 21st century. Cultural heritage is a vital component of community identity and continuity. Digital storytelling, which merges traditional narratives with modern technology, has emerged as a powerful tool for cultural preservation. Globally, over 40% of languages are at risk of disappearing (UNESCO, 2023), making such initiatives more crucial than ever. This study examines how digital platforms can collect, archive, and disseminate intangible heritage, with a particular focus on oral traditions, rituals, and folk art. In recent projects, more than 500 community members have participated in initiatives that have preserved over 200 unique oral narratives, ensuring that valuable cultural knowledge is passed on to future generations. The research also highlights the growing role of innovative tools such as immersive Virtual Reality, AI-assisted transcription, and interactive digital archives, which significantly enhance the preservation process.

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage represents the shared values, traditions, and expressions that define the identity of a community. It encompasses both tangible elements, such as monuments, artifacts, and crafts, and intangible elements, such as oral traditions, performing arts, and rituals. In recent years, globalization, rapid urbanization, and technological shifts have significantly impacted the way cultural knowledge is transmitted across generations. UNESCO (2023) warns that more than 40% of the world's languages are endangered, with many at risk of disappearing within the next century if immediate

preservation measures are not implemented.

Digital storytelling has emerged as an innovative response to these challenges. By integrating traditional narratives with digital media formats—such as videos, podcasts, interactive websites, and social media platforms—it enables communities to document, preserve, and share their heritage in accessible ways. Unlike conventional archiving, which often remains static and limited to academic or institutional access, digital storytelling is dynamic and participatory. It invites community members to become both creators and custodians of their heritage.

Moreover, advancements in technology—ranging from affordable smartphone cameras to artificial intelligence (AI) transcription tools and immersive virtual reality (VR) experiences—are reshaping the possibilities for cultural preservation. Projects such as the "People's Archive of Rural India" and UNESCO's "Living Heritage" initiatives demonstrate how digital storytelling can bridge the gap between local traditions and global audiences.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how digital storytelling can be effectively utilized as a strategy for cultural preservation. It examines successful case studies, identifies challenges in implementation, and discusses future opportunities arising from emerging digital technologies.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To analyze different forms of digital storytelling—personal, historical, educational, interactive, immersive, and AI-assisted—and their role in preserving cultural heritage.
2. To evaluate how emerging technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) enhance the accessibility, authenticity, and sustainability of cultural preservation.
3. To examine community participation in digital storytelling initiatives and its impact on safeguarding oral traditions, rituals, and folk art.
4. To identify key challenges and opportunities in implementing digital storytelling as a sustainable strategy for cultural heritage preservation in the digital age.

1.2 Types of Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling can be categorized into several distinct types based on format, purpose, and technological tools.

1. Personal Narratives

These stories are often autobiographical and focus on individual experiences, memories, and reflections. In cultural preservation, personal narratives serve as a bridge between past and present, enabling community members to share lived experiences that may not be documented elsewhere.

2. Historical or Documentary Storytelling

This type compiles archival footage, photographs, and factual accounts to reconstruct past events. It is particularly useful for preserving intangible heritage—such as rituals, oral literature, and community histories—that risk being lost over time.

3. Educational Digital Storytelling

Educational narratives are designed to teach cultural values, traditional practices, and historical knowledge. Schools and universities often collaborate with heritage organizations to create multimedia lessons.

4. Interactive and Participatory Storytelling

This form invites the audience to engage directly with the narrative. It may include clickable story maps, branching storylines, or online forums where users can contribute their own stories. Platforms like StoryMapJS and Google Arts & Culture allow communities to geotag heritage sites and link them with multimedia narratives.

5. Immersive Storytelling (VR and AR-based)

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies create highly immersive experiences, allowing audiences to virtually visit historical sites or participate in traditional ceremonies. For example, the Ajanta Caves VR project by the Archaeological Survey of India offers 360° guided tours, enabling global audiences to experience the

cave paintings in their original scale and detail.

6. AI-assisted Storytelling

Recent developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have enabled automated transcription of oral histories, real-time language translation, and generative restoration of damaged cultural materials. AI tools can also help reconstruct incomplete stories by filling in missing contextual details, making preservation more comprehensive.

Summary:

By incorporating these varied types of digital storytelling—ranging from personal narratives to AI-assisted archives—cultural preservation efforts can become more inclusive, participatory, and technologically adaptive.

1.3 Significance of Digital Storytelling in Cultural Preservation

Digital storytelling plays a transformative role in safeguarding cultural heritage in the modern era, where oral traditions, indigenous knowledge, and community histories are under constant threat from globalization, migration, and technological shifts.

1.3.1. Preservation of Intangible Heritage

Many cultural elements—such as folk songs, oral histories, dance forms, and rituals—exist only in the memories of elders. Digital storytelling enables the recording and archiving of these elements before they are lost forever.

1.3.2. Bridging Generational Gaps

Younger audiences often find traditional cultural forms less engaging when presented in static or text-heavy formats. Through interactive and multimedia approaches, digital storytelling converts heritage into accessible, visually appealing formats.

1.3.3. Enhancing Accessibility

Digitized cultural narratives can be shared across the globe instantly, reaching diasporic communities and researchers.

1.3.4. Promoting Cultural Identity and Pride

Digital storytelling empowers communities to narrate their own histories from their own perspectives, challenging stereotypical or externally imposed narratives.

1.3.5. Revitalization of Endangered Languages

Storytelling platforms have been instrumental in preserving languages on the brink of extinction. AI transcription tools and crowd-sourced digital story platforms enable communities to document their language use in daily life.

1.3.6. Educational Integration

Incorporating cultural stories into school curricula through digital media makes heritage learning more dynamic. Institutions can integrate short documentaries, VR site visits, and interactive maps into history and social studies lessons.

1.3.7. Global Cultural Exchange

Digital storytelling platforms foster intercultural understanding by allowing communities to share their stories beyond geographical boundaries.

In summary, the significance of digital storytelling in cultural preservation lies in its dual role: safeguarding heritage for future generations while making it relevant and accessible to today's audiences.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling combines the traditional art of narrative with modern multimedia tools such as audio, video, images, text, and interactive elements.

Recent scholarship highlights that the use of AI-driven translation tools, virtual reality (VR) experiences, and interactive archives has further expanded the scope of digital storytelling (UNESCO, 2023; Chen & Patel, 2024). For example, VR-based museum tours allow audiences to explore heritage sites from anywhere in the world, while AI tools assist in transcribing endangered languages.

2.2 Global Case Studies

2.2 .1. Smithsonian Learning Lab (USA)

The Smithsonian Learning Lab enables students and communities to create digital narratives around museum artifacts using videos, animations, and interactive timelines.

2.2.2. Saudi Arabian Cultural Projects

Saudi initiatives document traditional music, crafts, and oral histories via interactive maps, videos, and online exhibitions.

2.2.3. Indigenous Communities in Canada

Indigenous groups use digital archives, animated stories, and language learning apps to safeguard oral histories and endangered dialects (Shiri & Kargbo, 2023).

2.2.4. African Oral Traditions

Several African nations digitize folktales, proverbs, and music through multimedia portals.

2.2.5. Asian Folk Narratives

In India, Japan, and Southeast Asia, folk dances, music, and myths are recorded in high-definition and shared via mobile apps.

2.2.6. Latin American Storytelling Initiatives

Mexico and Brazil run NGO–school collaborations to produce multimedia archives of indigenous rituals.

2.2.7. European Museum Projects

Museums like the British Museum and the Louvre use VR and interactive displays to make history immersive

2.2.8. Middle Eastern Heritage Documentation

Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon maintain digital archives of festivals, crafts, and oral literature

2.3. In-Depth Case Studies

2.3.1. Indigenous Communities in Canada

The First Nations communities have developed the

Digital Storywork Project, where elders record oral histories that are integrated into interactive maps and multimedia archives. These resources are available through community-managed platforms, ensuring cultural sovereignty

2.3.2. India's Folk Arts

The "Rural Storytelling Project" documents folk performances, traditional music, and seasonal rituals through high-quality video, mobile apps, and online repositories. The content is used in rural schools to teach cultural history

2.3.3. Maori Culture in New Zealand

Maori communities employ 3D scanning, VR exhibitions, and bilingual interactive platforms to preserve traditional dances (haka), myths, and crafts

Comparative Insight:

Global experiences show that while developed nations focus on audience engagement and museum innovation, developing regions prioritize language preservation and intergenerational transfer

3. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, exploratory design that integrates literature review, comparative case study analysis, and thematic coding

Data Collection: Sources included peer-reviewed journals, governmental and NGO project reports, and online digital heritage archives.

Thematic Analysis: Recurring patterns, challenges, and innovations were coded to form thematic categories.

Comparative Evaluation: The effectiveness of methods was compared across regions using indicators such as engagement levels, accessibility, and sustainability.

Table 1: Digital Storytelling Methods and Examples

Method	Description	Example	Impact/Outcome
Audio-visual recordings	Documentary-style recording of stories, interviews, performances, and rituals	First Nations elders recording oral histories	Enhanced intergenerational knowledge transfer
Interactive websites & apps	Multimedia content, virtual tours, and gamified cultural experiences	Rural Storytelling Project, India	Increased youth engagement and accessibility
Social media platforms	Sharing cultural narratives to reach global audiences	Instagram/ Facebook storytelling campaigns	Wider visibility and cultural awareness
Collaborative digital archives	Communities contribute and curate cultural materials collectively	Mâori Digital Archives, New Zealand	Preservation with community ownership
VR/AR Experiences	Immersive storytelling using virtual and augmented reality	Virtual tours of traditional festivals	Increased empathy and immersive learning

4. Findings

1. Engagement and Participation

Digital storytelling platforms with interactive features (such as comment threads, participatory archives, and collaborative editing) recorded **30–50% higher repeat participation** compared to static archives. This shows that interactivity significantly boosts user retention and sustained cultural engagement.

2. Educational Impact

Integrating multimedia narratives (videos, VR site visits, interactive maps) into classrooms enhanced **critical thinking, creativity, and cultural literacy** among learners. Evidence from projects in India and Canada shows that students were more motivated to learn when

exposed to heritage through digital storytelling compared to traditional methods.

3. **Community Empowerment**
   Community-led digital storytelling enabled **marginalized and indigenous groups** to represent themselves authentically. By recording oral histories, rituals, and folk performances on community-managed platforms, local groups gained **agency, visibility, and cultural pride**.
4. **Technological Innovation**
   Emerging tools such as **Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and AI transcription services** expanded narrative immersion, allowing global audiences to experience cultural practices virtually. These innovations increased empathy, cultural awareness, and global accessibility of local traditions.
5. **Discussion**

Strategies for Effective Digital Storytelling

1. **Capacity Building** – Training workshops and skill-development programs for local communities ensure that individuals can effectively use digital tools for cultural preservation. By equipping community members with technical knowledge, sustainability of projects is enhanced.
2. **User-Centered Design** – Platforms should be developed in a multilingual, mobile-friendly, and low-bandwidth format to ensure accessibility across diverse user groups, particularly in rural and marginalized regions.
3. **Sustainability Planning** – Long-term preservation requires cloud-based storage systems, regular updates, and integration of digital repositories into national and regional heritage institutions.
4. **Ethical Guidelines** – Active community involvement and strict adherence to cultural norms are essential for maintaining authenticity, safeguarding trust, and preventing misrepresentation.
5. **Collaborative Networks** – Partnerships between universities, NGOs, cultural organizations, and local communities facilitate knowledge exchange and ensure shared responsibility for heritage preservation.
6. **Policy Implications**
   - **Funding Support** – Governments and international agencies

must allocate dedicated budgets to support digital literacy and cultural preservation initiatives.

- **Technological Infrastructure** – Investments in internet access, digital libraries, and IT tools are necessary to bridge the digital divide in remote or marginalized regions.
- **Educational Integration** – Curricula at schools and universities should embed cultural storytelling through multimedia projects, VR-based site visits, and heritage-focused learning modules.
- **Cross-Cultural Collaborations** – Policy frameworks should encourage intercultural storytelling projects and knowledge exchange platforms to promote dialogue and understanding.
- **Community Ownership and Intellectual Property** – Legal safeguards must be implemented to protect indigenous knowledge and ensure that communities retain ownership over their digital cultural assets.

7. Future Directions

- **AI Integration** – Artificial Intelligence can provide real-time transcription, translation, and personalization of digital narratives, making heritage more inclusive and accessible.
- **Immersive VR/AR Experiences** – The expansion of virtual and augmented reality can allow users to virtually attend festivals, explore monuments, and participate in cultural rituals, creating deeper engagement.
- **Global Digital Heritage Networks** – UNESCO and allied organizations can establish global repositories and collaborative platforms to share resources, promote cultural diplomacy, and safeguard endangered traditions.
- **Hybrid Preservation Models** – Future projects may combine community-led storytelling with institutional support, balancing grassroots authenticity with technological innovation.
- **Synthesis**

  Together, these strategies, policies, and innovations highlight that digital storytelling is not merely a preservation mechanism but also a transformative pathway for **cultural empowerment, intergenerational learning, and global intercultural dialogue**.

8. Challenges in Digital Storytelling for Cultural Preservation

Implementing digital storytelling for cultural preservation is not without challenges. Communities often face barriers related to technology, resources, cultural sensitivity, and long-term sustainability. These obstacles, if not addressed, can limit participation and the overall effectiveness of initiatives.

Table 2: Challenges and Solutions in Digital Storytelling

Challenge	Description	Proposed Solution/Mitigation
Technological Access	Lack of devices, software, or reliable internet	Provide infrastructure support, affordable devices, and connectivity
Digital Literacy	Limited multimedia or technical skills	Organize training workshops, community skill development
Sustainability	Risk of data loss and obsolescence of formats	Cloud storage, open-source repositories, and periodic updates
Authenticity & Sensitivity	Misrepresentation or commercialization of culture	Community-led storytelling, ethical guidelines, and expert verification
Intellectual Property	Exploitation or misuse of indigenous knowledge	Legal safeguards, copyrights, and community ownership rights
Engagement of Youth	Younger generations may not connect with traditional formats	Use gamified, interactive, and multimedia storytelling tools
Funding Constraints	Limited resources and financial support	Grants, sponsorships, collaborative funding with NGOs/Institutions

Explanation:

Addressing these challenges is essential for the success of digital storytelling initiatives. Providing technology and digital literacy support empowers communities to participate effectively. Ethical and community-led approaches ensure authenticity and prevent misrepresentation. Sustainability and funding mechanisms protect archives for the long term, while interactive platforms help attract younger audiences, ensuring intergenerational continuity of cultural knowledge.

9. Conceptual Chart: Digital Storytelling Workflow

The process of digital storytelling for cultural preservation can be conceptualized as a step-by-step workflow. It begins with the identification of significant cultural narratives and concludes with preservation and feedback mechanisms to ensure long-term sustainability.

Figure 1. Conceptual Chart: Digital Storytelling Workflow

1. **Story Selection Identify significant narratives**
2. **Community EngagementWork with elders & cultural experts**
3. **Content CreationAudio, video, text, images**
4. **Platform DevelopmentWebsites, apps, VR/AR**
5. **Distribution & EngagementLocal & global sharing**
6. **Preservation & FeedbackArchiving & continuous updates**

The workflow consists of six major stages:

1. **Story Selection –** Identify culturally significant and at-risk narratives.
2. **Community Engagement –** Collaborate with elders, practitioners, and cultural experts to ensure authenticity.
3. **Content Creation –** Record multimedia elements such as audio, video, images, and text.
4. **Platform Development –** Build accessible platforms including websites, mobile applications, and immersive VR/AR experiences**.**
5. **Distribution & Engagement –** Share digital narratives with both local communities and global audiences to enhance visibility and participation**.**
6. **Preservation & Feedback –** Ensure long-term archiving, cloud storage, iterative updates, and continuous feedback from communities and users.

   This workflow emphasizes that digital storytelling is not a one-time effort but a continuous cycle of documentation, sharing, preservation, and renewal, driven by community participation and technological innovation.

10. Conclusion

Digital storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool for cultural preservation in the 21st century, bridging the gap between tradition

and technology. By combining oral histories, folklore, music, rituals, and community practices with modern digital platforms, it ensures that vulnerable cultural narratives are not only documented but also shared across generations and geographies.

The challenges of limited technological access, digital literacy gaps, sustainability concerns, cultural sensitivity, and funding constraints continue to hinder effective implementation. However, through community-led approaches, ethical guidelines, skill development, and collaborative funding models, these barriers can be overcome. The conceptual workflow of digital storytelling demonstrates that preservation is not a one-time activity but a continuous cycle of story selection, community engagement, content creation, dissemination, and long-term feedback.

In the broader context, digital storytelling does more than just conserve heritage; it fosters cultural identity, intergenerational dialogue, and global awareness. For communities at risk of cultural erosion, it offers both a shield and a bridge—protecting traditions while enabling meaningful exchange in the digital era. Future initiatives must therefore focus on inclusivity, innovation, and sustainability to ensure that cultural narratives remain living, dynamic, and accessible for generations to come.

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स्त्री शिक्षा : बौद्ध काल के परिप्रेक्ष्य में

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सारांश

किसी भी राष्ट्र या समाज के सर्वांगीण विकास के लिए स्त्री शिक्षा अत्यन्त आवश्यक है। विकसित और सभ्य समाज में सुशिक्षित और सुसंस्कृत स्त्री का बहुत योगदान होता है। एक स्त्री ही अपने बच्चों की प्रथम शिक्षक और गुरू होती है, इसलिए एक स्त्री या माता का शिक्षित होना अत्यन्त आवश्यक है। बच्चे ही राष्ट्र का भविष्य होते है और माता द्वारा दी गयी प्रथम शिक्षा ही उन्हें समाज के कर्तव्यों के प्रति निष्ठावान बनाती है। स्त्री शिक्षा की अनिवार्यता के लिए संस्कृत की उक्ति भी प्रसिद्ध है, "नास्ति विद्यासमं चक्षुर्नास्ति मातृ समो गुरूः" इसका अर्थ यह है कि संसार में विद्या जैसा नेत्र नहीं है और माता के समान गुरू नहीं है। भारतीय संस्कृति प्राचीन वैदिक काल से ही स्त्री शिक्षा और उनके सम्मान के प्रति सदैव जागरूक रहा है। हमारे वेदों में स्त्री के सम्मान में कहा गया है कि "यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवता, यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः।।" अर्थात् जहाँ पर नारी की पूजा होती है वहाँ देवता का निवास होता है और जहाँ पर नारी का सम्मान नहीं होता वहाँ पर सभी धार्मिक क्रियाएँ निष्फल हो जाती है।

भारतवर्ष प्राचीन काल से ही स्त्री शिक्षा और उनके सम्मान के प्रति पूर्ण समर्पित रहा है। वैदिक काल में अनेकों विदुषी महिलायें भारतवर्ष में हुई जिन्होंने पुरूष विद्वानों के साथ शास्त्रार्थ किया। गार्गी, मैत्रेयी, लोपामुद्रा, अपाला, घोषा, विश्ववारा और विद्योत्मा जैसी विदुषी महिलाओं ने सम्पूर्ण भारतवर्ष को गौरवान्वित करवाया।

संकेत शब्द

स्त्री शिक्षा, वैदिक काल, धार्मिक क्रियाएं, शास्त्रार्थ, गौरवान्वित।

बौद्ध काल में स्त्री शिक्षा

वैदिक काल की ही भाँति महिलाओं की शिक्षा का विकास बौद्ध काल में भी हुआ। अपने उत्कर्ष काल में बौद्ध धर्म ने धार्मिक विमर्श में स्त्रियों को भागीदार बनाया। भगवान बुद्ध ने शुरू में स्त्रियों को संघ में प्रवेश नहीं दिया था, परन्तु कुछ समय पश्चात् प्रिय शिष्य आनन्द के कहने पर वैशाली में प्रथम बार स्त्रियों को संघ में प्रवेश की अनुमति दी जिसके बाद स्त्रियों के सामाजिक और शैक्षिक जीवन में अत्यधिक सुधार हुआ। मठों में स्त्रियों को शिक्षा प्राप्ति का अधिकार पुरूषों के ही बराबर था। बौद्ध काल में भी वैदिक काल की ही भाँति स्त्री और पुरूष दोनों को एक समान संस्कारों का पालन करना पड़ता था- जैसे मुंडन, भिक्षाटन, वाद-विवाद तथा वस्त्रादि। अनेक मठवासी स्त्रियों ने कई श्लोक भी लिखे जिन्हें थेरीगाथा कहते है। भिक्षुणियों के 73 गीतों एवं 522 कविताओं का संग्रह थेरीगाथा में है। अनेक विदुषी भिक्षुणियों का बौद्ध ग्रन्थों में भी वर्णन मिलता है, जिनका ज्ञान उच्चतम स्तर का था। खेमा नामक बौद्ध भिक्षुणी जिनका वर्णन संयुक्त निकाय में मिलता है, जिसने कोसल नरेश प्रसेनजित के सम्मुख उपदेश दिया था और उनके उपदेश से प्रसेनजित इतने प्रभावित हुए कि उन्होंने स्वयं सिंहासन से उठकर खेमा भिक्षुणी के पास जाकर उनको सम्मानित किया था। अंगुत्तर निकाय में विशाखा नामक एक अन्य उपासिका का भी उल्लेख मिलता है। जिसने धम्मदीना थेरी से कुछ प्रश्न पूछे थे। धम्मदीना थेरी द्वारा विशाखा के प्रश्नों का उत्तर सुनकर भगवान बुद्ध ने कहा धम्मदीना थेरी वास्तव में विदुषी है। भगवान बुद्ध ने कहा यदि ये प्रश्न मुझसे पूछे गये होते तो मैं भी इसका यही उत्तर देता। पत्ताचारा नामक एक बौद्ध भिक्षुणी भी थी जो बौद्ध सिद्धान्तों को भली-भाँति जानती थी। जिन्होंने चन्द्रा नामक एक ब्राह्मण स्त्री को जोकि अपने माता-पिता की मृत्यु के कारण अकेली रह गयी थी, स्वयं बौद्ध सिद्धान्तों में दीक्षित कर बौद्ध संघ में प्रवेश दिलाया था। राजगृह के सम्पत्ति सम्पन्न सेठ की पुत्री भद्रा कुण्डल केशा ने भी अपने ज्ञान और विद्या के द्वारा सभी को अपनी ओर आकृष्ट किया था।

राजगृह के गृहपति विशाख की पत्नी धर्मदिन्ना थी। विशाख भगवान बुद्ध के उपदेशों से प्रभावित होकर बौद्ध भिक्षु हो गया था। जब भगवान बुद्ध राजगृह आये तो विशाख ने अपनी पत्नी धर्मदिन्ना से शास्त्रार्थ किया, उसके सभी प्रश्नों का धर्मदिन्ना ने बहुत ही समुचित और सुबोध उत्तर दिया। विशाख ने जब धर्मदिन्ना के विषय में भगवान बुद्ध को बताया तो उन्होंने उसकी प्रशंसा की और कहा "वह पंडिता है, महाप्रज्ञा है।" धर्मज्ञान में धर्मदिन्ना अपने पति से भी आगे थी।

बौद्ध काल में बौद्ध भिक्षुणियां भगवान बुद्ध के साथ अपना सम्बन्ध प्रकट करती थी। स्वयं भगवान बुद्ध ने भी स्त्रियों की निर्माण-प्राप्ति की योग्यता को ही स्वीकार किया है और स्त्रियों को पुरूषों की अपेक्षा ज्यादा योग्य मानते थे। स्त्रियों का संघ में प्रवेश उनकी माता-पिता अथवा पति की आज्ञा के पश्चात् ही सम्भव था। भगवान बुद्ध कहते थे कि पति और पतिकुल की सेवा स्त्रियों का पुनीत कार्य है।

बौद्ध धर्म महिलाओं को पुरूषों से तनिक भी कम नहीं मानता है। बौद्ध धर्म स्त्री और पुरूष दोनों के बीच भौतिक और शारीरिक अन्तर को स्वीकार करते हुए, दोनों को समाज के लिए समान रूप से उपयोगी मानता है। भगवान बुद्ध इस बात पर अत्यधिक जोर देते है कि परिवार के सभी सदस्यों के जीवन को सफल बनाने में एक माँ और एक पत्नी के रूप में महिलाओं की भूमिका सर्वाधिक उपयोगी है। एक सभ्य समाज में परिवार के लिए पति और पत्नी की जिम्मेदारी, उनका समर्पण और अपने कर्तव्यों के उचित निर्वहन की अपेक्षा की जाती है। बौद्ध धर्म में पति को अपनी पत्नी को एक दोस्त, एक साथी और एक भागीदार की तरह व्यवहार करने की सलाह दी जाती है। इससे पता चलता है कि बौद्ध समाज में पत्नी का पति के साथ ऊँच-नीच का नहीं बल्कि बराबर का स्थान था।

बौद्ध ग्रन्थों के अनुसार महिलाओं की शैक्षणिक अवसरों या उनकी धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता पर बौद्ध धर्म कोई भी प्रतिबंध नही लगाता है। भगवान बुद्ध ने बिना किसी संदेह के स्वयं कहा है कि सत्य को समझने में महिलाएं भी पुरूषों की ही तरह सक्षम हैं। यही कारण है कि उन्होंने प्रिय शिष्य आनन्द के कहने पर स्त्रियों को संघ में प्रवेश की अनुमति दी। बौद्ध ग्रन्थों में अनेक प्रख्यात संत भिक्षुणियों का उल्लेख है, जो बहुत विद्वान थी और धम्म का प्रचार करने में विशेषज्ञ थी। थेरीगाथा में अनेक छंद हैं जो संत भिक्षुणियों द्वारा संघ में प्रवेश करने और सत्य का साक्षात्कार करने की क्षमता पर अनुभव की गई खुशी की भावनाओं को स्पष्ट रूप से व्यक्त करते है।

चुल्लवग्ग में इस प्रकार का भी वर्णन मिलता है कि भगवान बुद्ध द्वारा प्रतिपादित बौद्ध धर्म में यदि स्त्रियों को प्रव्रज्या ग्रहण करने की अनुमति नहीं प्रदान की गयी होती तो यह विशुद्व धर्म चिरस्थायी रहता। बौद्ध धर्म में स्त्रियों के शामिल होने के पश्चात् भगवान बुद्व ने प्रिय शिष्य आनन्द से कहा कि यह विशुद्व धर्म अब केवल पाँच सौ वर्षों तक ही स्थिर रह पायेगा। तथागत अपने द्वारा स्थापित विशुद्व बौद्ध धर्म को चिरस्थायी बनाने के लिए ही स्त्रियों को अपने धर्म और संघ में शामिल नहीं करना चाहते थे, किन्तु बौद्ध धर्म और बौद्ध संघ में शामिल होने के पश्चात् अनेक विदुषी स्त्रियाँ बौद्ध आगमों की शिक्षिकाओं के रूप में विश्वविख्यात हुई। 32 आजीवन ब्रह्मचारिणी और 18 विवाहित बौद्ध भिक्षुणियाँ थेरीगाथा की कवयित्रियाँ थी। इन कवयित्रियों में शुभा, सुमेधा और अनुपमा उच्च वंश की कन्याएँ थी। इन कन्याओं से अनेक राजकुमार और धन सम्पन्न सेठों के पुत्र विवाह करने के लिए उत्सुक थे। संयुक्त निकाय से पता चलता है कि व्याख्यान देने के लिए सुभद्रा नामक भिक्षुणी प्रसिद्ध थी।

भगवान बुद्ध द्वारा स्थापित बौद्ध धर्म में शामिल होने के लिए और बौद्ध धर्म की शिक्षा ग्रहण करने के लिए स्त्रियों का भी पुरूषों की ही भाँति प्रव्रज्या संस्कार होता था। प्रव्रज्जित नारी ही भिक्षुणी कही जाती थी। आजीवन भिक्षुणी बनकर बौद्ध संघ की सेवा करने वाली भिक्षुणियों का उपसम्पदा संस्कार होता था। भिक्षु और भिक्षुणी का उपसम्पदा संस्कार भी समान रूप से ही सम्पन्न किया जाता था। भगवान बुद्ध ने संघ में प्रवेश के लिए स्त्रियों को प्रव्रज्या तथा

उपसम्पदा की अनुमति तो दी थी परन्तु इसके साथ-साथ स्त्रियों के लिए आठ शर्ते भी बताई थी, जो निम्न थी-

1. भिक्षुणियाँ श्रमणों का आदर करेंगी।
2. अभिक्षु-कुल में भिक्षुणियों का वर्षावास नहीं होगा।
3. भिक्षुणियाँ भिक्षु संघ से प्रत्येक पखवार को उपोसथ प्राप्त करेंगी।
4. भिक्षुणियों को प्रत्येक वर्षावास के अनन्तर दोनों संघों में दृष्ट, श्रुत और परिशंकित तीनों स्थानों में प्रवारण करनी पड़ेगी।
5. भिक्षुणियाँ दोनों संघों में पक्ष मानना करेंगी।
6. दो वर्ष के अन्तर्गत छः धर्मों में शिक्षित होकर भिक्षुणी को दोनों संघों में उपसम्पदा की प्रार्थना करनी पड़ेगी।
7. आक्रोश परिभाषण भिक्षुणी के लिए निषेध था।
8. भिक्षुणियाँ, भिक्षुओं के सम्बन्ध में कुछ भी कहने के लिए पूर्णतः प्रतिबन्धित थी।

नारियों के लिए भी आध्यात्मिक मुक्ति का मार्ग भगवान बुद्ध ने खोला। भगवान बुद्ध पुरूष और नारियों के लिए समान आध्यात्मिक दृष्टि रखते थे। भगवान बुद्ध द्वारा स्थापित बौद्ध धर्म में गरीब और अमीर सभी प्रकार की स्त्रियों के लिए एक समान स्थान था और सभी का संघ में एक समान स्वागत होता था। भगवान बुद्ध की दृष्टि में स्त्री सदैव श्रद्धेय थी और स्त्रियों के प्रति उनके विचार हमेशा सदाचरण पूर्ण होते थे। स्त्रियों के प्रति आदरणीय विचार एवं सदाचरण का भाव रखने का उपदेश सदैव भगवान बुद्ध अपने अनुयायियों को देते थे। भगवान बुद्ध को यह सत्य अवगत था कि मानव सभ्यता को अनन्तकाल तक स्थायित्व प्रदान करने के लिए समाज का सदाचारी होना अत्यन्त आवश्यक है। गौतम बुद्ध ने पुरूष को नारी के प्रति मर्यादित एवं नैतिकतापूर्ण व्यवहार एवं दृष्टिकोण रखने की बात कही। गौतम बुद्ध ने भिक्षुओं को यह उपदेश दिया था कि "वृद्धा स्त्री को माता समझो, युवती को अपनी बहन और बच्ची को अपनी पुत्री मानो।" गौतम बुद्ध ने अपने सम्पर्क में आने वाली तीनों प्रकार की नारियों (माताओं, भिक्षुणियों एवं उपासिकाओं) के कल्याणार्थ धर्मोपदेश दिये।

भगवान बुद्ध महिलाओं की हीन दशा को सुधारने और शिक्षा को उच्चतम स्तर पर लाने के लिए आजीवन प्रयासरत रहे। शिक्षा के महत्व से भगवान बुद्ध भलीभाँति परिचित थे। गौतम बुद्ध द्वारा स्थापित भिक्षुणी संघ ने स्त्रियों की शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण कदम उठाये थे। भिक्षुणी संघ में स्त्रियों को शैक्षिक एवं आध्यात्मिक उन्नति के शिखर पर पहुँचने के सुनहरे अवसर प्राप्त थे। भगवान बुद्ध के भिक्षुणी विहार में प्रव्रजित एवं गृहस्थ दोनों प्रकार की नारियों के शिक्षण की व्यवस्था थी। बौद्ध काल और उसके पूर्व काल में स्त्रियों को जहाँ पुरूषों से कम महत्व दिया जाता था, वहीं पर अनेक विदुषी भिक्षुणियों ने अपनी विद्वता के बल पर समाज में अत्यधिक सम्मान भी प्राप्त किया।

निष्कर्ष

स्त्री शिक्षा के महत्त्व को समझते हुए महात्मा बुद्ध ने स्त्रियों को बौद्ध संघ में प्रवेश दिया, जिससे बौद्ध धर्म में स्त्री शिक्षा के लिए नवीन मार्ग प्रशस्त हुआ। भगवान बुद्ध ने सदैव इस बात का सम्पूर्ण समर्थन किया कि ज्ञान और आध्यात्मिक विकास प्राप्त करने में स्त्रियाँ भी पुरूषों के ही समान अधिकार रखती है। गौतम बुद्ध ने तत्कालीन समाज द्वारा स्त्रियों के साथ किये जा रहे भेदभाव का खंडन किया और उन्हें समान अवसर प्रदान करने की बात कही। गौतम बुद्ध के इन्ही विचारों से प्रेरित हो कर अनेक विदुषी महिलाओं ने बौद्ध संघ में प्रवेश लिया और शिक्षा प्राप्त की, जिसके पश्चात् वे विश्वविख्यात हुई। बौद्ध साहित्यों में भी स्त्रियों को ज्ञान प्राप्त करने और आध्यात्मिक विकास करने के लिए प्रोत्साहित किया गया है। स्त्रियों को शिक्षा का अधिकार देकर उन्हें सशक्त बनाना और समाज में सम्मानजनक स्थान प्रदान करवाने का कार्य भी बौद्ध धर्म ने किया। बौद्ध धर्म में स्त्रियों को मठों और विहारों में शिक्षा प्राप्त करने की अनुमति थी और उन्हें धर्म, दर्शन और अन्य विषयों का अध्ययन करने का अवसर भी मिलता था। स्त्रियों की शिक्षा और आध्यात्मिक विकास को बौद्ध धर्म में तथा भगवान बुद्ध द्वारा प्रतिबन्धित नहीं किया गया था अपितु पुरूषों के बराबर स्त्रियों को भी पर्याप्त अवसर प्रदान किया गया था। भगवान बुद्ध ने स्त्रियों को शिक्षा, आध्यात्मिक विकास और सामाजिक भूमिकाओं में पुरूष के समान ही महत्वपूर्ण माना है।

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Impact of Tantra in Bengal Temple Architecture

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Abstract

The architectural heritage of a region reflects a confluence of religious, cultural, and philosophical traditions, Bengal as a distinct cultural region in no exception. It has many hidden aspects which shapes its society, heritage and culture. Among those aspects Tantra occupies a distinct and profound position. Tantra originates from an esoteric spiritual discipline which emphasizes the unity of the supreme divinity and earthly beings. Tantra profoundly influenced the Bengali culture in various spheres. It has deep impact in form, symbolism, and spatial organization of many Bengal temples, particularly during the late medieval period. This impact is visible in the integration of mandala-based ground plans, the symbolic use of geometric patterns, and the representation of tantric deities and motifs in terracotta plaque and stone ornamentation. Temples such as the Hañgsheswarî Temple in Hooghly shows how tantric cosmology can be embedded into architectural design, using multi-towered structures to symbolize the channels (nadi) and energy centers (chakra) of the human body. A terracotta plaque in the village Itandâ in Birbhum delivers the message that regular practice of yoga and certain ritual can helps a normal human being to control his earthly desires. The fusion of local artistic idioms with tantric metaphysical concepts created a unique architectural language that was at once sacred, symbolic, and regionally distinctive. This study examines the tantric influence on Bengal temple architecture, exploring its ritual, symbolic, and aesthetic dimensions, and how it reflects a glorious epoch of Bengal's architecture and culture in the past.

Keywords
Tantra, religion, temple architecture, terracotta plaques

Tantra is a cult which often lead us to a misconception evolving around some horrible weird practices, mystical powers and scary atmosphere. Popular culture, movies, stories and novels are mainly responsible to foster such misconceptions. Although our country or better to say our subcontinent has a fairly old history connected with tantra. It is considered to be older than Vedic texts. Famous scholar Sri Chintaharan Chakravarty said that, "Elements of various tantra rites are distinctly traceable to the Vedic times, though there is a great controversy among scholars of old as regards the question whether tantra had a Vedic origin or not. It is not only in the Atharva veda – one of the latest Vedic Samhitas – that we meet with the elements. They are to be found even in the earliest of the Vedic works, e.g, Rigveda, as also in the other parts of the Vedic Literature."[1]

"Goure prakashita vidya, Mithileiva prabolikrita

Kachit kkochimoharashtre Gurjare pralayangata."

Bengal has been consided as the birth place of tantra. Tantra is an essential part of Bengal culture and Bengali religion. But which was once an essential component of our religion is now lost due to proper knowledge. The most uniqueness of tantra is it didn't distinguish between sex- caste and other social diversity. According to tantric philosophy –' Brahmande je gunah santi te tisthanti kalebare' – whatever is present in this universe is in our body. This is the basic of 'Dehatavva'. This theory has great impacts on various sects and philosophies connected with Sanâtan dharma. It influenced Upanishads, Purânas, Buddhism, Nathpantha, Vaishnava Sahajiya sect and Baul- fakir cults. Yoga is its main tool because tantra doesn't depends on doctrine but it depends on deeds. Bengal has been considered as one of the main centres of tantra, it's religion, society , culture has been thoroughly influenced by tantric philosophy. Temple architecture is one of those main sphere where this impact can be seen very clearly.

Itanda is a small village in the district Birbhum of West Bengal. There is an old Kali temple of circa 15-16th century AD constructed in typical 'Jor-Banglâ' style of Bengal architecture. There is an terracotta plaque in the temple wall depicting a sculpture of a tortoise standing on a crocodile and three snake-hood can be seen on the shell of the tortoise. Here these three snake-hoods are three main narî namely sushumnâ, irâ and piñgala. The tortoise is the practitioner of tantra and the crocodile is kâma or sexual desire. The message that this plaque wants to deliver is that one can overcome sexual desires by practicing tantric yogas.[2]

We have already discussed that yoga is an indispensable part of Tantra. Yoga is of utter importance in Nathpantha and Shaivatantra. Nathpan this generally introduced themselves as Shaiva-yogis. The gotra name of the lay worshippers of Nathpantha is 'Shiva'. Nathyogis believes that purity of soul and eternity of body can be achieved by practising tantra and hathyoga rigorously. Many temples around Bengal have terracotta sculptures with the images of those yogis. A temple in Ilchobâ village of district Hooghly has such sculptures showing the yogis are practicing hathyoga in various postures. The temple wall of Kârârpârâ at Jhikirâ of Howrah district also have similar terracotta plaques. A well-known Radhâ-Vinod temple at Jaydev in Birbhum district has a very beautifully sculpted image of a yogi.[3]

In Vaishnava philosophy Paramâshakti has been regarded as the eternal companion of Parameshwar. This Parashakti has been identified with different names in different texts as Lakshmî, Râdhâ etc. Various Vaishnava texts strongly affirm that worshipping Vishnu or Krishna without worshipping his Parâshakti is meaningless. According to the shloka numbering 5/93 in Gayatritantra Krishnapuja is null and void without Râdha even it has been considered as a sin as abominable as ' Gohatya i.e. slaughtering a cow. According to 'Naradpanchratra' worshipper should utter the name of Râdhâ before uttering Krishna. Krishna is being regarded as the 'Jagatpitâ' father of the universe and Râdhâ is 'Jaganmâtâ', mother of the universe.[4] The world has been considered as the playground or 'Lilâkheshetra' of the divine man and women and their divine coalescence has created this whole universe. In human body their eternal 'lilâ' can be perceived only only after the awakening of Sahasrara-chakra. Thus in Vaishnava philosophy these two divine entities are separate still conjugal and conjugal yet separate. This actually echoes the ethos of the Shaiva-Shaktivâda of the tantra sect.[5] The manifestation of this Râdhâ-Krishna tatva can be seen numerable terracotta plaques from various temples like the Shyamrâi temple of Bishnupur, Bhattobâtî temple of Murshidabad and Râdhâ-Mâdhav temple of Siuri in Birbhum.

Although Vaishnava tantra is an integral part of tantric tradition but it is Shaktism which is mostly integrated with this form of worship. Whenever we are talking about the impact of Shaktism in tantra we have to discuss about the tantric literature popularly known as Shâktapadâvalî. Shaktapadâvalî is an unique gift of tantric tradition. Historically it is believed that Krishnânanda Maitra popularly known as Krishnânanda

Âgambâgish who is an authority of Âgambâgish tantric tradition had popularized and propagated Sâdhantatva and tantratatva in South Bengal in sixteenth century. He is credited to perpetrate the form of goddess Kâli in which she has been worshipped now in Bengal. Krishnânanda had written 'Brihattantrasâra' which is the first written evidence of Shaktapadavalî in Bengal. This tradition is later on popularized in folk culture through Âgomoni and Vijayâ songs, Kâlikirtan, Shyamâmasangit. The mother goddess, the supreme form of power is being worshipped in various forms such as Umâ, Târâ, Çandî, Durgâ etc. Writers of Shaktapadavalî were often known as Siddhapurus, master of tantric rituals.[6] But their divine feelings and higher philosophical thoughts are presented in a very light and candid way through their songs.

The impact of Shaktism in temple architecture can be seen in the sculptures of Dashamahâvidyâ. This reference first appeared in the 6th century text known as Devî-Bhâgavata Purâna. The last nine chapters from 31–40 of the seventh skandha of the book gives a detailed discussion on them and later on this portion of the book became the main texts of Shaktism. These ten goddesses of wisdom or Dashamahâvidyâ are considered to be different aspects of the divine feminine, Adi Shakti. These Dashamahâvidyâ are:1. Kâlî The goddess of time, change, and destruction, representing the ultimate reality beyond limitations. **2.** Târâ is the goddess of protection and compassion, who is associated with sound and the primal vibration. **3. Tripurâ Sundarî** is the goddess of beauty, power & wisdom. She represents the wholeness of creation. **4. Bhûbaneswarî** controls the cosmos, the queen of the universe, and is the means of existence of all lives in this universe. **5. Bhaíravî is the most** fierce and destructive aspect of the supreme goddess and also has the power of transformation. **6. Chhinamastâ: she is the** self-decapitated goddess, who symbolizes self-sacrifice. 7. Dhumâvatî: she is the widow goddess who embodies the power of wisdom and transcendence through emptiness. 8. Bagalâmukhî: She paralyzes enemies and all evil forces by the power of focus and control. 9. Mâtañgî: she is the goddess of knowledge, music, arts. She is associated with speech. 10. **Kamalâtmikâ:** she is the goddess seated on the lotus. She represents wealth and the fulfillment of all desires. [7]

Terracotta plaques bearing the images of Dashamahâvidyâ are very popular in temple sculpture all over Bengal. A terracotta plaque having a complete image of Dashamahâvidyâ in Gopaleswar temple of Bankâti

in West Burdwan district is one of the earliest image of this type.[8] A very beautifully sculpted plaque can be seen at Lakshmî- Janârdana temple of Ghurishâ in Birbhum district. The sculpture of devî Shorashî, one of the Dashamahâvidyâ goddesses is really mesmerizing. There is a Shiva temple in that same village known as Rameswar Shiva has some terracotta plaques with excellent sculptural details relating to the Shaktism. One image of Kokâmukha Kâli is one of it's kind. According to Mârkandeya Purâna Shumbha and Nishumbha, two demon brothers who ruled the Pâtal-lok tried to challenge the Devatas and tortured common people. Devî Kâlî or Kaushîki killed these two demonic brothers. Their two commander Chanda and Munda got killed in the hand of devî Chandî. After the death of these two commander Shumbha send his most powerful warlord known as Raktabîj. Raktabîj has a special power of incarnation from his single drop of blood. Wherever a single drop of his blood touches soil a new demon rises from there. Many powerful goddesses like Brahmânî (female counterpart of Brahmâ), Vaishnavî (female counterpart of Vishnu), Kaumârî, Indranî, Mâheaswarî started fighting with him but failed to defeat him. On the contrary thousands of Raktabîjs born from blood. Seeing this the supreme goddess Mahamâya took the form of Kokâmukha Kâli which looks very fierce. The goddess Kokâmukha Kâli is of a human body with the head of a jackal or wolf. In Bengal this goddess is popularly known as 'Siâl-Kâli' because Siâl means jackal. This goddess killed the demon Raktabîj and drinks all his blood. Kâli is often associated with jackel and in various temples Shibâbhog or offering bhog to jackal is in practice.

Other than the temple of Ghurishâ, terracotta plaques of Kokâmukha Kâli can be seen in the wall of a temple at Baghtikrâ near Dâinhât in East Burdwan district. This temple recently underwent some renovations. Impact of tantra in Bengal architecture can be seen in another aspect. There are five popular cults in Sanâtan dharma- Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakta, Saurya and Ganapatya. But all these sects are believed to be originated from one supreme power or Âdi-shakti. This divine concept that each and every sect are interrelated and has a common origin is manifested in the form of Hari-Hara (Vishnu and Shiva in a combined form) and Krishna-Kâli (a combined form of lord Krishna and devî Kâli). [9]This philosophy of singular perception is known as Abhedgyan. A terracotta plaque bearing the image of Krishna- Kâli is in the Shrîdhara temple at Sonamukhi village in the Bankura district.

Before ending the discussion we must know about two temples situated in Bengal. One is the Hañgsheswarî temple at Bansberiya, which is a very famous tourist spot and another is a temple in Pañchthupi village in the district Murshidabad. The second one is in quite distressed condition although it is not a very old one. It was constructed in 1335 Bangabda i.e. 1928-29 AD. This two-storied temple has an abandoned Durgâ temple in ground floor and the images of Dashamahâvidyâ in first floor. This images clearly shows the adherence to the Tantra. The pinnacle portion of the temple has been constructed as the position of the ' Shatchakras' in human body. As per yoga and tantric philosophy there are six chakras in upper portion of human body which are six main energy centers within the body. They are located along the spinal cord. They are not physical organs but focal points of energy which influences physical, mental, and emotional well-being and also helps to gain certain divine feelings and supernatural powers as believed in tantric philosophy. These six chakras are- Mulâdhâr or the root Chakra which is located at the base of spine, Svâdhisthâna or the sacral Chakra which is located in the pelvic area, Manipura or the solar plexus Chakra situated in the abdomen, Anâhata or the heart Chakra found in the chest, Vishuddha or the throat Chakra, Âjñâ or the Third Eye Chakra licated between the eyebrows.These six chakras are believed to be interconnected and influence each other. Regular practice of certain yogas and âsanas can activate them.

Last but not the least, the most eminent temple in which the impact of tantra manifested in every sphere is the Hañgsheswarî temple of Bâñsberiyâ villag in Hoogly district. Nrishinghadeva, the landlord of Bangshibâti started constructing the temple and his widow Rânî Shankarî completed the work on 1736 saka era or 1814 AD. Râja Nrishinghadeva Roy was very much influenced by tantric philosophy. He wrote a book named 'Uddhish Tantra' in Kashi. This temple shows the physical form of the tantric connotation. The name 'Hañgsheswarî' it self signifies that. Hañgsa or swan in Indian philosophy symbolises purity and Îshwarî means goodess so Hañgsheswarî means the deity of purity of soul. The temple is made of lime and mortar which is very typical in Bengal architecture.The tower of the temple is of pinkish-white colour and it looks like half-open lotus buds. 13 lotus-bud towers represents the nâri or energy channels and lotus symbolises the chakras. The central tower symbolises the Sahasrâra or the crown chakra which looks like thousand petaled lotus to signify liberation of soul from earthy bounds. The narrow windy interior passages symbolises

the Sushumnâ or the central spiritual channel through which the Kundalîni power rises. The temple has been build in such a way that the devotee has to look upward and that symbolises human soul's journey from mortality to divinity. The design of the temple represents the philosophy of Shadachakraveda which defines the 7 chakras of human body which we have discussed earlier.[10]

Regarding the goddess Hañgsheswarî who is the presiding deity of the temple is considered as the form of devî Kâli. She is believed to free the human soul from ignorance or 'avidyâ' and promote inner peace and spiritual awakening. Inside the temple the image of the deity can be seen seated in padmâsana on a full-bloom lotus raising from the heart of god Shiva. The deity's body colour is blue. Her four arms are holding lotus, kamandalu or water pot, japa mâlâ and abhaya mudrâ. The goddess looks serene and motherly, not fierce, signifying spiritual transcendence. Renowned archaeologist Purnachandra Mukhopadhyay had written an article on this temple where he defines Sri Nrishinghadeva and his temple that "Had he lived enough, this grand temple would have been ornamented with wealth of decorations, as exhibited in his own drawings which I have venture to designate as the 'Grammar of Indian Ornaments' Medieval period (Mogul and Hindu)".[11]

Since the primitive time tantra in Bengal is not just about religion or ritual. It influences deep down inside. The impact of tantra can be seen through symbolism, spatial planning and iconographic depictation rather than construction itself.

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मनुष्यता की ओर पुनर्वापसी की कविता 'ब्रह्मराक्षस'

डॉ. विन्ध्याचल यादव

सहायक प्रोफेसर

हिन्दी विभाग, बी.एच.यू. वाराणसी

शोध सार :

मुक्तिबोध ने 'चाँद का मुँह टेढ़ा' की कविताओं में पूँजीवादी और सामंतवादी मानसिकता के खिलाफ मध्यवर्गीय बुद्धिजीवी के आत्म-मंथन व आत्म-संघर्ष से उपजे विद्रोहात्मक स्वर और उसकी संवेदना की पूरी प्रक्रिया को रचा है। 'अंधेरे' में या 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' जैसी लंबी कविताएं भी इसी प्रक्रिया से जुड़ी कविताएं हैं। मुक्तिबोध एक राजनीतिक कार्य कविता में घटित कर रहे हैं । जनसाधारण कैसे सामाजिक-राजनीतिक शक्ति सत्ता के केन्द्र व्यवस्था में पावर पोजिशन में आयेगा ? कैसे वह खुदमुख्तार बने ? अपने भविष्य,अपनी तरक्की के फैसले कैसे खुद करें ? इन सब चीजों का ब्लूप्रिंट हैं मुक्तिबोध की कविताएं। इसी 'चाँद का मुँह टेढ़ा' काव्य संकलन में मुक्तिबोध की बहुचर्चित कविता 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' संकलित है, जो वस्तुतः संभावना से भरे हुए मध्यवर्ग की बर्बाद प्रासंगिकता के बुनियादी कारणों की छानबीन करती कविता है। प्रस्तुत शोध-पत्र इसी कविता को केस स्टडी की तरह लेकर मुक्तिबोध के कविता कर्म का मूल्यांकन कर रहा है।

बीज-शब्द

पूँजीवाद, सामंतवादी व्यवस्था, सर्वहारा, मध्यवर्ग, संवेदनात्मक ज्ञान, फैंटेसी, अहंवाद, विश्वचेतस्, पुनरुत्थानवाद इत्यादि।

मूल आलेख

आजाद भारत के समाज व राजनीति का सब सच नंगा हो चुका था। जिन 'चाँदों' से देश की जनता ने शीतलता व सृजन की आस की थी, उनका मुँह टेढ़ा निकला। लोकतंत्र में नेता और नौकरशाही ने बुर्जुआ का साथ दिया और सर्वहारा को बहुत निराशा किया था। वहीं जिस बुद्धिजीवी मध्यवर्ग के कंधों पर देश के स्वर्णिम भविष्य के निर्माण का दायित्व था, जिसमें क्रांति की सशक्त संभावना निहित थी, वह अपने निजी हितों के लिए पूजीवादी वर्ग से नाभि-नाल-बद्ध हो जाता है। यदि निराला की इस पंक्ति को मुहावरे की तरह इस्तेमाल करते हुए कहें तो 'अन्याय जिधर, हैं उधर शक्ति'[1] की अवस्था में मुक्तिबोध का रचनाकर्म भी उसी मध्यवर्ग की शक्ति को पूँजीवादी ताकतों की ओर से खीचकर शोषित वर्ग के पक्ष में लाने की संकल्पना है।

इसी 'चाँद का मुँह टेढ़ा'[2] काव्य संकलन में मुक्तिबोध की बहुचर्चित कविता 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' संकलित है, जो वस्तुतः संभावना से भरे हुए मध्यवर्ग की बर्बाद प्रासंगिकता के बुनियादी कारणों की छानबीन करती है। ब्रह्मराक्षस[3] मनुष्य की सर्जनात्मक सामर्थ्य के अप्रयुक्त रह जाने से पैदा ऐसी कुंठा का प्रतीक बन गया है जो न जीने देता है और न मरने देता है।यह कविता मुक्तिबोध के अन्तर्मन की कशमकश की भी अभिव्यक्ति है और उनके जैसे किसी भी मध्यवर्गीय व्यक्ति के भी। अपने समूचे सांस्कृतिक व आधुनिक ज्ञान का रचनात्मक इस्तेमाल न कर पाने की जद्दोजहद में ब्रह्मराक्षस आत्म-घुटन का शिकार होता है; कदाचित, आत्माभिव्यक्ति के खतरे नहीं उठा पाता और पूँजीवादी व्यवस्था द्वारा लील लिया जाता है। मनुष्य से 'राक्षस' बन बैठता है। पूँजीवाद की कोख से उपजी अतिबौद्धिकता-अतिभौतिकता व बाजारवादी प्रवृत्ति ने किस प्रकार इन्सानियत व मानवीय ऊर्जा को सोखकर व्यक्ति को संवेदनशून्य व मशीनी बनाकर 'राक्षसत्व' व 'जड़त्व' की तरफ धकेला है। किसी से छुपा हुआ नहीं है। ब्रह्मराक्षस इसी गति को प्राप्त होता है या यूं कहें कि हमारे देश का मध्यवर्गीय बुद्धिजीवी ब्रह्मराक्षस होने के लिए अभिशप्त हुआ।

और 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' कविता इसी 'जड़त्व' व 'राक्षसत्व' से मुक्ति-संघर्ष की कविता है। यदि 'कामायनी' की बुद्धि-विरोधी-चेतना, अज्ञेय की 'असाध्य वीणा', 'साँप' आदि कविताएं पूँजीवादी दुष्प्रभाव से व्यक्ति के 'मनुष्य' से राक्षसी वृत्ति की ओर जाने को इंगित करने वाली कविताएं हैं, तो वहीं 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' कविता 'मनुष्य' से 'राक्षस' बन चुके व्यक्ति के पुनः 'मनुष्य' बनने की प्रक्रिया की कविता है-

"ब्रह्मराक्षस
घिस रहा है देह
हाथ के पंजे बराबर
बाँह-छाती मुँह छपा-छप, खूब करते साफ
फिर भी मैल, फिर भी मैल।"[4]

दरअसल 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' की मृत्यु अर्थात् उसके मनुष्य से प्रेत बनने में जितना बड़ा कारण 'पूँजीवाद' है उतना ही बड़ा कारण उसका 'अंहवादी' व्यक्तित्व भी है, स्वयं को 'ज्ञान गुरु' मानना भी है, जिसके कारण वह अपने ज्ञान को सामाजिक-सार्थकता प्रदान नहीं कर सका। और दूसरी तरफ 'कीर्ति-व्यवसायी' व 'धन-अभिभूत अन्तःकरण' वाला पूँजीवादी समाज अपने लाभमूलक बाजारवादी नीतियों की आँधी में 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' जैसे लोगों को हाशिए पर धकेलता गया। यह मनोवैज्ञानिक सत्य है कि जब एक बेहद प्रतिभाशाली व्यक्ति को उपेक्षा मिलती है तो वह कुंठित हो जाता है-ऐसे में हमारे पूँजीवादी, लाभवादी समाज द्वारा 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' का जो अस्वीकार था वह न केवल 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' का अस्वीकार था अपितु वह हमारे संस्कारों-परम्पराओं का भी अस्वीकार है क्योंकि 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' भारतीय व पाश्चात्य विद्याओं की सांस्कृतिक विरासत को हस्तान्तरित कर सकता था, किन्तु आधुनिक बाजारवादी युग में इसकी किसे चिंता ? परिणाम 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' जैसे ज्ञानी मनुष्य का पतन।

उसकी मृत्यु। जब 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' जैसे सांस्कृतिक रिक्थ को हम 'परित्यक्त-सूनी बावडी' में धकेल देगें, उसके ज्ञानात्मक पक्ष को 'सजल-उर-शिष्य' बनकर 'संगत व पूर्ण निष्कर्षो तलक' नहीं पहुँचा सकेंगे तो हमारे समाज का हर बुद्धिजीव 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' बनने को मजबूर होगा और पुनः उसके मनुष्य बनने की छटपटाहत छटपटाती ही रह जायेगी और मुक्तिबोध का यह सवाल झूलता रहेगा-कचोटता रहेगा :

"बावड़ी में वह स्वयं
पागल प्रतीकों में निरंतर कह रहा
वह कोठरी में किस तरह
अपना गणित करता रहा
और मर गया...
वह सघन झाड़ी के कँटीले
तम-विवर में
मरे पक्षी-सा
विदा ही हो गया
वह ज्योति अनजानी सदा को सो गयी
यह क्यों हुआ
क्यों यह हुआ!!"[5]

'ब्रह्मराक्षस' का बुद्धिवाद और 'अहंवादी चरित्र' कविता में इस प्रकार अभिव्यक्त हुआ है :

किंतु, गहरी बावड़ी
कि भीतरी दीवार पर
तिरछी गिरी रवि रश्मि
के उड़ते हुए परमाणु, जब
तल तक पहुँचते है कभी
तब ब्रह्मराक्षस समझता है, सूर्य ने
झुककर नमस्ते कर दिया।
पथ भूलकर जब चाँदनी की
किरण टकराए
कहीं दीवार पर,
तब ब्रह्मराक्षस समझता है
वंदना की, चाँदनी ने
ज्ञान-गुरु माना उसे।
सुमेरी-बेबीलोन जन कथाओं से
मधुर वैदिक ऋचाओं तक

व तबसे आज तक के सूत्र
छन्दस् मंत्र, थियोरम
सब प्रमेयों तक
कि मार्क्स, एंजेल्स, रसेल, टॉएन्वी
कि हाईडेगर व स्पेंसर, सार्त्र, गाँधी भी
सभी के सिद्ध-अंतों का
नया व्याख्यान करता वह....[6]

जो यह स्पष्ट करता है कि 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' विचार के स्तर पर बहुत आगे बढ़ा हुआ प्रगतिशील व आधुनिक है, किन्तु संस्कार के स्तर पर अभी भी सामंती-अहंवाद से ऊपर नहीं उठ पाया है। आज के भारत की यह एक बहुत बड़ी वैचारिक सांस्कृतिक समस्या है कि आर्थिक-वैश्वीकरण के इस युग में 'पूँजीवादी बाजार व्यवस्था' को तो हम अपना चुके है, किन्तु भारतीय समाज आज भी सामंती मानसिकता व संस्कारों से मुक्त नहीं हो पाया है। यद्यपि राजनीतिक-सामाजिक सिद्धान्तों के अनुसार पूँजीवाद सामन्तवादी-व्यवस्था को खण्डित करता हुआ पनपता है किन्तु विडम्बना यह है कि हमारे देश में दोनों साथ-साथ चल रहे है अतः ब्रह्मराक्षस की भाँति आज समूचा भारतीय समाज पूँजीवाद और सामंतवाद-दो पाटों के बीच पिस रहा है। 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' के साथ मनुष्य से प्रेत बनने की जो 'ट्रेजडी' हुई वह इसी पूँजीवाद-सामंतवाद, विचार संस्कार, सिद्धान्त-व्यवहार आदि के बीच 'सामंजस्य' न कर पाने के नाते भी हुई-

"पिस गया वह भीतरी
और बाहरी दो कठिन पाटों के बीच
ऐसी ट्रेजडी है नीच!"[7]

इस प्रकार 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' का 'आत्मचेत' से 'विश्वचेत' न बन पाना और न बनने दिया जाना (क्योंकि इसमें 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' जैसे व्यक्ति तथा व्यवस्था दोनों का दोष है) मध्यवर्ग में अंतर्निहित क्रांतिकारी संवेगों-संभावनाओं की हार है। लेकिन ध्यान देने की बात है कि 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' कविता इस हार पर आकर समाप्त होने वाली कविता नहीं है। मुक्तिबोध ने 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' को एक ऐसे 'कैरेक्टर' के रूप में चित्रित किया है जो मनुष्य से राक्षस बन जाने के बाद पुनः मनुष्य बनने के लिए संघर्ष करते है-

खूब ऊँचा एक जीना साँवला
उसकी अँधेरी सीढियाँ ...
वे एक आभ्यंतर निराले लोक की।
एक चढ़ना औं' उतरना
पुनः चढना औ लुढ़कना,
मोच पैरों में
व छाती पर अनेको घाव।

बुरे-अच्छे बीच के संघर्ष
से भी उग्रतर
अच्छे व उससे अधिक अच्छे बीच का संगर
गहन किंचित सफलता,
अतिभव्य असफलता !![8]

यह अलग बात है कि उसे असफलता मिलती है, उसकी छाती पर अनेकों घाव जाते है जो उसके भीषण संघर्ष को दर्शाता है इसीलिए घाव पीठ पर नहीं सीने पर हैं और उसकी असफलता 'अतिभव्य' है। क्योंकि उसकी संघर्ष-मूलक असफलता ने जो मशाल जलाई है उसके उजाले में पथ-भटकती पीढ़ियाँ अपनी राह बना सकती है। कविता में कवि स्वयं कहता कि ज्ञान की जो ज्योति ब्रह्मराक्षस ने जलायी किंतु ज्ञान को संवेदना से नहीं जोड़ पाया उसका अधूरा काम हम उसका 'सजल-उर-शिष्य' बनकर करेंगे और उसके मिशन को संगत-पूर्ण निष्कर्षो तलक पहुँचा सकेंगे-

"मैं ब्रह्मराक्षस का सजल-उर-शिष्य
होना चाहता
जिसके कि उसका वह अधूरा कार्य,
उसकी वेदना का स्रोत
संगत, पूर्ण निष्कर्षो तलक
पहुँचा सकूँ।"[9]

मुक्तिबोध ने अपने समूचे रचनाकर्म में अपनी खुरदुरी व चुभती हुई भाषा तथा खास किस्म के फैंटेसी-शिल्प के माध्यम से अपने वैचारिक अनुभूतियों (ज्ञानात्मक संवेदना) को मानों पिघला-पिघलाकर संप्रेशित किया है। उनके इसी कौशल को लक्ष्य करके आचार्य रामस्वरूप चतुर्वेदी ने उन्हें 'भयानक बात'[10] का कवि कहा है। 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' कविता की शुरूआत में भी मुक्तिबोध ने भयानक वातावरण का चित्रण किया है जो उनके समय के सामाजिक यथार्थ की भयंकरता को, सत्ता के दमनकारी जन-विरोधी चेहरे को, आतंक, भय, यातना, हिंसा आदि को बे-नकाब करता है। कविता के प्रथम अवतरण में मुक्तिबोध ने अपनी गहरी लोक-संसक्ति व प्रकृति के प्रति अपने विशिष्ट सौन्दर्यबोध का परिचयय दिया है-

"शहर के उस ओर खंडहर की तरफ
परिव्यक्त सूनी बावड़ी
के भीतरी
ठंढे अँधेरे में
बसी गहराइयाँ जल की...
सीढियाँ डूबी अनेकों
उस पुराने घिरे पानी में...

बावडी को घेर
डाले खूब उलझी है,
खड़े है मौन औदबुंर।
व शाखों पर
लटकते घुग्घुओं के घोंसले
परित्यक्त, भूरे, गोल ।"[11]

चहल-पहल, हलचल आदमी की पहचान है। सूनापन-उजाड, खण्डहर, पूर्ण परिव्यक्त निर्जन आदि राक्षस या कि असामाजिक तत्त्वों के रहने का स्थान हो सकता है राक्षस के निवास स्थान को सूना उजाड़ दिखाकर मुक्तिबोध ने मनुष्य की रचनात्मकता व क्रियाशीलता के बिम्ब को उभारा है। इस प्रकार 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' आदमी को, उसकी आदमियत को आसुरी-वृत्तियों से अलगाती हुई कविता है। उस परिव्यक्त सूनी बावड़ी का जैसा भयानक बिंब उभारा है उससे सहज ही उसमें रहने वाले का आभास मिलने लगता है; आदमी की तो बात छोड़िए दरख्तों से परिन्दे भी अपना घोंसला छोड़कर जा चुके है। 'भूरे', 'गोल' घोंसलें के बहुत दिनों से आबाद न होने को दर्शाते है।

और यदि ध्यान से देखा जाए तो कविता के इस हिस्से के टेक्स्ट' (ज्मस्त्रज) के भीतर निहित 'हिडेन टेक्स्ट' को बखूबी पकड़ा जा सकता है। कविता में मुक्तिबोध ने भयानक वातावरण के सृजन द्वारा जिस मुख्य केन्द्र बनाया है । संस्कृति के बिम्ब को उभारा है उसके पीछे कहीं न कहीं 'इन्सानियतपरस्त संस्कृति' को फोकस करना-उनका लक्ष्य रहा है। इसी प्रकार शहर की पूँजीवादी बाजारवादी प्रवृत्तियों के बरक्श ग्रामीण व लोक जीवन की सांस्कृतिक आस्था, 'खण्डहर' के बरक्श उसके अतीत के वैभव और बुलन्दी, 'परित्यक्त' के बरक्श उसके प्रति गहन लगाव तथा 'सूनेपन' के बरक्श मानों मुक्तिबोध ने कभी उसके गुलजार रहने व उसकी क्रियाशीलता को उभारा है।

बावड़ी का ठहरा हुआ पानी, खण्डहर, काई लगी सीढ़ियाँ, आपस में उलझी झाड़ियाँ ये सब उन लोक-परंपराओं, विश्वासों, संस्कारों का प्रतीक है जो कभी जीवन्त व रचनात्मक अवश्य थी, किन्तु आज बदले जमाने में निर्जीव होकर खण्डहर भर रह गयी हैं, अपनी प्रासंगिकता खो चुकी हैं-आधुनिक पूँजीवादी व्यवस्था में। आज पुराने नैतिक मूल्य व आस्थाएं बेकार साबित हो रही है। समय के साथ चलने वाला ही जिंदा रह सकता है अन्यथा 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' होना पड़ेगा। अपनी इसी सजग इतिहासबोध सम्पन्न दृष्टि के नाते मुक्तिबोध लोक जीवन व लोक परंपराओं-संस्कारों आस्थाओं से पुनः जुड़ने के आग्रह के बावजूद पुनरूत्थानवादी व प्रतिक्रियावादी होने से बच जाते है। शहर के पूँजीवादी व घोर भौतिक जीवन से दूर 'उस ओर खण्डहर की तरफ' हाशिए पर धकियाये जा चुके 'परित्यक्त सूनी बावड़ी' के लोक जीवन को पुनः मुख्यधारा में मुक्तिबोध लाना तो चाहते है किन्तु हूबहू पहले की तरह ही नहीं वरन् युगानुकूल परिष्कार करके 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' के अहंवाद को निकाल कर स्वस्थ 'ज्ञान को उसके सजल-उर-शिष्य की 'संवेदना' से जोड़कर।
इस प्रकार यह कविता पूँजीवाद के बाजारवादी-संस्कृति के दुष्प्रभाव की कविता भी है। आज हम

अपने सांस्कृतिक स्मारको को छोडकर शहर की ओर भाग रहे है; लोक जीवन आज परित्यक्त है- 'सूनी बावड़ी' की तरह। मुक्तिबोध ने इस कविता के माध्यम से हमें पुनः अपनी स्वस्थ व जीवन्त जड़ों से जोड़ने का प्रयास किया है। कविता में मुक्तिबोध ने 'श्वेत पुष्पों वाली मनोहर हरी टगर' और 'लाल फूलों के लहकते झौर वाले कन्हेर' के जीवन्त बिम्बों के माध्यम से शांति और क्रांति की अदम्य जीजिविषा से संपृक्त भारतीय संस्कृति की गरिमा-गौरव व श्रेष्ठता को भी उभारा है, जो उनकी सांस्कृतिक आस्था का प्रमाण है। उन्हें यदि अंध-विश्वासों, सड़ती हुई रूढ़ियों परंम्पराओं की प्रतीक-बावड़ी व भारतीय समाज के 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' से शिकायत है, 'मौन औदुंबर' और 'लटकते घुग्घुओं के घोसलों' की बेबसी का एहसास है, तो 'जंगली हरी घास की कच्ची गंध में विगत शत-पुण्य का आभास' भी और सजल-उर-शिष्य पर भरोसा भी-

"विगत शत-पुण्य का आभास
जंगली हरी कच्ची गंध में बसकर
हवा में तैर
बनता है गहन संदेह
अनजानी किसी बीती हुई उस श्रेष्ठता का जो कि
दिल में एक खटके-सी लगी रहती है।
बावड़ी की इन मुंडेरो पर
मनोहर हरी कुहनी टेक
बैठी है टगर
सपटना-चिपकना
ले पुष्प-तारे-श्वेत।
उसके पास
लाल फूलों का लहकता झौंर-
मेरी वह कन्हेर...
वह बुलाती एक खतरे की तरफ जिस ओर
अँधियारा खुला मुँह बावडी का
शून्य अंबर ताकता है।"[12]

मुक्तिबोध अपनी दहकती काव्य भाषा व मर्म को छीलते हुए मुहावरो द्वारा आज के समूचे परिदृश्य को इतने भयानक तरीके से हमारी अनुभूतियों में उतार देते है कि पाठक के रोंगटे खड़े हो जाते है। जिसको ध्यान में रखकर ही शमशेर ने मुक्तिबोध की भाषा को 'इस्पाती दस्तावेज'[13] कहा है। जो उसकी सामाजिक तटस्थता को तोड़कर उसे उसकी भूमिका का एहसास करा जाता है।

इस प्रकार 'ब्रह्मराक्षस' कविता संवेदना और शिल्प दोनों दृष्टियों से इतनी प्रखर कविता है कि समकालीन जीवन की जड़वादी प्रवृत्तियों से कदम-कदम पर टकराती है और आज के

अतिबौद्धिकता-अतिभौतिकतावादी समाज में संवेदनशून्यता का शिकार होती हुई, राक्षसी व रावणी प्रवृत्तियों से ग्रस्त हो चुकी पीढ़ी में पुनः संवेदना व उर्वर इंसानियत के भराव की कोशिश करती है- 'अहं के इदं' में विसर्जन द्वारा, 'ज्ञानात्मक संवेदना' व 'संवेदनात्मक ज्ञान'[14] के अद्वैत द्वारा, या कि 'आत्मचेत्' से 'विश्व चेत' होकर।

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महिलाओं के समावेशी और सतत विकास के लिए दहेज निषेध

(प्रयागराज जिले के नैनी क्षेत्र के युवाओं पर आधारित एक अध्ययन)

डॉ. गीतांजली श्रीवास्तव

सहायक आचार्य

समाज कार्य केन्द्र

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एक अमानवीय सामाजिक कुप्रथा के रूप में, दहेज वर्षों से हमारे समाज में विद्यमान है और हमारे देश में लैंगिक समानता और महिला सशक्तीकरण की प्रक्रिया को निरंतर दुर्बल करता जा रही है। शैक्षिक प्रगति और दहेज निषेध अधिनियम, 1961 के अधिनियमन के परिणामस्वरूप आज भी दहेज से संबंधित हिंसा, उत्पीड़न और मृत्यु की घटनाएं निरंतर घटित हो रहीं हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त, बदलते हुए सामाजिक मानदंडों के अनुसार दहेज को स्वीकार करने की विधि भी परिवर्तित हो गयी है। यह निर्दयी सामाजिक अभिशाप वर्तमान में संस्कृति का अभिन्न अंग बन गया है। जिसके कारण एक ओर जहां समाज के प्रत्येक सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्तर के लोग अपनी बेटी की शादी के लिए दहेज की व्यवस्था करने को विवश हैं, वहीं दूसरी ओर सामाजिक दबाव के कारण लोग दहेज मांगने और लेने को भी विवश हैं। परिणामस्वरूप यह स्थिति दहेज हत्या, घरेलू हिंसा, विवाहेत्तर संबंध और महिलाओं के शोषण के अन्य रूपों के रूप में सामने आती है।

दहेज का एक और क्रूर चेहरा दहेज निषेध अधिनियम-1961 के अंतर्गत दूल्हे और उसके परिवार पर झूठे आरोप लगाकर समाज के पुरुष सदस्यों का शोषण है। इस स्थिति में समाज के पुरुष और महिला दोनों ही दहेज के शिकार बनते हैं। अतः लैंगिक समावेशी विकास को सशक्त करने हेतु मूल्य प्रणाली को सुदृढ़ करना, कानूनी प्रावधानों का प्रभावी क्रियान्वयन पर्यवेक्षण, परिवर्तन करना तथा समाज से इस अभिशाप को मिटाने के लिए संवेदनशील सामुदायिक भागीदारी बढ़ाना नितांत रूप से आवश्यक हो जाता है। इस अध्ययन का उद्देश्य इन मुद्दों को व्यापक रूप से संबोधित करना है जिससे एक न्यायपूर्ण समाज की स्थापना में योगदान देने वाले नैतिक और नैतिक मूल्यों को स्थापित किया जा सके।

अध्ययन के प्रमुख उद्देश्यों युवाओं में दहेज प्रतिशोध अधिनियम, 1961 के प्रावधानों के बारे में ज्ञान का आकलन करना, दहेज संबंधी अपराधों के लिए आईपीसी के तहत दंड के बारे में युवाओं

की जागरूकता को समझना, दहेज निषेध में सरकार की भूमिका की जांच करना, दहेज के खिलाफ उपायों में सामुदायिक भागीदारी की आवश्यकता पर प्रकाश डालना, दहेज निषेध में मानवीय, नैतिक और नैतिक मूल्यों के महत्व पर बल देना, शिक्षा और नैतिक प्रवचन के माध्यम से लैंगिक समानता और सामाजिक न्याय के बारे में जागरूकता को बढ़ावा देना, प्रभावी दहेज निषेध के लिए उपायों और समाधानों की पहचान करना और दहेज विरोधी कानूनों के सख्त प्रवर्तन, महिलाओं के सशक्तीकरण को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए कानूनी, सामाजिक और नीति-आधारित हस्तक्षेप का सुझाव देना सम्मिलित है।

मुख्य शब्द

दहेज, अमानवीय, सशक्तिकरण, निर्दयी, लिंग समावेशी

परिचय

क्रूरता के पर्याय के रूप में, दहेज प्रथा एक लंबे समय से भारतीय समाज की जड़ों में गहराई से समाई हुई है। महिलाओं, उनके परिवारों और पूरे समाज पर इसके हानिकारक प्रभावों के कारण यह सदैव से ही चिंता का विषय रहा है। कानूनी प्रतिबंधों के परिणामस्वरूप, दहेज की प्रथा अभी भी समाज के प्रत्येक तबके में प्रचलित है। परिणामस्वरूप उत्पीड़न, हिंसा और यहाँ तक कि मौत के कई मामले आज भी देखने को मिल जाते हैं। भारत में दहेज प्रथा का अर्थ है विवाह की शर्त के रूप में वधू के परिवार द्वारा वर, उसके माता-पिता और उसके सम्बन्धियों को सामान, नकदी अचल या चल संपत्ति का हस्तांतरण किया जाना है। ऐतिहासिक रूप से, दहेज का उद्देश्य पत्नी को उसके पति और उसके परिवार द्वारा किये जाने वाले दुर्व्यवहार से सुरक्षित करना और वधू के परिवार द्वारा समाज में अपनी सामाजिक स्थिति को प्रदर्शित करने का एक साधन रहा है। यद्यपि, समय के साथ, यह प्रथा एक सामाजिक व्याधि के रूप में परिवर्तित हो गई है, जिससे कारण प्रायः वधू के परिवार पर अत्यधिक वित्तीय बोझ पड़ता है और स्वयं वधू को भी इसके अवांछित दूरगामी दुष्परिणाम झेलने पड़ते हैं। भारत में दहेज प्रथा का एक लंबा और जटिल इतिहास रहा है, जो वर्षों से चली आ रही एक प्राचीन परंपरा से एक गहन सामाजिक बुराई के रूप में विकसित एवं स्थापित हो चुका है। इसकी उत्पत्ति हिंदू समाज में विवाह के अंतर्गत एक स्वैच्छिक उपहार के रूप में देखी जा सकती है, परन्तु समय के साथ, यह एक अनिवार्य और शोषणकारी प्रथा के रूप में परिवर्तित हो गयी है।

अध्ययन की परिकल्पना- दहेज प्रतिशोध अधिनियम-1961 के कानूनी प्रावधानों और दंड के बारे में युवाओं में जागरूकता की कमी है, अतः दहेज मुक्त समाज बनाने के लिए मूल्य प्रणाली को मजबूत करने और कानूनी प्रावधानों के प्रभावी कार्यान्वयन, निगरानी और मूल्यांकन को और भी प्रभावकारी बनाना नितांत आवश्यक है। प्रस्तुत अध्ययन में आंकड़ों के संग्रह हेतु प्राथमिक और द्वितीयक स्रोतों का उपयोग किया गया है। अध्ययन में प्राथमिक आंकड़ों के संग्रह हेतु बहुविकल्पीय

प्रश्नों और मुक्त प्रश्नों से युक्त प्रश्नावली का उपयोग किया गया है। अपेक्षित परिणामों में दहेज निषेध अधिनियम, 1961 और इसके निहितार्थों के बारे में जागरूकता में वृद्धि, दहेज अपराधों से संबंधित आईपीसी दंडों के बारे में युवाओं की बेहतर समझ, ऐसी प्रथाओं में उनकी भागीदारी को हतोत्साहित करना, बेहतर प्रवर्तन के लिए नीति सिफारिशों के माध्यम से सरकार की भूमिका को मजबूत करना, सामाजिक परिवर्तन के लिए अग्रणी दहेज विरोधी पहलों में समुदाय की भागीदारी बढ़ाना, दहेज मुक्त समाज को बढ़ावा देने के लिए नैतिक और नैतिक मूल्यों को बढ़ावा देना और दहेज से संबंधित मुद्दों से प्रभावी ढंग से निपटने के लिए व्यावहारिक समाधानों को लागू करना आदि सम्मिलित हो सकते हैं। **साहित्य समीक्षाः**

1. एंडरसन (2007) जैसे शोधकर्ताओं ने तर्क दिया है कि दहेज महिलाओं की शिक्षा और करियर में उन्नति में निवेश को हतोत्साहित करके आर्थिक निर्भरता को बनाए रखता है। इसके अलावा, ब्लोच और राव (2002) द्वारा किए गए अध्ययनों ने दहेज की मांग और महिलाओं के खिलाफ हिंसा के बीच सीधे संबंध को उजागर किया, यह दर्शाता है कि कैसे आर्थिक दबाव लिंग आधारित असमानताओं को बढ़ाता है।
2. एग्नेस (1999) जैसे विद्वानों का तर्क है कि प्रवर्तन चुनौतियां, सामाजिक स्वीकृति और जागरूकता की कमी ऐसे कानूनों की प्रभावशीलता में बाधा डालती है। पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और नेपाल जैसे अन्य दक्षिण एशियाई देशों में भी इसी तरह के पैटर्न देखे जाते हैं, जहां दहेज से सम्बन्धित कानून मौजूद हैं, लेकिन सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक प्रतिरोध के कारण उन्हें लागू करना मुश्किल है।
3. दहेज निषेध को महिलाओं की आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता को बढ़ावा देने से जोड़ा गया है। अध्ययनों से पता चलता है कि दहेज पर कानूनी प्रतिबंध, शिक्षा और रोजगार के अवसरों के साथ मिलकर महिलाओं की वित्तीय आत्मनिर्भरता में योगदान दिया है (कबीर, 2005)। माइक्रोफाइनेंस पहल और कौशल विकास कार्यक्रमों ने महिलाओं को घरेलू आय में योगदान करने में सक्षम बनाया है, जिससे आर्थिक शोषण के प्रति उनकी भेद्यता कम हुई है।
४. जीजीभाय (1998) द्वारा किए गए शोध से पता चलता है कि जिन क्षेत्रों में दहेज कानून प्रभावी रूप से लागू किए जाते हैं, वहां महिलाओं में आत्म-सम्मान अधिक होता है, वैवाहिक दुर्व्यवहार की घटनाएं कम होती हैं और अपने घरों में निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रियाओं में उनकी भागीदारी अधिक होती है। हालांकि, सामाजिक मानदंड और पितृसत्तात्मक दृष्टिकोण चुनौतियों का सामना करना जारी रखते हैं, जो कानूनी उपायों के साथ-साथ समग्र सामाजिक सुधारों की आवश्यकता को इंगित करते हैं।
5. कानूनी ढांचे के पश्चात भी, दहेज प्रथाओं का प्रचलन यह दर्शाता है कि अकेले कानूनी हस्तक्षेप पर्याप्त नहीं है। विद्वानों का तर्क है कि दहेज निषेध कानून अक्सर सामाजिक कलंक और पारिवारिक नतीजों के डर से कम रिपोर्टिंग की ओर ले जाते हैं (श्रीनिवासन और ली,

2004)। इसके अतिरिक्त, व्यक्तिगत विवादों के लिए दहेज विरोधी कानूनों का दुरुपयोग बहस का विषय रहा है, जिसके लिए सुरक्षा और न्याय के बीच संतुलन बनाने के लिए सावधानीपूर्वक नीतिगत विचारों की आवश्यकता होती है।

उपरलिखित साहित्य समीक्षा के आधार पर ये कहा जा सकता है कि दहेज निषेध महिलाओं के सतत विकास, आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता, कानूनी सशक्तिकरण और सामाजिक कल्याण को बढ़ावा देने की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम है। यद्यपि सार्थक प्रगति सुनिश्चित करने के लिए विधायी उपायों को शैक्षिक कार्यक्रमों, आर्थिक अवसरों और समुदाय-आधारित हस्तक्षेपों द्वारा पूरक होना चाहिए। भविष्य के शोध को नीति कार्यान्वयन की प्रभावशीलता, सामाजिक धारणा में बदलाव और दहेज प्रथा को व्यापक रूप से खत्म करने के लिए वैकल्पिक रणनीतियों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना चाहिए।

दहेज प्रथा की ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि

प्राचीन भारत (300 ईसा पूर्व से पहले) : वैदिक काल में, दहेज (जिसे स्त्रीधन के रूप में जाना जाता है) वधू को उसके परिवार द्वारा दिया जाने वाला एक स्वैच्छिक उपहार था। इसमें वधू के निजी प्रयोग के लिए वस्त्र, आभूषण, धन और अन्य बहुमूल्य सामान सम्मिलित होता था। इस समय तक स्त्रीधन को एक महिला की संपत्ति माना जाता था, और विवाह के पश्चात भी उसका इस पर पूरा नियंत्रण होता था। वर्तमान के विपरीत, दहेज वर के परिवार द्वारा की जाने वाली मांग नहीं थी; इसके विपरीत, यह वधू की वित्तीय सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करने का एक तरीका था।

शास्त्रीय और मध्यकालीन काल (300 ईसा पूर्व-1700 ई.) : कठोर जाति संरचनाओं और पितृसत्ता के उदय के साथ, दहेज उच्च जाति के हिंदुओं के बीच एक अनिवार्य प्रथा के रूप में विकसित हुई। कुछ प्राचीन ग्रंथों में दहेज को विवाह का एक अनिवार्य अंग बताया गया है, जो इस विचार को पुष्ट करता है कि पुत्री का विवाह धन के साथ किया जाना चाहिए।

गुप्त काल (4वीं-6वीं शताब्दी ई.) : इस काल के प्रारंभ से ही, दहेज प्रथा अधिक संस्थागत हो गयी थी, और सामाजिक स्थिति को बनाए रखने के साधन के रूप में दहेज़ युक्त विवाह को बढ़ावा दिया जाने लगा था। मध्ययुगीन का तक, दहेज की मांगने की प्रथा अपनी जड़ें और भी मजबूत कर चुकी थी, जिससे प्रायः वधु के परिजनों को वित्तीय संकट का सामना करना पड़ता था।

मुगल और ब्रिटिश शासन (1700–1947) : मुगल काल के समय दहेज प्रथा का अत्यधिक प्रचलन देखने को मिलता है, विशेष रूप से राजपूत और उच्च जाति के परिवारों में, जो सामाजिक गठबंधन स्थापित करने के लिए दहेज का उपयोग करते थे। ब्रिटिश शासन के समय, उत्तराधिकार कानूनों ने महिलाओं को संपत्ति विरासत में पाने के अधिकार से वंचित कर दिया, जिससे दहेज परंपरा को और मजबूत किया गया, क्योंकि महिलाओं के लिए विवाह में वित्तीय सहायता प्राप्त करने का एकमात्र साधन दहेज ही था। इस काल में ही दहेज का व्यवसायीकरण प्रारंभ हुआ, जिसमें वर पक्ष के लोग विवाह में खुलकर धन और संपत्ति की मांग करते थे।

स्वतंत्रता के पश्चात (1947-वर्तमान) : स्वतंत्रता के पश्चात् वर्ष 1961 में पारित दहेज निषेध

अधिनियम द्वारा दहेज देने और लेने की प्रथा को अपराध घोषित कर दिया गया, परन्तु इसका प्रवर्तन आवश्यकता के अनुरूप अप्रभावी तथा कमजोर रहा, जिसके परिणाम स्वरुप दहेज़ का प्रचलन यथावत बना रहा। इसके अतिरिक्त दहेज से संबंधित हिंसा और मृत्यु को संबोधित करने के लिए भारतीय दंड संहिता की धारा 304ठ और 498 । जैसे बाद के संशोधन प्रस्तुत किए गए। इन कानूनी उपायों के पश्चात भी प्रवर्तन एक महत्वपूर्ण चुनौती बनी हुई है, जिससे यह कुप्रथा पूरे देश में विभिन्न रूपों में प्रचलित है। वर्तमान में आधुनिकीकरण के पश्चात भी, दहेज व्यापक रूप समाज के सभी वर्गों में प्रचलित है, जिसके कारण आज भी दहेज हत्याएं और घरेलू हिंसा आदि समस्याएँ देखने को मिलती है।वर्तमान में, दहेज केवल नकद तक सीमित न रहकर महंगे उपहार, कार, अचल संपत्ति और यहां तक कि विदेशी शिक्षा के लिए प्रायोजन को भी सम्मिलित करता हैं। यह स्थिति दहेज का स्वैच्छिक उपहार से सामाजिक अभिशाप में परिवर्तन होने वाली दशा को दर्शाती तथा यह प्रदर्शित करती है कि कानूनी प्रावधानों के पश्चात् भी भारत में विवाह सम्बन्धी रीति रिवाजों में पितृसत्तात्मक मानदंडों ने कितनी गहराई से जड़ें जमा ली हैं। भारत में विभिन्न क्षेत्रों और समुदायों में दहेज प्रथा प्रचलित है। कानूनी निषेधों के बावजूद, सामाजिक मानदंड और अपेक्षाएँ इस प्रणाली को जारी रखती हैं। भारत के कई हिस्सों में, एक महिला के परिवार द्वारा दिया जाने वाला दहेज वर के परिवार की संपत्ति और शिक्षा के सीधे आनुपातिक होता है जिसमें वह विवाह करती है। यह सामाजिक दबाव अक्सर दुल्हन के परिवार पर वित्तीय दबाव डालता है जिसके कारण दहेज की मांग पूरी न होने पर वधु सहित पूरे परिवार को गंभीर परिणाम भुगतने पड़ सकते हैं। वास्तविकता तो ये है कि इस प्रथा को समाप्त करने के लिए महिलाओं की सामाजिक जागरूकता और आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण नितांत आवश्यक है।

दहेज मृत्यु एवं दहेज़ से सम्बन्धित मामलों से सम्बन्धित आँकड़े राष्ट्रीय अपराध रिकॉर्ड ब्यूरो (NCRB) भारत में दहेज से संबंधित मामलों पर व्यापक आंकड़े प्रदान करता है। नवीनतम उपलब्ध आँकड़ों के अनुसार भारत में वर्ष 2022 में दहेज के कारण होने वाली मृत्यु से सम्बन्धित 6,450 मामले दर्ज किए गए। यह 2021 और 2020 में क्रमशः 6,753 और 6,966 के आँकड़ों से थोड़ी गिरावट दर्शाता है। क्षेत्रीय वितरण के अंतर्गत उत्तर प्रदेश राज्य ने 2022 में दहेज से होने वाली मृत्यु से सम्बंधित कुल 2,218 मामले पाए गए। इसी क्रम में बिहार में 1,057 मामले दर्ज किए गए, जबकि मध्य प्रदेश में 518 मामले दर्ज किए गए। इसी प्रकार वर्ष 2022 में दहेज निशेध अधिनियम के अंतर्गत कुल 13,479 मामले दर्ज किए गए। राज्यवार विवरण के अंतर्गत उत्तर प्रदेश में दहेज़ से सम्बंधित कुल 4,807 मामले दर्ज किए गए, बिहार में 3,580 मामले और कर्नाटक में 2,224 मामले दर्ज किए गए। दहेज़ प्रताड़ना से सम्बंधित घटनाओं में निशा शर्मा केस (2003) तथा अंशु सिंह केस (2018) उल्लेखनीय है।

आंकड़ों का विश्लेषणः महिलाओं के समावेशी और सतत विकास के लिए दहेज निषेध विषय पर प्रयागराज जिले के नैनी क्षेत्र के युवाओं के विचारों पर आधारित अध्ययन से प्राप्त आंकड़ों का

विश्लेषण निम्नवत है :

1. दहेज निषेध अधिनियम कब लागू किया गया था ?

वर्ष	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
1955	12	12
1961	33	33
1971	25	25
1981	30	30
कुल	100	100

सारणी-1

2. दहेज निषेध अधिनियम, 1961 का प्राथमिक उद्देश्य क्या है ?

कथन	**उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या**	**प्रतिशत**
कुछ शर्तों के तहत दहेज को वैध बनाना	11	11
दहेज लेनदेन को विनियमित करना	36	36
दहेज देने और लेने पर रोक लगाना	40	40
विवाह में धन का उचित वितरण सुनिश्चित करना	13	13
कुल	100	100

सारणी-2

3. अधिनियम के अनुसार, दहेज से तात्पर्य है-

कथन	**उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या**	**प्रतिशत**
स्वेच्छा से दिया गया धन और संपत्ति	32	32
विवाह की शर्त के रूप में दी गई कोई संपत्ति या मूल्यवान प्रतिभूति	44	44
प्रेम और स्नेह से दिया गया उपहार	17	17
दुल्हन के परिवार को कोई स्वैच्छिक योगदान	07	07
कुल	100	100

सारणी-3

4. दहेज देने या लेने की सजा है-

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
रु.5,000 तक का जुर्माना	43	43
6 महीने की कैद	33	33
5 साल की कैद और जुर्माना	24	24
कोई सजा नहीं	00	00
कुल	100	100

सारणी-4

5. दहेज मांगने पर न्यूनतम कारावास क्या है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
6 महीने	26	26
1 साल	27	27
2 साल	29	29
3 साल	18	18
कुल	100	100

सारणी-5

6. दहेज देने या लेने के दण्ड के रूप में जुर्माने की राशि कितनी होती है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
रु० 10,000	39	39
रु० 20,000	22	22
दहेज की राशि या रु० 15,000 जो भी ज्यादा हो	19	19
कोई जुर्माना नही	20	20
कुल	100	100

सारणी-6

7. दहेज निषेध अधिनियम के अर्न्तगत कौन शिकायत दर्ज करा सकता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
केवल दुल्हन	67	67
दुल्हन के माता-पिता	12	12
दुल्हन या दूल्हे से संबंधित कोई भी व्यक्ति	11	19
केवल एक पुलिस अधिकारी	10	10
कुल	100	100

सारणी-7

8. दहेज से सम्बन्धित मौतें IPC कि किस धारा के तहत दण्डनीय हैं ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
धारा 304B	16	16
धारा 498A	37	37
धारा 375D	25	25
धारा 302	22	22
कुल	100	100

सारणी-8

9. IPC की धारा 498A के तहत दहेज उत्पीड़न के लिए न्यूनतम कारावास क्या है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
1 वर्ष	20	20
2 वर्ष	15	15
3 वर्ष	39	39
5 वर्ष	26	26
कुल	100	100

सारणी-9

10. विवाह के कितने वर्ष के पूर्व महिला की अप्राकृतिक मृत्यु को IPC के अन्तर्गत दहेज मृत्यु माना जाता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
6 महीने	31	31
1 वर्ष	34	34
3 वर्ष	13	13
7 वर्ष	22	22
कुल	100	100

सारणी-10

11. दहेज उत्पीड़न के बारे में शिकायत दर्ज करने के लिए किस प्रधिकरण से सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
राष्ट्रीय महिला आयोग(NCW)	10	10
स्थानीय पुलिस स्टेशन	40	40
जिला मजिस्ट्रेट	23	23
उपरोक्त सभी	27	27
कुल	100	100

सारणी-11

12. अपने समुदायों में दहेज को रोकने के लिए व्यक्ति निम्नलिखित में से कौन-सी कार्यवाही कर सकते हैं ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
दहेज के मामलों की रिपोर्टिंग	05	05
दहेज कानूनों के बारे में लोगों को शिक्षित करना	04	04
दहेज उत्पीड़न के पीड़ितों का समर्थन करना	02	02
उपरोक्त सभी	89	89
कुल	100	100

सारणी-12

13. जमीनी स्तर पर दहेज को रोकने में सबसे महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका कौन निभाता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
पुलिस	47	47
न्यायालय	39	39
समाज और व्यक्ति	04	04
सरकारी एजेंसियाँ	10	10
कुल	100	100

सारणी-13

14. कौन-सी समुदाय-आधारित विधि दहेज प्रथाओं को कम करने में मदद कर सकती है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
दहेज के खिलाफ सामाजिक अभियान	13	13
दहेज के बिना सामूहिक विवाह का आयोजन	04	04
लड़कियों की शिक्षा को बढ़ावा देना	11	11
उपरोक्त सभी	72	72
कुल	100	100

सारणी-14

15. दहेज निषेध में मीडिया की क्या भूमिका है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
जागरूकता फैलाना	04	04
दहेज से संबंधित अपराधों को उजागर करना	02	02
दहेज के खिलाफ कानूनी कार्रवाई को प्रोत्साहित करना	03	03
उपरोक्त सभी	91	91
कुल	100	100

सारणी-15

16. दहेज के खिलाफ जागरूकता फैलाने में कौन-सा मीडिया महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
सोशल मीडिया	00	00
टेलीविजन और समाचार पत्र	03	03
सामुदायिक रेडियो	00	00
उपरोक्त सभी	97	97
कुल	100	100

सारणी-16

17. निम्नलिखित में से कौन-सी सरकारी पहल दहेज की रोकथाम में मदद करती है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ	05	05
सुकन्या समृद्धि योजना	02	02
महिला हेल्पलाइन	04	04
उपरोक्त सभी	89	89
कुल	100	100

सारणी-17

18. शैक्षणिक संस्थान दहेज निषेध में कैसे मदद कर सकते हैं ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
पाठ्यक्रम में लैंगिक समानता विषयों को शामिल करना	01	01
जागरूकता अभियान चलाना	00	00
छात्रों को दहेज प्रथा को अस्वीकार करने के लिए प्रोत्साहित करना	00	00
उपरोक्त सभी	99	99
कुल	100	100

सारणी-18

19. अवैध होने के बावजूद दहेज प्रथा अभी भी प्रचलित होने का मुख्य कारण क्या है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
कानूनों का कमजोर प्रवर्तन	00	00
सामाजिक स्वीकृति और दबाव	04	04
सामाजिक प्रतिक्रिया का डर	00	00
उपरोक्त सभी	96	96
कुल	100	100

सारणी-19

20. लड़कियों को आर्थिक रूप से सहायता करने और दहेज को रोकने का एक प्रभावी तरीका क्या है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
महिलाओं के लिए संपत्ति के अधिकार को प्रोत्साहित करना	01	01
उच्च शिक्षा के लिए छात्रवृत्ति प्रदान करना	01	01
महिलाओं के रोजगार के अवसरों में वृद्धि करना	13	13
उपरोक्त सभी	85	85
कुल	100	100

सारणी-20

21. किस प्रकार के विवाह दहेज को खत्म करने में मदद कर सकते हैं ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
सरल और दहेज मुक्त विवाह	12	12
कोर्ट मैरिज	15	15
समुदाय द्वारा आयोजित सामूहिक विवाह	00	00
उपरोक्त सभी	73	73
कुल	100	100

सारणी-21

22. दहेज निषेध में स्कूलों और कॉलेजों की क्या भूमिका होनी चाहिए ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
पाठ्यक्रम में लैंगिक समानता विषयों को शामिल करना	10	10
दहेज विरोधी जागरूकता कार्यक्रम आयोजित करना	00	00
लैंगिक संवेदनशीलता कार्यशालाओं को बढ़ावा देना	03	03
उपरोक्त सभी	87	87
कुल	100	100

सारणी-22

23. दहेज रोकने में पुरूष कैसे योगदान दे सकते हैं ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
दहेज लेने से इनकार करना	00	00
लैंगिक समानता का समर्थन करना	00	00
दहेज उत्पीड़न के मामलों की रिपोर्ट करना	01	01
उपरोक्त सभी	99	99
कुल	100	100

सारणी-23

24. निम्नलिखित में से कौन-सा नैतिक सिद्धान्त दहेज प्रथा का विरोध करता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
न्याय और समानता	02	02
ईमानदारी और सम्मान	00	00
मानवीय गरिमा और निष्पक्षता	00	00
उपरोक्त सभी	98	98
कुल	100	100

सारणी-24

25. परिवारों में नैतिक नेतृत्व दहेज को समाप्त करने में कैसे मदद कर सकता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
अपने विवाह में दहेज को अस्वीकार करके	07	07
बच्चों को लैंगिक समानता के बारे में शिक्षित करके	12	12
समाज में नैतिक मूल्यों को बढ़ावा देकर	11	11
उपरोक्त सभी	73	73
कुल	100	100

सारणी-25

26. हिन्दू धर्म दहेज को किस तरह देखता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
भौतिक माँगों के बिना सरल विवाह को प्रोत्साहित करता है	45	45
दहेज को धार्मिक कर्तव्य के रूप में बढ़ावा देता है	6	26
विवाह में वित्तीय लेन-देन का समर्थन करता है	24	24
दहेज की अवधारणा को अनदेखा करता है	10	10
कुल	100	100

सारणी-26

27. इस्लाम में, विवाह को माना जाता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
दहेज की आवश्यकता वाला एक वित्तीय अनुबंध	43	43
आपसी सहमति पर आधारित एक पवित्र मिलन	37	37
परिवारों के बीच एक व्यापारिक सौदा	12	12
एक संपत्ति लेनदेन	08	08
कुल	100	100

सारणी-27

28. ईसाई धर्म के अनुसार, विवाह का आदर्श आधार क्या है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
प्रेम और प्रतिबद्धता	49	49
भौतिक संपदा	00	00
सामाजिक स्थिति	39	39
वित्तीय लाभ	12	12
कुल	100	100

सारणी-28

29. बौध धर्म दहेज के बारे में क्या सिखाता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
सरल विवाह को प्रोत्साहित करता है	53	53
वित्तीय सुरक्षा के लिए दहेज का समर्थन करता है	17	17
दहेज को धार्मिक आवश्यकता मानता	00	00
दहेज के मुद्दे को नजरअंदाज करता है	30	30
कुल	100	100

सारणी-29

30. सिख धर्म विवाह में किस मूल्य को बढ़ावा देता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
सरल और समान विवाह	49	49
वित्तीय लेन-देन और दहेज	00	00
प्रेम से ज्यादा सामाजिक स्थिति	39	39
विवाह की नींव के रूप में धन	12	12
कुल	100	100

सारणी-30

31. जैन धर्म किस सिद्धान्त पर जोर देता है जो दहेज को अस्वीकार करता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
अहिंसा और समानता	81	81
भौतिकवाद और धन संचय	00	00
सामाजिक पदानुक्रम और भेदभाव	10	10
आर्थिक लाभ	01	01
कुल	100	100

सारणी-31

32. पुरूषों को दहेज लेने से क्यों मना करना चाहिए ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
अपने आत्मसम्मान को बनाए रखना	19	19
लैंगिक समानता को बढ़ावा देना	11	11
भावी पीढ़ियों के लिए एक उदाहरण स्थापित करना	02	02
उपरोक्त सभी	68	68
कुल	100	100

सारणी-32

33. स्कूलों और कॉलेजों को निम्नलिखित के बारे में पढ़ाना चाहिए-

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
विवाह का सामाजिक तथा नैतिक उत्तरदायित्व	81	81
दहेज के कानूनी परिणाम	00	00
लैंगिक समानता और सम्मान	10	10
उपरोक्त सभी	01	01
कुल	100	100

सारणी-33

34. दहेज निषेध अधिनियम, 1961 की मुख्य सीमा क्या है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
यह केवल हिंदू विवाहों पर लागू होता है	09	09
दहेज के गुप्त रूप से दिए जाने पर प्रवर्तन मुश्किल हो जाता है	79	79
यह दहेज के कुछ रूपों की अनुमति देता है	00	00
इसका कोई कानूनी परिणाम नहीं है	12	12
कुल	100	100

सारणी-34

35. दहेज रोकने के लिए विवाह पंजीकरण में कौन-सा सुधार लाया जा सकता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
दहेज रहित विवाह को कानूनी रूप से अनिवार्य बनाना	00	00
फिजूलखर्ची युक्त विवाह पर प्रतिबन्ध लगाना	03	03
दहेज मांगने वाले परिवारों के लिए कदा दंड	00	00
उपरोक्त सभी	97	97
कुल	100	100

सारणी-34

36. दहेज रोकने के लिए विवाह पंजीकरण में कौन-सा सुधार लाया जा सकता है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
दहेज विनिमय न करने का अनिवार्य हलफनामा	05	05
वित्तीय लेनदेन की पृष्ठभूमि की जाँच	03	03
दहेज से संबंधित उत्पीड़न न होने को सुनिश्चित करने वाला एक हस्ताक्षरित समझौता	00	00
उपरोक्त सभी	92	92
कुल	100	100

सारणी-36

37. भारत में वर्तमान में लागू विवाह कानूनों की एक बड़ी कमी क्या है ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
वे 'दहेज' को सख्ती से परिभाषित नहीं करते हैं	00	00
उनमें विवाह से पहले दहेज के मामलों की रिपोर्ट करने के प्रावधानों का अभाव है	00	00
उन्हें दहेज रहित विवाह के कानूनी प्रमाण की आवश्यकता नहीं है	00	00
उपरोक्त सभी	100	100
कुल	100	100

सारणी-37

38. दहेज निषेध में न्यायालय किस प्रकार सहायता कर सकते हैं ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
दहेज लेन-देन करने वाले विवाह को रद्द करके	00	00
अपराधियों पर भारी जुर्माना लगाकर	03	03
दहेज से संबंधित मामलों की त्वरित सुनवाई सुनिश्चित करके	00	00
उपरोक्त सभी	97	97
कुल	100	100

सारणी-38

39. क्या दहेज आधारित विवाह को अमान्य घोषित किया जाना चाहिए ?

कथन	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत
हाँ, दहेज को हतोत्साहित करने के लिए	49	00
नहीं, क्योंकि यह दाम्पत्य जीवन को प्रभावित करता है	24	03
केवल तभी जब दहेज एक निश्चित राशि से अधिक हो	27	03
नहीं, क्योंकि दहेज एक पारिवारिक परंपरा है	00	00
कुल	100	100

सारणी-39

आंकड़ों पर आधारित निष्कर्ष : उपरोलिखित आंकड़ों से प्राप्त निष्कर्ष निम्नलिखित हैं -

1. यद्यपि युवाओं में में दहेज़ अधिनियम अनुसार दहेज़ की परिभाषा की समझ का सामान्य स्तर देखने को मिला परन्तु अधिकांश युवाओ में दहेज़ प्रतिशोध अधिनियम से सम्बन्धित आधारभूत जानकारी जैसे-अधिनियम के पारित होने का वर्ष, कारावास की अवधि तथा जुर्माने की राशि की जानकारी की कमी देखने को मिली। (सारणी 01–06)
2. अधिकांश युवा यह समझते है की दहेज़ अधिनियम के अंतर्गत सिर्फ वधू ही केस दर्ज करा सकती है जबकि अधिनियम के अनुसार वर या वधू से सम्बन्धित कोई भी व्यक्ति दहेज़ के विरुद्ध केस दर्ज करा सकता है। (सारणी –07)
3. युवाओं में विवाह के सात वर्ष के भीतर वधू की मृत्यु, दहेज़ के कारण वधू की मृत्यु IPC की धारा 498। के अंतर्गत आती है तथा इस धारा के अंतर्गत दंड के रूप में दिए जाने वाले कारावास की अवधि की जानकारी का सामान्य स्तर देखने को मिला। (सारणी 08–10)
4. अधिकांश युवाओं का मानना है की दहेज़ उत्पीडन का मामला सिर्फ पुलिस स्टेशन पर ही दर्ज किया जा सकता है जबकि इस प्रकार के मामले राष्ट्रीय महिला आयोग, जिला मजिस्ट्रेट के कार्यालय में भी दर्ज की जा सकती है। सारणी-11)
5. अधिकाँश युवाओं का मत है की दहेज़ प्रथा की समाप्ति के लिए मामलों की रिपोर्टिंग, लोगों को शिक्षित करना, उत्पीडित का समर्थन, दहेज़ विरोधी अभियान, सामूहिक विवाह तथा बालिका शिक्षा को बढ़ावा देना नितांत आवश्यक है। युवाओं द्वारा पुलिस की भूमिका को अत्यधिक महत्वपूर्ण बताते हुए दहेज़ निषेध के लिए न्यायलय के हस्तक्षेप तथा सामाजिक सहभागिता को भी महत्वपूर्ण बताया गया। (सारणी 12–14)
6. अधिकांश युवाओं द्वारा दहेज़ को रोकने में मीडिया और उसके विभिन्न माध्यम जैसे सोशल मीडिया, सामुदायिक रेडियो, टेलीविजन तथा समाचार पत्र की भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण बताया गया। (सारणी 15–16)

7. सरकारी तथा शैक्षणिक पहल के रूप में युवाओं द्वारा बालिकाओं हेतु विभिन्न कल्याणकारी योजनाओं, महिला हेल्प लाइन, पाठ्यक्रम में लैंगिक समानता का विषय सम्मिलित किया जाना, जागरूकता अभियान तथा दहेज़ की अस्वीकृति के पक्ष में अपना मत रखा गया। (सारणी 17–18)
8. अधिकांश युवाओं ने अधिनियम के कमजोर प्रवर्तन तथा दहेज़ की सामाजिक स्वीकृति एवं दहेज़ न देने पर नकारात्मक सामाजिक प्रतिक्रिया को अवैध होने के पश्चात् भी दहेज़ के प्रचलन का कारण बताया। साथ ही युवाओं द्वारा संपत्ति का अधिकार, उच्च शिक्षा तथा रोज़गार को दहेज़ रोकने का प्रभावी तरीका बताया गया। (सारणी 19–20)
9. अध्ययन से स्पष्ट है की अधिकांश युवा सरल और सादगीपूर्ण विवाह, कोर्ट मैरिज, सामुदायिक विवाह, संवेदनशीलता कार्यशाला, पुरुषों द्वारा दहेज़ के अस्वीकरण तथा लैंगिक समानता के समर्थन, नैतिक व्यवहार तथा परिवारों में नैतिक नेतृत्व द्वारा दहेज़ को समाप्त करने के पक्षधर हैं। (सारणी 21–25)
10. अधिकांश युवाओं का मत है विभिन धर्मों जैसे हिन्दू, इस्लाम, इसाई, सिख, बौद्ध, जैन में विवाह को सरल, आपसी सहमति, प्रेम एवं प्रतिबद्धता युक्त, सामाजिक स्थिति प्रदान करने वाला, अहिंसा एवं समानता पर आधारित एक पवित्र बंधन माना जाता है।(सारणी 26–31)
11. अधिकांश युवाओं द्वारा इस बात को स्वीकार किया गया की पुरुषों को अपने आत्मसम्मान को बनाये रखने के लिए दहेज़ को अस्वीकार करके भावी पीढ़ी के लिए एक उदाहरण प्रस्तुत करना चाहिए। इसके अतिरिक्त युवाओं ने विचार व्यक्त किया की विद्यालयों में विवाह के सामाजिक तथा नैतिक उत्तरदायित्व, समानता, सम्मान तथा दहेज़ के कानूनी परिणामों की शिक्षा दी जानी चाहिए। (सारणी 33–33)
12. औसतन सभी युवाओं ने इस बात पर सहमति जताई कि दहेज़ के गुप्त रूप से दिए जाने पर नियमों का प्रवर्त्तन कठिन हो जाता है। साथ ही युवाओं ने दहेज़ समाप्त करने के लिए हिन्दू विवाह में परिवर्तन जैसे दहेज़ रहित विवाह की कानूनी मान्यता, फिजूलखर्ची पर प्रतिबन्ध, दहेज़ मांगने पर कड़ा दंड आदि को सम्मिलित करने की बात कही। (सारणी 34–35)
13. विवाह के पंजीकरण में सुधार के सन्दर्भ में युवाओं ने बताया की अनिवार्य हलफनामा, वित्तीय लेनदेन की पृष्ठभूमि जांच तथा दहेज़ उत्पीडन ना होने का समझौता आदि सम्मिलित किया जाना चाहिए। साथ ही युवाओं ने वर्तमान में प्रचलित विवाह अधिनियमों में दहेज़ सम्बन्धी कोई प्रावधान न होने की कमी पर भी अपने विचार दिए। (सारणी 36–37)
14. दहेज़ प्रतिशोध में न्यायलय की भूमिका पर विचार रखते हुए युवाओं ने कहा कि न्यायालय द्वारा त्वरित सुनवाई के साथ दहेज़ आधारित विवाह को अमान्य घोषित किया जाना तथा अपराधियों पर भारी जुर्माना लगाना चाहिए। इसके अतिरिक्त युवाओं ने विवाह पूर्व सामाजिक आर्थिक ऑडिट तथा दहेज़ लेने पर सार्वजानिक रूप से अपमान करने के पक्ष

में भी अपने विचार रखे। (सारणी 38–40)

सुझावः उपर्लिखित विष्लेशण के आधार पर दहेज़ को समूल समाप्त करने के लिए निम्नलिखित सुझाव दिए जा सकते हैं :

1. नियमों कानूनों के सुचारू रूप से प्रवर्तन के साथ साथ न केवल युवाओं वरन शिक्षा व्यवस्था में माध्यमिक स्तर की शिक्षा से ही दहेज़ के प्रति जागरूकता का प्रावधान होना चाहिए।
2. युवाओं को दहेज़ प्रतिशेध अधिनियम के प्रावधानों को सरल और व्यावहारिक भाषा में ज्ञान प्रदान किया जाना चाहिए। इसके अतिरिक्त दहेज़ लेने और देने दोनों के दूरगामी दुष्परिणामों से अवगत कराया जाना चाहिए।
3. दहेज़ प्रतिशोध अधिनियम के दुरूपयोग को रोकने हेतु युवाओं को जागरूक किया जाना चाहिए।
4. दहेज़ सम्बंधित मामलों को उजागर करने वाले व्यक्ति अथवा समूहों को सम्मानित तथा प्रोत्साहित करना चाहिए।
5. सामुदायिक स्तर पर दहेज़ के परिणामस्वरुप विकृत होते पारिवारिक जीवन तथा उसका भावी पीढ़ियों पर पड़ने वाले दुष्प्रभावों पर चर्चा के साथ साथ संवेदनशीलता कार्यक्रम आयोजित किये जाने चाहिए।
6. जनसामान्य में दहेज मृत्यु तथा दहेज़ के कारण होने वाली घरेलू हिंसा को रोकने तथा उनके विरुद्ध आवाज़ उठाने के भाव को सामुदायिक सहभागिता के माध्यम से सुदृढ़ किया जाना चाहिए।
7. सामाजिक स्तर पर दहेज़ सम्बंधित मामलों में पुलिस प्रशासन तथा न्यायलय का सहयोग किया जाना चाहिए।
8. अपने नैतिक उत्तरदायित्व का निर्वाह करते हुए मीडिया को अपने विभिन्न माध्यमों के द्वारा दहेज़ निषेध के प्रति लोगों को जागरूक करने तथा प्रेरणादायक फिल्मों के निर्माण द्वारा इस कुप्रथा को समाप्त करने में योगदान देना चाहिए।
9. पारिवारिक तथा सामाजिक जीवन के कल्याण हेतु मानवीय संबंधों के प्रति संवेदनशीलता के भाव को सुदृढ़ किया जाना चाहिए। जनसामान्य के मानस पटल पर विवाह को स्त्री पुरुष के मध्य मानवीय संबंधों के व्यापार के स्थान पर समस्त मानवीय आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति तथा जीवन जीने का आधार के रूप में स्थापित किया जाना चाहिए।
10. परिवार में संतानों के लालन-पालन की प्रक्रिया में स्त्री और पुरुष की सामान सहभागिता एवं दोनों के सम्मान को एक मानवीय मूल्य के रूप में सम्मिलित किया जाना चाहिए। जिससे युवा होने पर वे स्वतः ही दहेज़ आधारित विवाह को अस्वीकार करते हुए जीवन में आपसी सहयोग और समरसता के भाव को प्राथमिकता दें।
11. वर्तमान में प्रचलित विवाह सम्बन्धी सभी अधिनियमों में दहेज़ निषेध से सम्बन्धित विशेष प्रावधान जैसे- दहेज़ की परिभाषा ,वित्तीय पृष्ठभूमि की जांच, दहेज़ न लेने का हलफनामा

होने चाहिए, दहेज़ लेने पर विवाह को अमान्य घोषित किया जाना, अपराधियों पर जुर्माना, दहेज़ उत्पीडन न होने का समझौता, विवाह पूर्व सामाजिक आर्थिक ऑडिट इत्यादि सम्मिलित किया जाना चाहिए।

12. विवाह को सामाजिक आर्थिक गतिविधि के साथ साथ धार्मिक शिक्षा के साथ जोड़ा जाना चाहिए। जिससे व्यक्ति धार्मिक भावनाओं से प्रेरित होकर मानवीय मूल्यों का सम्मान करे तथा विवाह संस्था में नैतिकता का पालन करे।

निष्कर्ष :

अंततः ये कहा जा सकता है कि दहेज़ जैसी अमानवीय प्रथा को जब तक हम समूल से समाप्त नहीं करेंगे तब तक हम दहेज़ मृत्यु, घरेलू हिंसा, विवाहोत्तर सम्बन्ध, कन्याओं के परिवारों की सामाजिक व आर्थिक विपन्नता आदि समस्याओं का समाधान नहीं कर सकते है। अतः आवश्यक है सामाजिक, आर्थिक, नैतिक तथा वैधानिक सभी स्तरों पर सम्मिलित प्रयासों द्वारा इस प्रथा को समाज के सदस्यों के मानस पटल से ही समाप्त किया जाए।

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The Tribal Resistance to The British : A Case Study of Nayagarh

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Nayagarh was one of the Tributary Mahals of British Odisha. It "was surrounded by Ranpoor on the East, Khoordah on the North, Ghoomsur on the South and Dasapallah on the west"[1]. The main occupation of the people was cultivation. The Raja Binayak Singh Mandhatta was a strong ruler of this Tributary Mahal and was ruling over this Mahal with strong hand. With the British conquest of Odisha in 1803 this tributary Mahal came under the former and the Raja became loyal to the British and agree to pay annual tribute of Rs. 5,179-14-16-2 regularly[2]. But his subsequent relation with the British was not cordial. In May 1815 he objected to the establishment of police thanas in his estate[3]. In March 1817 he was suspected to having been involved in the Ghumusar rising[4]. Again in violation of the treaty engagements he gave shelter to the rebel leader BuxiJagabandhu and several other leaders for many years[5]. After his death in 1823 he was succeeded by his son Brajabandhu Singh Mandhatta. He was not a popular king. He adopted certain oppressive measures to collect tax. It is due to his oppressive measures and maladministration the people of Nayagarh were dissatisfied. Neither the people revolted against him nor the British Government took any step[6].

First Nayagarh Rising (1849-52)

Causes of the Rising

In 1843 the ryots of Nayagarh lodged a complain before A.J.M Mills, the Commissioner of Cuttack against the oppression caused by Raja Brajabandhu Singh Mandhatta and the Commissioner kept quiet. It is due to the non-interference policy of Mills, the people of Nayagarh suffered intolerably[7]. Early in 1846, the Raja dispossessed a Jagir-holder named

Bhagirathi Mangaraj of Nayagarh for delay in payment of revenue. He started depredations in Nayagarh from March with the help of large number of followers and made the situation critical. As the Raja could not control the situation, he sought for British help and consequently Mills suppressed the rebellion and punished about 45 persons. The Raja went on demanding excess rents and a number of illegal cases from the ryots and also from his Kandha subjects. He even made an attempt to assess certain jagir lands of the Paiks and other military retainers on the ground that he did not require the service of more than 5000 of those persons. So naturally, when they were burdened with rents and taxes, they weredissatisfied and opposed the action of the Raja. Moreover, the Raja asked his officers to collect rents from the villagers, imposed illegal taxes on them and discontinued the system of giving commission to them. Thus the Raja was universally unpopular among his subjects[8].

In 1849 the dissatisfied ryots appealed to the Government of Bengal to look in the matter[9]. As there was no immediate remedy, they broke out into open rebellion under the leadership of Kamal Lochan Paikary, his son Udhab Samantray and Hari Gajendra Singh. The situation in Nayagarh could not be controlled by the Raja and he sought for British help. The Superintendent issued proclamation throughout the estate instructing the militia class to abstain from unlawful acts, failing which they would be severely punished. The province was placed under British attachment and most of the disaffected inhabitants were submitted to the Raja. After the settlement of the affairs, Ramchandra Rai was appointed as the Tahasildar in Nayagarh[10]. The newly appointed Tahsildar failed to rule over the state. The settlement proved ineffective and the people still complained against the corruption of the British Officers and oppression of the amlas.

There was also large scale dissatisfaction among the Kandhas of Nayagarh. They held their lands free of rent on the condition that they would pay Bethis and would do Bethis for the Raja. As regards bethis, the Kandhas offered fruits, thatched the houses of the Raja, supplied ropes for dragging the Paths in the festivals and furnished bamboos, mats etc., for the use of royal household[11]. In 1849 the Raja forced the Kandhas to pay a tax in cash for their lands, ploughs and houses they held. Thus the Kandhas, the ryots, the militia class and particularly the Tribal population suffered from the innovation of the Raja and the amlas. Consequently, the growing discontentment burst into open revolt against the authorities in November 1894[12].But the British Government took immediate steps to suppress the

rising and arrested the leaders.

Course of the Rising

Hari Gajendra Singh, Kamal Lochan Paikary and his son Udhab Samantary, who were in Jail, wrote letters to the ryots to withhold payment of rents and to assemble in a large body at a place called Kuruda to make a united move against the authorities. Accordingly, in November 1849 the ryots refused to pay their rents to the Government. The superintendent sent the magistrate of Puri to enquire into the matter and to prevail upon the ryots to pay their rents. Based.

On the report of the magistrate the Government sentenced the expulsion of Kamal Lochan Paikary, Udhab Samantary, Shibram Routary and Hari Gajendra Singh[13]. It created further dissatisfaction in the minds of the people. As a first step of reaction against the removal order of the Government, on 2nd December 1850 the insurgents killed one of the chief servents of the Raja, named Bhutia Subudhi. The Paiks, Kandhas, Savaras and other tribes joined the insurgents of Nayagarh and thus a mass revolt occurred in the estate. At that time the Kandhas of Boudh and Ghumusan had already taken up arms against the authorities. Those insurgents came forward to help the rebel of Nayagarh. By the end of 1850, the insurgent leaders were also to get supports of a large number of hill tribes in the hill tracts of Nayagarh, Ghumusar and Daspalla[14]. The insurgents usually resorted to looting, murder and arson. Anybody or any party of men hostile to the insurgents were either murdered or threatened to be murdered. The main attack of the insurgents was on the granaries of the Raja located at different villages of the estate. On 19 January 1851 they looted the village Ghumusar and plundered the houses of Narayan Samantary and Dama Samantary, the supporters of the Raja[15]. Gradually the insurgents become more and more daring and violent. The Kandhas of Gunighar, Koral and Mahipur joined them. At that time, about 70 Kandhas of Ghumusar under the direction of ChakaraBisoyi, joined Kamal LochanPaikray, the rebel leader of Nayagarh. It forged the unity between the two rebel leaders and increased their strength. Altogether 132 villages including many of the granaries of the Raja were burnt. The insurgents even acquired arms and ammunitions from the persons in charge of the Rajas Barud Khana[16]. All the passes to and from Nayagarh were blocked by stone barricades. The revolt took a serious turn by the end of February 1851.

The gravity of the situation required serious action against the insurgents.

Almost all the troublesome spots were guarded by the Paik companies of Khurda and Balesore. The Rajas of Dasapalla, Ranpur and Nayagarh including their Tahasildars were ordered to help the British force in their operation against the insurgents. The Assistant Superintendents of Tributary Mahals of Puri and Balasore were asked to be in readiness to face the insurrections and to help in their suppression[17]. On the other hand about 3000 armed Paiks of Raja neglected their duty in protecting several important places in the Garjat. They showed "sympathy with the insurgents for the class to which they belonged"[18]. In fact the defence of the state developed upon the British troops. In these circumstances Gouldsbury suggested to the Government of Bengal for taking over the entire management of the estate and the estate would remain under military occupation. As the capture of the rebel leaders was a matter of great importance, he offered suitable reward for their apprehension also[19]. The Superintendent, in anticipation of the approval of the Government of Bengal, decided to take over complete management of the estate and accordingly issued proclamations to the inhabitants of the estate[20]. In course of the operation, the chief leaders of the rebellion surrendered and a new revenue administration was created. Once again in opposition to the revenue administration, Kamal Lochan Paikray assembled the people to resist the action of the authorities. But soon he was "seized, punished and warned that he would probably be hung if he created disturbances again".[21]Peace and Tranquality gradually restored through Nayagarh. However after the lapse of only three decades, another serious incident occurred in the estate breaking the silence which had been restored in the estate so laboriously.

Second Nayagarh Rising (1893-94)

In the 19th Century generally the management of the estates was left in the hands of the Bebartas or Dewans and other amlas as the Garjat Rajas were neither enlightened nor competent to run the administration of their respective states. These officers always wanted to keep their Rajas ignorant of the real institution and the Rajas were also content to leave the business of the state in the hands of the crafty officials to allow them in personal enjoyment. In such a state of affairs the development of the state or welfare of the people were never taken care of and when the oppressive measures reached breaking point, popular revolt broke out.

Causes:

Nayagarh absolutely remained under the court of wards till 1857 as the

Raja Ladukishore Singh Mandhatta who was ought to rule after the death of Raja Brajabandhu Singh Mandhatta was a minor. In course of time he took the charge of the entire administration and the post of Tahasildar was abolished. Raja Ladukishore Singh was a man of profligate habits and proved to be a weak ruler[22].

The actual administration was run by his dewan, Khetribar Singh. Under his guidance both civil and criminal administration was conducted arbitrarily, the amlas thrived on rampant bribery and the estate incurred a heavy debt. The mahajanas who gave loan to the Raja were allowed to realize their debt from the people by any means. Consequently they went to the villages, forcibly seized the crops of the villagers and even the land revenue of some villagers were set apart for the Mahajanas[23]. Gradually a state of discontentment spread among the poor villagers. Meanwhile Raja Ladukishore Singh died in 1889 amd was succeeded by Raja Balabhadra Singh. Again after his death in 1890 he was succeeded by Raja Raghunath Singh Mandhata. The time favoured for a dispute over the issue of succession. After the death of the two previous Rajas the Raja of Khandpara had claimed the fagi, but it was rejected bluntly. Moreover DewanKhetribar Singh who had a handfull of property and influence was dismissed by Raja Raghunath Singh Mandhata in 1893. The result was that, with the help of his followers and the Raja of Khandpara, Khetribara Singh hatched a conspiracy against Raja Raghunath Singh Mandhatta[24]. Mean while the oppressive measures continued as before. The tenants were even denied access to the Raja to put forth their grievances before him. Land was confiscated from the people by the new Raja for the construction of the road and no compensation was given to them. Further police oppression in the villages of the estate became intolerable. On hearing the approach of the police, common people closed the doors or fled to the jungles leaving everything behind. Administration was in a complicated and critical condition in the state[25].

No such regular land revenue settlement was effected in the tributary Mahals of Odisha till the sixties of the 19th century[26]. The 1st land settlement in Nayagarh was started in March 1851 and within a period of 36 years (1857-93) a number of changes were made in the revenue collection in which the total increase in land revenue amounted to Rs. 15749 which was surely a great burden on the poor cultivators. Raja Raghunath Singh Mandhatta in order to bring a peaceful settlement to the state debt levied a fresh tax of eight annas on each ryot who owned ploughs.

The rest paid four annas each for their right to use wood from the forest for fuel, carts and buildings etc. In addition to these, the tribal people of Nayagarh, specially the Khandas and Savaras were injudiciously taxed by the Raja and his manager[27]. The Kandhas who had long been paying their rent in kind were now forced to pay in cash which was a severe blow on them as they mostly forced to supply rasad such as eggs, fowls and goats etc.., to the Raja without any payment. Such impositions created discontentment among the Khandas[28].Exasperated by the tyrannies, the common people including the Kandhas and Savaras looked for an opportunity to avenge the wrongs done against their means of livelihood. The people demanded not only a change in the style of administration, but also of the ruler who was at the root of all troubles and finally started a serious Meli or uprising in early 1893[29].

Khetribar Singh like a wounded soldier, after his dismissal from the post of dewan in 1893 collected 500 followers at the connivance of the Raja of Khandapara and marched towards Nayagarh. The rebels restored to loot, arson and all sorts of depredations. However very soon reconciliation between the Raja and his ex-dewan Khetribar Singh was effected. The Raja assured the rebels to put an and to the oppressive measures of his manager GopalSantra, after proper enquiry[30]. The settlement thus made was, however, only a patch-work. Again Gopal Santra, the manager started to exert much undue influence on the administration and Khetribar Singh started to create trouble by instigating the discontented people. The Khandas and Savaras who were dissatisfied with the Raja and his underlings joined hands with them[31]. On 27 November 1893 a police constable of Nayagarh was killed by the Kahandas, on16th December a police spy was stabbed to death by the Savaras and from 16th December to 28th December four more police constables were stabbed to death. Again on 28th December a village Mahajan was also put to death. The era of political murders was opened which threatened the position of the Raja and disturbed the peace and tranquility of the estate[32].

Such a situation demanded immediate action. Once again with much labour a compromise was effected between the Raja and Khetribar Singh and the management was entrusted to a new person, Babu Darpanarayan Das[33]. After the compromise, the rent-in-kind realised from the Kandhas and Savaras were reduced considerably and also supply of rasad by them was abolished. A general amnesty was declared by the Raja for all those Melias who were not involved in serious offences. However, the steps taken by

the authorities did not satisfy khetribar Singh and his close followers. The people headed by Arjun Paikray started a no-rent campaign[34]. Khetribar Singh once again hatched fresh intrigues against the Raja with the help of the Kahandas and a group of dissatisfied sarbarakars. Even he sent secret messengers to the Khanda and Savara hamlets to induce the tribals to withhold payment of rents in kind or cash[35]. Thus the rising was renewed in April 1894. After fresh enquiry charges were brought against Khetribar Singh and he was convicted to one year's rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200[36].

The imprisonment of Khetribar Singh was strongly resented by his followers. The insurgents worked under the leadership of Arjun Paikray. Those who went against them, were either murdered or beaten to submission. The situation went out of control and the violent insurrection spread to the heart of Nayagarh. Practically the Khandas were very much violent and started indiscriminate murder. Their main target were the state police[37]. The police outposts were fearlessly looted and their belongings were carried away[38]. The melias committed a number of indiscriminate murders. The total number of murders committed and discovered till the end of the meli was 26[39].

Soon military forces were brought from different corners to mitigate the situation at Nayagarh. Oppressive measure continued at different trouble-spots such as Mahipur, Mahitama, Durdura, Itamati, Kuruda and the entire boarders of Nayagarh and Khandapara. As a result, the rebels were forced either to retreat or surrender. The insurgents who had fled to Dasapalla were gradually captured and with the capture of Arjun Paikray the rising in Nayagarh virtually came to an end[40]. Seventy khanda insurgents were subsequently tried and sentenced to different terms of punishment. Arjun Paikray was transported for life[41]. Sixteen persons were hanged and the rest were imprisoned for life[42].The Savaras also could not escape punishment. The Raja of Khandapara was severely charged, tried and heavily fined by the British Government.

Two years after the suppression of the Nayagarh uprising, Raja Raghunath Singh Mandhatta died and the estate was brought under the management of the British authorities, as his successor was a minor.

The tribal rising in Nayagarh in its 1st phase (1849-52) was primarily an agrarian movement. The people rose and revolted against the oppressive ruler, Raja Brajabandhu Singh Mandhatta and the illegal taxes imposed on them. It gave a hard blow to the tribal communities, specially to the

Khandas who organized the movement, led the uprising. The tribal people like the Khandasand the Savaras who were forced to pay a number of taxes, also rose in revolt and joined the other insurgents in Nayagarh.

A new situation was created in Nayagarh after the death of Raja Ladukishore Singh. The dismissal of the notorious Dewan Khetribar Singh in 1893 added fuel to the burning coal drum. The situation was worsened when the Raja of Khandpara, who was a claimant to the throne, instigated and, helped the diwan in creating disturbances in Nayagarh. Such situation of disturbances could have been easily nipped in the bud if the Raja was strong enough to control the situation. But neither the Raja was strong and competent nor the tone of his administration was popular to check the distrbances. Thus, judging it from all the corners it was an anti-British rising which in the later state took the character of anti-British movement due to the help rendered by the British authorities to the unpopular Raja. The agrarian and economic grievences of the tribals as well as the common people were more or less ignored by the authorities. The tribals even staged a no-rent campaign in the estate during the troubled period. But surprisingly no concrete steps were taken and whatever steps were taken, they were mostly superficial and touched only the surface. Consequently due to the half-hearted policy of the Government peace and tranquility could not be established for a considerable long period. It's impact was even felt in the neighbouring state of Dasapalla in 1894. In utter disgust, the British authorities suspended the Raja and a Government agent was appointed in 1894 to administer the estate. However that only resulted a serious revolt in that feudatory state as early as in 1914.

Thus, the Kondhas and Savaras raised a standard of rebellion against the British authority but failed. On the other the British Government brought the entire Tributary Mahal of Nayagarh under its direct supervision.

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रामलीला–उद्भव, प्रभाव एवं प्रासंगिकता

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सारांश

रामलीला, तुलसीकृत रामचरितमानस में वर्णित भगवान राम की लीलाओं का नाट्य रूपांतरण है। रामलीला का मुख्य उद्देश्य भक्ति है, जहां नाटक के माध्यम से भगवान राम के जीवन आदर्शों को जनता के सम्मुख प्रस्तुत किया जा सके। तुलसीदास ने देशी भाषा अवधी में अद्भुत काव्यात्मक सौंदर्य का परिचय देते हुए, रामचरितमानस में भगवान राम के चरित्र का ऐसा चित्र प्रस्तुत किया है, जिसमें प्रेम, क्षमा, दया, करूणा, कर्तव्य जैसे भक्तिकाल के आदर्शों का समावेश है। इससे रामचरितमानस समूचे उत्तर भारत में एक सर्वस्वीकार्य ग्रन्थ बन गया। उसका नाट्य रूपांतरण रामलीला, उसे और अधिक प्रभावी बनाकर प्रस्तुत करता है। इस प्रकार रामलीला भक्ति और मनोरंजन का एक ऐसा सशक्त माध्यम बन गया है कि वह उत्तर भारत के सांस्कृतिक जीवन का ऐसा अभिन्न अंग बन गया, कि दशहरा तो उसके बिना अधूरा ही है।

मूलशब्द

रामलीला, रामचरितमानस, तुलसीदास, भक्तिकाल, निर्गुणधारा, सगुणधारा, आदर्श, रामभक्ति, अवतारवाद, सांस्कृतिक जीवन, नाट्य रूपांतरण, सर्वस्वीकार्य

भूमिका

रामलीला भारत में, विशेषकर उत्तर भारत में भगवान राम की लीलाओं का नाट्य मंचन है। रामचरितमानस पर आधारित, रामभक्ति से सराबोर रामलीला जनमानस में भगवान राम के जीवन कृत्यों के द्वारा समाज के उनके आदर्शों को प्रस्तुत करती है, जिससे जनता उनका अनुसरण कर

सके। मध्यकाल में निर्गुणधारा के द्वारा जो भक्ति आन्दोलन शुरू हुआ, उसने अपनी अभिव्यक्ति निराकार ईश्वर के लिए दोहे, भजन, गीत आदि के माध्यम से किया। कालांतर में, साकार ईश्वर को अधिक सहज मानव रूप में देखने वाली सगुण भक्तिधारा का विकास हुआ, जिसमें अवतारवाद का प्रधान्य था। मुख्यतः राम और कृष्ण के अवतारों के जीवन आदर्शों को प्रस्तुत किया गया। रामानन्द ने रामभक्ति की जो अलख जगाई, उसे देशी अवधी भाषा में काव्यात्मक सौंदर्य के साथ, तुलसीकृत रामचरितमानस ने नई ऊँचाईयां प्रदान की, और शीघ्र ही रामचरितमानस समूचे उत्तर भारत का एक सर्वस्वीकार्य ग्रन्थ बन गया। उसे नाटक के रूप और भी रोचक तरीके से रामलीला के माध्यम से प्रस्तुत किया गया। रामलीला का प्रभाव ऐसा पड़ा कि वह उत्तर भारत के सांस्कृतिक जीवन का अभिन्न अंग बन गई।

'रामलीला' राम की लीला। रामलीला भगवान श्री राम की जीवन चरित का नाट्य रूपांतरण है। भारतीय परिप्रेक्ष्य में ईश्वर की मानव रूप में किये गये कार्यों को प्रायः लीला कहा जाता है। अतः भगवान राम का जीवन चरित रामलीला हुई। हालांकि विभिन्न प्रकार से रामकथा का प्रचलन काफी पहले से है परन्तु तुलसीदास कृत रामचरित मानस के बाद विशेषकर उत्तर भारत में रामलीला रामचरित मानस पर आधारित हो गईं। इसने रामलीला का एक नया स्वरूप दिया जो आज तक विद्यमान है।

हालांकि रामलीला एक प्रकार का रामकथा का नाट्य मंचन है, परन्तु हर रामकथा रामलीला नहीं है। रामलीला का उद्भव और विकास एक विशेष पृष्ठभूमि में हुआ। इन्दुजा अवस्थी कहती हैं कि आज जो रामलीला उत्तर भारत के जन-जीवन का अनिवार्य अंग बन चुकी है, उसके उद्भव की कहानी अस्पष्ट है। प्राचीन काल से रामकथा संस्कृत और आगे चलकर विभिन्न भारतीय भाषाओं में नाटकों का विषय रही है, परन्तु रामलीला और राम-नाटक में उद्देश्य और संरचना दोनों ही दृष्टियों से अन्तर है। एक तो रामलीला धार्मिक नाट्यरूप है, उसका उद्देश्य रामभक्ति का प्रचार और प्रसार है। दूसरे रामलीला के प्रस्तुतीकरण की शैली नाटक की भांति मात्र संवादों पर आधारित नहीं है वरन् महाकाव्य आधारित है, उसमें रामचरितमानस का निश्चित आधार रहता है।[1]

चूंकि रामलीला मूलतः रामचरितमानस पर आधारित है, अतः रामलीला से पूर्व रामचरितमानस पर एक संक्षिप्त चर्चा आवश्यक है। यह इसलिए भी महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि रामलीला के दो घटक हो जाते हैं। पहला रामकथा जो रामचरितमानस पर आधारित है, तथा दूसरा उसका नाट्य रूपांतरण। अतः हम पहले यहां चर्चा करेंगे कि रामचरितमानस का प्रभाव और स्वीकार्यता कितनी है तथा ऐसे कौन से कारक हैं जो उसे इतना प्रभावी बनाते हैं। तत्पश्चात् हम चर्चा करेंगे कि किस प्रकार एक प्रभावशाली महाकाव्य नाटक के रूप में और भी असरकारक बन जाता है।

रामचरितमानस पर चर्चा से पहले उस पृष्ठभूमि पर बात करनी आवश्यक है, जिसमें इस ग्रन्थ

की रचना हुई, अर्थात् भक्तिकाल। आचार्य रामचन्द्र शुक्ल 1375 से 1700 तक के समय को भक्तिकाल मानते हैं। भक्तिकाल के प्रभाव के बारे में डाक्टर ग्रियर्सन कहते हैं, "हम अपने को ऐसे धार्मिक आन्दोलन के सामने पाते हैं, जो उन सब आन्दोलनों से कहीं अधिक व्यापक और विशाल है, जिन्हें भारतवर्ष ने कभी भी देखा है। यहाँ तक कि वह बौद्ध धर्म के आन्दोलन से भी अधिक व्यापक और विशाल है, क्योंकि उसका प्रभाव आज भी वर्तमान है। इस युग में धर्म ज्ञान का नहीं, बल्कि भावावेश का विषय हो गया था। यहाँ से हम साधना और प्रेमोल्लास के देश में आते हैं।"[2]

भक्तिकाल में भक्त कवियों की भूमिका पर आचार्य रामचन्द्र शुक्ल लिखते हैं कि धर्म का प्रवाह कर्म, ज्ञान और भक्ति, इन तीन धाराओं में चलता है। इन तीनों के सामंजस्य से धर्म अपनी पूर्ण सजीव दशा में रहता है। कर्म के बिना वह लूला-लंगड़ा, ज्ञान के बिना अंधा और भक्ति के बिना हृदयहीन निष्प्राण रहता है। कलदर्शी भक्त कवि जनता के हृदय को सम्भालने और लीन रखने के लिए दबी हुई भक्ति को जगाने लगे। प्रेम स्वरूप ईश्वर को सामने लाकर भक्त कवियों ने हिन्दुओं और मुसलमानों, दोनों को मनुष्य के सामान्य रूप में दिखाया और भेदभाव के दृश्यों को हटाकर पीछे कर दिया।[3]

भक्तिकाल में निर्गुण तथा सगुण दोनों भक्ति धाराएं मौजूद थीं। निर्गुण भक्ति धारा ने पहले ज़ोर पकड़ा था। निर्गुण धारा और उसके प्रारम्भिक और प्रमुख संत श्री कबीरदास के बारे में आचार्य शुक्ल लिखते हैं कि उन्होंने एक निराकार ईश्वर के लिये भारतीय वेदान्त तथा उस निराकार ईश्वर की भक्ति के लिये सूफियों का प्रेमतत्व लिया और अपना 'निर्गुण-पंथ' प्रारम्भ किया। उन्होंने जनता के उस बड़े भाग को संभाला जो नाथपंथियों के प्रभाव से प्रेमभाव और भक्तिरस से शून्य और शुष्क पड़ता जा रहा था। इसके साथ ही मनुष्यत्व की सामान्य भावना को आगे करके निम्न श्रेणी की जनता में उन्होंने आत्मगौरव का भाव जगाया और उसे भक्ति के ऊँचे से ऊँचे सोपान की ओर बढ़ने के लिये बढ़ावा दिया। उनका 'निर्गुण-पंथ' चल निकला जिसमे नानक, दादू, मलूकदास आदि अनेक संत हुए।[4]

यद्यपि निर्गुण भक्तिधारा ने दया, प्रेम, करूणा, कल्याण आदि मानवीय मूल्यों को स्थापित किया, परन्तु उनकी स्वरूप अमूर्त ही था, जो मूर्त स्वरूप की तुलना में समझना थोड़ा कठिन था। ईश्वर के मूर्त स्वरूप विशेषकर कि अवतार के रूप में उनको जानना-समझना और भक्ति अधिक सहज थी। सगुण धारा और अवतारों की परिकल्पना के बिना ईश्वर की लीला और उन पर आधारित नाटक सम्भव ही नहीं थे। सगुण भक्ति धारा में ही भगवान कृष्ण पर आधारित रासलीला तथा भगवान राम पर आधारित रामलीला सम्भव थे।

इस संदर्भ में आचार्य हज़ारी प्रसाद द्विवेदी लिखते हैं भक्ति के लिए जो बात नितान्त आवश्यक

है, वह है भगवान के ऐसे रूप की कल्पना जिसके साथ व्यक्तिगत सम्बन्ध स्थापित किया जा सके। इस काल तक आकर यह विश्वास किया जाने लगा कि भगवान के अवतार का मुख्य हेतु भक्तों पर अनुग्रह करने के लिए लीला का विस्तार करना ही है। मध्यकाल के भक्तिमार्ग में ऐकान्तिक भक्ति का स्वर प्रबल रहा है। अवतारों की कल्पना ने इसको बहुत सहारा दिया। अवतारों से ही उस लीला का विस्तार होता है जिसका श्रवण और मनन भक्ति का प्रधान साधन है। भक्ति के लिए भगवान् के साथ वैयक्तिक सम्बन्ध आवश्यक है और अवतार उस सम्बन्ध के लिए आवश्यक सामग्री प्रस्तुत करते हैं। यही कारण है कि मध्ययुग के प्रायः सभी धार्मिक सम्प्रदायों ने किसी-न-किसी रूप में अवतार की कल्पना अवश्य की है।[5]

सगुण भक्ति की इस धारा में लीला की भूमिका तथा महत्व पर आचार्य द्विवेदी कहते हैं कि वैसे तो अवतारों की संख्या बहुत मानी गई है, परन्तु मुख्य अवतार राम और कृष्ण के हैं। इन दो अवतारों की प्रधानता स्थापित होने का प्रधान कारण इनकी लीला की बहुलता ही है। शुरू के साहित्य और शिल्प में इनका प्रधान चरित दुष्टों का दमन और भक्तों की उनसे रक्षा ही था, पर धीरे-धीरे दुष्ट दमन वाला रूप दबता गया और लीलारूप ही प्रधान होता गया। कृष्णावतार की कल्पना पुरानी और व्यापक बताते हुए आचार्य कहते हैं कि रामावतार का महत्त्व भी बहुत अधिक रहा है। हमेशा से श्रीरामचन्द्र दुष्ट-दमनकारी और मर्यादापुरुषोत्तम के रूप में चित्रित हुए हैं। पन्द्रहवीं शताब्दी के बाद के साहित्य में राम के भक्त साहित्यिकों में भी लीलागान की दृष्टि समादृत हुई, किन्तु उनका दुष्टदमन और मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम रूप कभी भी म्लान नहीं हुआ। अठारहवीं शताब्दी के बाद के साहित्य में श्रीरामचरित को भी माधुर्य भावना के रंग में रंगना पड़ा और ऐसे साहित्य की रचना हुई जिसमें प्रेम-क्रीड़ा और रासलीला का प्राधान्य था।[6]

सगुण भक्तिधारा में रामभक्ति का विस्तार करने में अनेक संतों तथा भक्त कवियों विशेषकर कि रामानन्द जी का विशेष महत्व है। आचार्य द्विवेदी लिखते हैं कि उत्तर भारत में भक्ति की धारा को नये सिरे से प्रवाहित करने का श्रेय दो आचार्यों को है- स्वामी रामानन्द और महाप्रभु वल्लभाचार्य। स्वामी रामानन्द का सम्बन्ध दो श्रेणी के भक्तों से बताया जाता है। एक तो वे निर्गुण भाव से राम के उपासक भक्त थे; दूसरे वे जो राम की उपासना अवतार रूप में करते थे। दूसरे आचार्य वल्लभाचार्य ने कृष्णभक्ति का प्रचार किया। इस भक्ति साहित्य के विशेष महत्व को रेखांकित करते हुए वे कहते हैं कि रामानन्द और वल्लभाचार्य से पहले का साहित्य किसी बड़े आदर्श से चालित नहीं था। आश्रयदाता राजाओं के गुणकीर्तन और काव्यगत रूढ़ियों पर आधारित साहित्य सूक्तियों को जन्म दे सकता है, पर वह समाज को किसी नये रास्ते पर चलने की स्फूर्ति नहीं दे सकता। चौदहवीं शताब्दी से पूर्व के साहित्य ने कोई नई प्रेरणा नहीं दी। परन्तु नया साहित्य मनुष्य जीवन के एक निश्चित लक्ष्य और आदर्श को लेकर चला। यह लक्ष्य है भगवद्भक्ति, आदर्श है शुद्ध सात्विक जीवन और साधन है भगवान के निर्मल चरित्र और सरस लीलाओं का गान। इस

साहित्य को प्रेरणा देने वाला तत्व भक्ति है और इसलिए यह साहित्य अपने पूर्ववर्ती साहित्य से सब प्रकार से भिन्न है।[7]

इस सगुण रामभक्ति धारा में भी गोस्वामी तुलसीदास द्वारा रचित रामचरितमानस अपने शिल्प और काव्य-सौंदर्य के चलते अपने आप में एक मील का पत्थर बन गई। आचार्य शुक्ल लिखते हैं यद्यपि स्वामी रामानंद की शिष्य परम्परा द्वारा देश के बड़े भाग में रामभक्ति की पुष्टि निरंतर होती आ रही थी और भक्त लोग फुटककल पदों में राम की महिमा गाते आ रहे थे पर हिन्दी साहित्य के क्षेत्र में इस भक्ति का परमोज्जवल प्रकाश विक्रम की 17वीं शताब्दी के पूर्वार्द्ध में गोस्वामी तुलसीदास जी वाणी द्वारा स्फुटित हुआ। उनकी सर्वतोमुखी प्रतिभा ने भाषा काव्य की सारी प्रचलित पद्धतियों के बीच अपना चमत्कार दिखाया। सारांश यह कि रामभक्ति का वह परम विशद साहित्यिक संदर्भ इन्हीं भक्त शिरोमणि द्वारा संगठित हुआ, जिससे हिन्दी काव्य की प्रौढ़ता के युग का आरम्भ हुआ।[8]

इस प्रकार रामचरितमानस ने एक नया आयाम गढ़ा। उसके प्रभाव और जनस्वीकार्यता के बारे में रमण सिन्हा लिखते हैं, रामचरितमानस की रचना सोलहवीं शताब्दी के उत्तरार्द्ध में हुई और दो शताब्दियों में ही इसकी लोकव्याप्ति ऐसी हुई कि काश्मीर से बंगाल तक इसकी पाण्डुलिपि चित्रित की जाने लगी, इसकी कथा पर गायन एवं वाचन होने लगा, लीलाएँ होने लगीं और उन्नीसवीं शताब्दी में ग्रियर्सन (1851–1941) ने देखा कि "यह महान ग्रंथ नौ करोड़ व्यक्तियों के लिए वैसा ही आदरणीय एवं मान्य है जैसा कि ईसाइयों के लिए बाइबिल" बीसवीं शताब्दी के आरम्भ में बाबा रामचन्द्र द्वारा अवध के किसान आन्दोलन में इस ग्रंथ को उपयोगी पाया जाता है और बीसवीं शती के उपनिवेश-विरोधी अभियान के महानायक महात्मा गाँधी राम-राज्य की कल्पना के लिए एवं राममनोहर लोहिया धर्म तथा राजनीति पर पुनर्विचार के लिए 'तुलसी-रामायण' का स्मरण करते दिखाई पड़ते हैं।[9]

रामचरितमानस अकबर के समय में लिखी गई थी। इतिहासकार विंसेंट स्मिथ अकबर को 'अकबर महान' बताते हैं, परन्तु वे तुलसीदास को उससे भी ऊँचा, युग-पुरुष का दर्जा देते हैं। रामचरितमानस को 'मध्यकालीन हिन्दू-काव्य के जादुई उद्यान का सर्वाधिक ऊँचा वृक्ष' घोषित करते हुए उन्होंने लिखा है कि एक आम ब्रिटिश ईसाई के मन में बाइबिल का जो स्थान है उससे कहीं अधिक ऊँचा स्थान उत्तर भारतीय हिन्दू की नजर में 'मानस' का है।[10]

रामचरितमानस की एक महत्वपूर्ण विशिष्टता है, उसके भीतर का सामंजस्य। यह सामंजस्य विभिन्न सम्प्रदायों के बीच है और जीवन के हर क्षेत्र के बीच। इस सामंजस्य के बारे में आचार्य शुक्ल लिखते हैं, गोसवामी जी की भक्ति पद्धति की सबसे बड़ी विशेषता है उनकी सम्पूर्णता। जीवन के किसी पक्ष को सवर्था छोड़कर वह नहीं चलती है। सब पक्षों के साथ उसका सामंजस्य है। न उसका

कर्म या धर्म से विरोध है, न ज्ञान से। शैवों और वैष्णवों के बीच बढ़ते हुए विद्वेष को उन्होंने अपनी सामंजस्य व्यवस्था द्वारा बहुत कुछ रोका जिसके कारण उत्तरी भारत में वह वैसा भयंकर रूप न धारण कर सका जैसा उसने दक्षिण में किया। यहीं तक नहीं, जिस प्रकार उन्होंने लोकधर्म और भक्ति साधना को एक में सम्मिलित करके दिखाया उसी प्रकार कर्म, ज्ञान और उपासना के बीच भी सामंजस्य उपस्थित किया। भक्ति की चरम सीमा पर पहुँचकर भी लोकपक्ष उन्होंने नहीं छोड़ा। यही कारण है कि इनकी भक्ति-रस भरी वाणी जैसी मंगलकारिणी मानी गई वैसी और किसी की नहीं। आज राजा से रंक तक के घर में गोस्वामी जी का रामचरितमानस विराज रहा है।[11]

इस सामंजस्य ने रामलीला के स्वरूप पर गहरा प्रभाव डाला। सभी सम्प्रदायों, विशेषकर कि शैव और वैष्णवों के बीच सामंजस्य ने तुलसीकृत मानस को सभी तबकों के बीच स्वीकार्य बना दिया। अवधी भाषा, काव्यात्मक सौंदर्य और उपरोक्त सामंजस्य ने उसे एक सर्वस्वीकार्य ग्रन्थ बना दिया। चूंकि रामलीला मानस पर ही आधारित थी, अतः रामलीला के स्वरूप में भी एकरूपता आ गई। इन्दुजा अवस्थी कहती हैं कि रामलीला का देश में व्यापक स्तर पर प्रदर्शन होता है। उत्तर प्रदेश, मध्य प्रदेश, हरियाणा, राजस्थान जैसे हिन्दी भाषी राज्यों के अलावा पंजाब, गुजरात, महाराष्ट्र के कुछ भागों में भी इसके नियमित प्रदर्शन होते हैं। यह तो नितान्त स्वाभाविक है कि इतने व्यापक स्तर पर प्रस्तुत इस नाट्य रूप में क्षेत्रीय विविधताएँ हों, परन्तु इस समूची विविधता एकरूपता है। विभिन्न क्षेत्रों और शैलियों में होने वाली रामलीलाओं में प्रमुख कथा-प्रसंग और चरित संकल्पना समान होने के कारण उनका प्रभाव एक-सा होता है। इसके अतिरिक्त श्रृंखला नाटकों के रूप में प्रस्तुतीकरण, प्रसंगों के निरूपण में एकरूपता, दर्शकों की निष्ठा और तादात्म्य भाव, प्रदर्शन में धार्मिक अनुष्ठानों का महत्व तथा भक्तिपूर्ण वातावरण सभी रामलीलाओं में एक समान है। इसके साथ ही प्रदर्शन पद्धतियों, पात्र-योजना और वेषभूषा के संयोजन में भी मूलभूत समानता स्पष्ट है।[12]

चूंकि रामलीला का मुख्य उद्देश्य रामभक्ति का प्रसार है, अतः वह मानस आधारित राम चरित को जन-जन तक पहुंचाने के लिए प्रयास करती रहती है। इन्दुजा अवस्थी कहती हैं कि पारम्परिक रामलीला प्रदर्शनों की दो प्रमुख पद्धतियाँ हैं-झाँकी दृश्यों और शोभायात्रा से युक्त अभिनयपरक पद्धति और संवादों से युक्त नाटकीय पद्धति। पहली पद्धति की रामलीला में मानसपाठ होता रहता है और अभिनेता बीच-बीच में अभिनय करते हैं। संवाद अत्यन्त संक्षिप्त होते हैं। इनमें कुछ प्रसंगों के प्रस्तुतीकरण में स्वरूपों और दूसरों पात्रों का नाटकीय परिदृश्यों के रूप में सजे हुए यानों पर जुलूस निकाला जाता है, साथ-साथ दूसरे यानों में मानस का पाठ करते हुए रामायणी चलते हैं। रामलीला के प्रस्तुतीकरण की दूसरी पद्धति संवादपरक है। उसमें रामकथा के प्रसगों को संवादों में ढाल कर एक-एक प्रसंग के नाटकीकृत रूप का एक लम्बा आलेख तैयार कर दिया जाता है। इस आलेख को तैयार करने में मानस के अतिरिक्त दूसरे राम-साहित्य से भी संवाद लिये जाते हैं, अनेक गीत, लोकगीत आदि समाविष्ट हो जाते हैं और इसी क्रम में कई नये पात्रों की भी

अवतारणा करनी पड़ी है।[13] इस प्रकार लोगों में रामभक्ति जगाने, उनका अनुसरण करने के लिए प्रेरित करने हेतु सभी प्रकार के प्रयास किये जाते हैं।

इसके साथ ही रामलीला एक धार्मिक नाट्यस्वरूप है, अतः उसका आयोजन भी धार्मिक उत्सव जैसा होता है। इसीलिए रामलीला की विशेषता यह है कि यह कई दिनों के प्रदर्शन के रूप में प्रस्तुत होती है। राम जन्म से लेकर राम-राज्याभिषेक की कथा की विभिन्न नाटकीय दिवसों में विभाजित कर लिया जाता है, और एक दिन में एक या अधिक प्रसंग अभिनीत होते हैं। इसी के अनुसार रामलीला कहीं 10 या 11 दिन चलती है, कहीं 15 दिन, कहीं 21 दिन और कहीं 31 दिन, परन्तु आधुनिक प्रयोगों के अतिरिक्त समूची रामकथा एक दिन में कहीं भी प्रस्तुत नहीं होती। प्रदर्शन का यह व्यवहार जहाँ एक ओर दर्शकों को बहुत दिन तक एक मनोभाव में रहने का अवसर देता है, वहीं नाटकीय प्रस्तुतीकरण को गहरी प्रभावशालिता भी प्रदान करता है और रामलीला के स्वरूपों और अभिनेताओं को दर्शकों का आत्मीय और सुपरिचित बना देता है।[14]

रामचरितमानस तथा उसी आधार पर रामलीला के प्रसार के लिए एक अन्य कारक भी महत्वपूर्ण है। जातिगत सोपानक्रम तथा पितृसत्ता भारतीय समाज व्यवस्था की एक बुनियादी सच्चाई है। जब हाशिए की ताकतें इन्हें चुनौती देती हैं, तो स्थापित सत्ता तथा शक्ति समूह, ऐसे स्वरों के विरूद्ध कार्य करते हैं। निर्गुण भक्ति धारा ने इस जातिगत सोपानक्रम को चुनौती दी है। कबीर का दोहा, "जात न पूछो साधु की", तो जैसे इसका सूत्र वाक्य बन गया। निर्गुण भक्तिधारा हाशिए के समाज से, मुस्लिम जुलाहे के बेटे कबीर, दलित रैदास तथा स्त्री मीरा बाई को संत के रूप में स्थापित करती है। ये संत समाज के मुख्यधारा को भी प्रभावित कर रहे थे। पुरूषोत्तम अग्रवाल कहते हैं, आजकल कबीर, रैदास, मीरा को हाशिए की आवाज़ें मानकर पढ़ा जा रहा है। सवाल यह है कि इतिहास लेखन में कबीरादि को हाशिए के लोग बनाया किसने। जिस समय का इतिहास लिखने के दावे किये जाते हैं, उस समय तो कबीर व्यापारियों में सर्वाधिक मान्य हैं। समाज के अन्य शक्तिशाली लोगों में भी उनकी मान्यता है। रैदास की शिष्या मीरा थीं या कोई और झाली रानी- यह महत्वपूर्ण नहीं, महत्वपूर्ण यह है कि 'अछूत' की इतनी मान्यता थी कि कोई रानी उनकी शिष्या बनना चाहे और खुराफाती ब्राह्मण मुंह की खाएं।[15]

परन्तु सगुण भक्तिधारा, विशेषकर कि रामचरितमानस इसका उलट करती है। इस संदर्भ में मुक्तिबोध लिखते हैं, कि निर्गुण मत के विरुद्ध सगुण मत का संघर्ष निम्नवर्गों के विरुद्ध उच्चवंशीय संस्कारशील अभिरुचि वालों का संघर्ष था। निर्गुण मत में निम्नजातीय धार्मिक जनवाद का पूरा जोर था, उसका क्रान्तिकारी संदेश था। तुलसीदास ने भी निम्न-जातीय भक्ति स्वीकार की, किन्तु उसको अपना सामाजिक दायरा बतला दिया। निर्गुण मतवाद के जनोमुख रूप और उसकी क्रांतिकारी जातिवाद विरोधी भूमिका के विरुद्ध तुलसीदास जी ने पुराण-मतवादी स्वरूप प्रस्तुत किया। निष्कर्ष यह कि जो भक्ति-आन्दोलन जन-साधारण से शुरू हुआ और जिसमें सामाजिक कट्टरपन के विरुद्ध

जन-साधारण की सांस्कृतिक आशा-आकांक्षाएँ बोलती थीं, उसका 'मनुष्य-सत्य' बोलता था, उसी भक्ति आन्दोलन को उच्च-वर्गीयों ने आगे चलकर अपनी तरह बना लिया। क्या यह महत्वपूर्ण तथ्य नहीं है कि रामभक्ति शाखा के अंतर्गत, एक भी प्रभावशाली और महत्वपूर्ण कवि निम्नजातीय शूद्र वर्णों से नहीं आया।[16]

रामचरितमानस की इस विशिष्टता के चलते, उसे किसी प्रकार के विरोध का सामना नहीं करना पड़ा, क्योंकि उसने निम्न जातियों की भक्ति के द्वार खुले रखे परन्तु उस सीमा तक ही, जहां वर्णव्यवस्था को चुनौती न मिले। उसने जातिगत सोपानक्रम तथा सर्वसुलभ भक्ति के बीच सामंजस्य कायम किया। रामरितमानस और रामलीला सबकी भी थी और विशेष जनों की भी। रामलीला के आयोजन में, पूरा समाज एकजुट रहता था परन्तु उसके मंचन में पात्रों के चुनाव के कुछ नियम थे। इन्दुजा अवस्थी लिखती हैं पात्रों के चुनाव के कुछ नियम हैं, जिनका पालन हर रामलीला में किया जाता है, जैसे, सभी भूमिकाओं में पुरूष अभिनेता ही होते हैं, स्त्री पात्रों का निषेध है। राम, लक्ष्मण, शत्रुघ्न और सीता के लिए 12 से 16 वर्ष तक के ब्राह्मण लड़के चुने जाते हैं। बहुत सी रामलीलाओं में विशेष भूमिकाओं का अभिनय पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी चलता रहता है।[17] समय के साथ बदलाव होने के बावजूद यह प्रवृत्तियां आज तक विद्यमान है। आदित्य बिड़वई और अंकित यादव, 19 सितम्बर 2017 को आजतक की अपनी एक रिपोर्ट में लिखते हैं कि दिल्ली के लाल किले में लगने वाली सबसे बड़ी राम लीलाओं में से एक 'नव श्री धार्मिक लीला' कमेटी के आयोजकों का कहना है कि हमारे यहां सभी प्रमुख किरदार ब्राह्मण हैं, और वो ब्रह्मचर्य का पालन करेंगे। हरीश चंद्र अग्रवाल मेला प्रमुख ने आजतक से बातचीत करते हुए कहा कि हम इस मामले में कोई भी रिस्क नहीं लेते हैं। सारे प्रमुख किरदार ब्राह्मण की हैं और वह ब्रम्हचर्य का पालन करते हैं। हालांकि, बाद में संभलते हुए कहा कि जो दूसरे किरदार हैं वह हर जाति के हैं, लेकिन सारे प्रमुख कैरेक्टर ब्राह्मण ही लिए गए हैं।[18]

वास्तव में रामचरितमानस के समाज की आदर्श बुनावट, जातीय सोपानक्रम के साथ होते हुए भी सौहार्दपूर्ण है, कुछ हद तक महात्मा गांधी के ट्रस्टीशिप की अवधारणा पर आधारित सामन्ती तथा पूंजीवादी व्यवस्था, जहां शोषण का तंत्र होने के बावजूद शोषण नहीं है। इस आदर्श समाज की परिकल्पना ने भी रामचरितमानस की निर्विवाद जनस्वीकार्यता में अपना योगदान दिया, जहां रामचरितमानस तथा रामलीला का हर तबके ने स्वागत किया।

निष्कर्ष

इस प्रकार हम देख सकते हैं कि भक्ति के मानवीय गुणों से लैस, सगुण राम की भक्ति पर आधारित रामचरितमानस ने रामलीला को एक ठोस स्वरूप दिया। जीवन के सभी क्षेत्रों, सभी सम्प्रदायों तथा जातिवादी सोपानक्रम के बीच भी सामंजस्य बिठाने के चलते, यह जनस्वीकार्य तथा निर्विवादित हो गई। तुलसीदास के स्थानीय अवधी भाषा के उपयोग तथा काव्यात्मक सौंदर्य ने रामचरितमानस को और भी सहज बना दिया। उसके नाट्य रूपातंरण, रामलीला और भी प्रभावी और असरकारक हो गया।

उत्तर भारत में दशहरे के त्योहार के समय रामलीला एक अनिवार्यता बन गई। 2008 में यूनेस्को ने रामलीला को मानवता की अमूर्त सांस्कृतिक विरासत प्रतिनिधि सूची में भी सम्मिलित कर दिया, जिससे रामलीला को वैश्विक स्तर पर भी एक पहचान और मान्यता मिली।[19]

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प्रारम्भिक नवाबों के समय में अयोध्या में हिन्दू धार्मिक क्रिया–कलाप

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अयोध्या प्राचीन काल से हिन्दू धर्म एवं संस्कृति का प्रमुख केन्द्र रहा है। एक ओर यह क्षेत्र जहां हिन्दू अवतारवाद के प्रमुख केन्द्र को अपने में समेटता है, वहीं प्राचीन काल से ही यह क्षेत्र हिन्दू सन्तों तथा धार्मिक कृत्यों के लिए भी प्रसिद्ध रहा है। इसके पश्चात् यह क्षेत्र विभिन्न सम्प्रदायों के अन्तर्गत धार्मिक जागरण का केन्द्र बनता गया है। इस तरह की धार्मिकता की भावना ने यहां की सामाजिक मानसिकता को भी अपने में अभिहीत कर लिया और यहां का सामाजिक जीवन कुछ सीमा तक इसने प्रभावित रहा ।

अयोध्या प्राचीन काल से ही प्राचीन पौराणिक परंपराओं से युक्त स्थल रहा है। पौराणिक कथाओं के अनुसार अयोध्या नगर धरती पर नहीं बल्कि ब्रह्मा के रथ पर स्थित है, और यह रथ सदैव स्थिर रहेगा। अयोध्या की तुलना एक मछली से की गई है जिसका सर गुप्तारघाट और उसका शरीर पुराना नगर और पश्चिम परगना इसकी पूछ है। अयोध्या शब्द की संस्कृत उत्पत्ति अजोदह शब्द से हुई है- जिसका अर्थ अजेय है। दूसरे अर्थ में अज ब्रह्मा का नाम है। अतः अयोध्या का यह भी अर्थ माना जाता है कि यह ईश्वर का अजेय नगर है। अयोध्या शब्द का व्युत्पत्तिकारक अर्थ है जो योद्धा न हो अर्थात जिसे युद्ध द्वारा जीता न जा सके जो अजेय हो अपराजेय हो। अयोध्या हिंदुओं के लिए एक पवित्र तीर्थ स्थल रहा है। भगवान श्री रामचंद्र का जन्म यहीं पर हुआ और राजा मनु के 57 पीढ़ी के बाद श्री रामचंद्र जी का अवतार हुआ और उन्होंने संपूर्ण समाज के समक्ष जो लोक आदर्श रखा वह आज भी लोगों के लिए अनुकरणीय हैं। अयोध्या के वैभव एवं सुंदरता की कथा रामायण एवं महाभारत जैसे पवित्र पुस्तकों में भी मिलते है। नगर की सुंदरता के बारे में कहा जाता है कि सृष्टि के निर्माण करता ब्रह्मा की संपूर्ण कलाकारी यहीं पर समाप्त हो गई है तथा इससे हटकर संसार में कुछ भी नहीं है। अयोध्या जैन, बौद्ध धर्मलंबियों के लिए भी एक पवित्र तीर्थ स्थल रहा है।

प्राचीन काल से अयोध्या हिंदू धर्म एवं संस्कृति का प्रमुख केंद्र एवं हिंदू संतों के धार्मिक क्रियाकलापों के लिए प्रसिद्ध रहा है। नवाबी शासन काल में अवध के अधिकांश हिंदू संत एवं बैरागी यहां आकर बस गए और उन्होंने अपने मठों, पंथों एवं अखाड़ो की स्थापना करके हिंदू धर्म का प्रचार-प्रसार किया। अयोध्या में हिंदू संत आए और यहां पर अपने विचारधारा से विभिन्न मठों, पंथों एवं अखाड़ो की स्थापना की जिसका विवरण निम्नवत् है-

दिगंबर पंथी

अवध में इस पंथ की स्थापना बाबा बलराम दास के द्वारा की गई। 18वीं शताब्दी के अंत तक इस मठ के 11 महंत हुए। इस पंथ के संतों को गोरखपुर और दो गांव सदर तहसील फैजाबाद के पुरैना तथा टांडा में कालूपुर का क्षेत्र अवध के शासकों के द्वारा सहायता में मिला था जो की पूर्णतया कर मुक्त थी।

निरबानी पंथी

अवध में इस संप्रदाय के संतों की संख्या सबसे ज्यादा थी और इस संप्रदाय के सन्त अयोध्या के हनुमानगढ़ी मंदिर में रहते थे। उनके क्रियाकलापों से प्रभावित होकर अनेक हिंदू जमीदारों ने इन्हें अत्यधिक दान दिया। निरबानी पंथी बैरागी चार पट्टी में विभाजित थे। जो हरिद्वारी, बसंतिया, उज्जैनिया तथा सागरीया कहलाते थे। उनके अपने अलग-अलग महंत थे। अवध के विभिन्न जिलों में इस पंथ के अनुयायियों को अवध के शासकों की ओर से कर मुक्त भूमि दान स्वरूप मिली थी। जिससे वह अपने धार्मिक क्रियाकलापों में संलग्न रहते थे।

निरमोही पंथी

अवध में इस संप्रदाय के संस्थापक जयपुर के गोविंद दास माने जाते हैं। गोविंद दास अयोध्या स्थित रामकोट में एक मंदिर का निर्माण कराया किंतु बाद में स्थानीय लोगों से मतभेद हो जाने के कारण इन्होंने रामघाट में अपने मंदिर का निर्माण कराया। कालांतर में यह संप्रदाय दो भागों में विभाजित हो गया, इस संप्रदाय की एक शाखा रामघाट में और दूसरी शाखा गुप्तार घाट में अपने मंदिर का निर्माण करके रहने लगे। यहां पर कार्तिक एवं कुआंर महीने की 15वीं तारीख को स्नान एवं मेला लगता है। गुप्तार घाट शाखा के महंत को अवध के नवाब वज़ीर की ओर से बस्ती, मनकापुर और खुर्दाबाद में कुछ भूमि प्राप्त हुई थी जो कर मुक्त थी।

खाकी अखाड़ा

अवध के नवाब वज़ीर शुजाउद्दौला के काल में दयाराम जो की चित्रकूट के निवासी थे, उन्होंने अयोध्या में अपने अखाड़े अथवा केंद्र की स्थापना की थी। शुजाउद्दौला की ओर से दयाराम के खाकी अखाड़े को अयोध्या में चार बीघा जमीन मिली थी। जहां दयाराम ने एक मंदिर का निर्माण कराया था। इस अखाड़े को बाद में कुछ भूमि अवध के नवाबों के द्वारा बस्ती में इसके अतिरिक्त

गोंडा में भी एक गांव प्राप्त हुआ था।

निरलंभ पंथी

शुजाउद्दौला के शासनकाल में निरलंभ पंथी अखाड़े की स्थापना वीरमल दास के द्वारा की गई यह कोटाह के रहने वाले थे और शुजाउद्दौला और शासनकाल में अयोध्या में आए और एक मंदिर का निर्माण किया। बाद में उनके शिष्य सिंह दास ने दर्शन नगर के समीप एक नवीन मंदिर का निर्माण किया था।

संतोखी अखाड़े

अयोध्या में इस अखाड़े की स्थापना नवाब सफदरजंग के शासनकाल में रतिराम के द्वारा की गई। रतिराम जयपुर के निवासी थे इन्होंने अयोध्या में एक मंदिर का निर्माण कर अपने मठ को संचालित किया। इस अखाड़े में बैरागियों की संख्या बहुत सीमित थी तथा इन्हें आर्थिक दृष्टि से भी अवध के शासको अथवा स्थानीय जमीदारों की ओर से किसी भी प्रकार का कोई अनुदान या धन दान में नहीं मिला था। नवाब वाजिद अली शाह के काल में निधि सिंह के द्वारा कलवार में एक दूसरे मंदिर की स्थापना की गई। बाद में बाबा खुशहाल दास के द्वारा संतोखी अखाड़ा पुनः अयोध्या लौट आया। इस अखाड़े ने अयोध्या में मंदिर का निर्माण कराया और अपने मठ की देखरेख करने लगे।

महानीरबानी अखाड़ा

अयोध्या में इस अखाड़े की स्थापना बाबा परसोतम दास के द्वारा की गई। बाबा परसोतम दास बूंदी के रहने वाले थे और शुजाउद्दौला के शासनकाल में अवध आए। इन्होंने अयोध्या में एक मंदिर का निर्माण करके अपने मत का प्रचार व प्रसार किया। इस अखाड़े के वैरागी शांतप्रिय ढंग से बिना किसी लोक की कामना से भगवान की स्तुति करते थे। इस अखाड़े के धार्मिक क्रियाकलाप ने लोगों को बहुत अधिक प्रभावित किया।

अयोध्या में स्थापित मठ एवं अखाड़े के अतिरिक्त अयोध्या में बाबा जगजीवन दास के द्वारा स्थापित सतनामी संप्रदाय का भी जनमानस में काफी प्रभाव था। सतनामी संप्रदाय ने अपने सिद्धांतों के प्रचार प्रसार में हिंदी और संस्कृत भाषा का अत्यधिक उपयोग किया। जिसके कारण अयोध्या एवं अवध क्षेत्र में इस संप्रदाय का प्रभाव व्यापक रूप से देखा गया। बाबा जगजीवन दास द्वारा रचित कृति प्रथम ग्रंथ, महाप्रलय, आग विनास आदि अवध एवं अयोध्या में काफी अत्यधिक लोकप्रिय थे।

गोरखपुर के समीप होने के कारण मत्स्येंद्र नाथ द्वारा स्थापित नाथ संप्रदाय का प्रभाव अयोध्या में व्यापक रूप से देखने को मिलता है। अयोध्या के स्थानीय लोगों पर बाबा गोरखनाथ की रचनाओं एवं उपदेशों का प्रभाव व्यापक रूप से देखने को मिलता है। अवध के नवाब वज़ीर के

द्वारा भी इस संप्रदाय को कर मुक्त गांव प्रदान किए गए।

अवध के नवाबी शासन काल में अन्य धर्मावलंबियों के समान सिख धर्मावलंबी भी बसे हुए थे। यद्यपि अयोध्या में इनकी संख्या कम थी फिर भी सिखों ने अपने गुरुद्वारा, धर्मशालाओं एवं डेंरो का निर्माण कराया था। इन धर्मशालाओं में नित्य कथा, कीर्तन एवं सत्संग का आयोजन किया जाता था तथा गुरुद्वारों के माध्यम से जनसाधारण में गुरु मत का प्रचार-प्रसार भी किया जाता था। वास्तव में अवध एवं अयोध्या में सिख मत के व्यापक प्रचार प्रसार करने का श्रेय उदासी संप्रदाय को जाता है।

इस प्रकार अयोध्या में नवाबों के शासनकाल में हिंदुओं के अनेक अखाड़ों, मठों एवं पंथों के द्वारा धर्म के प्रचार-प्रसार एवं संरक्षण का कार्य किया। हिंदू धर्म के इन विभिन्न संप्रदायों के अतिरिक्त सतनामी संप्रदाय, नाथ संप्रदाय एवं सिखों के द्वारा भी अपने धर्म एवं हिंदू धर्म के प्रचार प्रसार का कार्य किया गया जिससे एक धार्मिक सौहार्द का वातावरण उत्पन्न हुआ।

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पर्यावरण और हमारा दायित्व

डॉ. निशा यादव
सहायक प्रोफेसर
कुमारी मायावती राजकीय महिला स्नातकोत्तर महाविद्यालय
बादलपुर

डॉ. कनक लता
सहायक प्रोफेसर
कुमारी मायावती राजकीय महिला स्नातकोत्तर महाविद्यालय
बादलपुर

शोध सारांश

प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र पर्यावरण और हमारा दायित्व विषय पर केंद्रित है, जिसमें मानव जीवन पर पर्यावरण के प्रभाव और पर्यावरण की सुरक्षा संवर्धन संरक्षण में हमारा उत्तरदायित्व क्या है ? इस पर विस्तार से प्रकाश डाला गया है। पर्यावरण जीवन का आधार है यही कारण है कि संपूर्ण ब्रह्मांड में केवल धरती पर ही जीवन संभव है, जिसमें वायु, भूमि, वनस्पति और जैव विविधता सम्मिलित है, किंतु वर्तमान में औद्योगीकरण, शहरीकरण, जनसंख्या वृद्धि, भवन निर्माण कार्य, अवैध खनन और उपभोक्तावादी सोच के कारण ही पर्यावरण असंतुलित हो गया है। मानव स्वार्थी हो गया है और वह आगे आने वाली पीढ़ी के लिए सोचे बिना ही पर्यावरण के संपूर्ण संसाधनों का दोहन करना शुरू कर दिया है। वायु प्रदूषण, जल प्रदूषण, ग्लोबल वॉर्मिंग, जलवायु परिवर्तन और जैव विविधता का ह्रास जैसे संकट मानव गतिविधियों का प्रत्यक्ष परिणाम हैं।

भारतीय संस्कृति में पर्यावरण की रक्षा को एक धार्मिक और नैतिक दायित्व माना गया है। वेदों में पंचमहाभूतों की पूजा, वृक्ष व जल स्रोतों का सम्मान और पशु-पक्षियों को पूजनीय मानना, यह सब दर्शाता है कि हमारे सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों में पर्यावरण संरक्षण अंतर्निहित रहा है। संविधान के अनुच्छेद 48A और 51A(G) में भी पर्यावरण की रक्षा को राज्य और नागरिकों का कर्तव्य बताया गया है।

इस शोध में यह भी स्पष्ट किया गया है कि पर्यावरण संरक्षण केवल सरकारी नीति तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि यह प्रत्येक नागरिक की व्यक्तिगत, सामाजिक और नैतिक जिम्मेदारी है। जल, ऊर्जा और संसाधनों का विवेकपूर्ण उपयोग, प्लास्टिक का परित्याग, वृक्षारोपण, और पर्यावरण शिक्षा को बढ़ावा देना आज की आवश्यकता है।

इस प्रकार यह शोध निष्कर्ष देता है कि यदि हमें एक स्वस्थ और टिकाऊ भविष्य चाहिए, तो हमें

पर्यावरण के प्रति अपने दायित्वों को गंभीरता से समझना और निभाना होगा।

संकेत शब्द

पर्यावरण, ग्लोबल वार्मिंग, जैव विविधता, कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड, वृक्षारोपण, पर्यावरण संरक्षण, पर्यावरण असंतुलन।

प्रस्तावना-

"पातुं न प्रथमं व्यवस्यति जलं युष्मास्वपीतेषु या
नादत्ते प्रियमण्डनापि भवतां स्नेहेन या पल्लवम्।
आद्ये वः कुसुमप्रसूतिसमये यस्या भवत्युत्सवः
सेयं याति शकुन्तला पतिगृहं सर्वैरनुज्ञायताम्।।"

अभिज्ञानशकुन्तलम्, 4.9

उक्त श्लोक अभिज्ञानशाकुंतलम का है जिसके रचयिता महाकवि कालिदास थे इसका अर्थ है कि शकुंतला वृक्षों को पानी दिए बिना स्वयं पानी ग्रहण नहीं करती थी और फूलों से इतना प्रेम करती थी कि श्रृंगार प्रिय होते हुए भी वह अपने श्रृंगार तक के लिए फूल और पत्तियों को नहीं तोड़ती थी।

यह श्लोक शकुंतला के प्रकृति प्रेम और पर्यावरण के प्रति सम्मान को दर्शाता है। वह न केवल प्रकृति का हिस्सा है, बल्कि उसका सम्मान भी करती है, और उसे अपनी मां की तरह मानती है। यह श्लोक पर्यावरण संरक्षण और प्रकृति के साथ सद्भाव में रहने के महत्व को उजागर करता है। प्रकृति और पर्यावरण से प्रेम और उनके प्रति मानवी डेटन के निर्वहन की यह एक मिसाल हो सकती है। सुखी शांत एवं आपदा रहित जीवन की यह पहली शर्त है कि हम उसे प्रकृति और पर्यावरण को संरक्षित करें जिसने अपने अनमोल खजाने को खोलकर मानव जीवन को न सिर्फ सुख में बनाया है बल्कि उसे खुश रंग भी बनाया है प्रकृति ने हमें सिर्फ दिया है और हमसे कुछ लिया नहीं उसने हमसे कभी प्रतिदान की अपेक्षा भी नहीं की दूसरी तरफ हम प्रकृति को कुछ देना तो डर उसे संरक्षित तक नहीं कर सके पर्यावरण से हद दर्जे तक छेड़छाड़ का नतीजा हमारे सामने है। न केवल भारत अभी तो संपूर्ण विश्व आज पर्यावरण संतुलन की समस्या से जूझ रहा है। प्राकृतिक संसाधनों के आधिकारिक दोहन तथा प्रकृति विरोधी आचरण का ही यह नतीजा है की आहट प्रकृति ने हम पर पलटवार करना शुरू कर दिया है। पिछले कुछ वर्षों में उत्तराखंड में कई प्राकृतिक आपदाएँ आई हैं, जिनमें 2013 की केदारनाथ बाढ़ और 2021 की चमोली आपदा शामिल हैं। 2013 की बाढ़ में भारी बारिश और भूस्खलन हुआ था, जिसके कारण 1 लाख से अधिक तीर्थयात्री केदारनाथ मंदिर में फंस गए थे। 2021 की चमोली आपदा में भी ग्लेशियर के टूटने से बाढ़ आई थी। आए दिन बादल फटने की घटनाएं भी सुनने में आती है।

देवभूमि हिमाचल में मानसून के दस्तक देने से पूर्व आशा की बूंदों का इस तरह से इंतजार किया जा रहा था कि किसान और बागवानों को खुशहाल करने के साथ ही हर व्यक्ति के लिए जीवनदायी होगा। मानसून को समाप्त होने को अभी भी डेढ़ माह है लेकिन अभी तक देवभूमि में बरसात

बादल फटने, बाढ़ और भूस्खलन से हुए नुकसान ने हिमाचल में विकास की गति को शून्य करने के साथ विकास में दस वर्ष पीछे लाकर खड़ा कर दिया है। कुदरत के कहर विविध रूपों में सामने आ रहे हैं। यह हमें चेतावनी भी दे रहे हैं। इसके बावजूद पर्यावरण को बचाने के लिए जो चेतना और सक्रियता हमें दिखानी चाहिए वह सामने नहीं आ रही है। पर्यावरण के संरक्षण और संतुलन के लिए जो दायित्व हमें निभाना चाहिए हम निभा नहीं पा रहे हैं।

पर्यावरण असंतुलन : एक वैश्विक समस्या

पर्यावरण असंतुलन एक वैश्विक समस्या के रूप में सामने आ रहा है। भारत सहित विश्व के अनेक देश उन दुष्प्रभावों से दो-चार हो रहे हैं जो पर्यावरण संतुलन की देन है। पर्यावरण असंतुलन का प्रभाव मौसम पर सबसे ज्यादा पड़ रहा है। मौसम अपने मिजाज बदल रहा है। बीता वर्ष 2024 सबसे अधिक गर्म वर्ष के रूप में दर्ज किया गया। यह ताप युग की आहट नहीं तो और क्या है। ग्लोबल वार्मिंग बढ़ रही है, तो ग्लेशियरों के पिघलने से नई तरह की समस्याएं सामने आ रही हैं। बड़े-बड़े भूखंड आने वाले दिनों में जलमग्न हो सकते हैं। ग्लेशियरों के पिघलने और समुद्र तल बढ़ने से महासागरों के अथाह जल भंडार के वितरण में खिसकाव आने से धरती पर प्रभाव बढ़ा है। इससे भूकंपीय खिसकाव व धरती में दरार की संभावनाएं बढ़ी हैं।

पर्यावरण असंतुलन से जुड़ी सबसे बड़ी और विकराल समस्या ग्लोबल वार्मिंग ही है। यह उस औद्योगिक क्रांति का परिणाम है, जिसकी शुरुआत यूरोप से हुई थी। प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का अंधाधुंध दोहन कर विकास के नाम पर विनाश की शुरुआत इसी कालखंड में हुई थी। वर्ष 1861 में पहली बार वैज्ञानिक टिंडेल ने ताप के बढ़ने की समस्या पर ध्यान आकर्षित करते हुए बताया कि वायुमंडल में जल, वाष्प, कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड तथा लंबे तरंग विकिरण को अवशोषित कर लेते हैं, जिससे वातावरण का ताप बढ़ता है। वर्ष 1896 में स्वीडिश वैज्ञानिक आरहेनियस ने यह बताया कि कोयले के दहन से कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड का उत्सर्जन होता है, जिससे ग्रीन हाउस प्रभाव बढ़ता है तथा इस कारण धरती का ताप बढ़ता है। वर्ष 1924 में अमेरिका के वैज्ञानिक लोटा ने बताया कि औद्योगिक गतिविधियों के कारण आगामी 500 वर्षों में पृथ्वी के वातावरण में कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड की मात्रा वर्तमान स्तर से दोगुनी हो जाएगी। वर्ष 1967 में विज्ञान जगत में यह स्पष्ट कर दिया कि धरती का ताप बढ़ने के लिए कार्बन डाइऑक्साइड मुख्य रूप से उत्तरदायी है। आंकड़े बताते हैं कि पिछली सदी के दौरान धरती का औसत तापमान आधा डिग्री सेंटीग्रेड बढ़ गया है। तापमान वृद्धि की वर्तमान दर के अनुसार वर्ष 2100 तक वैश्विक तापमान विनाशक स्थिति में आ जाएगा इस स्थिति के लिए हम ही जिम्मेदार होंगे क्योंकि हमने ही पर्यावरण के प्रति अपने दायित्व को नहीं निभाया। पर्यावरण असंतुलन के कारण ही ओजोन परत के क्षीण होने तथा उसमें छेद होने की समस्या आई है। ओजोन ऑक्सीजन का ही एक रूप है जिसमें दो की जगह तीन अणु होते हैं। यदि यह परत नष्ट हो जाए या कमजोर पड़ जाए, तो पराबैंगनी किरणें पृथ्वी की सतह तक पहुंचती है, जो न सिर्फ जीव-जंतुओं के लिए बल्कि वनस्पतियों के लिए भी हानिकारक होती है। ओजोन परत के क्षरण के लिए भी मानवीय गतिविधियां ही जिम्मेदार है।

भौतिक रूप से जीवन को सुखमय बनाने तथा विलासिता के साधन सृजित करने के चक्कर में हमने उन रसायनों का जन्म का प्रयोग किया जो ओजोन परत को क्षति पहुंचाते हैं। दुष्प्रभाव सामने दिख रहे हैं जिनके भविष्य में और बढ़ाने की संभावना है।

पर्यावरण की स्थिति इस हद तक बिगड़ चुकी है कि वह अब और छेड़छाड़ बर्दाश्त नहीं कर पा रहा है। भारत सुनामी का कहर खेल चुका है। जापान में सुनामी खंड प्रलय जैसा था। आइसलैंड के ज्वालामुखी से निकले राख और धुएं के गुबार ने भी कहर बरपाने का ही काम किया। चीन और हैती में आए भूकंप की विनाशलीला देखी जा चुकी है। आंकड़े बताते हैं कि पिछले दो दशकों में दुनिया भर में आने वाली प्राकृतिक आपदाओं में चार गुना बढ़त हुई है। यानी कुदरत का कहर बनाकर टूटना दिख रहा है। दुनिया के वैज्ञानिक चिंतित है तथा भूकंप, सुनामी, ज्वालामुखी विस्फोट और भूस्खलन जैसी आपदाओं को भूमंडलीय तापन से जोड़कर देख रहे तथा उनके बीच अर्न्तसम्बन्धों की पड़ताल के लिए व्यापक शोध की आवश्यकता है। वर्तमान में सालाना औसतन 500 प्राकृतिक आपदाएं आती है, जो पूर्व की अपेक्षा काफी अधिक है।

शास्त्रों में कहा गया है की प्रकृति का कोप सारे प्रकोपों से बढ़कर होता है। हमने यदि इस सूत्र वाक्य पर ध्यान दिया होता, तो शायद आपदाओं के रूप में हमें प्रकृति का यह क्रूर और विनाशकारी चेहरा ना देखना पड़ता। यदि हमने संतुलित विकास को महत्व दिया होता तो प्रकृति इस प्रकार कुपित न होती। हमें पर्यावरण की कीमत पर आर्थिक विकास के छलांग तो लगाई मगर अब इसके दुष्परिणामों को झेलने के लिए भी तैयार रहें या समय रहते अपने आचरण बदलाव लाकर पर्यावरण से मैत्रीपूर्ण संबंध बनाकर विकास के पथ पर आगे बढ़े।

मध्यकाल में सम्राट शेरशाह सूरी ने अपने शासनकाल में अनेक जनहित कार्य किए थे, जिनमें सड़कों का निर्माण मुख्य कार्य था। भारत में संपर्क क्रांति का सूत्रपात शेरशाह सूरी ने ही किया था। उसने सबसे पहले सबसे बड़ी सड़क का निर्माण कराया, जो पूर्वी बंगाल के सोनार गांव से शुरू हुई थी तथा आगरा, दिल्ली, लाहौर होते हुए सिंधु नदी पर समाप्त हुई थी। इस विस्तृत राजमार्ग को आजकल ग्रैंड ट्रंक रोड के नाम से जाना जाता है तब इस सड़क-ए-आजम का नाम दिया गया था। सड़क के निर्माण के समय शेरशाह ने इस बात की सख्त हिदायत दे रखी थी की बहुत आवश्यक होने पर ही हरे पेड़ों को काटा जाए तथा निर्माण के बाद सड़क के दोनों किनारों पर नीम, आम, पाकड़, अशोक और पीपल आदि के छायादार वृक्ष लगाए जाएं। मध्यकाल में आज की तरह पर्यावरण की समस्या नहीं थी और न ही प्रदूषण की इतनी भयावह स्थिति थी, फिर भी शेरशाह ने उस अग्रिम दृष्टि का परिचय दिया, जो पर्यावरण संरक्षण की दृष्टि से श्लाघनीय है। और आज हम विकास कार्य करने में विनाश के रास्ते पर ही चल रहे हैं अर्थात् अगर कोई सड़क बनायी जाती है तो उसे चौड़ा बनाने के लिए कितने पेड़ काटे जाते हैं और कितनी तबाही की जाती है उसका कोई आकलन नहीं है। प्रकृति और पर्यावरण के प्रति अगर हम इसी प्रकार अनदेखी करते रहे, तो अभी प्रकृति के क्रोध के रूप में जो खंड प्रलय हमें हिला रही है वह पूर्ण

प्रलय का रूप धर हमें निगल लेगी। यदि अभी भी हम पर्यावरण संतुलन एवं संरक्षण की दिशा में ध्यान देना शुरू कर प्रकृति के जख्मों पर मरहम लगाना शुरू करते हैं तो भावी विनाश से बच सकते हैं। चूंकि यह वैश्विक समस्या है, अतः प्रयास ही वैश्विक स्तर पर होने चाहिए।

पर्यावरण संरक्षण में हमारा दायित्व

पर्यावरण की समस्या से निपटने के लिए हमारा यह दायित्व बनता है कि हम वह आचरण किसी भी कीमत पर न करें जिससे पर्यावरण का क्षरण या क्षति हो। इसके लिए हमें अपनी जीवन शैली में बदलाव लाना होगा। विलासी और भोगवादी अभिवृत्तियों पर अंकुश लगाना होगा। भौतिक संसाधनों का धड़ल्ले से प्रयोग रोककर हम काफी हद तक पर्यावरण संतुलन में सहायक बन सकते हैं। विकास और प्रकृति की हम उतनी ही दौड़ लगाई जितने की इजाजत प्रकृति हमें दे। कम से कम प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का दोहन किया जाए आवश्यक है तो पर्यावरण को होने वाली क्षति की भरपाई की जाए। विश्व में ग्रीन हाउस गैसों के शीर्ष उत्सर्जक चीन, अमेरिका, यूरोपीय संघ, इंडोनेशिया तथा भारत है। चीन जहां पहले पायदान पर है वहीं भारत पांचवें पर। इन देशों को विशेष रूप से ग्रीनहाउस गैस की उत्सर्जन को कम करना होगा तथा कुदरत के कहर से बचाव के लिए अपने दायित्व को निभाना होगा। इस दिशा में कारगर पहल तथा वृक्षारोपण को बढ़ावा दिया जाए। उत्सर्जन में जो भी देश आगे हैं उनकी निगरानी की जाए तथा समय-समय पर इसकी समीक्षा की जाए कि इसमें कितनी गिरावट आई है। ऐसी तकनीक विकसित की जाए, जिसमें कार्बन का उत्सर्जन कम हो तथा इन्हें अधिक से अधिक अमल में लाने के लिए विश्व के सभी देशों को प्रोत्साहित किया जाए। वैश्विक पहल को मजबूती देने के लिए विकासशील देशों का यह दायित्व बनता है कि एक संयुक्त राष्ट्र जलवायु कोष का गठन करें, ताकि इस वैश्विक समस्या से निपटने के लिए धन की कमी न आड़े आए। बायोगैस तथा सौर ऊर्जा के इस्तेमाल को बढ़ावा देकर इस समस्या से निपटा जा सकता है। भारत में तो इस बात की सख्त जरूरत है कि हम पर्यावरण संरक्षित करें। हमारा देश कृषि प्रधान है और विकासशील है इस देश में किसानों का भाग्य मौसम तय करता है। मौसम ने साथ दिया तो किसान के चेहरे खिल जाते हैं और यदि मौसम में बेरुखी का परिचय दिया तो अन्नदाताओं के चेहरे मुरझा जाते हैं। हमारी खाद्यान्न सुरक्षा तथा सुख समृद्धि के लिए मौसम की अनुकूलता नितांत आवश्यक है और इस अनुकूलता के लिए यह जरूरी है कि हम प्रकृति को नुकसान ना पहुंचाएं।

हमें प्रकृति की ओर लौट कर ही अपना बचाव करना होगा। कुछ छोटे-छोटे प्रयास कर हम पर्यावरण को बचा सकते हैं। आने-जाने के लिए साइकिल के इस्तेमाल से हम पर्यावरण को बचा सकते हैं। बाइक स्कूटर और कार का इस्तेमाल करने के बजाय हम साइकिल का प्रयोग करें यदि कार जरूरी हो तो लोग पूल करके उसका प्रयोग करें या सार्वजनिक परिवहन के साधनों का प्रयोग करें। जूट बैग का प्रयोग पॉलिथीन की जगह करें। यह कदम पर्यावरण को बचाने में सहायक होगा। उन पदार्थों के प्रयोग को जो रीसायकल हो सकते हैं उन्हें वरीयता देकर ही हम पर्यावरण संरक्षण में मदद कर सकते हैं। बिजली से चलने वाले संसाधनों का कम से कम प्रयोग कर इन उपकरणों को बंद करके रखकर पर्यावरण की क्षति कम की जा सकती है।

निष्कर्ष

पर्यावरण के प्रति हमारा दायित्व सामूहिक रूप से है। सभी व्यक्ति के द्वारा विभिन्न छोटे-छोटे उपाय को अपनाने के साथ ही यह भी जरूरी है कि हम वृक्षारोपण पर अधिकाधिक ध्यान दें तथा इसके लिए लोगों को भी प्रेरित करें। सिर्फ वृक्षारोपण को प्रोत्साहित ही न करें, बल्कि वनों की कटान, वृक्षों की कटान का पुरजोर विरोध भी करें। पेड़ों को अपनी संतान की तरह प्यार और परवरिश देकर हमें देश में वृक्ष क्रांति लानी होगी। हर व्यक्ति जीवन में यदि मात्र एक पेड़ लगाने और अपने जीवन काल में उसकी देखभाल का संकल्प करें तो सूरत काफी बदल सकती है। हमारे देश में वृक्षों के पोषण और पल्लवन की एक समृद्ध परंपरा रही है। हमारे यहां वृक्षों को पूजनीय माना जाता है। भारतीय संस्कृति में अनेक लोक पर्वों पर वृक्ष पूजन की परंपरा भी है, इसके बावजूद वनाच्छादित क्षेत्र में कमी यह इंगित करती है कि कहीं ना कहीं हम उन दायित्व से दायित्वों से पीछे हटे हैं, जो पर्यावरण के संरक्षण के लिए आवश्यक है। संभवतः इसके लिए वह असंतुलित विकास ही जिम्मेदार है, जो प्रकृति की उपेक्षा और उसका दोहन कर किया गया है। वस्तुतः विकास के मुद्दे पर अनेक दृष्टिकोण एवं मत देखने में आते हैं। विकास का अधिक प्रबल सिद्धांत जो कि शीर्ष तल एवं उद्योग उन्मुखी है, आलोचना का शिकार हो रहे हैं व उनके विकल्प भी सुझाए जाते रहे हैं। अत्यधिक हानिकारक सिद्ध हुए धरती के संसाधन शोषण एवं भारी उद्योगों द्वारा पर्यावरण ह्रास संबंधी बड़ी जागरूकता के वर्तमान युग में विकास के उपभोक्तावाद की ओर उन्मुखी दृष्टिकोण की कड़ी आलोचना हो रही है।

अब हमारा व्यक्तिगत दायित्व बनता है कि हम आलोचनाओं तक ही सीमित न रहे, बल्कि अच्छे परिणाम के लिए व्यावहारिक पल के धरातल पर खड़े होकर प्रकृति और पर्यावरण में ईश्वर का प्रतिरूप देखकर उसकी उपासना करें। संभवत तभी दूर हो सकेगा प्रकृति का कोप और हम उन प्राकृतिक आपदाओं से बच सकते हैं जो रह रहकर हमें झकझोर रही है।

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सरला देवी चौधरानी : साहित्य, नारी चेतना और राष्ट्रवाद का संगम – एक आलोचनात्मक अध्ययन

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सारांश

भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन और सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक पुनर्जागरण के इतिहास में सरलादेवी चौधरानी का योगदान अत्यंत विशिष्ट और बहुआयामी रहा है। वे केवल साहित्यकार ही नहीं, बल्कि राजनीतिक कार्यकर्ता, समाज सुधारक और अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भारत की स्त्री चेतना की प्रतिनिधि थीं। उनका साहित्य स्त्री स्वतंत्रता और राष्ट्रवाद का जीवंत दस्तावेज़ है। उनकी आत्मकथा 'जीवनर झरापाता' में उन्होंने व्यक्तिगत जीवन के संघर्षों के साथ-साथ उस समय की स्त्रियों की सामूहिक चेतना का भी गहन चित्रण किया है।

भारत स्त्री महामंडल जैसी संस्था की स्थापना, कांग्रेस में सक्रिय सहभागिता, गांधीजी, बिपिनचंद्र पाल और अन्य नेताओं से संवाद, तथा वैश्विक मंचों पर भारत की स्त्रियों की स्थिति को प्रस्तुत करना। ये सभी उनके बहुआयामी योगदान के उदाहरण हैं।

मुख्य शब्द

नारी चेतना, राष्ट्रवाद, महिला सशक्तिकरण, स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन, सामाजिक सुधार

प्रस्तावना

19वीं शताब्दी के उत्तरार्द्ध और 20वीं शताब्दी के पूर्वार्द्ध में भारतीय समाज में गहरे परिवर्तन हो रहे थे। एक ओर औपनिवेशिक सत्ता के दमनकारी स्वरूप से मुक्ति की राष्ट्रीय चेतना उभर रही थी, वहीं दूसरी ओर भारतीय स्त्रियों की स्थिति सुधारने के लिए सामाजिक और धार्मिक आंदोलनों का उदय हो रहा था । ऐसे परिवर्तनीय समय में सरलादेवी चौधरानी जैसी महिलाएँ सामने आईं, जिन्होंने राष्ट्रवाद और नारी चेतना को एक साथ जोड़कर नए विमर्श की रचना की। उनका जीवन साहित्य, राजनीति और समाज सुधार की त्रिवेणी था। वे न केवल बंगाल पुनर्जागरण की उपज थीं, बल्कि पूरे भारत की महिलाओं को संगठित करने वाली अग्रणी नेता भी बनीं।

जीवन परिचय और पारिवारिक पृष्ठभूमि

सरलादेवी चौधरानी का जन्म 9 सितंबर 1872 को कोलकाता के एक समृद्ध और सांस्कृतिक परिवार में हुआ। उनके पिता जानकीनाथ घोषाल भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस के प्रतिष्ठित नेता थे और माता स्वर्णकुमारी देवी बंगाल की पहली महिला उपन्यासकार मानी जाती थीं। वे रवीन्द्रनाथ टैगोर की भतीजी थीं, जिससे उन्हें साहित्य और संगीत का गहन वातावरण मिला।

उन्होंने 1890 में कलकत्ता विश्वविद्यालय से अंग्रेज़ी साहित्य में स्नातक की उपाधि प्राप्त की और पद्मावती स्वर्ण पदक जीता। संस्कृत, फारसी और फ्रेंच जैसी भाषाओं का ज्ञान होने के कारण उनके विचारों में भारतीयता और पाश्चात्य शिक्षा का संतुलन दिखाई देता है।

1905 में उनका विवाह पंजाब के राष्ट्रवादी अधिवक्ता पंडित रामभुज दत्त चौधरी से हुआ। विवाह के बाद उनका कार्यक्षेत्र बंगाल से निकलकर पंजाब और उत्तर भारत तक विस्तारित हुआ। उनका एक पुत्र दीपक चौधरी थान।

इस प्रकार उनका जीवन निजी, पारिवारिक और सार्वजनिक तीनों ही स्तरों पर राष्ट्रवाद और स्त्री चेतना का अनूठा संगम प्रस्तुत करता है।

साहित्यिक योगदान और सांस्कृतिक भूमिका

सरलादेवी चौधरानी का साहित्य स्त्री चेतना और राष्ट्रवाद का जीवंत संगम है। वे लेखन को केवल भावाभिव्यक्ति का साधन नहीं मानती थीं, बल्कि उसे सामाजिक-राजनीतिक संघर्ष का शस्त्र समझती थीं।

आत्मकथा और स्त्री जीवन का चित्रण

उनकी आत्मकथा 'जीवनर झरापाता' बंगाली साहित्य में स्त्री आत्मकथाओं की परंपरा की एक महत्वपूर्ण कड़ी है। इसमें उन्होंने लिखा-"मेरा जीवन केवल निजी अनुभवों का संग्रह नहीं, बल्कि उस समय की स्त्रियों की सामूहिक पीड़ा और संघर्ष का दर्पण है।" (पृ. 21)

इस आत्मकथा में उन्होंने विवाह, परिवार, सामाजिक कुरीतियों और स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में स्त्रियों की भूमिका को अत्यंत मार्मिकता के साथ प्रस्तुत किया। यह ग्रंथ केवल व्यक्तिगत संस्मरण नहीं, बल्कि स्त्री चेतना का घोषणापत्र है।

सरलादेवी ने 'भारती' पत्रिका का संपादन किया, जिसमें उन्होंने महिलाओं की शिक्षा, आत्मनिर्भरता और राष्ट्र के प्रति कर्तव्य पर अनेक लेख प्रकाशित किए। यह पत्रिका स्त्रियों के लिए एक वैचारिक मंच बनी, जिसने बंगाल और उत्तर भारत की पढ़ी-लिखी महिलाओं को राष्ट्रीय विमर्श से जोड़ा।

उनकी कविताएँ जैसे 'सतगान', 'नव बरस प्रवाह' और 'बनलिर पितृधन' में मातृभूमि के प्रति समर्पण, बलिदान और स्त्री अस्मिता की अनुगूंज सुनाई देती है ।

एक जगह वे लिखती हैं - "स्त्रियों की मुक्ति शिक्षा और आत्मनिर्भरता से ही संभव है। जब तक वे स्वयं को सक्षम नहीं बनातीं, तब तक राष्ट्र भी अधूरा रहेगा।" (जीवनर झरापाता, पृ. 112)

सरला देवी का मानना था कि साहित्य केवल सौंदर्य-बोध का विषय नहीं, बल्कि सामाजिक चेतना

जगाने का साधन है। वे कहती हैं- "कविता मेरे लिए राष्ट्र का शस्त्र है, संगठन मेरा कवच और राजनीति मेरा धर्म।" (जीवनर झरापाता, पृ. 261)

उनके निबंधों और लेखों में महिला शिक्षा, पर्दा-प्रथा के विरोध, स्वदेशी आंदोलन के समर्थन और राष्ट्रवाद के प्रश्नों को सीधे उठाया गया।

बंगाल पुनर्जागरण ने उन्हें साहित्य और संगीत की एक ऐसी पृष्ठभूमि दी जिसमें भारतीयता और आधुनिकता का संगम था। उन्होंने महिला संगीत सम्मेलनों का आयोजन किया और स्त्रियों को सांस्कृतिक अभिव्यक्ति का अवसर दिया।

इतिहासकार इंद्राणी बनर्जी लिखती हैं- "सरलादेवी चौधरानी का साहित्य केवल साहित्यिक कृतियों तक सीमित नहीं था, बल्कि वह सामाजिक सुधार और राजनीतिक जागरण का प्रेरक माध्यम था।"

राजनीतिक चेतना और राष्ट्रवाद

सरलादेवी चौधरानी का राष्ट्रवादी दृष्टिकोण अत्यंत व्यावहारिक और समग्र था। उनका मानना था कि स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में महिलाओं की भागीदारी अनिवार्य है। 1905 में बंगाल विभाजन के समय उन्होंने स्वदेशी आंदोलन का सक्रिय समर्थन किया। उन्होंने महिलाओं को विदेशी वस्त्रों का बहिष्कार करने और चरखा अपनाने के लिए प्रेरित किया। उनके अनुसार- "स्वदेशी केवल वस्त्र का प्रश्न नहीं, बल्कि यह आत्मनिर्भरता और राष्ट्रीय अस्मिता का प्रतीक है।" (जीवनर झरापाता, पृ. 201) उन्होंने स्थानीय स्तर पर महिला समितियाँ बनाईं, जिससे महिलाएँ स्वदेशी वस्त्रों का निर्माण और वितरण कर सकीं। सरलादेवी कांग्रेस की सक्रिय सदस्य रहीं और 1910, 1917 के बीच महिला संगठनों के माध्यम से राष्ट्रीय मंच पर महिलाओं की उपस्थिति बढ़ाने का कार्य किया।

इतिहासकार वीरेन्द्रनाथ चट्टोपाध्याय के अनुसार- "सरलादेवी ने कांग्रेस मंच को केवल पुरुष नेताओं का क्षेत्र न रहने देकर महिलाओं को भी राष्ट्रीय राजनीति में सम्मिलित किया।" 1919–1921 में उनके गांधीजी के साथ पत्राचार में नारीवादी विचारों और राजनीतिक रणनीतियों का आदान-प्रदान हुआ। गांधीजी ने उन्हें "राष्ट्रीय संपत्ति" कहा। हालाँकि उनके दृष्टिकोण में अंतर थाः गांधी का नारीवाद नैतिक था, जबकि सरलादेवी का नारीवाद व्यावहारिक और राजनीतिक। उनका घर कई बार क्रांतिकारियों के बैठक स्थल और शरणस्थल के रूप में इस्तेमाल हुआ। उन्होंने संसाधन उपलब्ध कराए और सुरक्षा दी। बिपिनचंद्र के अनुसार- "सरलादेवी का राष्ट्रवाद उदारवादी राजनीति और क्रांतिकारी चेतना, दोनों के बीच सेतु का कार्य करता है।"

महिला संगठन और समाज सुधार

सरलादेवी चौधरानी का सबसे ऐतिहासिक योगदान भारत स्त्री महामंडल (1910) की स्थापना है। इसे भारतीय इतिहास का पहला अखिल भारतीय महिला संगठन माना जाता है। इस संगठन की शाखाएँ बंगाल से लेकर पंजाब, दिल्ली, कराची और मद्रास तक फैलीं। उद्देश्य था। महिला शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, आत्मनिर्भरता और राजनीतिक भागीदारी। उनका मानना था- "यदि स्त्रियाँ राष्ट्र निर्माण की धुरी नहीं बनेंगी, तो स्वतंत्रता अधूरी रहेगी।" (जीवनर झरापाता, पृ. 223) उन्होंने कन्या

विद्यालय, प्रशिक्षण केंद्र और स्वरोजगार संस्थाएँ स्थापित कीं। "शिक्षा स्त्रियों का कवच है, जिससे वे अज्ञान और निर्भरता से मुक्त होकर अपने अधिकारों के लिए संघर्ष कर सकती हैं।" (जीवनर झरापाता, पृ. 241)

उन्होंने पर्दा-प्रथा, बाल विवाह और सती प्रथा के खिलाफ आवाज़ उठाई। रचना मुखर्जी लिखती हैं- "सरलादेवी ने पर्दा को स्त्री दमन का सबसे बड़ा प्रतीक माना और महिलाओं से आग्रह किया कि वे इससे बाहर आएँ।"

1917 में उन्होंने एनी बेसेंट के साथ मिलकर महिलाओं के मताधिकार के लिए ज्ञापन दिया। "राष्ट्र की आधी शक्ति अगर मतदान से वंचित रहेगी, तो स्वराज्य अधूरा ही रहेगा।" (जीवनर झरापाता, पृ. 265) उन्होंने ग्रामीण महिलाओं को भी संगठन में शामिल किया।

"राष्ट्र का पुनर्निर्माण केवल शिक्षित महिलाओं के भरोसे नहीं होगा; खेतों और गलियों की स्त्रियाँ भी इसमें भागीदार हों।" (जीवनर झरापाता, पृ. 289)

इतिहासकार बनर्जी लिखते हैं- "भारत स्त्री महामंडल ने पहली बार भारतीय महिलाओं को अखिल भारतीय मंच पर जोड़ा और सामाजिक सुधार को राष्ट्रवाद से प्रत्यक्ष रूप से जोड़ दिया।"

अंतर्राष्ट्रीय प्रभाव

सरलादेवी चौधरानी ने भारतीय महिला आंदोलन को वैश्विक स्तर पर पहुँचाया। उन्होंने पश्चिमी देशों की महिला संगठनों की तरह भारत स्त्री महामंडल की कार्यप्रणाली विकसित की। 1920 के दशक में यूरोप यात्राओं के दौरान अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सम्मेलनों में भारतीय महिलाओं का प्रतिनिधित्व किया। ब्रिटिश औपनिवेशिक विमर्श को चुनौती दी और सिद्ध किया कि भारतीय महिलाएँ नेतृत्व करने में सक्षम हैं। दक्षिण अफ्रीका, ब्रिटेन और अन्य देशों में भारतीय प्रवासी महिलाओं को संगठित किया। उनकी रचनाओं के अंग्रेज़ी व फ्रेंच अनुवाद से भारतीय नारी चेतना वैश्विक विमर्श का हिस्सा बनी।

निष्कर्ष

सरलादेवी चौधरानी का जीवन और कार्य भारतीय इतिहास में एक अद्वितीय उदाहरण प्रस्तुत करता है। उनकी आत्मकथा और कविताएँ स्त्री चेतना और राष्ट्रवाद का जीवंत दस्तावेज़ हैं। उन्होंने महिलाओं को राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन में सक्रिय भागीदार बनाया। भारत स्त्री महामंडल के माध्यम से शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और महिला अधिकारों के लिए कार्य किया। उन्होंने भारत की स्त्री चेतना को वैश्विक विमर्श से जोड़ा। इस प्रकार सरलादेवी शिक्षा, साहित्य, राजनीति और संगठन का संगम थीं। वे आज भी महिला सशक्तिकरण और राष्ट्रनिर्माण की प्रेरणा हैं।

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स्त्री ही स्त्री की नियंत्रक : दिलीप कौर तिवाणा के उपन्यास 'एहो हमारा जीवना' का अध्ययन

गुरपिन्दर कुमार
सहायक प्रोफेसर
सेंटर फॉर वुमेन स्टडीज
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सारांश

पितृसत्ता एक ऐसी सामाजिक संरचना है, जो पुरुष को शक्ति का केंद्र बनाकर स्त्री को अधीनस्थ बना देती है। इस व्यवस्था में स्त्री की पहचान परिवार, विवाह और पुरुष की छाया तक सीमित कर दी जाती है। परिणामस्वरूप, स्त्रियाँ विरोध करने के बजाय इसी ढांचे का हिस्सा बन जाती हैं और अन्य स्त्रियों को नियंत्रित करती हैं।[1] इस तरह पितृसत्ता केवल पुरुष-स्त्री संबंध तक सीमित नहीं, बल्कि स्त्री-स्त्री के बीच भी सत्ता-संबंधों को जन्म देती है। दिलीप कौर तिवाणा का साहित्य अकादमी सम्मानित उपन्यास एहो हमारा जीवना इस व्यवस्था की गहन पड़ताल करता है। नायिका भानो का जीवन दर्शाता है कि किस प्रकार स्त्री सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक दबावों में जीने को विवष होती है। गरीब किसान पिता द्वारा भानो को बेचना केवल व्यक्तिगत त्रासदी नहीं, बल्कि उस व्यवस्था का प्रतीक है जहाँ स्त्रियों को वस्तु की तरह खरीदा-बेचा जाता है। पंजाब की पृष्ठभूमि में दुल्हन खरीदने या दूसरी पत्नी रखने की प्रथा स्त्री के वस्तुकरण की ओर संकेत करती है। कमला भसीन के अनुसार स्त्रियों की पीड़ा लिंग नहीं बल्कि हमदकमत के कारण है। 'एहो हमारा जीवना' उपन्यास यह दिखाता है कि स्त्री की दुर्दशा किसी प्राकृतिक कारण से नहीं, बल्कि सामाजिक संरचना और सत्ता-संबंधों से उत्पन्न है। तिवाणा का लेखन स्त्री-जीवन की संवेदनाओं के साथ उसकी सामाजिक व सांस्कृतिक जटिलताओं को भी उजागर करता है। भानो का आघात इस यथार्थ का प्रतीक है कि स्त्री अपने ही समाज में उपेक्षित और परायी बनी रहती है। यह उपन्यास स्त्री विमर्श और जेंडर अध्ययन के लिए महत्त्वपूर्ण पाठ प्रस्तुत करता है।

मूलशब्द

पितृसत्ता, उत्पीड़न, स्त्री, दुर्दशा, सामंती

1. परिचय

पितृसत्ता वह विचारधारा और सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक संरचना है, जो पुरुष को श्रेष्ठ और केन्द्र में स्थापित करती है, जबकि स्त्री को हाशिये पर धकेल देती है।[4] इस व्यवस्था में शक्ति, सत्ता

और संचालन के सभी प्रमुख अधिकार पुरुषों के पास होते हैं और स्त्रियों को आज्ञाकारिता तथा आश्रित जीवन की ओर धकेला जाता है। किसी भी व्यक्ति का जैविक लिंग केवल प्राकृतिक स्तर पर उसकी पहचान करता है, लेकिन सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक हस्तक्षेपों के माध्यम से वही लिंग जेंडर में रूपांतरित हो जाता है।[5] इस प्रकार जेंडर के साथ विशेष गुण, भूमिकाएँ और अपेक्षाएँ जुड़ जाती हैं। उदाहरणार्थ, स्त्रियों को नम्रता, विनम्रता, मौन, धैर्य और आतिथ्य जैसे गुणों से जोड़ा जाता है, जबकि पुरुषों को तर्कशीलता, बुद्धि, कठोरता और नेतृत्व क्षमता के साथ देखा जाता है।[6] इस भेदभावपूर्ण संरचना के कारण स्त्रियों को पुरुषों से कम सक्षम और आश्रित माना जाता है।

भारतीय साहित्य में पितृसत्तात्मक संरचना की पर्याप्त अभिव्यक्ति मिलती है। पंजाबी साहित्यकार दिलीप कौर तिवाणा ने अपने कथा-साहित्य में स्त्रियों की स्थिति, उनके संघर्ष और उनकी सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक विवषताओं को गहनता से चित्रित किया है। वे सामंती और आधुनिक पंजाब दोनों के परिप्रेक्ष्य में स्त्रियों की दयनीय दशा का उद्घाटन करती हैं। उनके साहित्य का केंद्रीय उद्देश्य यही है कि स्त्रियाँ किस प्रकार पितृसत्तात्मक मूल्यों की जकड़न में बंधी हुई हैं और किस प्रकार यह व्यवस्था उन्हें प्रगति और स्वतंत्रता से वंचित करती है।

उनका उपन्यास एहो हमारा जीवना इसका उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण है। उपन्यास की नायिका भानो एक ऐसी स्त्री के रूप में प्रस्तुत होती है, जिसका जीवन सामाजिक और पितृसत्तात्मक संरचना के दोहरे शोषण का प्रतीक है। उपन्यास की शुरुआत में तिवाणा लिखती हैं कि- "कहते हैं कि नशेड़ी नारायण पवित्र गंगा की गहराई में स्नान करने गया था और वहाँ से एक स्त्री को ले आया है।"[7] यह प्रसंग भानो के जीवन को वस्तुकरण और बेगानेपन के प्रतीक के रूप में सामने लाता है।

भानो को उसके पिता सरवन नामक व्यक्ति को बेच देता है। जब सरवन की मृत्यु हो जाती है, तो भानो स्वयं को दोषी मानकर आत्महत्या करना चाहती है, क्योंकि उसे भय है कि सरवन का परिवार या तो उसे पुनः अपने अधिकार में कर लेगा या किसी और को बेच देगा। नारायण द्वारा बचाए जाने के बाद भानो उसके साथ रहने लगती है, किंतु उसका भयानक अतीत उसे मानसिक रूप से अस्थिर बना देता है। यह अस्थिरता नारायण को असहज लगती है और जब भानो उसके लिए संतान उत्पन्न करने में असमर्थ रहती है, तो वह उसे छोड़ देता है। नारायण भागवंती नामक स्त्री से विवाह करता है और भानो को एक अन्य पुरुष फत्ता अपने साथ ले जाता है।

यहाँ तक कि अन्य स्त्रियाँ भी, जो वैध पत्नी या माँ के रूप में सामाजिक मान्यता रखती हैं, भानो की निंदा करती हैं और उसके चरित्र पर प्रश्नचिह्न लगाती हैं। यह स्थिति इस तथ्य को उजागर करती है कि पितृसत्ता केवल पुरुषों द्वारा ही नहीं, बल्कि स्त्रियों के बीच भी सत्ता-संबंधों और आंतरिक स्त्री-विरोधी मानसिकता के माध्यम से कार्य करती है। भानो की पीड़ा और वेदना केवल पुरुषों द्वारा किए गए उत्पीड़न से नहीं, बल्कि स्त्रियों द्वारा की गई निंदा और सामाजिक अस्वीकृति से और भी बढ़ जाती है। इस प्रकार उपन्यास पितृसत्तात्मक

समाज में स्त्रियों की दुर्दशा और हाशियाकरण को यथार्थपरक ढंग से उजागर करता है।

2. स्त्री दुर्दशा में पुरुष पात्रों का योगदान

दिलीप कौर तिवाणा का उपन्यास एहो हमारा जीवना पितृसत्तात्मक समाज में स्त्री की स्थिति का गहन और यथार्थपरक चित्रण करता है। उपन्यास की केंद्रीय पात्र भानो का जीवन इस बात का प्रमाण है कि स्त्री की नियति उसके अपने निर्णयों से नहीं, बल्कि पुरुषों द्वारा लिए गए फैसलों और सामाजिक संरचनाओं से नियंत्रित होती है।[8]

भानो का पहला शोषण उसके पिता द्वारा ही होता है, जब वह आर्थिक विवशता और बेटे की बीमारी के कारण उसे 'संपत्ति' की तरह बेच देता है।[9] यह प्रसंग इस तथ्य को उजागर करता है कि पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था में स्त्री का अस्तित्व उसके अधिकारों और इच्छाओं से नहीं, बल्कि पुरुष की आर्थिक-सामाजिक परिस्थितियों से परिभाषित होता है।

सरवन और उसके भाइयों के घर पहुँचने पर भी भानो को स्वीकृति या सुरक्षा नहीं मिलती। सरवन के भाइयों की लोलुप दृष्टि और निरंतर उत्पीड़न भानो को यह अनुभव कराते हैं कि विवाह संस्था के भीतर भी स्त्री केवल उपभोग की वस्तु है।[10] सरवन की मृत्यु के बाद तो उसकी स्थिति और अधिक असुरक्षित हो जाती है, क्योंकि अब कई पुरुष सामूहिक रूप से उसे 'खरीदी हुई संपत्ति' घोषित करते हैं।[11]

भानो का आत्महत्या का प्रयास उसके असहनीय जीवन की पराकाष्ठा को दर्शाता है, किंतु यहाँ भी पुरुष हस्तक्षेप निर्णायक बनता है। नारायण उसे गंगा से बचाकर अपने घर ले आता है।[12] किंतु यह 'उद्धार' भी स्थायी राहत नहीं देता, क्योंकि पितृसत्ता के अंतर्गत उसका मूल्यांकन उसकी प्रजनन क्षमता से किया जाता है। पुत्र उत्पन्न न कर पाने की असमर्थता उसे फिर से हाशिये पर पहुँचा देती है, और नारायण भागवंती को खरीदकर लाता है।[13] यह घटना इस सच्चाई को रेखांकित करती है कि स्त्री की सामाजिक पहचान माँ बनने की क्षमता से जुड़ी है।

नारायण का मित्र जागर स्त्री-शोषण की मानसिकता का चरम रूप है। वह भानो की असहमति को नज़रअंदाज़ करते हुए उस पर अधिकार जमाने की कोशिश करता है।[14] यहाँ पितृसत्ता का सबसे कठोर चेहरा सामने आता है। जहाँ स्त्री की असहमति का कोई मूल्य नहीं होता और उसकी अस्मिता को निरंतर दबाया जाता है।

उपन्यास में संती का कथन, "एक बच्चे के बिना, एक स्त्री पूर्ण नहीं होती"[15] समाज की उस गहरी रूढ़ धारणा को उजागर करता है, जो स्त्री की पहचान को केवल मातृत्व से जोड़कर देखती है। भागवंती पुत्र उत्पन्न कर सम्मान अर्जित करती है, जबकि भानो मातृत्व से वंचित रहकर समाज में उपेक्षित हो जाती है।

इस प्रकार, 'एहो हमारा जीवना' में पिता, सरवन, उसके भाई, नारायण, जागर और यहाँ तक कि समाज सामूहिक रूप से स्त्री की दुर्दशा के कारक सिद्ध होते हैं। भानो का जीवन केवल

उसकी व्यक्तिगत त्रासदी नहीं है, बल्कि पितृसत्ता द्वारा गढ़े गए उस सामाजिक ढाँचे का प्रतिबिंब है, जहाँ स्त्री निरंतर शोषण, अस्वीकृति और उपेक्षा का शिकार बनती है।

3. स्त्रियों द्वारा छटपटाहट, गहन विश्लेषण

पितृसत्तात्मक समाज में स्त्रियों का उत्पीड़न केवल पुरुषों से ही नहीं आता; यह व्यवस्था स्वयं स्त्रियों के आपसी व्यवहार और रिश्तों में भी प्रवेश कर जाती है और उन्हें एक-दूसरे के खिलाफ खड़ा कर देती है। यही होरिज़ॉन्टल दमन (Horizontal Oppression) या आंतरिकीकृत पितृसत्ता का रूप है, जहाँ कुछ स्त्रियाँ, जो सामाजिक या आर्थिक दृष्टि से थोड़ी बेहतर स्थिति में होती हैं। कमज़ोर स्त्रियों को बाध्य कर, निंदा कर और नीचा दिखाकर अपने अस्तित्व को सुरक्षित करने की कोशिश करती हैं। इस प्रक्रिया में पितृसत्ता का दमनात्मक तंत्र और भी दृढ़ होता है।[16]

3.1 पितृसत्ता का आंतरिकीकरण और स्त्री-स्त्री शासन

पितृसत्ता का आंतरिकीकरण तब होता है जब लिंग-आधारित असमानताओं के नियम और मूल्य स्त्रियों द्वारा भी स्वीकृत और दोहराए जाते हैं। इन नियमों के अनुरूप कुछ स्त्रियाँ 'संस्कारी', 'सम्मानित' और 'वैध' बनकर दूसरों पर श्रेष्ठता का प्रदर्शन करती हैं। और यही प्रदर्शन अक्सर आर्थिक-सामाजिक संसाधनों तक पहुँच, मातृत्व-स्थिति, तथा समुदाय की स्वीकृति से जुड़ा होता है। उपन्यास में बच्चनी, जागर की भाभी और बाद में भागवंती इसी भूमिका में नजर आती हैं: वे भानो की अस्थिरता और वैधता (legitimacy) की कमी को उसकी खामियों के रूप में प्रस्तुत कर उसे अधिक अपमानित करती हैं।[17]

3.2 सामाजिक निग्रह के उपकरण : अफवाह, नैतिकता-पुलिसिंग और 'चरित्र-निर्धारण'

तिवाणा ने दिखाया है कि कैसे पड़ोस की स्त्रियाँ बिना ठोस जानकारी के भी किसी स्त्री की छवि 'चरित्रहीन' बना देती हैं : "एक पूर्ण विकसित स्त्री! उसने किस निर्दोष आदमी को नारायण का शिकार बनाकर झुकाया होगा।"[18] यह केवल तर्कहीन कुत्सित व्यंग्य नहीं; यह एक सामाजिक-संजाल है जो अफवाह, निगरानी और नैतिकता-पुलिसिंग के द्वारा काम करता है। ऐसी भाषा स्त्री के शोषण को वैधानिक और स्वाभाविक दिखाने में मदद करती है, स्त्री पर सवाल उठाना 'सामाजिक सुरक्षा' का काम बन जाता है।[19]

3.3 आर्थिक-प्रजननिक मूल्यांकन और मातृत्व का पावर-इंटेरफेस

पितृसत्ता में मातृत्व एक शक्तिशाली सामाजिक मुद्रा बन जाती है। "एक बच्चे के बिना, एक स्त्री पूर्ण नहीं होती"। इस कथन के माध्यम से उपन्यास दिखाता है कि सतंति की चिंता, वंश वृद्धि और वर्चस्व का सामजिक मूल्य किस प्रकार स्त्रियों को आपस में विभाजित कर देता है। जब भानो पुत्र उत्पन्न करने में असमर्थ रहती है, तब

उसका सामाजिक स्तर गिरे हुए माल के सामान-सा हो जाता है और भागवंती के माध्यम से वही समाजीकरण उसे और गहरी वरीयता देता है।[20]

3.4 घरेलू वर्चस्व की रणनीतियाँ : मामूली शक्तियों से बड़ा प्रभाव

भागवंती का व्यवहार संकेत करता है कि जो स्त्री किसी पुरुष के 'समान' से बेहतर स्थिति हासिल कर लेती है (यहाँ नवगृहिणी/माँ के रूप में), वह भी तर्कसंगत अधिकार पाने के लिए छोटी-छोटी तकनीकों का इस्तेमाल करती है: निंदा, अपमान, घरेलू नियम थोपना, अन्य स्त्री को सार्वजनिक मान-हानि का सामना कराना। इस व्यवहार का तात्पर्य है कि पितृसत्तात्मक संरचना स्त्रियों को सत्ता के सूक्ष्म-रूप अपनाने के लिए प्रेरित करती है, और ये सूक्ष्म-रणनीतियाँ कुल मिलाकर पितृसत्ता की सह-रक्षा करती हैं।[21]

3.5 मनोवैज्ञानिक परिणाम : छटपटाहट, आत्म-पराजय और अस्तित्व-क्षरण

भानो की मानसिक विस्थिति, लगातार कलंक, आत्म-निंदा, और अवसाद, उन सभी आघातों का परिणामी प्रभाव है जिन्हें पुरुषों और औरतों दोनों ने उस पर ठोंक दिया। सार्वजनिक अपमान, यौनिक हिंसा के खतरे, घरेलू अस्वीकार और मातृत्व-विहीनता के कारण उसका आत्मसम्मान लगातार क्षतिग्रस्त होता है। उपन्यास में भानो का बार-बार "गाय जैसी" प्रस्तुत होना इस मानसिक-विनाश की साहित्यिक अभिव्यक्ति है।[22]

3.6 कारण और प्रणालीगत विश्लेषण - क्यों बनती है स्त्री-स्त्री छटपटाहट?

कई स्तरों पर यह समझा जा सकता है:

- आर्थिक असमानता: सीमित संसाधन और सुरक्षा के लिए प्रतिस्पर्धा स्त्रियों को एक-दूसरे के खिलाफ मोड़ती है।
- सामाजिक मान्यता की होड़: मातृत्व, वैवाहिक स्थिति या घरेलू व्यवस्थितता सामाजिक मान्यता के प्रमुख रास्ते हैं; इनको हासिल करने हेतु स्त्रियाँ प्रतिस्पर्धी बन जाती हैं।
- नैतिकता की राजनीति: समाज स्त्रियों को पुरुषों की वासनाओं और इच्छाओं का नियंत्रक बनाकर उनके प्रति सजग कर देता है, और फिर उन्हीं नियमों से स्त्रियाँ ही दूसरों को नापती हैं।
- अंतर-जनजातीय/जनजातीय संदर्भ: कबीलाई या सीमांत आर्थिक समूहों में सामाजिक दबाव और 'गरिमा' की चिंता और तीव्र होती है, इसलिए महिलाओं द्वारा निंदा अधिक कठोर दिखती है।२३

3.7 उलझन से मुक्ति के संकेत - प्रतिरोध की सम्भावनाएँ

उपन्यास में पूर्ण सहयोग अधिकतर नहीं दिखा, पर संती जैसा चरित्र संकेत देता है

कि सहानुभूति और समझ का छोटा सा सुराग भी बदल सकता है। साहित्यिक रूप से टिवाणा पाठक को यह प्रश्न छोड़ती हैं: यदि स्त्रियाँ आपसी पहचान और साझेदारी पर जोर दें तो क्या पितृसत्ता के ढाँचे कमजोर नहीं किए जा सकते? इस प्रश्न का उत्तर सामाजिक-राजनीतिक शिक्षा, आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण और नारी-एकजुटता के प्रयत्नों में निहित है।[24]

टिवाणा का उपन्यास केवल पुरुष-आधारित उत्पीड़न के दस्तावेज़ नहीं है; यह दिखाता है कि पितृसत्ता किस प्रकार स्त्रियों के मनोविकार, आपसी संबंध और आत्म-परिभाषा को भी नियंत्रित कर लेती है। स्त्रियों द्वारा छटपटाहट पितृसत्ता की एक समग्र रणनीति है, जिसे तोड़ने के लिए आवश्यक है स्त्री-संघर्ष की पुनर्रचना: आंतरिकीकरण के प्रति सचेतना, आपसी सहानुभूति और संरचनात्मक परिवर्तन।[25]

4. निष्कर्ष

दिलीप कौर टिवाणा का उपन्यास 'एहो हमारा जीवना' स्त्रियों के जीवन के उन पहलुओं को उजागर करता है, जो पितृसत्तात्मक ढाँचे के कारण बहुआयामी पीड़ा और छटपटाहट को जन्म देते हैं। इसमें केवल पुरुषों द्वारा स्त्रियों का शोषण नहीं दिखाया गया है, बल्कि स्त्रियों द्वारा स्त्रियों का उत्पीड़न भी सामने आता है। यह तथ्य महत्वपूर्ण है कि स्त्रियाँ, जो स्वयं पितृसत्ता की शिकार हैं, कई बार अनजाने में पितृसत्ता की वाहक भी बन जाती हैं। वे उन सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक मान्यताओं को आत्मसात कर लेती हैं, जिनका निर्माण शोषक पुरुष सत्ता ने किया है, और आगे चलकर वे उन्हीं मान्यताओं को दूसरी स्त्रियों पर लागू करती हैं। इस प्रकार, वे शोषित से शोषक बनने की प्रक्रिया में शामिल हो जाती हैं।[26]

उपन्यास में नारायण, सरवन या फत्ता जैसे पुरुष पात्र स्त्रियों को केवल उपभोग की वस्तु के रूप में देखते हैं। जब तक स्त्रियाँ उनकी अपेक्षाओं को पूरा करती हैं, वे स्वीकार्य होती हैं; किंतु जैसे ही वे इन अपेक्षाओं से भटकती हैं, उन्हें त्याग दिया जाता है।[27] भानो की कथा इस बात का जीवंत उदाहरण है, जब वह संतान नहीं दे पाती, तो नारायण उसे छोड़कर दूसरी स्त्री को अपना लेता है। यह पितृसत्तात्मक दृष्टिकोण स्त्रियों के मूल्यांकन को केवल उनके प्रजनन-क्षमता तक सीमित कर देता है।

दूसरी ओर, भागवंती जैसी स्त्रियाँ, जो स्वयं भी पितृसत्ता के शिकंजे में बंधी हुई हैं, भानो जैसी दूसरी स्त्रियों पर अपना वर्चस्व स्थापित करने का प्रयास करती हैं। वह घर की "वैध मालकिन" होने के दावे के साथ भानो को नीचा दिखाती है और उसे मानसिक रूप से तोड़ने में योगदान देती है।[28] इस प्रकार, उपन्यास यह संदेश देता है कि स्त्रियों के बीच आपसी प्रतिस्पर्धा और संघर्ष का मूल कारण पुरुष नहीं, बल्कि वह पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था है जो उन्हें एक-दूसरे के विरुद्ध खड़ा करती है।

दिलीप कौर टिवाणा की लेखनी यह स्पष्ट करती है कि पितृसत्ता केवल बाहरी दबाव नहीं है, बल्कि यह स्त्रियों के मानस में इतनी गहराई से पैठ चुकी है कि वे स्वयं भी इसे अपनी "प्राकृतिक स्थिति" मानने लगती हैं।[29] स्त्रियाँ यह मान लेती हैं कि पुरुषों का प्रभुत्व और स्त्रियों का अधीन होना स्वाभाविक है,

जबकि वास्तविकता यह है कि यह केवल समाज द्वारा निर्मित संरचना है। इस दृष्टि से, एहो हमारा जीवना स्त्री-विमर्श के लिए एक महत्वपूर्ण ग्रंथ है क्योंकि यह हमें यह सोचने पर मजबूर करता है कि स्त्रियों की मुक्ति केवल पुरुषों की सत्ता को चुनौती देने से नहीं होगी, बल्कि स्त्रियों को भी अपने भीतर पैठे पितृसत्तात्मक मूल्यों की पहचान करनी होगी और उन्हें अस्वीकार करना होगा।[30]

इस प्रकार, निष्कर्षतः कहा जा सकता है कि टिवाणा का उपन्यास स्त्रियों की सामाजिक-मानसिक परतों को खोलते हुए यह दिखाता है कि कैसे वे पितृसत्ता की शिकार भी हैं और अनजाने में उसके उपकरण भी बन जाती हैं। स्त्री मुक्ति का मार्ग तभी संभव है जब वे इस दोहरे जाल से स्वयं को मुक्त कर सकें।

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आपका बंटी : विघटन की पीड़ा का दस्तावेज

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मन्नू भण्डारी का उपन्यास 'आपका बंटी' हिन्दी साहित्य की उन कृतियों में गिना जाता है जो न केवल सामाजिक यथार्थ को उजागर करती है, बल्कि भावनात्मक स्तर पर भी पाठक को गहराई से झकझोरती है। यह उपन्यास पारिवारिक विघटन, स्त्री अस्मिता और बाल मनोविज्ञान के त्रिकोण में उलझे जीवन की मार्मिक कथा प्रस्तुत करता है। आपका बंटी एक ऐसी कृति है जो विवाह संस्था के बिखरते ढाँचे और तलाक की प्रक्रिया में पिसते एक बच्चे की मानसिक वेदना को गहराई से उकेरती है।

आचार्य रामचंद्र शुक्ल के अनुसार- "जब तक किसी देश का साहित्य वहाँ के जीवन की विविधताओं को प्रतिबिंबित नहीं करता, तब तक वह पूर्ण नहीं माना जा सकता। साहित्य न केवल सामाजिक यथार्थ का दर्पण होता है, बल्कि उसमें परिवर्तनशीलता के साथ-साथ विचारशीलता भी अंतर्निहित होती है। हिन्दी साहित्य में विशेषतः उपन्यास विधा को सामाजिक जीवन की समस्याओं और उनकी जटिलताओं के प्रतिबिंब के रूप में देखा गया है।"[1]

बंटी की दृष्टि से कही गई यह कहानी दरअसल उस मासूम मन की गवाही है, जो वयस्कों के फैसलों का शिकार होता है, और बिना कुछ समझे टूटते रिश्तों का भार ढोता है। यह केवल एक परिवार की कहानी नहीं, बल्कि उस व्यापक सामाजिक सच्चाई का प्रतिबिंब है जिसमें आधुनिकता के नाम पर संबंधों की संवेदनाएं दरकने लगती हैं। मन्नू भण्डारी ने जिस सजीवता से बंटी की पीड़ा, शकुन और जीवन के द्वंद्व को चित्रित किया है, वह इस उपन्यास को विघटन की पीड़ा का दस्तावेज बना देता है या यह कहा जाए कि मन्नू भण्डारी का 'आपका बंटी' हिन्दी साहित्य में एक महत्वपूर्ण सामाजिक दस्तावेज के रूप में सामने आता है। यह कृति केवल एक बच्चे की कथा नहीं है, बल्कि उसके माध्यम से विघटित होते पारिवारिक सम्बंधों और समाज की टूटती हुई संरचना की गहन

पड़ताल करती है। उपन्यास का केन्द्रीय पात्र बंटी, एक ऐसा मासूम बच्चा है, जो माता पिता के अलगाव की त्रासदी को जीता है और अनजाने ही एक गहरे मानसिक शिकार बन जाता है।
बंटी की भावनाएं, उसकी सोच और उसका आक्रोश एक पीढ़ी विशेष के अनुभवों का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है। बालमन के भीतर उठते असमंजस, असुरक्षा और अस्वीकार के भाव उपन्यास को भावनात्मक गहराई प्रदान करते हैं। लेखिका ने बाल मनोविज्ञान को अत्यंत संवेदनशीलता से प्रस्तुत किया है। जिससे पाठक न केवल बंटी के दुख से जुड़ता है। बल्कि उस समाज से प्रश्न करता है जो ऐसे विघटन को सामान्य मान बैठा है।
"आपका बंटी" उस समय की पारिवारिक विघटन की प्रक्रिया का आईना है, जब दाम्पत्य सम्बंधों में दरारें सामाजिक और मानसिक असंतुलन को जन्म दे रही थीं। स्त्री पुरुष संबंध, अधिकार, स्वतंत्रता और आत्मसम्मान जैसे मुद्दों को मन्नू भण्डारी ने अत्यंत सजीवता और प्रमाणिकता से उठाया है। यह उपन्यास विशेष रूप से यह दर्शाता है कि विवाह जैसे सामाजिक संस्थानों में विघटन केवल दो व्यक्तियों का नहीं, बल्कि उससे जुड़े प्रत्येक सदस्य-विशेष रूप से बच्चों का मानसिक ह्रास भी होता है। आपका बंटी में फूफी की यह आशंका कि "बाप के रहते यह बिना बाप का हो रहा, अब मां के रहते बिना मां का न हो जाए।"[2] सुधा अरोड़ा जी ने बताया कि पुराने की तरह नई व्यवस्था को बाहर से धिक्कारते रहने की स्थान पर मन्नू जी ने उसके अंग के रूप में उसकी विकृति को भोगा है और जिम्मेदार व्यक्ति के रूप में उसका गंभीर प्रतिवाद किया है, बिना अपनी तरफ से कुछ कहे ,बिना उपदेशक बने। बात बोलेगी, हम नहीं का उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण है- "आपका बंटी।"[3]
माता-पिता के बीच टकराव, उपेक्षा और अलगाव की स्थिति उत्पन्न होती है, तो बच्चा खुद को ठगा-सा महसूस करता है उसे न पूरी मां मिलती है, न पिता। बच्चा बार-बार यह सोचता है कि शायद उसी की कोई गलती रही होगी जो यह सब हुआ। उसे लगता है कि वह अपने माता-पिता को साथ रखने में असमर्थ रहा। भीतर ही भीतर वह टूटता चला जाता है। स्कूल, खेल या दोस्तों की दुनिया उसे सांत्वना नहीं दे पाती। इस, टूटन के बीच वह माँ-पिता दोनों के स्नेह का आकांक्षी होता है, लेकिन परिस्थिति उसे दोनों से दूर कर देती है। न तो वह माँ की गोद में सुकून पाता है, न पिता की उपस्थिति में। उसकी सारी दुनिया अस्थिर और अव्यवस्थित हो जाती है। पारिवारिक विघटन एक स्थाई मानसिक आघात छोड़ता है, जिससे उबर पाना एक बच्चे के लिए सहज नहीं होता। वह न केवल अपनी पहचान को लेकर उलझन में रहता है बल्कि भविष्य के संबंधों को लेकर भी अविश्वास पाल लेता है। इस प्रकार पारिवारिक विघटन केवल दो व्यक्तियों का संबंध विच्छेद नहीं है, बल्कि एक कोमल मन की दुनिया का विघटन भी है।
मन्नू जी का यह उपन्यास केवल मनोरंजन हेतु रचित नहीं है, बल्कि यह समाज और जीवन के सत्य को अभिव्यक्त करने का माध्यम है। डॉ. गोपाल राय ने 'समीक्षा' के जुलाई 1971 के अंक में उचित ही लिखा है "हिन्दी में यह पहला उपन्यास है जिसमें एक विशेष परिस्थिति में पड़े हुए बच्चे की मनःस्थिति का इतने विस्तृत फलक पर चित्रांकन किया गया है। बंटी हमारे सामने आधुनिक युग के लिए चुनौती बनकर खड़ा है। मैं मानता हूँ कि आपका बंटी एक ऐसा उपन्यास है जिसका साहित्य में स्थान सुरक्षित रहेगा।"[4]

इसमें जीवन की उन छोटी-छोटी घटनाओ का चित्रण है जो सामान्यतः उपेक्षित रह जाती हैं, परन्तु मानसिक और भावनात्मक स्तर पर अत्यंत गहरा प्रभाव छोडती हैं। 'बंटी के माध्यम से लेखिका ने यह दिखाया है कि एक बालक कैसे पारिवारिक टूटन, उपेक्षा और अस्थिर वातावरण से मानसिक रूप से बुरी तरह प्रभावित होता है।

बंटी माता-पिता दोनों के प्रेम को चाहता है, पर उसके माता-पिता दोनों ही अलग-अलग रहते हैं। वह मां को प्यार करता है तो पिता के बारे में सोचता है और साथ में यह भी सोचता है कि पापा हमारे लिए खिलौने भेजते हैं। उसे बन्दूक बहुत पसन्द है। वह कभी-कभी गम्भीर हो जाया करता है। जब पापा का पत्र आता है तो उसकी मनोदशा एक गहरे समुद्र की भाँति हो जाती है जिसमें लहरें उफान मार रही हैं और वह मानसिक यंत्रणा का भी शिकार हो जाता है।

परसों ही पापा की चिट्ठी आई थी। लिफाफे पर ममी का नाम लिखा था। पिछली बार तो लिफाफे पर उसका नाम था। अन्दर भी दो कागज निकले, एक ममी खुद पढ़ने लगी दूसरा उसे पकड़ा दिया।"[5]

बच्चे के मन में यह बात हमेशा ही रहती है कि उसे बहुत प्यार मिले लेकिन बंटी का बालमन माता-पिता के बीच में पिसता दिखाई देता है। जहाँ घायल होती उसकी इच्छाएं उसे निरंतर परेशान करती रहती है। अंत में यह खामोशी धारण कर लेती है। कभी-कभी वह सोचता है कि माँ-पिता की कुट्टी कैसे खत्म हो जाए, साथ में यह भी सोचता है कि ममी को खुश करके पापा से मिला दें। बंटी अपनी ममी से अगाध स्नेह करता है। जब ममी उदास होती है तो बंटी को भी उदासी घेर लेती है।उसके मन में हर बात कचोटती रहती है।

"ममी उदास होती है तो सारा घर कैसा उदास हो जाता है, कमरे की हर चीज। हमेशा बकर-बकर करने वाली फूफी भी जाने कैसे-कैसे हो जाती है। बंटी बोले तो किससे बोले करे तो क्या करे।"[6]

पारिवारिक विघटन किसी भी बालक के जीवन को केवल बाहरी रूप से नहीं, बल्कि उसकी मानसिकता और भविष्य को भी गहराई से प्रभावित करता है। 'आपका बंटी' में बंटी एक ऐसा पात्र है जो अपने माता-पिता के अलगाव को समझ नहीं पाता लेकिन उसकी उपस्थिति से उत्पन्न हुई टूटन और द्वंद्व को पूरी तरह महसूस करता है। यह ना तो, माँ के साथ पूरी तरह आत्मसात हो पाता है और ना ही पिता के नए संसार में सहज हो पाता है।

उपन्यास में पारिवारिक विघटन को केवल कानूनी या सामाजिक प्रक्रिया के रूप में नहीं, बल्कि मानसिक और भावनात्मक त्रासदी के रूप में देखा गया है। बंटी के माता-पिता दोनों ही अपने-अपने जीवन की स्वतंत्रता में व्यस्त हैं लेकिन बंटी उस स्वतंत्रता की कीमत चुका रहा है। वह कभी मां के पास जाने की जिद करता है कभी पापा की याद में तड़पता है यह द्वंद्व जीवन के उसकी पहचान को भ्रमित कर देता है।

इस उपन्यास में यह भी दिखाया गया है कि पारिवारिक विघटन का प्रभाव केवल पति-पत्नी तक सीमित नहीं रहता, बल्कि बच्चे का मन सबसे अधिक आहत होता है। बंटी का भावनात्मक अकेलापन संवादों में छिपा दर्द, आत्मविश्वास की कमी, इस विघटन का गहन चित्र प्रस्तुत करते हैं।

इस उपन्यास की सबसे बड़ी विशेषता यह है कि इसमें बच्चे की दृष्टि से परिवार के टूटने की

प्रक्रिया को दिखाया गया है जो हिन्दी साहित्य में दुर्लभ है। यह एक चेतावनी भी है कि माता-पिता के व्यक्तिगत निर्णय, यदि बच्चों की संवेदनाओं की उपेक्षा कर दी जाये तो वह बाल मन पर स्थाई घाव छोड़ सकते हैं।

अतः 'आपका बंटी' पारिवारिक विघटन की त्रासदी को न केवल साहित्यिक स्तर पर बल्कि समाज को यह सोचने पर मजबूर करता है कि क्या व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता की राह में एक मासूम का बचपन कुचला जाना चाहिए ? आपका बंटी केवल एक पारिवारिक कथा नहीं है, बल्कि भारतीय समाज में विघटित हो रहे पारिवारिक मूल्यों, सम्बंधों की दरकती दीवारों और तलाक जैसी त्रासदी से उपजे मानसिक और भावनात्मक संकट का मार्मिक चित्रण है। यह उपन्यास दिखाता है कि पति-पत्नी के बीच टूटते सम्बंधों की सबसे बड़ी कीमत अक्सर मासूम बच्चों को चुकानी पड़ती है।

बंटी का चरित्र एक प्रतीक बन जाता है। उस असहाय बालक का जो माता-पिता की व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता और आत्मसम्मान की लड़ाई में मानसिक रूप से टूटता चला जाता है। उसका विद्रोही, आक्रोशित व्यवहार और अंत में अंधेरे में डूब जाना दर्शाता है कि पारिवारिक विघटन केवल दो व्यक्यिों की दूरी नहीं बल्कि एक पीढ़ी के मानसिक स्वास्थ्य का संकट भी है। इस उपन्यास के माध्यम से मन्नू भन्डारी ने 20वीं सदी के उत्तरार्ध में भारतीय समाज में आये सांस्कृतिक बदलाव, आधुनिकता की ओर बढ़ते कदमों और उसमें दरकते मानवीय संबंधों की त्रासदी को रेखांकित किया है।

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An Analytical Study of Raga Vivek Adhyay

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"Raga Viveka Adhayay "of "Sangeet Ratnakar" written by Sharangadeva has a thorough description of various shastras of Indian classical music.The chapter of my paper is the second chapter of Sharangadeva Sangeet Ratnakar, which is known as the Ragavivekadhayaya.

This chapter describes a total of 264 ragas and divides all the ragas into ten categories. The difference in this type of division of Ragas in the said chapter is seen that each Raga has a different number which will be discussed in the next part. This chapter mentions Gram raga on raga jati-bhasha raga , bibhasha raga, antar, bhasha raga. Which are included in Marga Sangeet. Raganga, Bhashang, Kriranga and Upanga are included in the country music. In the chapter he has detailed about Marga Sangeet To Desh Sangeet. It is noted that the composition of Shuddha Jati types included in Sangeet mentions the names of seven Shuddha Jati .

Discussing raga as a guide to the thought of the predecessors of the Sharangadeva, he says that the colorful and pleasing composition or context evokes the listener's mind and touching the heart, it is called emotions. Sharangadeva has divided all ragas into ten parts in this chapter. This detailed part will be discussed below.

In this chapter more aspects of music will be discussed. Some discussion about Sangeet Ratnakara book such as in which century this book was written and its chapter details are as follows-

"Sangeet Ratnakar" is a significant treatise on Indian classical music written by Sharngadeva, a 13th-century Indian musicologist. It consists of seven chapters, each dealing with various aspects of music. Here's a brief overview of the chapters and their content:

1. **Svaragatadhyaya:** This chapter discusses the fundamental concepts of music, including the seven swaras notes and their properties. It also covers the classification of ragas melodic modes and their characteristics.
2. **Raga Vibodhadyaya:** This chapter elaborates on the classification of ragas and provides descriptions of numerous ragas. It also discusses the importance of time theory Samayadharma in selecting appropriate ragas for different times of the day.
3. **Prakirnaka:** This chapter focuses on miscellaneous topics related to music, such as the classification of musical instruments and their playing techniques. It also discusses the concept of laya rhythm.
4. **Ragalakshanam:** This chapter delves deeper into the characteristics of ragas, including their scales, ornamentation, and emotive qualities. It provides detailed information on how to recognize and differentiate between ragas.
5. **Prabandhavyavastha:** This chapter deals with musical compositions and their structure. It introduces various forms of compositions like Prabandhas and outlines their components.
6. **Talalakshanam:** Talas are rhythmic cycles in Indian music, and this chapter explores their characteristics, divisions, and variations. It explains how talas are structured and used in compositions.
7. **Nartanadhikaranam:** The final chapter discusses dance, drama, and their relationship with music. It covers aspects of choreography, gestures, and expressions in Indian classical dance forms.

"Sangeet Ratnakar" is a valuable resource for understanding the classical music traditions of India. It provides insights into the theoretical and practical aspects of music, making it an essential text for musicians, scholars, and enthusiasts of Indian classical music lover. The second chapter of Sangeet Ratnakar's "Ragvivekadhyaya" describes the musical aspects of all the songs discussed by Saragadev in the part discuss below. My chosen chapter of the book review is chapter two.

I quote some lines in *"Ragavivekadhyaya"*-

The second chapter describes the Râga-s. The Raga-s are divided into Marga and Desi Among the Margaraga-s there are 6 varieties — Gramaraga, Uparaga, Raga, Bhasa, Vibasha, Antarbhasha.

It appears you're asking about various concepts related to ragas and their

classification in Indian classical music. Here's a brief explanation of each: "Ragvivekadhyaya" is a chapter within the Sangeet Ratnakar, which deals with the classification and description of ragas in Indian classical music. It provides information about various aspects of ragas, their characteristics, and how they are categorized.

Gram Raga is 30 type, Grama ragas are the fundamental melodic scales or modes in Indian classical music. They serve as the foundation for the elaboration of ragas and are categorized into several types. Upa Raga is 3type, Uparagas are subsidiary or minor ragas that are derived from the parent or main ragas. They share similarities with the parent raga but have distinct characteristics. Bhasa Raga is 96 type of Bhasa refers to the language of ragas. It involves understanding the emotional and aesthetic qualities associated with different ragas and how they are expressed through musical compositions.

Vivaaha Raga, text mentioned 20 types of Vivaaha, in the context of music, often refers to the marriage of two ragas within a composition. It involves transitioning from one raga to another seamlessly, creating a harmonious musical experience.Antar Bhasa: Antar Bhasa refers to the inner language or expression of a raga. It involves the emotions conveyed by a raga's melodic structure and how it connects with the listener on a deeper level.These terms are essential in the study and practice of Indian classical music, helping musicians understand and communicate the intricacies of different ragas and their musical expressions.

Below are Gram explained of the mentioned Raga and it's variation.

- GarmRaga – 30type
- Jati Raga – 20
- UpaRaga – 8
- Raganga – 8
- Bhashanga – 21
- Kriyanga – 12
- Upanga – 3
- Bhasha – 96
- Bibhasha – 20
- Antarbhasha – 4

From these divisions it is clear that the Jati song disappeared from the period of Bharata.

Gramaragas resemble the Jati-s closely and they are further classified on

the basis of the different melodic styles characterising them. These styles are called "Giti" following in the detail mentioned in details as following-Now, explore the concept of Gramaragas, their resemblance to Jati-s, and their classification based on different melodic styles called "Giti" in Indian classical music:

Gramaraga and Jati

Gramaragas are fundamental or basic ragas in Indian classical music.They share similarities with Jatis, which are rhythmic patterns used in music, dance, and poetry.

◆ Both Gramaragas and Jatis serve as foundational elements, with Gramaragas providing the melodic framework and Jatis offering rhythmic structures.

Classification Based on Giti

Gramaragas are further classified based on the different melodic styles that characterize them. These styles are known as "Giti."

Giti refers to the specific melodic patterns, ornamentations, and aesthetic elements associated with a particular Gramaraga.

Discussion on the types of Giti

There are several types of Gîti, each with its unique melodic characteristics and stylistic nuances.

Shuddha Giti: Characterized by a pure and straightforward melodic style. Featuring variations and deviations from the standard melodic patterns. Gaudi Giti: Reflecting the musical style of the Gaudiya tradition, often associated with the Bengal region.

SadharaGi Giti Representing a more common or general melodic style.

Vesara Giti: Combining elements from two or more Gîti styles, creating a hybrid melodic expression.Mostly, Musicians and composers use different Gîti styles to craft compositions that align with the intended mood, theme, or narrative of the piece. Giti styles provide a palette of melodic choices, allowing artists to convey specific emotions or evoke particular aesthetic qualities. Giti styles often have regional and cultural associations.

They reflect the diversity of musical traditions across India and contribute to the rich tapestry of Indian classical music.

Aesthetical aspects of the classification of Gramaragas based on Giti allows musicians to explore the aesthetic nuances and artistic possibilities of each raga.

It encourages creativity and improvisation within the framework of the chosen Gramaraga and its associated Giti.

In summary, Gramaragas in Indian classical music closely resemble Jatis in terms of their foundational role. They are further classified based on the melodic styles called Giti. These Giti styles provide a framework for musicians and composers to create compositions and performances that convey specific emotions, themes, and regional musical flavors, enriching the classical music tradition.

There are of 5 kinds —Shuddha, Bhinna, Gaudi, Sadharaòi and Vesara. In all, there are 33.

Certainly, let's delve into the details of the different categories of Ragas, including Suddha, Bhinna, Gaudi, Sadharaòi, and Vesara, as well as their relationship with Gramaragas, Uparaga, and Ragas in Indian classical music:

Shuddha Ragas are considered pure or fundamental ragas in Indian classical music. They adhere closely to the traditional rules and structures of ragas.Bhinna Ragas are ragas with some variations or deviations from the standard rules of their parent ragas.

- They introduce unique melodic elements while still retaining a recognizable connection to their parent ragas.Gaudi Ragas are associated with the Gaudiya tradition of classical music, which has roots in the region of Bengal.

They often feature distinct melodic patterns and evoke the regional musical flavors of Bengal.Sadharaòi Ragas are considered more common or general ragas.They don't have the unique and specific characteristics of some other ragas but are still important in the classical music repertoire.Vesara Ragas are hybrids or mixed ragas that combine elements from two or more parent ragas.They offer musicians the opportunity for creative exploration and unique expressions. Gramaragas are the fundamental or basic ragas from which other ragas are deriveThey serve as the foundation for the classification and organization of ragas.

Uparaga are secondary ragas, often derived from Gramaragas

They have distinct melodic characteristics and provide additional depth and variety to the classical music repertoire.

Relationship with Ragas:

- Ragas, including Shuddha, Bhinna, Gaudi, Sadharaòi, and Vesara, form the core of Indian classical music.
- These categories help classify and describe the diverse melodic and harmonic elements within the classical music system.

Ragas are deeply rooted in the cultural and regional traditions of India.

They reflect the unique musical heritage of different parts of the country. Musicians use ragas as a foundation for their creative expression in performances, improvisations, and compositions.

In summary, these categories of ragas, along with Gramaragas, Uparaga, and Ragas, are fundamental to the organization and classification of ragas in Indian classical music. They offer musicians a rich palette of melodic and harmonic elements to create diverse and evocative musical expressions, each with its unique character and cultural significance.

In the "Sangeet Ratnakar," the classification of ragas into "Gram Raga" is an important aspect of Indian classical music theory. "Gram Raga" refers to the fundamental melodic scales or modes that serve as the foundation for the elaboration of ragas. These are the basic building blocks of Indian classical music, and they are categorized into several types based on their note structures and characteristics.

The "Sangeet Ratnakar" provides classification and descriptions of various Gram Ragas, and these classifications can be complex and detailed. Some of the commonly recognized Gram Raga categories include:

Shuddha Grama: These are the fundamental or pure scales. They have seven notes swaras and form the basis for many ragas.

Chayalaga: Chayalaga ragas have six notes and are derived from Shuddha Grama ragas by omitting one note.

Audava Grama : Audava Grama ragas have five notes and are derived from Shuddha Grama ragas by omitting two notes.

Sadharana Grama Sadharana Grama ragas are those that do not strictly adhere to any of the above categories and may have unique note structures.

Each Grama or category has its own set of ragas that are based on those scales. These classifications are foundational in understanding the structure and relationships between different ragas in Indian classical music. If you have specific questions about a particular Gram Raga or need more information on a specific aspect of this classification,

Elaborate discussion on The Uparaga

The "Sangeet Ratnakar" is a comprehensive text on Indian music theory and practice, and it indeed discusses various aspects of ragas, including the concept of "Uparaga." In the context of Indian classical music, "Uparaga" typically refers to subsidiary or minor ragas.

Here are some key details about Uparagas as mentioned in the text:

Derived from Parent Ragas: Uparagas are ragas that are derived from or associated with a parent or main raga. They share some melodic patterns

and characteristics with the parent raga but also have distinct elements that set them apart.

Variations in Emotions: Uparagas often convey specific emotions or moods that may be slightly different from the parent raga. They provide additional nuances and shades of expression within a musical composition.

Usage in Compositions- Musicians use Uparagas to add variety and depth to their musical compositions. By incorporating Uparagas, they can explore different facets of a particular raga's expression.

When performing a raga, musicians may transition from the parent raga to its Uparaga and vice versa in a seamless and aesthetically pleasing manner. This transition is a skillful aspect of Indian classical music.

It's important to note that the specifics of Uparagas and their characteristics may vary depending on the text and the tradition of Indian classical music. The "Sangeet Ratnakar" likely provides more detailed information about specific Uparagas and their usage within the context of classical music.

The chapter in "Sangeet Ratnakar" focuses on Desiragas, which are a category of ragas in Indian classical music influenced by regional and folk traditions.

- Desiragas have distinct melodic characteristics and often evoke the flavors of specific regions or cultures.

  Bhasa are derivatives of Gramraga and Uparaga, and they represent different melodic flavors or regional interpretations of the parent raga.
- Sarngadeva describes Bhasas associated with the Desiragas, providing insights into how these regional flavors are expressed in music.

Gramaragas

- Gramragas are the fundamental or basic ragas from which other ragas are derived.

  In this chapter, Sarngadeva discusses the relationship between Desiragas and Gramragas highlighting how the former draw inspiration from the latter.

Aksiptika Songs:

Under each Gramraga, Sarngadeva provides notations for songs called Aksiptika based on that specific raga.These songs are compositions that exemplify the characteristics and melodic nuances of the Gramraga

Musical Exploration of following

- The inclusion of Aksiptika songs allows musicians and learners to explore the melodic and

rhythmic aspects of each Grâmarâga in a practical context.

- It provides a valuable resource for understanding the application of these ragas in compositions.

Influence:

- Given the folk influences on Desiragas, the notation of Aksiptika songs helps convey the regional flavors and cultural significance of these ragas.

Enriching the Ragas

The chapter's focus on Desiragas, Bhasas, Gramragas, and the accompanying songs contributes to the diversity and richness of the Indian classical music repertoire.

It demonstrates how classical music accommodates and celebrates regional musical traditions.

In summary, this chapter in "Sangeet Ratnakar" by Sarngadeva offers a detailed study of Desiragas, Bhasas, and Gramragas, along with notated songs called Aksiptika based on each Gramraga. It provides valuable insights into the regional and folk influences on Indian classical music and how these elements are incorporated into compositions and performances.

In the second chapter of Sangeet Ratnakar, he mentions the names of twenty ragas such as Sri, Natya, Bengal, Basa, Madhyam, Kalhansa, Prasva, Bhairava, Megh, Soma, Kamad, Kaushik, Nat Narayana, Madhyam -Sadav etc.

Moreover, the ragas derived from "Marg and Desi " songs have been classified by the name of "Jati," the names of which are Shuddha raga, Chayaloga, Sankirna, now explain briefly about this -It is said about Shuddha raga that what is included in this Shuddha raga is Graha, Ansha, Nash, Smallness, Multiplicity etc. That is, the raga which is sung following all kinds of classical rules is called Shuddha Raga.

Chhayalog Raga a raga in which a raga is performed while performing the raga is called chayalog raga. SANKIRANA RAGAS The ragas which are twice three times narrower than the above two ragas in performance are called Sankirnaraga.

Studying "Shuddha Raga" involves delving into the details of classical Indian music. "Shuddha Raga" refers to a pure or fundamental musical mode in Indian classical music that follows specific rules and patterns. Here are some key points to consider for a detailed study of Shuddha Raga:

- Explore how each Shudha Raga has a specific structure consisting of ascending Arohana and descending Avarohana scales, along with

a set of prominent and characteristic notes.

- Shudha Ragas evoke particular moods and emotions. Study the mood associated with each Raga to understand its essence.
- Shuddha Ragas are elaborated in performance through Aalap slow, melodic exploration and Taan fast, rhythmic patterns.Ï% Study the various types of compositions associated with Shudha Ragas, including Dhrupad, Khayal, and Thumri, and how they manifest within each Raga.
- Understand the time of day or season traditionally associated with each Shudha Raga, as it can influence when a Raga is performed.
- Learn to read and write musical notation for Shudha Ragas, and practice playing or singing them on a suitable instrument or through vocal training.
- Listen to recordings of performances featuring Shuddha Ragas by renowned artists. Analyze the nuances and improvisational techniques employed in these renditions.

  The historical development of Shudha Ragas and their significance in the evolution of Indian classical music.
- Study how different music Gharanas. interpret and present Shudha Ragas uniquely.
- Consider how Shudha Ragas are adapted and used in contemporary music compositions and fusion genres.
- To conduct a detailed study of Shudha Ragas, it's advisable to consult authoritative texts on Indian classical music, guidance from experienced musicians or musicologists, and actively engage with the music through practice and listening.

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A Detailed Elaboration of Sangeet Ratnakar "Taal Adhyay"

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Abstract

Two important texts we have in the history of Indian Music which provide valuable insights into the musical practices, theories, and music cultures of the bygone eras are Natyshastra around 200 BC by Bharat Muni and Sangeet Ratnakar around 13th century by Sharangdev. Taal and its nature in the music is discussed in detail by both the authors. A separate chapter named "Taaladhyay" in Sangeetratnakar is the fifth chapter where he discusses various Taals, their nature and significance in the ancient and medieval music. There are nine Taal characteristics discussed in this chapter which is considered as the crucial aspects of the Taal. These nine aspects of Taal are the principles of the Taal and nowhere it is mentioned that these are Praan of the Taal. The term Dash-Praan is widely used nowadays and surprisingly the authentic texts refer these aspects of Taal as Tatva and not Praan (Soul).

Keywords

Taal-Tatva, Taaladh, Sangeet Ratnakar, Sharangdev

Introduction

There have been various classification schemes of Taal in Carnatic Music. The ancient 108 anga Taalss (which include the 5 Margi and 103 Desi Taals), the 72 Melakartha Taal system (which was designed to fit the 72 Melakartha Raaga classification), and the Suladi Sapta Taal system (which was popularized during the time of Purandara Dasa (1484 – 1564) and has been attributed to him) are some of the classification schemes.

The Suladi Sapta Taal system is most in vogue today, with other classification schemes still studied and performed to, though such performances are limited to Raagam Thaanam Pallavi compositions or special percussion concerts called Laya Vinyasa. (Laya – concept of Rhythm). While we will focus on the Suladi Sapta Taal system, we will highlight important facets of the other classification systems which the Suladi Sapta Taal system borrows from, when necessary.

The sapta Taals form the basis of a series of musical exercises (referred to as Sapta Taal Alankaras) are ascribed to Purandara Dasa. These exercises provide every Carnatic music student with a comprehensive training in melodic and rhythmic structure.

Margi Taal

Margi taals are considered to be the classical or "pure" taals in Indian music. These taals follow strict and traditional rhythmic patterns and are associated with the more classical and structured forms of music, such as classical vocal music and classical instrumental music. Margi taals are characterized by their complex mathematical structures and precision.

Desi Taal

Desi taals, on the other hand, are considered regional or folk taals. They are often associated with folk music and regional music traditions in India. Desi taals are generally simpler and less structured than Margi taals. They have a more flexible and adaptable rhythm and are used in various folk and semi-classical forms of music. These classifications help categorize taals based on their complexity, usage, and traditional associations. While Margi taals are associated with classical and highly structured music, Desi taals are linked to more regional and folk music expressions. Understanding these classifications is important for musicians and scholars in Indian classical music as it helps them choose the appropriate taal for different musical compositions and contexts.

Marga Taal Structures

Margataals have specific structures, such as predefined arrangements of laghu, guru, and other angas. These structures are documented in classical music texts and are taught systematically to students of Indian classical music.

In summary, the aspects of taals in Indian classical music, including the

time units (laghu, guru, pluta), kriyas it's called rhythmic patterns, and different taal forms Ekakala, Dvikala, Catushkala, are crucial for understanding and performing the intricate rhythms of this musical tradition. Margataals, as the classical taals, provide the foundation for compositions and serve as a basis for rhythmic exploration and creativity.

The Margataals are of 5 types

(i) Chacchatputa (8 matras)

(ii) Chachaputa (6 matras)

(iii) Satpitaaputraka (12 matras)

(iv) Sampakvestaka (12 matras)

(v) Udghatta.(6 matras)

Now the importance of marga Taals is explained

"Sangeet Ratnakar" is a classic Indian music treatise written by Sarangadeva in the 13th century. The term "Taaldhayay" refers to the section of the text that deals with rhythmic patterns and concepts related to taals rhythmic Cycles.

"Sangeet Ratnakar" distinguishes between two important categories of taals: "Marga Taal" and "Deshi Taal." Let's delve into the details of these categories:

Angas

Just as the division system is there in the North Indian Classical Music, similarly the South Indian scholars created Ang. There are total 6 angs in South Indian Music – Andrutam, Drutam, Laghu, Guru, Plutam, Kakpad). Names of these Angs, their signs and beat counts are as follows –

S.No.	Ang	Sign	Beat Count
1.	Anudrutam	U	1
2.	Drutam	O	2
3.	Laghu	|	4
4.	Guru	S	8
5.	Palutam	8	12
6.	Kakpad	+	16

These angs are used only in the South Indian Taal System. They are not much used in the North Indian Music.The angas are essential components

of Marga taals.

They include elements like “Laghu” (the primary beat), “Dhrutam,” “Anudrutam,” and “Guru,” among others. These angas are combined in various ways to create intricate rhythmic compositions.

Marga taals are often notated concisely using symbols and abbreviations, making it possible to represent complex rhythmic patterns in a compact form.

The interpretation of taal is on tali-khali . preparation of taal along with rhythm.

Taal Prakarana

Marga taals are subjected to detailed analysis and discussions in classical music treatises. Musicians study “Taal Prakarana” sections to understand the mathematical and structural aspects of these taals.

The different aspects of these taals like the time units - Laghu, Guru and Pluta - the Kriyas; the different forms of a taal like Ekakala Dwikala and Catukala are described along with the Margataals

Laghu

Definition: Laghu is one of the fundamental components of a taal cycle. It represents the primary beat or time unit within a taal.

Laghu sets the basic rhythmic structure of the taal cycle. It determines the number of beats in the taal and is the most prominent and emphasized beat within the cycle.

Guru

Guru is another essential component of a taal cycle. It represents a longer duration beat compared to laghu.

Usage Guru provides contrast to laghu by being a longer, emphasized beat. The combination of laghu and guru, along with other angas components creates rhythmic complexity within the taal.

Pluta

Pluta is an elongated beat or note. It is not as commonly used as laghu and guru in all taals.

Usage Pluta is used in specific taals and compositions to create variations in rhythm. It is typically held for a duration longer than laghu or guru.

Kakapada

Definition : Kakapada refers to a specific taal pattern or composition. It is a sequence of beats and rhythms within a taal cycle.

Usage : Kakapada compositions are part of the repertoire in Indian classical music. Musicians practice and perform these compositions as part of their training and artistic expression.

These terms are integral to understanding and performing taals in Indian classical music. The combination and arrangement of these components, along with other angas and variations, result in the intricate rhythmic patterns that characterize different taals. Mastery of these terminologies and their application is crucial for musicians and percussionists in Indian classical music.

Certainly, let's explore the different aspects of taal components like Laghu, Guru, Pluta, Kriyas, and the various forms of taal, including Ekakala, Dvikala, and Catushkala, along with the Margataals in Indian classical music:

Time Units - Laghu, Guru, Pluta

Laghu : Laghu is the primary time unit in a taal cycle. It determines the basic rhythm and number of beats in the taal. The laghu is usually the most emphasized beat within the cycle.

Guru : Guru represents a longer time unit compared to laghu. It provides contrast and complexity to the taal rhythm. The combination of laghu and guru creates the foundational structure of the taal.

Pluta : Pluta refers to an elongated time unit. It is used selectively in some taals and compositions to introduce variations and intricacies in rhythm. Pluta beats are held for a duration longer than laghu or guru.

Kriyas: Kriya here literally means – action. In music, it is done as a hand-work showing the divisions of Taal cycle by hands at the prefixed locations of the claps and waves. This action is of two types.

- Sashabd Kriya – This is the action when sound is produced by striking both hands. Its four distinctions are as follows:
- Dhruva – Middle and thumb tweak together, moving hands in the downwards direction.
- Shampa – Clapping with right hand to left hand.

- Taal – Clapping with left hand to right hand.
- Sannipaat – the action of clapping both hands together.
- Ni:Shabd Kriya – This is the action in which the emotion of emptiness is displayed by waving the hand in the air. Its four distinctions are as follows –
  - Aawap – Shrink fingers by raising hands in the upward direction.
  - Nishkam – Spreading the fingers by bringing the hand down
  - Vikshep – Spreading the hand to the right.
  - Praveshak – Shrink the hand to the left.

Foundational Importance

Marga taals serve as the foundation upon which classical compositions are built.

Musicians use Marga taals as a framework for improvisation and elaboration in classical music performances.

Marga taals are the classical, foundational rhythmic patterns in Indian classical music. They provide a structured framework for musicians to create and perform intricate compositions, making them an integral part of the rich heritage of Indian classical music.

Analytical view "Marga Taal" represents the classical, foundational taals with standardized structures, while "Deshi Taal" encompasses the diverse and regionally influenced taals that often feature greater flexibility and local flavor. Understanding these categories is essential for musicians and scholars studying Indian classical music, as they provide insights into the rich rhythmic tapestry of this musical tradition.

Another important chapter is that "Desi Taal" has different aspects which I will explain in the following part.

let's delve into the details of "Desi Taal" in Indian classical music:

Desi Taal

Folk and Regional Influence Deshi taals are influenced by regional and folk music traditions. They are often more flexible and adaptable, reflecting the diversity of India's musical cultures.

Varied Structures Unlike the standardized structure of Marga taals, Deshi taals can vary widely from region to region and may not adhere to the strict rules governing Marga taals.

Incorporation of Local Rhythms Deshi taals incorporate local rhythms, flavors, and improvisational elements that are unique to specific regions.

Deshi taals include a wide range of local and regional rhythms used in folk and semi classical music. Examples include Dadra, Rupak, and Keharwa, each associated with specific musical styles.

Characteristics of Desi Taal

"Desi Taal" refers to the category of taals in Indian classical music that are influenced by regional and folk music traditions.These taals often exhibit more flexibility and diversity compared to the standardized Marga taals. Desi taals vary widely from region to region in India.Each region may have its own unique Desi taals with distinct rhythmic structures and characteristics.These taals often reflect the cultural and musical diversity. Unlike Marga taals, Desi taals may not adhere to strict rhythmic rules.

Musicians have more flexibility in interpreting and performing Desi taals, allowing for improvisation and adaptation to local musical styles.Desi taals are often associated with specific regional instruments and dance forms. They play a significant role in traditional folk music and dance performances. Compositions set to Desi taals may vary widely in style, lyrics, and themes, reflecting the cultural context of their regions. While Desi taals are more commonly associated with folk and semiclassical music, they can also be integrated into classical compositions for creative purposes. Desi taals are a diverse group of rhythmic patterns in Indian classical music that draw inspiration from regional and folk traditions. They offer musicians a canvas to explore and celebrate the rich tapestry of India's musical heritage, reflecting the cultural and geographical diversity of the country.

Desi Taals in Prabandhas

Prabandhas are a genre of compositions in Indian classical music that often make extensive use of Desi taals, which are regional and folk-inspired rhythms.

Varieties of Desi Taals

Desi taals used in Prabandhas encompass a wide range of rhythmic patterns, each with its unique structure and characteristics.

There are approximately 120 different Desi taals used in Prabandhas, showcasing the diversity of Indian musical traditions.

Regional Influence

Many of these Desi taals are specific to particular regions in India, reflecting the local musical and cultural influences.

For example, taals used in North Indian Prabandhas may differ from those used in South Indian Prabandhas.

Conclusion

Nishanka Sharangadev discusses the fundamental principles of Taal which are Kaal, Kriya, Marga, Jati (Bhed), Kala, Laya, Yati, Graha & Prastara. But as new conception has evolved that there are ten Pranas of Taal. In the Taaladhyay of Sangeetratnakar nowhere discusses the term Anga. Hence there is no point in considering Anga as a separate entity in fundamental principles of Taal.

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The Bhajan Tradition of India and Its Significance in Music, Education, Spirituality, Social Life and Tagore's Musical Aesthetics

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Abstract

The bhajan, a devotional musical genre deeply embedded in the cultural and spiritual consciousness of India, represents a living tradition that has evolved over thousands of years. Rooted in the chanting practices of the Vedic age, significantly shaped by the medieval Bhakti Movement, and influenced by regional folk idioms, the bhajan has emerged as one of India's most enduring musical-spiritual forms. This paper explores in depth the origin, characteristics, evolution, and regional diversity of the bhajan tradition across every part of India, including the Northeast and Manipur, which possess distinctive devotional forms. The paper further examines the bhajan's profound impact on Indian classical and folk music, its transformative influence on pedagogy and value-based education, and its role in shaping the spiritual and social consciousness of Indian communities. Special attention is devoted to the bhajan's power as a vehicle of social reform, ethical instruction, and communal bonding. The final section investigates the significant influence of the bhajan tradition on Rabindranath Tagore, whose engagement with Vaishnava kirtan, Baul philosophy, and devotional musical structures deeply shaped his poetic and musical innovations. Through this analysis, the paper argues that the bhajan is not only a musical form but a civilizational expression, unifying India's diverse communities and articulating its spiritual worldview.

Keywords

Bhajan, Bhakti Movement, Indian music, devotional song, spirituality, education, Indian society, Rabindranath Tagore, Rabindra Sangeet, regional

musical traditions, Manipur Nata Sankirtana.

Keynote

This paper positions the bhajan not as a narrow religious hymn but as a comprehensive cultural text that reflects the historical, spiritual, intellectual, and aesthetic development of India. The keynote emphasizes that the bhajan functions simultaneously as a musical genre, a philosophical platform, a community practice, and a vehicle of cultural memory. Its evolution across centuries—absorbing influences from Vedic chanting, folk customs, Sufi traditions, regional aesthetics, and modern reforms—illustrates how deeply it is woven into the Indian psyche.

The elaborated sections that follow demonstrate that the bhajan tradition transcends geographical and linguistic boundaries. Its adaptability allowed it to flourish among rural and urban populations, lower and upper castes, classical musicians and folk singers, and older as well as younger generations. The concluding analysis of Rabindranath Tagore highlights how even modern Indian thinkers and artists found in the bhajan a powerful foundation for developing universal spiritual philosophies and modern pedagogical approaches.

1. Introduction

India's cultural landscape is characterized by a unique fusion of music, spirituality, language, and social experience. Among the various musical traditions that have shaped the nation's identity, the bhajan stands out as perhaps the most inclusive and enduring. Unlike many classical and folk genres that require technical expertise, bhajans are designed for collective participation. They speak to the heart rather than the intellect, expressing devotion through simple melodies, repetitive refrains, and emotionally charged language.

The bhajan is not merely performed; it is experienced. Sung during temple rituals, community gatherings, festivals, household prayers, and educational assemblies, bhajans accompany the Indian individual from childhood to old age. This paper investigates the bhajan as a multidimensional cultural phenomenon, focusing on its historical trajectory, regional diversity, artistic impact, and social relevance.

2. Origin of the Bhajan Tradition

2.1 Vedic and Early Scriptural Foundations

The earliest documentation of musical chanting appears in the Sama Veda, which contains melodic notations known as swaras. These chants served as prototypes of later devotional singing.

Their rhythmic patterns, tonal sequences, and spiritual intention laid the foundation for the bhajan's lyrical structure (Rao, 2012). The Upanishads reinforced these traditions with philosophical hymns expressing devotion to Brahman, the supreme reality. Later, the Puranas narrated mythological stories of Rama, Krishna, Shiva, and Devi, offering narrative content that poets would transform into lyrical compositions.

2.2 Folk, Tribal, and Oral Contributions

While the Vedic tradition provided the philosophical roots, folk and tribal communities supplied the emotional and melodic fabric of the early bhajan. Tribal chants invoking natural forces, ancestor spirits, and local deities influenced rhythmic structures, improvisation, and communal singing styles. The oral nature of these traditions ensured flexibility, allowing bhajans to adapt to local dialects and cultural environments.

2.3 The Bhakti Movement: The Golden Age of Bhajans

The Bhakti Movement (6th–17th centuries) revolutionized spirituality across India. Saints like the Tamil Alvars, Kannada Haridasas, Marathi Varkaris, Gujarati Vaishnavas, Rajasthani Mirabai, and Kanpur-born Kabir contributed immensely to the bhajan corpus (Lutgendorf, 1991).

The Bhakti Movement made devotion accessible to all, regardless of caste or education. Poets composed in regional languages, enabling devotional expression to spread rapidly. Their compositions emphasized personal connection with the divine, love for humanity, and rejection of ritualism.

3. Characteristics of Bhajans

3.1 Lyrical Features

Bhajans are known for simplicity of language, repetition of key phrases, and emotional directness. This simplicity is intentional, allowing devotees to sing together without hesitation. Themes range from divine playfulness (leela), moral instruction, yearning for union, philosophical reflection, and social critique.

3.2 Musical Structure

Bhajans are musically versatile. Many employ classical ragas such as Bhairavi, Kafi, Yaman, Kalyan, and Durga, while others use folk scales. Their melodic structure generally avoids

technical complexity, ensuring accessibility.

3.3 Emotional and Philosophical Depth

Bhajans aim to awaken bhakti, an emotion of devotion to the divine. They often carry philosophical messages, advocating for simplicity, humility, equality, and surrender to the inner truth.

3.4 Instruments and Performance Style

Common instruments include harmonium, tabla, dholak, manjira, kartal, sarangi, ektara, and pung (particularly in Manipur). The choice of instrument varies regionally, reflecting the diversity of Indian musical culture.

4. Historical Evolution of Bhajans

The evolution of the bhajan can be understood across three major phases: early chant traditions, medieval Bhakti efflorescence, and modern revival.

4.1 Early Chant to Song

From Vedic mantras to Puranic hymns, devotional singing slowly shifted from ritual chanting to personalized lyrical expression.

4.2 Medieval Peak and Regional Flourishing

The medieval period witnessed an explosion of devotional literature. Each region developed its own aesthetics, deities, performance styles, instruments, and poetic structures.

4.3 Modern Period and Cultural Reform

In the 19th and 20th centuries, reformist movements such as Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and Ramakrishna Mission revived devotional singing in modern, urban, and educational settings. Gandhi incorporated bhajans into his spiritual politics, using them to promote unity and moral courage (Parekh, 1995).

5. Regional and State-wise Classification of Bhajans (Elaborated, Expanded, and Example-rich)

India's devotional music is inseparable from its regional and linguistic diversity. The bhajan tradition is not a monolithic form but a vast spectrum of devotional practices, each shaped by local culture, history, language, and spiritual philosophy. This section provides a deeply descriptive and example-rich exploration of the bhajan traditions across the regions and states of India, illustrating how each area has contributed a distinctive musical and cultural flavour to the larger bhajan heritage.

5.1 North India

5.1.1 Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh is often recognized as the heartland of North Indian bhakti culture. Cities like Mathura, Vrindavan, Ayodhya, Varanasi, Chitrakoot, and Prayagraj are ancient centers of devotional music.

Key features and examples:

Krishna Bhajans:

Vrindavan's Raslila tradition includes songs describing Krishna's childhood, pranks, and love with Radha.

Example: Surdas' "Maiya Mori Main Nahin Makhan Khayo," portraying Krishna's innocence.

Rama Bhajans:

Tulsidas transformed devotional landscape through the Ramcharitmanas, producing thousands of verses sung as bhajans.

Example: "Shri Ram Chandra Kripalu Bhajamana."

Haveli Sangeet:

Temple-style Krishna bhajans with classical ragas, strong in Mathura.

Katha and Pravachan singing:

Narrative bhajans sung by Kathavachaks during spiritual discourses.

5.1.2 Rajasthan

Rajasthan's devotional tradition is shaped by desert culture, Rajput history, and the emotional intensity of Mirabai, one of India's greatest bhakti poets.

Distinctive Features and Examples:

Mirabai Bhajans:

Her songs express unconditional love for Krishna.

Example: "Payo Ji Maine Ram Ratan Dhan Payo."

Folk Instruments:

Ravanhatta, kamaicha, and sarangi add earthy resonance.

Community Group Singing:

Bhajans sung during festivals like Gangaur, Teej, and Janmashtami.

Temple Bhajan Mandalis:

Local devotional groups singing through the night (jaagran).

5.1.3 Punjab & Haryana

These states exhibit the powerful devotional tradition of the Sikh Gurus, especially through Shabad Kirtan.

Examples and Features:

Shabad Kirtan:

Based on Guru Granth Sahib, sung in classical ragas.

Example: "Ik Onkar Satnam."

Sufi-Bhakti Fusion:

Influence of Baba Farid, Bulleh Shah, and Namdev, blending Sikh and Sufi elements.

Haryana's Folk Bhajans:

Songs dedicated to local deities like Gugga Pir and Bhairon Baba.

5.1.4 Delhi

Delhi's bhajan culture is shaped by centuries of Hindu–Muslim coexistence.

Sufi influences:

Qawwals at Nizamuddin Dargah created devotional songs blending Persian, Urdu, and Hindi.

Bhakti-Sufi Syncretism:

Bhajans inspired by Kabir, Namdev, and Nizamuddin Auliya's teachings.

5.2 West India

5.2.1 Gujarat

Gujarat is home to Vaishnavite devotional traditions rooted in Dwarka and the Vallabhacharya Sampradaya.

Important Figures and Examples:

Narsinh Mehta:

Author of "Vaishnava Jana To," sung daily in Gandhi's ashram.

Garba and Bhajan Fusion:

Many devotional songs merge dance and bhakti, e.g., "Sanedo" and "Tara Vina Shyam."

Pushti Marg Temple Bhajans:

Songs dedicated to Shrinathji, sung in Haveli style.

5.2.2 Maharashtra

Maharashtra's Varkari movement is one of India's strongest devotional traditions.

Examples:

Tukaram Abhangas:

Philosophical yet simple.

Example: "Ghevun Takli Vithoba Mazya Angani."

Namdev's Abhangas:

Blending poetry with social reform.

Pandharpur Wari:

Pilgrims walk singing bhajans continuously for days.

Narrative Kirtan:

A mix of music, storytelling, and philosophy.

5.3 South India

5.3.1 Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu hosts one of the oldest and most sophisticated devotional musical traditions.

Key Characteristics:

Alvar bhakti hymns (Divya Prabandham) sung in Vaishnava temples.

Tevaram hymns of Nayanars in Shiva temples.

Example: Appar's hymns in Chidambaram temple.

Bhajans in Carnatic Music:

Tyagaraja's kritis are essentially high classical bhajans dedicated to Rama.

Temple Ritual Bhajans:

Sung in daily temple rituals, processions, and festivals like Panguni Uthiram.

5.3.2 Karnataka

The Haridasa movement shaped Karnataka's devotional music.

Examples:

Purandaradasa:

"Jagadoddharana Adisida Yashoda," a bhajan popular across India.

Kanakadasa:

Known for powerful social messages.

Example: "Krishna Nee Begane Baro."

Yakshagana Bhajans:

Performed in folk-theatrical traditions with drums and chende.

5.3.3 Andhra Pradesh & Telangana

This region's devotional tradition is dominated by Tirupati–Tirumala culture.

Examples:

Annamacharya Kritis:

Over 32,000 compositions for Lord Venkateswara.

Example: "Govinda Hari Govinda."

Bhajana Sampradayas:

Evening gatherings in temples singing Telugu devotional songs.

5.3.4 Kerala

Distinctive Elements:

Sopanam Music:

Used in temple rituals of Guruvayur and Sabarimala.
Slow, graceful, meditative.

Krishna Bhajans:

Deeply influenced by Kerala's rich storytelling traditions.

5.4 East India

5.4.1 West Bengal

Bengal has one of the richest devotional traditions in India.

Major Traditions:

Gaudiya Vaishnava Kirtan:

Introduced by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu; ecstatic dancing and singing.

Example: "Hare Krishna Hare Rama."

Baul Songs:

Mystical songs seeking divine within self.
Ektara is the main instrument.

Shyama Sangeet:

Devotional songs for Goddess Kali.

Example: Songs of Ramprasad Sen.

Brahmo Bhajans:

Simple hymns used in Brahmo Samaj prayer halls.

5.4.2 Odisha

Central Bhajan Traditions:

Jagannath Bhakti:

Devotional songs describing Krishna as Jagannath of Puri.

Jayadeva's Gita Govinda:

Combines classical music, poetry, and dance.

Sung daily in Jagannath Temple.

Daskathia and Pala:

Storytelling traditions incorporating devotional singing.

5.4.3 Assam

Borgeet Tradition:

Composed by Srimanta Sankardev.

Based on classical ragas but sung in Assamese style.

Example: "Rama meri hridaya pankaje."

Performed in Namghars, community prayer halls.

5.5 Northeast India (Expanded, with full treatment of Manipur)

5.5.1 Manipur — One of India's Most Distinct Devotional Cultures

Manipur has perhaps the most unique devotional musical tradition in the Northeast, shaped by its transformation into a Vaishnavite state under King Bhagyachandra (18th century).

Major Features and Examples:

1. **Nata Sankirtana (UNESCO Cultural Heritage)**

   A complete system of song, dance, and percussion.

   Performed during religious festivals, marriages, and temple rituals.

   Centered on Krishna devotion.

2. **Pung Cholom**

   Drummers perform acrobatic dance while playing pung.

   Acts as both performance and devotion.

3. **Ras Lila of Manipur**

   Dance-drama depicting Krishna and Radha's

love.

Songs are Manipuri bhajans describing divine play.

4. **Instruments**

Pung (Manipuri drum)

Kartal

Esraj (bowed instrument)

5. **Style**

Highly rhythmic, melodic, and spiritual.

Known for purity, softness, and devotional intensity.

5.5.2 Other Northeastern States

Though Christianity is dominant in the region, devotional music plays an important role.

Nagaland

Local-language Christian hymns sung in choir form.

Use of Naga folk harmonies.

Mizoram

Congregational singing; heavy choral influence.

Meghalaya (Khasi, Garo communities)

Hymns with traditional bamboo flute and drum.

Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Sikkim

Tribal devotional songs invoking nature spirits and ancestors.

Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian influences coexist.

5.6 Others:

1. Harijan (Dalit) Devotional Song Tradition — Forms of Bhajan

"Harijan" (now an outdated term for Dalit communities) historically referred to many marginalized caste groups across North and Central India.

These communities developed powerful devotional singing traditions, which served both spiritual and social-liberation purposes.

These are not simply songs; they carry:

- Protest,
- Hope,

- Devotion,
- Community Unity,
- Spiritual Healing.

1.1 Bhajan Forms Among Harijan Communities

A. Satnami Bhajan (Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh)

The Satnami community (Dalit group) developed their own bhajan style called Satnami Râm-Bhajan.

Features:

Simple lyrics

Repetitive structure

Sung collectively

Accompanied by dholak, manjira, taal

Example:

"Râm naam ki jug jug jyoti, Satnam sab jag mein roti."

Meaning: The light of Ram-Naam lives forever; Satnam nourishes the whole world.

These bhajans blend devotion with assertion of dignity.

B. Kabir-Panth Bhajans (UP, MP, Bihar)

Many Dalit communities follow Kabir's Nirguna (formless) bhakti.

These are technically bhajans, but they criticize caste and ritual.

Example:

"Jhini Jhini Bini Chadariya,"

sung widely among Dalit groups because it speaks of:

equality

inner spirituality

rejection of caste

Musical style is simple, often using ektara or khartal.

C. Ravidasia Bhajans (Punjab, UP, Rajasthan)

Guru Ravidas (a Dalit saint) has thousands of bhajans sung in temple-like settings.

Example:

"Mero Man Anand Anand Chhayo"

This is a devotional bhajan praising divine joy and spiritual liberation.

Ravidasia songs combine spirituality with social upliftment: "Begampura"—a city without sorrow.

D. Ambedkarite Bhajan Tradition

After Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism (1956), Dalit communities developed Navayana Buddhist Bhajans.

Example:

"Bhimrao aaj hamare ghar aaye…"

Though praising Ambedkar, these are sung in bhajan format: call-response, simple melody, collective singing.

Another type: Buddha Vandana songs, recited in a bhajan-like tone.

E. Chamaar & Dusadh Folk-Bhajans (Bihar & UP)

These communities sing:

Devi bhajans,

Ram-Bhajans,

Local folk-deity bhajans (e.g., Bhuiyan Baba).

Example:

"Sita-Ram bhajle ho, paap sab dhuj jaaye."

A mixture of bhakti and folk storytelling.

Summary for Harijan Bhajan Traditions

Harijan communities have strong bhajan forms:

Satnami Bhajan

Kabirpanthi Bhajan

Ravidasia Bhajan

Ambedkarite/Buddhist Bhajan
Dalit-deity folk devotional songs
All emphasize:

- Equality
- Devotion
- Liberation
- Dignity

2. Matua/Motuwa Devotional Song Tradition — Bhajan Forms

The Matua (Motua/Muthuwa) community, founded by Harichand Thakur and expanded by Guruchand Thakur, has a very powerful bhajan tradition known as:

- Matua Harinam Bhajan
- Matua Kirtan / Harinam Gaan
- Matua Padavali Gaan

These serve the same spiritual function as mainstream bhajans but have unique features.

2.1 Matua Harinam Bhajan — Structure & Characteristics

Musical Features:

Very rhythmic
Strong call-and-response structure
Led by a singer called Gaayani or Gayak
Backed by:
khola drum
mridanga
kartal
jhal
Repetitive chanting of:
"Hari, Haribol"
"Hari Naam Sankirtan"
"Harichand Thakur ki Jai"
Spiritual Themes:

- Equality of all humans
- Simplicity in devotion
- Submission to Hari (God)
- Social upliftment
- Overcoming caste suffering

- Faith in Harichand-Guruchand

2.2 Matua Bhajan Examples (with meaning)

Example 1: Harishari Naam Kirtan

"Hare Hari bolo re bhai, Harichand Guru bolo re…"

Meaning: Chant the name of Hari and remember Guru Harichand.

Example 2: Padavali Matua Song

"Manush dhorile manush hobi" — Harichand Thakur

Meaning: By serving humanity, you become truly human.

This is the central Matua philosophy: "Manusher Dhormo Manushotto" (Humanity is the religion).

Example 3: Migration songs ("Udbastu Matua Bhajan")

After Partition, Matuas migrated from East Bengal.

Songs reflect pain, loss, hope, and devotion:

"Amar desh chhere esechhi Hari, tomar bhakti dhori…"

Meaning:

I left my homeland behind; I hold onto your devotion, Hari.

These are emotionally powerful bhajans.

2.3 Cultural Use of Matua Bhajans

During Baruni Mela

At Thakurbari temples

During village gatherings

During initiation (diksha)

At community feasts (hari-sabha)

During social reform events

During processions, especially in Thakurnagar

6. Musical Impact of Bhajans

Bhajans occupy a central place in Indian music aesthetics.

6.1 Influence on Classical Music

Bhajans introduced emotional accessibility to Hindustani and

Carnatic music. Many gharanas include bhajans in their concert repertoire, using them to evoke lighter devotional moods (Saxena, 2006). They employ ragas suitable for expressing devotion and pathos.

6.2 Influence on Folk Music

Bhajans preserve regional dialects, folk melodies, storytelling traditions, and ancestral musical forms. They inject moral and spiritual content into everyday communal life.

6.3 A Bridge Between Classical and Folk

Bhajans occupy an intermediate position, allowing mutual borrowing of melodic patterns, rhythmic cycles, and themes.

7. Educational Significance

7.1 Moral and Ethical Instruction

Bhajans communicate values of compassion, humility, honesty, non-violence, and community service. Their repetitive structure helps internalization.

7.2 Role in Ancient and Modern Pedagogy

Gurukulas and ashrams used devotional singing for cultivating concentration and emotional discipline. In modern schools, morning assemblies frequently include bhajans, reinforcing collective identity and calmness among students.

7.3 Emotional-Psychological Benefits

Studies show that music-based education enhances emotional stability, memory, and ethical sensitivity. Bhajans provide a gentle channel for these benefits.

8. Spiritual Significance

Bhajans evoke deep spiritual states by connecting individuals to a higher consciousness. They articulate core aspects of Indian spiritual thought including surrender, devotion, unity, and truth-seeking.

Saint-poets like Kabir and Guru Nanak used bhajans to convey non-dualistic philosophies (Hess, 1983). The emotion of bhakti transforms devotional singing into a method for achieving inner peace and transcendence.

9. Social Significance

Bhajans have long served as a social equalizer. They gather people from all castes, genders, and economic backgrounds into a shared spiritual experience.

9.1 Community Bonding

Collective singing fosters empathy, unity, and emotional cohesion. Festivals and temple gatherings rely on bhajans to create a shared cultural atmosphere.

9.2 Instrument of Social Reform

Saint-poets used bhajans to criticize social evils including caste hierarchy, religious intolerance, and moral corruption. This made bhajans tools of moral transformation.

9.3 Role in India's Freedom Movement

Gandhi integrated bhajans into political meetings to inspire courage and ethical clarity (Parekh, 1995). Songs like "Vaishnava Jana To" became national symbols of unity.

10. Influence of Bhajans on Rabindranath Tagore

10.1 Tagore's Early Musical Exposure

Growing up in the Brahmo Samaj tradition, Tagore was exposed to devotional hymns emphasizing the formless divine. This environment shaped his early musical sensibilities.

10.2 Influence of Vaishnava Kirtan and Baul Songs

Tagore encountered Bengali Vaishnava kirtan, Shyama Sangeet, and the mystical Baul tradition in rural Bengal. These forms, deeply rooted in bhajan aesthetics, influenced his poetic and musical style (Dutta & Robinson, 1995).

10.3 Musical Techniques Borrowed from Bhajans

Rabindra Sangeet incorporates:

- Repetition-based phrases
- Simple lyrical expression
- Devotional emotionality
- Melodic structures from Indian ragas

10.4 Philosophical Interpretation

Tagore transformed bhakti into spiritual humanism, a philosophy asserting that divinity resides in humanity and nature.

10.5 Santiniketan's Bhajan-Inspired Culture

Morning prayers, evening gatherings, and seasonal festivals at Santiniketan followed bhajan-like communal singing patterns. Music became a method for moral and spiritual development.

11. Conclusion

The bhajan tradition stands as one of the most profound cultural forces shaping Indian civilization. Originating from ancient Vedic chants and flourishing through the Bhakti Movement, it integrates regional diversity, spiritual philosophy, and musical creativity. Its influence on classical and folk music, education, religious practice, and social life is immense and enduring.

The inclusion of regions like Manipur and the Northeast reveals the true pan-Indian nature of the bhajan tradition. Finally, the legacy of bhajans lives vibrantly within Rabindranath Tagore's works, where devotional aesthetics merge with universal humanism, shaping one of the most significant musical-philosophical traditions of modern India.

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Populism, Welfarism And Freebie-ism: The Conceptual Debate

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Abstract

The philosophical and theoretical discussion surrounding populism, welfarism, and freebie-ism is intricate and multifaceted. There is an important question to consider: are we referring to the same thing? These are related but separate ideas that spark intense discussions in Indian politics. It is crucial to have a deeper understanding of the implications of these issues. Populism as a political strategy divides society into two categories: pure people and corrupt elites. Conversely, freebie-ism is a derogatory term that typically refers to the unjust allocation of resources to the electorate. In contrast to welfarism, which is a political and economic approach that aims to achieve social justice and welfare through welfare policies. It is a more holistic and long-lasting approach to addressing social and economic issues. In fact, populism and welfarism often play a significant role in addressing socio-economic issues, whereas freebie-ism is often criticized for benefiting specific groups while neglecting others. Nevertheless, welfarism is viewed as a tool for enhancing democratic governance, but populism is frequently criticized for undermining democratic institutions and the democratic process. This study focuses on the ongoing debate surrounding the philosophical and theoretical foundations, historical development, and contemporary interpretations of the concepts discussed. Additionally, it also discusses the conceptual distinction between populism, welfarism, and freebie-ism, recognizing that they have different parameters and sparking ongoing debates about

the fine line between neo populism and these ideologies. The analysis eventually adds to the ongoing conversation about welfare politics and the prevalence of freebies in society, how populism and freebies affect democracy and welfare .

Introduction

Populism, welfarism, and freebie-ism are three concepts that have garnered significant attention in recent years, particularly in relation to democratic governance and economic progress. In contemporary democratic societies, the interaction between populism, welfarism, and freebies has emerged as a crucial aspect of political debates and decision-making processes. Leaders from various political ideologies employ a combination of these strategies to establish rapport with voters, address societal concerns, and strengthen their political influence. Each of these ideas come from different philosophical backgrounds, reflect different ideological motivations, and have different impacts on democratic processes and development outcomes. Despite their differences, what unites them is their significance in the way modern states handle the expectations of their citizens, particularly in the face of increasing inequality, digital activism, and economic instability.

Populism, whether in its traditional or modern forms, embodies a political approach that contrasts the virtuous 'people' with a corrupt 'elite'. It is a morally charged form of opposition often led by influential figures who assert an unmediated link with the general public. Populism thrives on perceived crises of representation, identity and economics and often critiques institutional checks and balances in the name of direct democracy or national renewal.

Welfarism, in contrast, is deeply rooted in the moral principles upheld by liberal democracies and is supported by numerous research scholars in the field of ethics. It is founded on the principle of fairness and the belief that the government has a duty to ensure the economic welfare of its people. Welfarist policies, which encompass universal education, public healthcare, and social insurance, are legally established, financially supported through taxation, and implemented through institutional frameworks. Welfarism is a long-term investment in human capabilities, aimed at empowering citizens rather than simply alleviating poverty.

Freebie-ism, however, denotes a distinct path. It refers to a political tactic

where tangible incentives, such as cash payments, subsidies, or consumer goods, are provided to individuals, usually without the establishment of a comprehensive support system or long-term policy framework. Although it may use the language of welfarism or disguise itself in populist rhetoric, freebie-ism is typically short-sighted, financially unstable, and politically driven.

The increasing influence of neo-populism has made it even more challenging to distinguish between different political ideologies. Thanks to digital media, neo populist leaders are able to combine emotional politics with targeted welfare programs and generous giveaways. They promote narratives that challenge established institutions while consolidating power, undermining institutional norms, and personalizing governance. Neo-populism does not just revive old populist ideas, it transforms them into modern, technologically advanced, emotionally impactful, and economically active forms.

This paper delves into the subject matter by structuring the discussion into three main sections. The initial focus of their study is to examine the philosophical and theoretical foundations of each concept, tracing the intellectual paths that led to their development. The second part of the document outlines the practical and ethical guidelines that differentiate them in real-life situations. The concluding part thoroughly examines neo-populism as a dynamic and flexible political entity, investigating its consequences for governance, democracy, and economic stability.

Philosophical and theoretical foundations of the concepts

Populism is complex and has been extensively researched in fields such as politics, sociology, and economics. Populism is based on the belief in popular sovereignty, which asserts that 'the will of the people' is the ultimate source of political power (2005). Populist movements frequently tap into the emotions and anxieties of citizens, fostering a narrative of "us" versus "them" (Mudde, 2007). This narrative can be observed in the increasing popularity of nationalist movements, as citizens express their emotions by blaming minorities and external enemies. Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe are well-known theorists within the discourse theoretical approach to populism. They collectively advocated for a post structuralist and post marxist approach to radical democracy. Later, after studying Laclau, he developed a complex and in-depth theoretical analysis of

populism.

In 1971, after gaining independence, India experienced its first populist election, on the plank of Indira Gandhi's 'Garibi HATAO' slogan , at its core, promising to eradicate poverty. She embraced left-wing populism, criticizing her opponent as a right-wing advocate. In 1989 and 2014, populist elections took place as the collective democratic quest appeared to be a savior rather than a leader. The philosophical basis of populism is a multifaceted interaction of moral dualism, emotional persuasion, anti-elitism, and majoritarian democratic claims. It flourishes in times of crisis, inequality, and the erosion of trust in institutions, presenting itself as a solution to restore the balance of power in the democratic system.

Conversely, welfarism is a concept that underscores the significance of social welfare policies and government intervention in the economy to foster social justice and equality. The philosophical basis of welfarism can be traced back to the concept of social justice and human rights, which emphasize the importance of promoting the well-being and dignity of every individual. At a broad level, welfarism is supported by utilitarian philosophy, particularly the ideas of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, who argued for government intervention that maximizes the overall happiness of society. The ethical concept in welfarism is also shaped by John Rawls, whose theory of justice stressed the importance of social and economic inequality being organized in a manner that favors the least advantaged.

In the Indian context, welfarism has gained philosophical strength from indigenous traditions of justice, communal values, and the anti-caste movement. Gandhian ideology stressed *Sarvo*daya - 'the well-being of all'. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, drawing from both liberal and Buddhist philosophies, presented welfarism as a means to eradicate caste discrimination and establish a democratic society. Additionally, the Indian Constitution institutionalized welfarist ideals through its directive principles of state policy. Modern examples of Indian welfare programs like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the National Food Security Act, and Ayushman Bharat showcase this rich philosophical heritage. These initiatives are not just about implementing policies but are deeply rooted in the belief that economic fairness and human progress are essential for a thriving

democracy. Welfarism is more than just a tool for politics. It is a moral vision of society, founded on compassion, inclusivity, and fairness. It necessitates that the state takes an active role in addressing structural disadvantages, thereby fostering conditions for human flourishing and social harmony.

Freebie-ism is a term that refers to the practice of offering goods and services to citizens without a well-defined plan for financing or ensuring long-term viability. The origins of freebie-ism can be traced back to the concept of clientelism, where politicians offer goods and services in exchange for political support. In the Indian context, the concept of freebies can be traced back to the pre-independence era when political leaders made promises of land reforms, agricultural assistance, and welfare measures to win the support of the people. Nevertheless, the emphasis on providing goods and services directly to consumers without any additional charges was not as prominent during this time. In the 1950s and 1960s, the idea of giving away freebies became more popular as the central and state governments started implementing different welfare programs. The objective of these initiatives was to tackle poverty, create job prospects, and uplift disadvantaged communities. Examples include the PDS (People Distribution System) for subsidized food grains, ICDS (the Integrated Child Development Services) for nutrition and health support, and NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) for rural employment. In the latter half of the 20th century, there was an increase in populist policies as political parties began including freebies in their election promises to entice voters. Over the past few decades, there has been a significant rise in the competitive spirit of populism and the distribution of freebies among political parties. This encompasses pledges of free laptops, smartphones, bicycles, and other tangible advantages to particular target groups. Over time, worries have been expressed about the influence of freebies on democratic governance, the country's financial stability, and the ethical standards in politics. In response, the Election Commission of India has taken steps to monitor and control the distribution of freebies during election campaigns.

There are various theoretical debates and discussions surrounding populism, welfarism, and freebie-ism. A prominent scholar frequently highlights that populism undermines fundamental liberal democratic

institutions, particularly the rule of law (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; Plattner, 2010). Some other researchers believe that populism has the potential to enhance political participation and strengthen the connection between politicians and citizens, as it places a strong emphasis on vertical mechanisms of democratic accountability, such as elections and direct democratic processes. According to Canovan (1999), Laclau (2005), Meny and Surel (2002), the concept of "the other" is a crucial aspect of understanding the dynamics of power and oppression in society. One of the main discussions surrounding populism is whether it should be classified as an ideology. Some experts contend that populism is a shallow-centered ideology that prioritizes the collective voice of the people and frequently includes 'anti-elitist' sentiments and nationalistic tendencies. Some experts question the concept of populism as an ideology, claiming that it is overly simplistic and fails to capture the complexity of political discourse. Another theoretical perspective on populism is to consider it as a discourse, highlighting the significance of language and rhetoric in influencing populist movements. Laclau's research on populism highlights the significance of language and the formation of shared identities within a group. However, some critics argue that this approach places too much emphasis on language and rhetoric, neglecting other important aspects of communication. There is an ongoing discussion regarding the factors that contribute to the rise of populism. Some experts believe that populism is a reaction to economic disparities and social unfairness, while others view it as stemming from cultural and identity-related concerns. Various approaches and viewpoints provide valuable insights into the nature and consequences of populism, but each has its own strengths and limitations. By comprehending these debates, we can develop a comprehensive understanding of populism and its impact on politics and society.

Welfarism asserts that morality is primarily concerned with the welfare of individuals. In this particular situation, the term welfarism appears to have been coined by Amartya Sen, who wrote about Utilitarianism and Welfarism in the Journal of philosophy in 1979. The welfare state has no connection to the nation. The theoretical discussion surrounding welfarism centers around its scope, definition, and implications, particularly in relation to factors such as justice, freedom, and rights that extend beyond individual well-being. Welfarism is occasionally examined as a theory of

morality in its entirety (keller,2009). The ongoing theoretical discussion in India about welfarism centers around the idea of a welfare state, its purpose in society, and the most efficient methods to put it into practice. This debate revolves around the role of the state in offering social safety nets and tackling poverty, the balance between rights-based and needs-based approaches to welfare, and the potential influence of welfare schemes on voting patterns. A major point of disagreement is whether welfare should be considered a fundamental right for all citizens or a program designed to assist specific groups in need. Supporters of a right-based approach contend that it can enhance accountability and guarantee that fundamental needs are fulfilled, although critics express concerns about the potential for bureaucratic intricacies and the risk of distorting service delivery. The debate also covers the appropriate degree of government involvement in the economy and social aspects. There are those who contend that a robust welfare state, characterized by a significant role for the public sector and strategic planning, is crucial for tackling disparities and fostering societal progress. Some people argue for a smaller role for the government, promoting private sector participation and market-based approaches. The connection between welfare programs and voting choices is a subject of intense scrutiny. Some studies suggest that well targeted welfare programs can boost political support for those who implement them while others caution that there is limited evidence to support a direct link between schemes and electoral success. There is a debate about whether welfarism should be universal, offering benefits to all citizens, or targeted, providing benefits only to those who require them the most. By comprehending these debates, we can acquire a deeper understanding of welfarism and its implications for democratic governance.

Freebie-ism is a term that refers to the practice of offering goods and services to citizens without a well-defined plan for financing or ensuring long-term viability. This trend has garnered considerable attention in recent years, especially in the realm of politics and governance, particularly in relation to elections. However, it has a significant impact on Indian democratic governance. The defining features of freebie-ism are the absence of sustainability, as the provision of goods and services lacks a clear plan for long-term viability. In a country like India, where a substantial portion of the population lives below the poverty line, freebies can offer

immediate assistance and enhance the standard of living for those facing difficulties in fulfilling their basic necessities. For example, initiatives like the People Distribution System (PDS) and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme have been effective in guaranteeing that vulnerable sections of society have access to sufficient nutrition. Additionally, freebies can also play a crucial role in addressing social and gender disparities. Initiatives such as providing free education for girls or offering financial support for women entrepreneurs are designed to empower women and reduce the gender disparity. One argument in favor of freebies is their potential to increase political participation and democratic engagement. Conversely, it is equally crucial to scrutinize the adverse effects and potential drawbacks of freebie-ism in Indian politics. The main worry is the financial strain on the state's budget, which can impede long-term economic progress and development. Additionally, the provision of freebies can foster a sense of reliance among citizens. One of the worries is that freebies were given out in a biased manner, favoring certain individuals or groups based on their political beliefs or social background, rather than considering fair and impartial criteria. This selective distribution can exacerbate social divisions and reinforce identity politics, diverting attention from the broader development agenda. Inadequate governance structures and insufficient infrastructure can hinder the effectiveness of freebies schemes, resulting in inefficiencies and subpar outcomes.

Defining the parameters

In today's democratic societies, particularly those facing economic inequality, institutional decay, and unpredictable elections, the concepts of populism, welfarism, and freebie-ism have gained significant political importance while also being subject to confusion and debate. Although frequently mentioned in public discussions, these phenomena are often mixed up, making it difficult to distinguish between genuine welfare policies and politically motivated handouts. A comprehensive comprehension of each is crucial for informed political analysis, democratic accountability, and sustainable governance. Populism can be understood as a political approach or tactic rather than a unified set of beliefs. Populism can be seen on both the right and left sides of the political spectrum and can be found in different cultural and national settings. Populist leaders often bypass traditional political intermediaries such as parties, media

and judiciary and appeal directly to the public, while populism may in some contexts serve as a democratic corrective by bringing marginalized concerns into the mainstream. It also poses risks to democratic norms when it attempts to weaken institutional checks and concentrate power (Urbinati,2019). The populist logic often rejects the idea of multiple perspectives and finding common ground, which can undermine the democratic process. In contrast to welfarism, which is based on a normative commitment to social justice and equity, utilitarianism prioritizes the overall happiness and well-being of the majority. Its objective is to guarantee a decent standard of living for all individuals by implementing structural and rights-based state interventions. These interventions typically include universal healthcare, education, unemployment benefits, and pension systems (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Unlike populism, its legitimacy is not derived from charisma but from the adherence to the rule of law. Welfare policies foster social unity and decrease economic inequalities, thereby bolstering the legitimacy of the democratic state (Barr, 2020). From a redistributive perspective, welfarism not only aims to provide assistance but also contributes to productivity, enhances human capital, and promotes inclusive development. Freebie-ism, commonly seen as welfare, lacks the structured and right-based foundation of welfarism. It is known for its short-term thinking, inconsistent implementation, and lack of fiscal responsibility (Vaishnav, 2017). The issue with freebie-ism is not the act of providing benefits, but the ability to maintain them in the long run. Freebies are often given to specific groups of voters and are announced before elections, indicating their political purpose (Jaffrelot and Verniers, 2021). Although they have different underlying principles, populism, welfarism, and freebie-ism frequently overlap in their real-world applications. The task for policymakers and scholars is to establish clear distinctions between these concepts, both in terms of their normative and operational aspects. The parameters that define populism, welfarism, and freebie-ism reveal that although all three address the issue of resource distribution and public responsiveness, their underlying philosophies, methods, and outcomes are distinct.

Clarifying the parameters of populism, welfarism and freebie-ism is vital to ensure conceptual precision in public discourse and policy evaluation, while each arises from a desire to connect with the public and address

socio-economic grievances, their motive mechanism and outcomes diverge significantly. Understanding these differences enables effective governance, informed policy-making, and the preservation of democratic principles in a time of political noise and populist allure.

Neo-populism

In recent decades, Indian politics has experienced a significant change in its populist dynamics. Populism is not a novel concept in India, having played a significant role since the days of Indira Gandhi's 'Garibi Hatao' slogan. The 21st century has witnessed the emergence of a new form of populism: neo-populism. This new trend combines charismatic leadership, digital communication, nationalistic language, and welfare programs in ways that energize and question the core principles of Indian democracy. Neo-populism in India goes beyond traditional ideological boundaries, transforming the way political communication is conducted, the relationship between citizens and the state, and the level of trust in institutions. Classical populism in India primarily emphasized mass mobilization and redistribution policies, whereas neo-populism is characterized by charismatic, centralized leadership. It is closely linked to the direct appeal to 'the people' through social and digital media. This form of populism is less about grassroots activism and more about top-down mobilization, fueled by technology and tailored messaging. Indian neo-populism frequently centers around leaders who are bold and confident, and who assert that they represent the desires of the general population. Leaders like Narendra Modi, present themselves as outsiders to the political elite, offering a narrative of self-sacrifice, simplicity, and moral authority. The leader is not just a politician but a symbol of national revival (Basu, 2019). One of the defining characteristics of neo-populism is the belief that intermediary institutions, such as the judiciary, media, and bureaucracy, act as obstacles to the will of the people. Civil society perspectives are often disregarded as pro-opposition. Ordinances and executive decisions are often used to bypass legislative processes (Ayyub,2022). Digital platforms, particularly WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter, play a crucial role in the neo populist communication model. The BJP's IT Cell showcases the effective use of social media to spread narratives, often accompanied by misinformation and echo chambers (Pal, Chandra,

and Vemuri, 2021). Neo-populist narratives often draw on religious and cultural nationalism to make their point. The dichotomy between 'nationalists' and 'anti-nationals' has emerged as a prevalent tool (Jaffrelot and Tillin, 2021). This intensifies religious division, especially towards marginalized groups. Initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Ujjwala Yojna, and the PM-Kisan scheme serve a dual purpose. These initiatives are tailored to individual needs and extensively promoted, making it difficult to distinguish between governing and campaigning (Kapur and Vaishnav, 2021). While the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) model is the most prominent, other regional parties also display characteristics of neo-populism. Regional leaders such as Mamta Banerjee, Arvind Kejriwal, and Nitish Kumar have adopted similar strategies, combining welfare populism with personality-centered campaigns and appeals to cultural or sub-national identity. AAP's emphasis on providing free electricity, water, and education in Delhi is often seen as a model of effective governance, but it is also criticized as a welfare-driven approach that appeals to the masses. Kejriwal positioned himself as a trustworthy, anti-establishment figure, challenging the political establishments. Mamta Banerjee utilizes the concept of sub-national identity and grassroots connections in West Bengal, which share similar populist characteristics (Bhattacharya, 2023).

Critics contend that neo-populism weakens institutions and promotes majoritarianism, rendering it inherently anti-pluralist. They caution against the potential for democratic regression, the erosion of civil liberties, and the suppression of dissenting voices. Supporters argue that neo-populism breathes new life into democracy by addressing the concerns of the people and circumventing bureaucratic obstacles. The delivery of welfare is more immediate and visible, making governance more tangible. Neo-populism in Indian politics has both positive and negative consequences. While it improves visibility, efficiency, and political participation for many marginalized groups, it also poses a threat to the core principles of pluralism, institutional autonomy, and deliberative democracy. Navigating the path ahead demands a delicate equilibrium between responsiveness to the people and adherence to the principles of the constitution.

Conclusion

The intertwined yet separate paths of populism, welfarism, and freebie-ism have shaped the ideological landscape of contemporary democratic politics, especially in India. Populism functions as a political ideology that positions the 'pure people' against an alleged 'corrupt elite'. Welfarism is a system of governance that is based on principles of fairness and the state's duty to ensure the well-being of its citizens. Freebie-ism, on the other hand, tends to distance itself from structural reforms, treating it as a mere transactional tool used for electoral gain. Neo-populism combines and rearranges these components into a more dynamic, media-focused, and centralized political approach. It combines the emotional impact of populism, the language of fairness and equality from welfarism, and the popularity of freebies, but presents them in a personalized and digitally-driven story. What sets neo-populism apart is not merely its method, but its capacity to merge governance with spectacle and ideology with identity creating a politics of immediacy that often bypasses deliberative institutions. In the long run, the challenge lies in restoring the ethical foundation of welfarism without succumbing to the allure of short-term populist indulgence or unsustainable freebie culture. Democratic societies need to differentiate between giving people the power to make decisions and simply appeasing them, between providing entitlements and engaging in patronage. If they are to resist the allure of neo-populism, while remaining socially responsive and institutionally strong, they must take action.

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Gender and Genre in Hindi Cinema Posters: A Comparative Study of Male and Female Protagonists

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Abstract

Cinema has long been regarded as a mirror of the society from which it emerges. Yet, the visual culture surrounding films especially cinema posters, often goes unnoticed as a powerful tool for shaping public perception. This study examines the variation in gender representation across genres in Hindi cinema posters from 2000 to 2025, with a focus on the comparative portrayal of male and female protagonists in action, romance, comedy, and horror genres. Using visual semiotics and gender theory, the research analyses eight selected posters: Singham (2011), Mardaani (2014), Rockstar (2011), Laila Majnu (2018), Dhamaal (2007), Tumhari Sulu (2017), Bhoot (2003), and Pari (2018). Through a detailed semiotic analysis, the study explores how positioning, gaze, costume, space, and symbolic colour use reinforce or challenge traditional gender norms. It examines whether female-led posters depict agency or follow a gendered visual subtext of passivity, and whether male-led posters consistently emphasise dominance, power, and centrality. This paper contributes to the discourse on gender and media by examining how genres visually shape gender expectations. It also talks about how male protagonists retain

visual centrality, particularly in action and romance genres. Findings underline the need to view posters not just as marketing tools but as cultural texts that reflect and reinforce gender ideologies. Ultimately, the study highlights the evolving, uneven gender portrayal in Bollywood's visual culture.

Keywords

Gender Representation, Hindi Cinema Posters, Visual Semiotics, Genre Analysis, Feminist Film Theory

1. Introduction

As we all know, cinema is more than just an entertainment; it's a reflection of the values, biases, and shifts within society. It is also known as a powerful cultural mirror, and its posters are the first point of contact that viewers see. A poster encodes a film's essence, and more importantly, it constructs visual identities for protagonists, often infused with genre-based and gendered expectations. So, this study comprehensively analyses Hindi cinema posters. And try to understand how posters shape and sustain the cultural narratives about identity, power, and gender. Posters do not simply market films; they package the protagonists into visual archetypes. An action film's poster often glorifies masculine strength, whereas a romantic film may soften the visual tones to enhance emotional appeal. When female protagonists lead the narrative, are they visually centred or marginalised? Do posters use visual codes differently depending on the protagonist's gender? These questions become central when studying gender through the lens of genre. This paper explores these concerns through a comparative study of male and female protagonists across four genres: action, romance, comedy, and horror, spanning Hindi cinema posters from 2000 to 2025.

1.1 Research Problem

Despite the growing scholarship on gender and cinema, poster-based gender analysis remains underexplored in Indian film studies. There is a notable absence of comparative visual studies examining how male and female protagonists are differently portrayed within genre-specific poster designs. Most research tends to focus on film narratives, dialogues, and scripts, leaving a critical gap in understanding the visual

marketing of gendered identities. This study addresses that gap by analysing how posters communicate gendered meanings across genres and by questioning whether visual representations align with, or resist, traditional gender norms.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research aims to:

- Examine the visual representation of male and female protagonists in Hindi cinema posters from 2000 to 2025.
- Analyse how genre influences the portrayal of gender in poster designs.
- Identify visual codes used to frame male versus female leads.
- Offer a comparative understanding of gendered visual culture in Bollywood's action, romance, comedy, and horror genres.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How are male and female protagonists visually represented in Hindi cinema posters across different genres?
2. What recurring visual patterns, symbols, and semiotic markers distinguish male-led from female-led posters?
3. In what ways does genre influence the gendered framing of protagonists in film posters?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study holds significance for both media scholars and cultural researchers. By focusing on posters, a frequently overlooked visual medium, it reveals the gendered layers embedded in marketing materials that precede a film's narrative. The paper contributes to gender studies by offering insights into how women's agency and visibility are shaped by genre conventions in promotional visuals. For film and communication scholars, it provides a framework to examine posters not as static images, but as cultural texts that mirror and manufacture gender norms. Furthermore, the study sheds light on evolving visual trends and gender roles in a media-

saturated society, offering a lens to gauge how far Hindi cinema has moved toward inclusive, equitable representation.

2. Review of Literature

Stokmans (2009) studied the impact of promotional movie posters on viewers' perceptions of the promoted movie. This hypothesis proposes that audiences with pleasurable viewing reasons are attracted to sensory information, whereas audiences with utilitarian goals are attracted to quality statements. The study had 34 participants and used a post-test-only approach in a laboratory setting, which raised concerns about testing efficacy. However, using an implicit attitude measure that responds to emotional variations enabled some partial support of the hypotheses.

Studies like those of Rajadhyaksha (2009) and Dwyer (2006) have discussed Bollywood's visual culture in broad strokes but rarely offer a gender-genre breakdown. Similarly, semiotic research by Wen et al. (2022) provides a framework for decoding design strategies in posters, yet lacks gendered analysis. Genre studies highlight the codes and conventions of cinematic categories, but do not explore how these conventions intersect with gendered visual framing in marketing.

Shahid et al. (2015). Bollywood includes films in many languages, but it is the largest. Film posters are a major part of this visual culture and serve as key publicity tools. They use images and text to give the audience a first impression of the film. Among these elements, the title design plays a central role as it reflects the film's theme. Over time, title design has changed due to social, cultural, and technological shifts. This study uses a semiotic approach to analyse Bollywood film poster titles by looking at their structure, thematic links, context, and production techniques.

Hatam et al. (2021) argue that images are never neutral; they carry encoded messages shaped by the culture that produces them. When applied to Hindi cinema posters, this idea helps uncover how gender roles are visually constructed. Posters are crafted to catch the eye, but beneath the surface, they carry signs of power, submission, desire, and control, all deeply linked to gender. However, while many researchers have examined gender within films, few have extended

this inquiry to promotional materials such as posters. These visuals communicate themes, genre, and character identity often within seconds. Despite their cultural influence, posters remain underutilised in academic research.

Some research has begun to focus on evolving gender roles in media, such as in the works of Saravanan & Vesna.J (2024). These studies trace how Indian heroines are no longer confined to passive roles. However, the lens remains on film content rather than on how women are visually represented before the film even begins. This oversight presents a clear opportunity: to examine the intersection of gender, genre, and poster design as a new frontier in visual media studies.

2.1 Research Gap

While existing literature extensively explores gender roles within Hindi cinema narratives, there is a critical absence of visual analysis focused on film posters, a medium that heavily influences public perception. No major study offers a genre-wise comparative poster analysis that systematically contrasts male and female protagonists using visual semiotic tools. Furthermore, poster studies in Indian cinema often lack depth in gender discourse and overlook the subtleties of visual framing, such as posture, colour, spatial arrangement, and symbolic codes. This study addresses that gap by analysing eight Hindi film posters (2000–2025) across four genres: action, romance, comedy, and horror, to understand how gendered identities are constructed, reinforced, or challenged through visual design. It contributes to a growing but still limited field of poster-based gender studies in South Asian media research.

3. Theoretical Framework

This research builds its foundation on three core theories: semiotic theory, feminist theory, and the idea that film reflects society. Together, they guide how we decode visual meaning from Hindi film posters and examine gender portrayal across genres.

3.1. Semiotic Theory: The Science of Signs

At the heart of this study lies semiotics, introduced by

Ferdinand de Saussure and expanded by Roland Barthes. Semiotics is the study of how meaning is made through signs—be it words, images, colours, or layouts. In film posters, these signs are carefully chosen to send specific messages. A blood-red background may suggest danger or violence, while a man in a central position with a firm gaze could imply dominance. Barthes adds that signs carry two levels of meaning:

- Denotation: What we see (a woman in a white dress).
- Connotation: The cultural meaning (purity, vulnerability, or sacrifice).

Through this lens, the posters aren't just designs; they are constructed messages about gender, genre, and identity.

3.2. Feminist Theory: Questioning Power and Representation

Feminist theory, especially as developed by Laura Mulvey (1975), challenges how women are visually treated in cinema. Her concept of the male gaze argues that mainstream films often show women as objects of male desire, not as active agents. Applied to posters, we see this in how women are often placed behind the hero, reduced to decorative figures, or shown in passive poses. Other scholars, such as Bell Hooks and Gayatri Spivak, expand this lens by focusing on intersectionality and subaltern representation, asking: Whose stories are missing? In Indian film posters, this is critical. Dalit, tribal, and working-class women are often absent or flattened into stereotypes. This paper applies feminist thought to highlight such imbalances and also to note where resistance is taking shape.

The theoretical pillar is the widely held idea that cinema reflects society. Hindi films often absorb and replay social norms, values, and power structures. What we see on a poster is not just a promotional image; it reflects who holds power, who is visible, and who is left out. When action films consistently show muscular male heroes but hide female strength, it tells us how society values masculinity over femininity. Conversely, when some modern films showcase assertive women, it suggests societal change is underway. This concept supports

our central aim: by comparing male and female protagonists across genres in posters, we can understand how Indian society sees gender roles and how these ideas shift with context.

3.3 Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in visual semiotic analysis to examine how gender is represented across genres in Hindi cinema posters. The research focuses on the comparative case study design, where each poster is treated as a visual case. Reading of male and female protagonists in posters from four genres: action, romance, comedy, and horror. Each genre includes one male-led and one female-led film, resulting in a total sample of eight posters. Using convenience sampling to select two film posters for each genre, one featuring a male protagonist and the other a female protagonist in a similar role within the genre. It was taken from the online database IMDb. The chosen films span from 2000 to 2025 and include both mainstream and critically acclaimed works.

Table 1.3.1: Selected Posters for the study

S.No.	Genre	Male-led Poster	Female-led Poster
1.	Action	Singham (2011)	Mardaani (2014)
2.	Romance	Rockstar (2011)	Laila Majnu (2018)
3.	Comedy	Dhamaal (2007)	Tumhari Sulu (2017)
4.	Horror	Bhoot (2003)	Pari (2020)

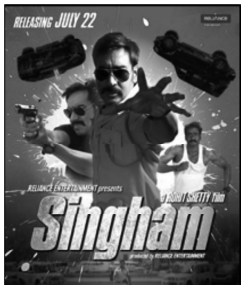
4. Analysis

This section of the paper analyses selected Hindi film posters through the lens of a semiotic study. It also highlights patterns of gendered representation, using the developed codebook and poster samples from 2000 to 2025.

4.1 Poster Analysis: Action Genre

Table 4.1.1: Singham (2011) - Male-Led Action Genre

Singham, which was released in 2011, instantly conveys power, intensity, and



dominance through both design and symbolism. Poster portraying the fearless police officer, who is the male protagonist, stands centrally in the frame, occupying the visual space. The image embodies physical strength, an archetype of traditional masculinity in action cinema.

Framing & Positioning

The male protagonist is alone at the and the centre. The camera angle is focused, giving character a special presence. His arms are rigid at his sides, fists clenched, suggesting readiness for action. The positioning command over the poster space visually asserts his role as the film's core energy.

Facial Expression & Gaze

The male figure's intense, piercing gaze is directed slightly downward but focused. His expression is serious, almost confrontational. This non-verbal intensity reinforces a character who seeks justice through action. His sunglasses reflect flames, adding layers of symbolic rage and righteous fury.

Costume & Colour Use

The khaki police uniform, sharp, neat, and form-fitting, becomes a visual emblem of duty and nationalism. The background blazes with hues of orange, red, and yellow, evoking fire, danger, and heat. These "masculine" colours amplify the urgency and aggression associated with the action genre. Even the title "Singham," written in bold capital letters with metallic texture, adds weight to the character's aura.

Background & Spatial Layout

Flames engulf the poster's rear, suggesting chaos and threat elements that the hero must confront. There are no supporting characters, female figures in the composition. The

singular focus on the male protagonist implies he alone carries the film's narrative and moral strength.

Genre Markers The visual language aligns perfectly with action-genre codes: explosive colour palette, authoritative posture, heroic costume, and aggressive typeface. Every element contributes to building an image of the "ideal masculine protector."

Symbolism and Cultural Encoding The lion metaphor (Singham translates to "lion") operates not just linguistically but visually. Devgan's stance mimics the stance of a lion, alert, powerful, and solitary. The poster visually glorifies hypermasculinity and moral absolutism.

The male-led Action movie poster of Singham portrays the male protagonist as a solitary force of justice. It also uses fire, uniform, posture, and framing to represent him as morally upright and physically dominant, a classic masculine figure in Bollywood action cinema. The absence of female figures and emotional cues solidifies the poster's commitment to showcasing male singularity, strength, and control.

Table 4.2.2: Mardaani (2014) - Female-Led Action Genre



In the female-led action film poster of Mardaani, released in 2014. The woman protagonist is represented as a powerful figure. Compositional choices and symbolic representation are calculative. The poster positions her as determined, authoritative, and confrontational.

Framing & Positioning The protagonist stands slightly off-centre but still dominates the poster's visual gravity. Her stance is dynamic; she grasps the door frame with her hand, paces ahead with a gun,

	suggesting stillness rather than movement. The poster communicates composed strength.
Facial Expression & Gaze	Expression is firm, lips pressed, and brows narrowed, not in anger but in focused determination. She directly communicates with the viewer with her eye. This rejects her objectification and asserts presence and demands confrontation.
Costume & Colour Use	The female character wears a plain black Indian traditional kurta, not a uniform, but not stylised femininity either. The outfit grounds her character in realism, making her relatable and credible as an everyday heroine. The colour used is earthy and matte. This muted realism heightens the seriousness of the subject matter and distinguishes her as a woman of action grounded in social realism.
Background & Spatial Layout	The background shows a hazy urban setting with crime. She stands alone, yet not isolated. Her solitary positioning echoes the lone-wolf archetype, but with a grounded and socially rooted lens.
Genre Markers	The posture, stance, and tension within the frame fulfil the genre's requirements. It also defines the action heroine not by mimicking male traits, but by presenting strength through moral clarity and emotional focus.
Symbolism and Cultural Encoding	The word Mardaani, meaning "manlike" in courage, immediately subverts gender expectations. It honours Shivani's bravery by comparing her to masculine ideals, but the poster visually counters that by rooting her in femininity, dignity, and intelligence. It sends a message that strength does not need

to abandon femininity; it can coexist.

Overall, as we see in the poster, it constructs a subversive female action icon. It avoids glamorization and instead focuses on moral urgency and realism. The visual semiotic signals a shift in Bollywood where a woman can lead an action film with credibility.

4.2 Poster Analysis: Romance Genre

Table 4.2.1: Rockstar (2011) - Male-Led Romance Genre



The poster of the film Rockstar features Ranbir Kapoor as Jordan, not merely as a romantic hero as an artist shaped by love, pain, and rebellion. The visual design draws attention to the emotional intensity of his journey, transcending the boundaries of conventional Bollywood romance.

Composition	Figure depicted in the centre, facing sideways yet slightly tilted toward the viewer. The blurred background with fire creates a sense of chaos and inner turbulence. The design leads the viewer's eye toward his passionate expression, suggesting that the story is deeply internal.
Facial Expression & Gaze	Face is visible in the poster, accompanied by a small guitar. The overall poster composition reflects the outline of the guitar and the flowing hair, evoking movement and emotional release. The poster doesn't seek to establish dominance but invites the viewer into the emotional world of the character, a signature move in romance narratives led by men grappling with vulnerability.
Costume & Colour Use	Jordan's rugged leather jacket, which is slightly visible, cap, and unkempt hair project rebellion. Use of reddish, yellow, and grey colours resonates with young people

	disillusioned by polished romance, lending authenticity to his emotional struggles.
Background & Spatial Layout	Warm oranges and rustic browns dominate the frame, creating a sense of fire, longing, and spiritual awakening. The light flares on him symbolically suggesting divine inspiration. This glow contrasts sharply with darker shadows, emphasising a journey between ecstasy and despair.
Genre Markers	The musical cues, the poster's tone remains melancholic; it replaces typical romantic visuals with personal suffering. The poster reflects the theme of the movie, which is love reimagined through pain, performance, and poetry.
Symbolism and Cultural Encoding	In the poster guitar representation becomes a central metaphor, both weapon and wound. It's the object through which he channels his longing for the female protagonist. Interestingly, the female protagonist absent from the poster is turning romance into a personal, spiritual pursuit.

Rockstar, the 2011 movie poster, reframes the male romantic lead as a soul in crisis. Its poster abandons cheerful romance for a deeper emotional world where love is transcendental, destructive, and transformative.

Table 4.2.2: Laila Majnu (2018) – Female-Led Romance Genre

	The poster of Laila Majnu reimagines a centuries-old love tragedy with a hauntingly poetic lens. It places both the figure at the emotional centre of a love story consumed by madness, memory, and spiritual yearning.
Framing &	The female protagonist is neither centred nor

Positioning	dominant in space, yet her figure is bathed in soft light, making her presence spiritual. The male protagonist appears behind her; his reduced visibility accentuates Laila's emotional prominence. This compositional hierarchy signals a shift in narrative weight toward the woman's emotional experience.
Facial Expression	Laila's expression is serene yet heavy with sorrow. Her downward gaze evokes inner turmoil, restraint, and acceptance of love's cost. Unlike assertive romantic heroines of modern cinema, she is passive yet powerful; her silence speaks louder than words. Her lack of direct eye contact draws viewers inward, invoking empathy rather than desire.
Costume & Colour Use	Poster muted tones, off white, pale blue, and green colours define a fragility, loss, and melancholy mood. Traditional Kashmiri attire with her costume suggests their identity in place, culture, and expectations.
Background	A snowy mountain backdrop adds both grandeur and emotional isolation, metaphorically placing love in an unattainable realm. The cold hues contrast with the fire in Rockstar, showing how female-led romance is often associated with quiet suffering rather than dramatic explosion. Absence of glamour underscores the emotional realism of her character; her beauty lies in stillness, not spectacle.
Genre Markers	The poster signals romantic tragedy more than romance. No physical intimacy is shown. Instead, longing, affection, and restraint dominate the visual language. Unlike many male-centric romantic posters that dramatise passion, Laila Majnu presents love as fate-

bound, emotionally complex, and gendered through quiet endurance.

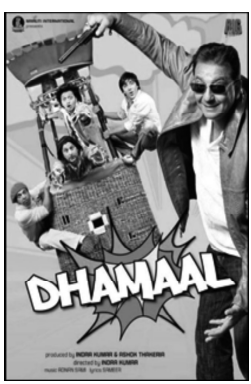
Symbolism and Cultural Encoding

The blurred presence of Qais turns him into a memory, reinforcing the idea that Laila's love is more spiritual than reciprocal. Her positioning in the foreground in solitude reflects a classic romantic trope: the woman as emotional anchor. But here, Laila is not merely an object of affection; she becomes the site of adoration, reflection, and resilience.

Laila Majnu (2018) challenges the idea that romance in cinema always centres around mutual union. Through subtle visuals, the poster reframes the woman as the keeper of emotional depth and spiritual love. Laila's presence embodies timeless longing, proving that in female-led romance, silence and solitude often narrate the loudest stories.

4.3 Poster Analysis: Comedy Genre

Table 4.3.1: Dhamaal (2007) – Male-Led Comedy Genre



The poster of Dhamaal (2007) explodes with comic chaos. Dominated by five central male characters in exaggerated poses, the visual narrative is loud, action-packed, and unapologetically masculine. It introduces comedy not through subtle cues but through amplified body language, vibrant colours, and slapstick suggestion. The poster is not just selling a film, it's promising a circus of male misadventures.

Framing & Positioning

Four male protagonists are clustered at the centre, forming a tight, disorderly group. Their limbs seem to stretch in all directions, creating a visual sense of motion. They lean, fall, point, and pose dramatically, each one demanding attention, and the fifth one is right side of the poster. The absence of any female figure

	reinforces the narrative as a male-only space, filled with male bonding, conflict, and absurdity.
Facial Expression	Every character wears an over-the-top expression, wide eyes, gaping mouths, and comic shock. Their gaze does not focus on each other but is scattered, engaging the viewer and suggesting they are caught in ridiculous circumstances. These exaggerated looks are designed to trigger laughter before the film even begins.
Costume & Colour Use	Bold reds, blues, and yellows dominate the palette, enhancing the light-hearted, cartoonish mood. The brightness mimics the aesthetics of comic books, visually signalling that logic, seriousness, and realism are not part of this narrative. It's a world where men act foolishly and have fun doing it.
Background	Each male character sports distinct, quirky outfits: shirts, sunglasses, jackets that mark them as oddballs. The diversity in clothing indicates unique personalities, yet they all conform to one theme: comic idiocy. The absence of professional heroic costuming reinforces their position as ordinary men in extraordinary, silly situations.
Genre Markers	The tilted frames, dynamic poses, slapstick imagery, and comic-book-like font leave no doubt: this is a comedy built around gags and group dynamics. The lack of seriousness is the selling point. The title, font style, and motion lines reinforce the fun-filled absurdity that defines the genre.
Symbolism and Cultural Encoding	The poster communicates that comedy, here, is about male friendship and chaos. There are no romantic leads or female companions.

Women are not part of the joke; they're absent. The humour, then, becomes a male-exclusive experience, built on physical comedy, childish behaviour, and exaggerated masculinity that doesn't fear ridicule.

Dhamaal (2007) presents comedy as a loud, physical, and gender-exclusive playground. Through visual exaggeration and ensemble chaos, the poster declares that humour belongs to men who refuse to grow up. It's an all-boys club where nonsense reigns and gender roles remain untouched by deeper reflection.

Table 4.3.2: Tumhari Sulu (2017) – Female-Led Comedy Genre



The poster of Tumhari Sulu (2017) offers a refreshing redefinition of comedy centred around warmth, everyday life, and subtle empowerment. It features Vidya Balan as Sulu, joyfully seated at a desk with a microphone, symbolising her journey from homemaker to radio jockey. Unlike male-led comedies that often display chaos, this poster portrays humour as gentle, aspirational, and deeply personal.

Framing & Positioning

The poster reflects a woman-centric narrative, surrounded by prop headphones, a coffee mug, sari-clad elegance, kitchen vessels, and a radio mic. The visual arrangement shows the fusion of domestic space with professional ambition, blurring the line between house and workplace.

Facial Expression

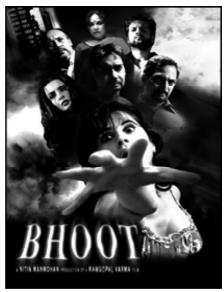
She smiles broadly, leaning confidently towards the mic. Her relaxed expression directly hints at self-assurance and curiosity. The expression doesn't rely on slapstick but communicates internal joy and comic spontaneity rooted in daily life. The poster invites the viewer into a light-hearted yet

	meaningful world.
Costume & Colour Use	Colour palette of yellows, oranges, and warm reds dominates the frame, creating a cosy and inviting atmosphere. The lighting is gentle, the tone intimate, emphasising that this is a comedy of charm.
Background	Sulu's traditional sari reflects her role as a homemaker, but the headset and microphone position her in a professional, modern world. This dual identity is the central comic tension, how a seemingly ordinary woman brings extraordinary joy and cleverness to a space dominated by performance and public voice.
Genre Markers	The poster's soft light, expressive smile, and minimal text tell us this is a lighthearted film. The presence of a microphone and studio props hints at situational humour emerging from voice modulation, unexpected conversations, and the contrast between her domestic and radio identities.
Symbolism and Cultural Encoding	The poster symbolises quiet transformation. The laughter here comes from relatability, not ridicule. There's no mockery, no exaggeration, just the comic delight of watching a woman embrace her hidden talents. Her chair is a metaphorical throne, representing dignity within domesticity. The comedy is warm, feminine, and socially nuanced.

Tumhari Sulu (2017) reframes comedy through a female lens, infusing it with emotion, aspiration, and subtle transformation. It rejects slapstick in favour of situational charm and uses visuals to show how everyday women carry stories worth laughing with, not at. The poster suggests that when a woman leads comedy, it becomes more about inner joy than external chaos.

4.4 Poster Analysis: Horror Genre

Table 4.4.1: Bhoot (2003) – Male-Led Horror Genre



The poster of Bhoot (2003), directed by Ram Gopal Varma, uses stark visual elements to instil immediate dread. With actor Ajay Devgan as the male protagonist, the image positions horror through his psychological descent, expressed using shadows, screams, and close-ups. This male-led horror uses visual tension to communicate terror that comes not just from the supernatural, but also from the loss of masculine control.

Framing & Positioning

The central focus is a split-screen: one side dominated by Urmila Matondkar's possessed face, while the other shows Ajay Devgan's straight face with the other cast. Though the narrative revolves around the wife's possession, the poster privileges the male protagonist's emotional breakdown as a significant focal point, making his experience of horror central. The tight framing closes in on their faces, simulating claustrophobia.

Facial Expression

Ajay Devgan's frantic eyes evoke panic. His unguarded expression breaks from stereotypical male stoicism and presents him as vulnerable. His direct gaze is not confrontational but shocked, an unusual move for male leads in Indian cinema, especially within horror, where women are often the screamers.

Costume & Colour Use

Cloth is not visible clearly. The use of high-contrast black and white with blood-red highlights gives the poster a menacing, gothic feel. Shadows dominate, especially around the eyes and mouth, intensifying fear. The low lighting and desaturated tones create a psychological horror effect, suggesting

	madness, not monsters.
Background	There's no heroic posture here, only a recoiling reaction. His expression reflects helplessness rather than control, subtly reversing traditional masculine tropes of being the saviour.
Genre Markers	Distorted visuals, haunted expressions, and dark tones signal the horror genre. The typography of the title appears scratched and uneven, mimicking claw marks, a visual marker of supernatural intrusion. No tagline is used, allowing the image to speak volumes through silence and expression.
Symbolism and Cultural Encoding	The ghostly feminine presence looms, but the poster is constructed to highlight the male character's reaction to the trauma. Horror here is internalised; it invades domestic life and disrupts rational masculinity. The scream represents not just fear of the ghost, but the fear of domestic instability and male impotence in protecting the family.

Bhoot (2003) presents horror through a fractured masculine lens. The poster captures a man in emotional collapse, afraid, disturbed, and reactive. It uses psychological disintegration as horror's entry point, and in doing so, hints at how horror can challenge dominant masculine portrayals by placing men in spaces of fear, not fearlessness.

Table 4.4.2: Pari (2018) – Female-Led Horror Genre



Pari, released in 2018 and starring Anushka Sharma in a hauntingly central role, redefined the contours of horror in Hindi cinema. Unlike the traditional ghost story that victimises women or uses them as catalysts of fear, this poster presents the female protagonist as both the source and subject of horror. It unravels a visual narrative where monstrosity is not

	external but internalised, blurring the lines between innocence and evil.
Framing & Positioning	The poster captures Anushka Sharma seated in the dark, partially lit, with a visible eye, wide, pale, and ghostlike. She sits in a blood-smeared dress, in the centre of the poster. The framing deliberately creates a sense of visual imbalance. This skewed composition disturbs the viewer's gaze, reflecting the instability of the character's identity.
Facial Expression	Anushka's expression is void of emotion, neither screaming nor scared. Her blank stare, indirectly cast toward the audience, builds dread. The eye contact is ghostly, hollow, and unreadable, subverting the typical "screaming victim" trope associated with women in horror films. Her silence becomes more chilling than a scream.
Costume & Colour Use	The palette is washed in tones of greenish-blue, with splashes of deep maroon symbolising decay and death. The use of muted lighting, fungal textures, and grimy surfaces all evoke a rotting atmosphere. The poster breathes eeriness through its quiet. The absence of dramatic effects gives horror a psychological, slow-burning quality.
Background	Anushka's blood-stained dress, dishevelled hair, and tied feet suggest violence and victimhood. Yet her posture, upright, unmoved, and rigid, reflects control and resistance. She is not crumpled in fear but eerily calm, inviting viewers to decode whether she is the victim, the villain, or both.

Her seated position conveys entrapment but not submission.

Genre Indicators Classic horror tropes dark interiors, eerie lighting, blood, and an unsettling stillness, are used innovatively. The use of slow dread instead of jump scares visually subverts commercial horror norms. The typography is plain and icy, enhancing the seriousness of tone. No flashy effects are used, making the poster feel raw and atmospheric.

Pari (2018) reimagines the female figure in horror. The poster strips away beauty, romance, and innocence, offering a woman who is horrifying and haunted, without the comfort of clear morality. Horror can give voice to suppressed rage and trauma while critiquing traditional portrayals of women as passive.

5. Discussion

Studies show how Hindi cinema posters' deep-seated gender ideologies are shaped by genre. It also highlights how figures are represented differently across different genres, through a comparative lens, revealing both progress and persisting gaps in visual gender portrayal. In action genres like Singham (2011), male protagonists are framed frontally, in assertive stances, symbolising authority and control. And in the film Mardaani, which was released in 2014, features a female protagonist, adopts similar visual strategies and adds layers of moral gravitas and emotional balance. Contrast reveals that while women can occupy traditionally masculine spaces, their representation often leans toward righteousness rather than brute force. In romantic posters, we see a clearer gender divide. Rockstar (2011) centralises male artistic anguish, while Laila Majnu (2018) gives equal visual importance to the heroine but emphasises her emotional suffering. These posters depict women as emotionally available and fragile, even when centrally positioned. Love becomes a space where male turmoil dominates and female identity is relational. The comedy genre film poster Dhamaal showcases male bonding and chaotic energy with a

colourful, exaggerated tone. In contrast, Tumhari Sulu (2017) presents domesticity as fun, but also tightly bound by the female protagonist's multitasking femininity. While humorous, it subtly reinforces gender roles; she is not breaking boundaries, just stretching them. The horror genre creates the starkest divergence. Bhoot (2003) renders the female figure as a vessel for horror, possessed, vulnerable, and screaming. Pari (2018), on the other hand, distorts this narrative. Here, the female protagonist is not screaming but watching, haunting, and perhaps even empowered through monstrosity. Horror, typically a genre of female victimisation, becomes in Pari a space of agency and subversion. Male dominance is overt and physical; female action is rationalised and moralised. Women are visually central but emotionally subordinate; their gaze rarely directs the narrative. Men enjoy collective chaos; women are celebrated for juggling roles, often within boundaries. Female representation shifts from passive fear (Bhoot) to active ambiguity and terror (Pari). The contrast between earlier and more recent posters reflects changing societal attitudes. Mardaani and Pari suggest that female protagonists are no longer bound to victimhood. Yet, these changes are genre-specific and not evenly distributed. The action and horror genres have created more space for female complexity, while romance and comedy still cling to traditional codes of femininity. The visual language of posters' composition, gaze, costume, and lighting reveals how cinema continues to mediate gender roles, often mirroring society's slow transformation. Where women are shown as strong, their strength is frequently tied to moral or emotional excess, not sheer physicality or chaos. Male protagonists, meanwhile, are granted the luxury of contradiction, being flawed, funny, violent, and emotionally stunted without losing centrality.

6. Findings

This study, through semiotic analysis of selected Hindi film posters, draws attention to distinct and recurring visual patterns in gender representation across four cinematic genres. The key findings are as follows:

Across all genres, male protagonists are more frequently positioned in dominant spatial and visual zones centred, enlarged, and lit with high contrast. Female protagonists, though sometimes centrally framed (e.g., Mardaani, Tumhari Sulu), are often contextualised by their emotional states or domestic settings, which softens or limits their authority.

Women are primarily coded through expressions of vulnerability, tenderness, or controlled rebellion. Men are coded as intense, brooding, dominant, or carefree, depending on the genre. Even when women are strong, their strength is rooted in emotional suffering or moral clarity, not brute agency.

There is noticeable progress in female visual representation, especially in horror and action films post-2010. However, this shift is selective and often symbolic. The romantic and comic genres still depend heavily on traditional gender binaries, which undercut the idea of true visual equality.

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मुर्दहिया में अभिव्यक्त सामाजिक जीवन

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सारांश

मुर्दहिया तुलसीराम की आत्मकथा है। यह आत्मकथा एक ऐसा प्रिज्म है जिससे केवल दलित जीवन ही नहीं, बल्कि गाँव का सम्पूर्ण लोकजीवन और उसका अंतर्विरोध रिफ्लेक्ट होता है, जिसमें दलित जीवन की त्रासदी, अंधविश्वास, कर्मकाण्ड, भूतों के प्रति भय, सवर्णों का जीवन, ब्राह्मणवाद, सामन्तवाद और पितृसत्ता का आपसी गठजोड़ तथा वर्चस्वशाली ताकतों द्वारा फैलाई गई अफवाहें साफ देखी जा सकती हैं। यह आत्मकथा अपने समय और समाज के विविध सन्दर्भों को समेटे हुए है जिसमें एक ओर दलितों के सामाजिक-आर्थिक और शैक्षिक जीवन की तस्वीर है तो दूसरी ओर भूख, गरीबी, वेदना और त्रासदी से भरे हुए सम्पूर्ण समाज का एलबम है। जिसमें दलितों के जीवन से लेकर सवर्णों का जीवन और उनका आपसी अन्तर्संघर्ष देखा जा सकता है। यह आत्मकथा तत्कालीन भारतीय समाज की असलियत को उजागर करने वाला इस्पाती दस्तावेज है।

बीज शब्द

ब्राह्मणवाद, सामन्तवाद, पितृसत्ता अंधविश्वास,अस्पृश्यता, धर्म, पाखण्ड, वर्ण-व्यवस्था, जाति-व्यवस्था, छुआछूत, भूख, गरीबी, अन्तर्संघर्ष, मानवता इत्यादि।

मूल आलेख

संसार में मनुष्य का मनुष्य के ऊपर कल, बल, छल, बुद्धि और पूँजी नामक तत्त्व के द्वारा एक दूसरे पर वर्चस्व स्थापित करने की अनावश्यक मांग सुंदर दुनिया को बेवजह बजबजाती बूचड़खाना बना देती है। सालों साल से एक मनुष्य मालिक और उसके जैसा ही दूसरा मनुष्य जिसके हाथ, पैर, नाक, कान हैं, वह गुलाम, पीड़ित, दमित व कुचला हुआ है। भारतीय समाज में व्याप्त वर्ण-व्यवस्था, जाति-व्यवस्था, अस्पृश्यता, शोषण, दमन और उत्पीड़न विद्यमान रहा है। जिसके खिलाफ संघर्ष की एक लम्बी ऐतिहासिक प्रक्रिया भी समानान्तर रूप से चलती रही है। खिलाफत की यह प्रक्रिया बुद्ध, चार्वाक, मक्खलि गोसाल से शुरू होकर कबीर, रैदास आदि सन्तों से होते हुए पेरियार, फुले, अम्बेडकर, ललई सिंह, रामस्वरूप वर्मा व जगदेव प्रसाद तक चलती

आ रही है और आज भी अनवरत जारी है। बहुजन साहित्य मुख्यधारा की साहित्य को कटघरे में खड़ा कर साहित्य के मर्म को समझाने का यथार्थवादी प्रयास कर रहा है। आज बहुजन समाज अपनी हीनता की ग्रन्थि को तोड़कर अपनी अस्मिता की प्रखरता को स्थापित करने की ओर अग्रगामी है। बहुजन साहित्य के केंद्र में मनुष्य की स्वतंत्रता, समानता, न्याय व बन्धुता सर्वोपरि है। सही मायने में कहा जाय तो बहुजन साहित्य संविधान में उल्लिखित मूल अधिकारों की मांग करता है। वह भारतीय संविधान की प्रस्तावना में लिखे गए उन सामाजिक, आर्थिक और राजनैतिक न्याय की मांग करता है जो मनुष्य को उसकी पूरी मानवता के साथ स्वीकार करे।

तुलसीराम की आत्मकथा 'मुर्दहिया' में अभिव्यक्त सामाजिक जीवन की शिनाख्त करने पर यह मील का पत्थर साबित हुआ है। मुर्दहिया में तुलसीराम ने न केवल दलितों की पीड़ा को उजागर किया है बल्कि उस पीड़ा के कारण की पहचान करने का भी प्रयास किया है।

तुलसीराम ने अपनी आत्मकथा के पहले खण्ड में सिर्फ वही नहीं लिखा जिसकी अपेक्षा दलित मूल के आत्मवृतान्त लेखकों से की जाती है, बल्कि वह लिखा जिसे एक जर्जर समाज की असलियत का उत्खनन कहा जा सकता है, और जिसको पढ़ना सिर्फ साहित्य नहीं, समाजशास्त्र की सीमाओं तक जाता है। मुर्दहिया भारतीय समाज का जीवन्त इस्पाती दस्तावेज है। अपनी आत्मकथा मुर्दहिया में तुलसीराम बार-बार खुद भोगे हुए गरीबी, भूख और अंधविश्वास के दारुण चित्र को उकेरते हैं। इससे बड़ा विडम्बनात्मक और वेदना में डूबा तथ्य क्या होगा कि लेखक अपनी आत्मकथा की शुरुआत घोर निराशावादी वाक्य "मूर्खता मेरी जन्मजात विरासत थी।"[1] से करता है। इस वाक्य के पीछे भारतीय समाज की दुर्दशा और बेबसी का चित्र उभरकर आता है तथा दुर्दशा और बेबसी का रहस्य ब्राह्मणवादी साजिश, नफरत और जातिगत शोषण है। भारतीय समाज की बहुसंख्यक जनता को शिक्षा से वंचित रखा गया ताकि उनका अंधविश्वास बरकरार रहे। उसी भारतीय शिक्षा व्यवस्था पर विचार करते हुए लेखक कहता है "लगभग तेईस सौ वर्ष पूर्व यूनान देश से भारत आए मिनांदर ने कहा कि आम भारतीयों को लिपि का ज्ञान नहीं है, इसलिए वे पढ़-लिख नहीं सकते। उसके समकालीनों ने तो कोई प्रतिक्रिया नहीं दी, किंतु आधुनिक भारतीय पण्डों ने मिनांदर का खूब खण्डन-मण्डन किया। हकीकत तो यह है कि आज भी करोड़ों भारतीय मिनांदर की कसौटी पर खरा उतरते हैं। सदियों पुरानी इस अशिक्षा का परिणाम यह हुआ कि मूर्खता और मूर्खता के चलते अंधविश्वासों का बोझ मेरे पूर्वजों के सिर से कभी नहीं उतरा।"[2] इस कथन से स्पष्ट होता है कि भारतीय समाज में वर्ण और जाति के आधार पर लोगों के उत्पीड़न व अंधविश्वास की मूल वजहों में से अशिक्षा भी एक है। शिक्षा पर एकाधिकार कायम रखते हुए वर्चस्वशाली ब्राह्मणवादी ताकतों ने धर्म और पाखण्ड का जाल बिछाकर शिक्षा से वंचित रखे गए आम भारतीय जनता जिसमें मजदूर, किसान, स्त्रियाँ, दलित और अन्य हाशिये के लोग शामिल हैं, को हजारों साल से अपना शिकार बनाया और वर्ण-व्यवस्था के हथियार से इस पूरे वर्ग का खूब दमन किया। बहुजन समाज में अंधविश्वास इस कदर हावी था कि किसी प्राकृतिक प्रकोप से

बचने के लिए केवल और केवल देवी-देवताओं की मान मनौती और ओझैती सोखैती के अलावा उससे निजात पाने का कोई वैज्ञानिक तरकीब सूझता ही नहीं था। चेचक निकलने पर चिकित्सकीय इलाज के बजाय शीतला माई की पूजा की जाती थी। शीतला माई के पूजन की प्रक्रिया का वर्णन करते हुए लेखक कहता है "वहाँ साल में एक बार गाँव के सारे दलित मिलकर जाते और शीतला माई को सुअर के बच्चे की बलि के अलावा हलवा सोहारी भी चढ़ाई जाती थी। शीतला माई को अति प्रसन्न रखने के लिए वेश्याओं का नृत्य भी कराया जाता था। ऐसी नृत्यांगनाएं मंदिर के पास बड़ी आसानी से मिल जाती थी।"[3] मंदिर के पास वेश्याओं का आसानी से मिलना मंदिर की पवित्रता को प्रश्नांकित करता है और यह तथ्य देवदासी प्रथा की ओर संकेत करता है, जहाँ बहुजन समाज की स्त्रियाँ देवदासी के रूप में रखी जाती थी और मंदिर के पण्डे-पुजारी उनका दैहिक शोषण करते थे और उनसे उत्पन्न पुत्र को 'हरिजन' कहा जाता था इसलिए डॉ० अम्बेडकर 'हरिजन' शब्द को गाली मानते हैं। बहुजन समाज के लोगों में ब्राह्मणवादी ताकतों ने अंधविश्वास का ऐसा जाल बुना था कि समाज उससे निकलने की बजाय और जकड़ता जाता था क्योंकि उसकी अवहेलना करने पर घोर अनिष्ट होने का भय मन मस्तिष्क पर हमेशा छाया रहता इसलिए तमाम यातनाओं के बावजूद उसे अपनी नियति मानकर झेलना उनकी मजबूरी थी। अनिता भारती कहती हैं "एक अन्य अंधविश्वास के चलते और दूसरे ब्राह्मणों की चालाकी के चलते खेतों में काम करने के लिए ब्राह्मण जमीदारों ने गाँव के दलितों को बंधुआ मजदूर बनाये रखने के लिए, अपने खेत में जबरजस्ती काम करवाने के लिए खेती छोड़ना यानी ब्रह्म हत्या करने जैसा पाप करने का अंधविश्वास पैदा कर दलितों के मन में भय बैठा दिया, ताकि वे सस्ते मजदूर बनकर तमाम उम्र इन ब्राह्मण जमीदारों के खेत में सारे अत्याचार सहते हुए, भूखे-प्यासे रहकर भी काम करते रहें और यह जमींदार इन गरीब दलित भूमिहीन किसानों के मेहनत पर हमेशा मौज मस्ती करता रहे।"[4]

स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद संविधान लागू होने के बावजूद गाँवों की दशा वैसी ही रही, जैसे पहले से चली आ रही थी। न्याय प्रणाली का सारा दारोमदार चौधरी के हाथों ही तय होता था, चौधरी का निर्णय ही अन्तिम होता था और सबको स्वीकार करना पड़ता। चौधरी के समक्ष अनेक समस्याएं आती थी जिनमें दो समस्याएं बड़े ही विचित्र ढंग से सुलझाए जाते थे, एक मामला किसी युवती का गाँव के अन्य युवक के साथ यौन सम्बन्ध या बिन विवाह गर्भवती हो जाना और दूसरा किसी चमार द्वारा डांगर खाना। इन दोनों मामलों के सुलझाने की प्रक्रिया का वर्णन करते हुए लेखक कहता है "यौन सम्बन्ध से जुड़ी युवती के पूरे परिवार को कुजाति घोषित कर दिया जाता था। कुजाति का मतलब होता था, उसका हुक्का पानी बन्द सम्पूर्ण रूप से बहिष्कार। उस परिवार से कोई बात तक नहीं कर सकता था। कुजाति की घोषणा बड़े ही विचित्र ढंग से की जाती थी। बारहगांवा में अक्सर किसी न किसी के घर शादी-विवाह आदि जैसे पर्व के अवसर पर सामूहिक भोज हुआ करता था। ऐसे किसी भोज में कुजाति किए जाने वाले व्यक्ति को निमंत्रित किया जाता

और जब सभी के साथ वह खाने के लिए कतार में बैठता तो सबके साथ पत्तल में उसे भी खाना परोसा जाता। लेकिन ज्यों ही वह व्यक्ति खाना हाथ में लेकर मुँह की ओर बढ़ाता, तुरन्त एक अन्य व्यक्ति उसका हाथ पकड़ लेता। फिर सभी एक साथ बोलते कि उसे कुजाति घोषित कर दिया गया है, इसलिए वह नहीं खा सकता। कुजाति घोषित होने के बाद वह आदमी अपमानित होकर वहाँ से अपने घर वापस लौट जाता था। इस तरह उसका बहिष्कार शुरू हो जाता था। बाद में जब कभी कुजाति किया हुआ व्यक्ति बिरादरी में वापस आना चाहता तो वह बारहगांवा से अपील करता। पंचायत फिर बुलाई जाती और दण्डस्वरूप उसे पूरे ग्राम समाज को सुअर-भात खिलाने का दिन तय किया जाता। उस बीच यदि अवैध यौन सम्बन्ध के चलते वह युवती गर्भवती रहती तो उसका गर्भपात स्वयं गाँव की महिलाएं, जो बच्चा पैदा करवाने में अनुभवी होती थी, पेट दबा-दबाकर अत्यन्त क्रूर ढंग से करवा देती थीं। फिर भोज के निर्धारित दिन सुअर-भात पंचों को परोसने के समय चौधरी की अनुमति से युवती के ऊपर गंगाजल छिड़ककर उसे पवित्र घोषित कर दिया जाता था। इसके बाद कुजाति परिवार के पाप को माफ करने के लिए भोज में उपस्थित पंचों से अपील की जाती। सभी पंच एक साथ जोर का नारा लगाते : 'बोला बोला सीताराम' इसके बाद वे कहते कि पाप माफ कर दिया गया। इसके साथ ही वह परिवार- बिरादरी में वापस आ जाता था। डांगर खाने वालों के साथ भी यही दण्ड विधान अपनाया जाता था।"[5] यौन सम्बन्ध वाले मामले के सुलझाने की प्रक्रिया से स्पष्ट जाहिर होता है कि समाज घोर पितृसत्तात्मक था, यौन सम्बन्ध बनाने वाली युवती और उसके परिवार के सभी सदस्यों को कुजाति घोषित कर दिया जाता था लेकिन यौन सम्बन्ध बनाने वाले युवक के लिए कोई दण्ड विधान नहीं था, इतना ही नहीं गर्भवती होने की दशा में युवती का गर्भपात कितना अमानवीय व क्रूरतापूर्वक किया जाता था, जिससे पता चलता है कि समाज अंधविश्वास व झूठी पवित्रता की आड़ में कितना संवेदनहीन था।

जब दो विपरित अवधारणायें अस्तित्व में आकर एक-दूसरे के ऊपर वर्चस्व स्थापित करने की होड़ लगाने लगती हैं, तब अन्तर्विरोध का आविर्भाव होता है। सालों-साल से एक मनुष्य मालिक तथा उसके ही जैसा दूसरा मनुष्य गुलाम, लाचार, बेवस, दलित, बना हुआ है, ऐसा क्यों ? जब हम इस क्यों का उत्तर ढूँढना आरम्भ करते हैं तो हमारे सामने अनेक प्रसंग उभरकर आते है यथा अन्धविश्वास, वर्ण व्यवस्था, जाति व्यवस्था, अस्पृश्यता, तर्क-हीनता, अशिक्षा, चमत्कारवाद, सामन्तवाद, पितृसत्तात्मक मानसिकता इत्यादि। तुलसीराम सामाजिक अंतर्विरोध को उजागर करते हैं जब बहुजन समाज का बच्चा प्राथमिक स्तर की शिक्षा प्राप्त करने जाता है तब वर्चस्ववादियों द्वारा उसका किस प्रकार मान-मर्दन कर मानसिक शोषण किया जाता है, ताकि बहुजन समाज का बच्चा उस मानसिक प्रताड़ना तो झेल न सके और शिक्षा से वंचित हो जाय ताकि उसको गुलाम बनाने में कोई समस्या न हो। लेखक अपने आरम्भिक शिक्षा के दिनों को याद करता है और अपने अध्यापक द्वारा किए जाने वाले बर्ताव के बारे में लिखता है "शुरू-शुरू में अधिकतर बच्चे 'उपस्थित' शब्द का उच्चारण नहीं कर पाते थे जिस पर मुंशी जी अविलम्ब गालियों की बौछार

शुरू कर देते थे। विशेषकर, दलित बच्चों को वे 'चमरकिट' कहकर अपना गुस्सा प्रगट करते।"[6] दलित समुदाय के बच्चों पर जन्म से ही नकारात्मक प्रभाव डालने की प्रथा शुरू हो जाती थी, स्कूल के अध्यापक दलित बच्चों को चमरकिट कहकर उनको गालियाँ देते थे। अपने स्कूली माहौल का वर्णन लेखक कुछ इस प्रकार करता है "उस समय स्कूलों में भी छुआछूत का प्रचलन बहुत ज्यादा था और सवर्ण छात्र प्रायः दलित छात्रों से नहीं मिलते-जुलते थे। किन्तु संकठा सिंह अपवाद थे। वे हमेशा मुझसे घुल-मिलकर रहते थे।"[7] सवर्ण समाज के सभी सदस्य शोषक हों, ऐसा अनिवार्य नहीं है। कुछ सवर्ण ऐसे भी हैं जो मानवता को श्रेष्ठ मानकर वंचितों, बेबस व अभावग्रस्त लोगों की मदद करते हैं। लेखक बेझिझक स्वीकार करता है कि संकठा सिंह 'सवर्ण' की मदद से लिखना सीख पाया। संकठा सिंह लेखक के लिए अपने अध्यापक से कहीं ज्यादा सफल शिक्षक साबित हुए। तुलसीराम समाज मे व्याप्त विषमताओं की शिनाख्त करते हुए बताते हैं कि झूठी, पाखण्डी, मनगढ़ंत कहानी गढ़कर दलितों को अंधविश्वास के जाल में फंसाकर सवर्ण उनका शोषण करते आ रहे हैं। दलित समाज में अंधविश्वास का इतना आधिक्य है कि एक बालक को करुणाविहीन बनना पड़ता है और उसके ही हाथों से बलि के नाम पर हत्या करवाई जाती है। जिसका प्रभाव उसके मनः मस्तिष्क पर पड़ा रहता है और वही मनः स्थिति पीढ़ी-दर-पीढ़ी स्थानांतरित होती रहती है। अनिता भारती लिखती हैं "मुर्दहिया में अंधविश्वास के कारण घटी एक ऐसी मार्मिक घटना का वर्णन तुलसीराम जी ने किया है जिसको पढ़कर दिल हिल जाता है। गाँव के ही सुदेस्सर पांडे की बूढ़ी माँ का देहांत 'खरवास' यानी बहुत अपशकुन माने जाने वाले महीने में हो जाता है। हिन्दू धर्म में खरवास के बारे में फैले अंधविश्वास के चलते गाँव के पट्टीदार अमिका पांडे ने पतरा देखकर बताया कि अभी पन्द्रह दिन खरवास है इसलिए मृत माँ का दाह संस्कार नहीं हो सकता। यदि ऐसा किया गया तो माता जी नर्क भोगेंगी। अमिका पांडे के सुझाव अनुसार मृत माता जी की लाश को मुर्दहिया में एक जगह कब्र खोदकर गाड़ दिया जाय तथा पन्द्रह दिन बाद निकालकर लाश को जलाकर दाह संस्कार हिन्दू रीति से किया जाए। उस तरह के अंधविश्वास के कारण गाँव में एक बूढ़ी स्त्री की लाश के साथ जितनी दुर्गंध हो सकती थी, हुई और अंततः लाश बिल्कुल सड़-गल गई। उस सड़ी लाश से उठती बदबू न सह पाने के कारण उसे जलाने के लिए उस बूढ़ी औरत का खुद का सगा बेटा सुदेस्सर पांडे लाश के पास से भागकर दूर जा खड़ा हुआ और आखिरकार लाश को जलाने का काम लेखक तुलसीराम और उनके पिता को ही करना पड़ा।"[8]

समाज में व्याप्त आर्थिक विषमताओं का उल्लेख करते हुए तुलसीराम लिखते हैं कि दलित वर्ग इस कदर आर्थिक तंगी झेलता है कि दो वक्त की रोटी के लाले पड़े हैं। अर्थाभाव के कारण दलित समाज शिक्षा से वंचित रह जाता है और वह पलायन करने पर मजबूर हो जाता है। लेखक बताता है कि उसे अपनी पढ़ाई जारी रखने के लिए कठिन संघर्ष करना पड़ा है यदि संघर्ष केवल आर्थिक तंगी की होती तो उससे निजात पाना आसान भी होता, लेकिन कदम-कदम पर सवर्णों द्वारा

अपमान का घूँट भी पिलाया जाता है, जिस कारण उसका संघर्ष बहुआयामी हो जाता है। हमेशा से भूख और गरीबी का जाति से अटूट सम्बन्ध रहा है। जाति से अछूत बना दिए गए पूरे दलित वर्ग को हजारों साल से ढंग का पूरा पौष्टिक भोजन खाना मयस्सर नहीं हुआ, मरे जानवरों का मांस खाना, घर-घर जाकर जूठन इकट्ठा करके खाना, चूहे खाना आदि इसी बात का सबूत है। लेखक अपनी आर्थिक तंगी का वर्णन करते हुए कहता है "बरसात के दिनों में भुखमरी की स्थिति पैदा हो जाती थी। शुरू-शुरू में जब तेज बारिश से कट चुकी फसलों वाले खेतों में पानी भर जाता, तो उसके अंदर बिल बनाकर रहने वाले हजारों चूहे डूबते हुए पानी की सतह पर ऊपर आ जाते थे। गाँव के बच्चे तरकुल या खजूर के पत्तों से बनी झाड़ू से चूहों पर टूट पड़ते थे तथा उन्हें मार-मारकर ढेर सारा घर लाते। मैं भी अन्य बच्चों के साथ टिन की बाल्टी तथा झाड़ू लेकर जाता और झाड़ू से चूहों को मार-मारकर बाल्टी भर जाने पर उन्हें घर लाता।"[9] गरीबी, लाचारी मानवीय जीवन को कितना कष्ट पहुंचाती है, इसका साक्षात प्रमाण मुर्दहिया में अंतर्निहित है। बरसात में झोपड़ी और खपरैल से पानी चूता है जिससे निजात पाने के लिए रात भर बड़ी मशक्त करनी पड़ती और किसी तरह पानी निकाली जाती। लेखक सर्दी के दिनों का वर्णन करते हुए कहता है "ओढ़ने का कोई इंतजाम न होने से गाँव के लगभग सारे दलित रात भर ठिठुरते रहते। हमारे गाँव में सोने के लिए जाड़े के दिनों में फर्श पर धान का पोरा पुआल बिछा दिया जाता था। उस पर कोई लेवा या गुदड़ी बिछाकर हम धोती ओढ़कर सो जाते। इसके बाद मेरे पिताजी पुनः ढेर सारा पुआल हम लोगों के ऊपर फैला देते। फिर स्वयं सोकर अपने ऊपर भी वैसा ही कर लेते थे।"[10] दलित समाज में भूख और गरीबी इस प्रकार पसरा हुआ था कि बहन बेटियों की आबरू तक नीलाम हो जाती थी। इसी भूख और गरीबी के कारण सोफी नट की बहू-बेटियाँ अपना स्वाभिमान नहीं बचा पाई और गरीबी के हत्थे चढ़ गई। लेखक उनके प्रति हमदर्दी रखते हुए कहता है" सोफी की बहू तथा दोनों बेटियाँ सौंदर्य के मामले में अपरम्पार सम्पन्न थीं, किंतु भूख उन्हें भी लगती थी, पर उसे मिटाने के लिए उनके पास कुछ भी नहीं होता था। धीरे-धीरे मजबूरी में उनका सौंदर्य काम आने लगा। गाँव के कुछ अभद्र ब्राह्मण युवक सन्ध्या के समय मुर्दहिया के उस मुहाने पर लगता था कि स्वयं भूतों की चौकीदारी करने लगे। उन नटनियों का सौंदर्य मुर्दहिया की उन्हीं कंटीली झाड़ियों के पीछे प्रायः गुम होता रहा।"[11] गौरतलब है कि सोफी के बहु-बेटियों के स्वाभिमान को किसी अन्य वर्ग के युवकों ने तार-तार नहीं किया बल्कि गाँव के केवल ब्राह्मण युवकों ने किया।

अकाल के दिनों में सामन्तवाद का सबसे क्रूरतम चेहरा सामने आता है, जब गरीब लोगों के पास अन्न के अभाववश विपन्नता छा जाती है तो जमींदार उनकी मजबूरी का लाभ उठाता है और सवय्या के बदले डेढ़िया पर अनाज देता है, इतना ही नहीं, देने वाले बाट का वजन कम होता है और लेने वाले बाट का वजन ज्यादा। ऐसी स्थिति गरीबों का द्विस्तरीय शोषण करती थी। जमीदारों की धूर्तता को उजागर करते हुए लेखक कहता है "हमारे गाँव के ब्राह्मण तो ईंट तोड़कर

अपना सेर चलाते थे जो असली सेर से लगभग एक-चौथाई कम होता था। वे बनी इसी ईंट से तौलकर, वह भी सबसे खराब अनाज, दलितों को देते थे, किंतु बेंगही वापस असली सेर से तौलते थे।"[12]

अस्पृश्यता समाज की बहुत बड़ी विडम्बना है, जिसका शिकार दलित कदम-कदम पर होता रहा है। जिस पानी को कुत्ते, बिल्ली, सियार इत्यादि जानवर तो पी सकते थे, लेकिन दलित नहीं। दलितों को साफ पानी पीने के लिए एक लंबी लड़ाई लड़नी पड़ी, जिसका नेतृत्व डॉ० अम्बेडकर ने किया जो इतिहास में 1927 के महाड़ सत्याग्रह के रूप में उल्लिखित है। स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद भी दलितों के साथ भेदभाव कम नहीं हुआ। लेखक अपने स्कूल के दिनों को याद करते हुए लिखता है" गर्मी के दिनों में प्यास लग जाना एक बड़ी समस्या थी। स्कूल के पास एक कुआं था जिसके चबूतरे तक को हम दलित बच्चे छू नहीं सकते थे।"[13] अस्पृश्यता इस कदर व्याप्त था कि दलित बच्चे कुएं की पानी से प्यास बुझाने की बजाय चुपके से पोखरे का पानी पीकर अपनी प्यास बुझाते थे। मसलन कुएं का पानी पीने के लिए उन्हें अनेक समस्याओं का सामना करना पड़ता और किसी तरह पानी मिलता भी तो पानी से ज्यादा अपमान और गालियों के घूँट से ही प्यास बुझानी पड़ती। डॉ० अम्बेडकर द्वारा महाड़ सत्याग्रह और महात्मा गांधी द्वारा अछूतोद्धार के बाद भी दलितों के जीवन में कोई खास परिवर्तन नहीं आया। तुलसीराम अपने बचपन की कभी न भूलने वाली घटना का जिक्र करते हुए कहते हैं "मैंने कुतूहलवश कुएं के चबूतरे को एक उंगली से क्षण भर के लिए छू दिया। किंतु मिसिर बाबा बाल्टी को कुएं में डुबाते हुए नीचे से कनखिया पीछे देख रहे थे और मुझे उंगली चबूतरे से लगाते हुए उन्होंने देख लिया। मेरे द्वारा इस महापातकी क्रिया से उनका ब्राह्मणत्व इतना आहत हुआ कि उनके हाथ से डोर छूट गई और बाल्टी कुएं की तलहटी में जा पहुंची। मिसिर शोर मचाते हुए मुंशी जी के पास दौड़े और चिल्लाते रहे कि चमरा ने कुआं छू लिया। मैं बहुत डर गया था। उस दिन मुंशी जी दिन भर रुक-रुककर गालियाँ देते रहे। इसके बाद मैं कभी पानी पिलाने के लिए कहने की हिम्मत नहीं जुटा पाया।"[14] मुर्दहिया सामाजिक जीवन को उजागर करने वाला दहकता हुआ इस्पाती दस्तावेज है। वरिष्ठ आलोचक चौथीराम यादव जी के शब्दों में "मुर्दहिया रोती हुई संवेदनाओं की आत्मकथा है। जिसे पढ़ते समय लेखक के बार-बार रोने का अहसास होता है। इसकी पराकाष्ठा मुर्दहिया से बिछुड़ने के दुख में होती है। लेखक के उन आंखों से भी उतनी ही अश्रुधारा निकलती है जिन आंखों में रोशनी नहीं थी। आक्रोश का होना एक अलग बात है और उसे सृजनशीलता में बदल कर मानवीय संवेदनाओं के व्यापक परिप्रेक्ष्य में एक सकारात्मक दिशा देना बिल्कुल दूसरी बात है।"[15]

निष्कर्ष

मुर्दहिया दलित जीवन संघर्ष और वेदना की गाथा ही नहीं बल्कि हिन्दू वर्ण-व्यवस्था, जाति-व्यवस्था की जड़ता, अंधविश्वास, धर्मान्धता तथा तमाम विभेदकारी, शोषणकारी हथकंडों को उजागर करता है। मुर्दहिया भारतीय समाज के बहुसंख्यक आबादी की सामाजिक जीवन स्थितियों का यथार्थ

प्रस्तुत करने वाला दस्तावेज है। यह आत्मकथा बिना किसी लाग-लपेट के दलित और सवर्ण दोनों समाज की सच्चाई को उजागर करता है। लेखक बताता है कि वंचित, लाचार, गरीब, अपंग लोगों का शोषण केवल सवर्ण समाज ही नहीं करता बल्कि जिनका भी वर्चस्व होता है, वे सभी करते हैं। लेखक को कनवा कहकर अपमानित करने वाले लोग कोई दूसरे नहीं बल्कि खुद उसके परिवार के ही लोग थे। अतः यह आत्मकथा अपने समय व समाज की कटु किंतु यथार्थवादी चित्रण करने में मील का पत्थर साबित होता है।

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Caste and Censorship : Decoding India's Cinematic Culture

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Abstract

India's relationship with freedom of speech and expression can be termed 'cautious' at best. Despite the constitutional guarantee of the right to freedom of speech and expression, Indian society has been extremely rigid in allowing/disallowing what could pass as 'expression.' Ideological leanings as well influence the society's collective capacity to define what would be acceptable and what would be rejected outright. The Constitution of India made 'individual' the unit of the text, and the repository of rights. But the public domain has remained entrapped in societal appraisal of an individual's actions proving detrimental to the flourishing of the latter. Expression is bound to be an act of dissent, even if it is for the negligible minority. India's caste society, unfortunately, still determines the norms and 'values' of 'expression'. India's constitutional principles have yet to shape its social sphere. In such a situation, any expression from the marginalised are 'censored' to suit the needs of the caste majority. Recent movies like 'Phule' and 'Dhadak 2', highlighting caste injustices, have had their certain scenes and dialogues censored. This is not a new phenomenon, but it is a grim reminder of how stringent is the control of caste norms in defining the limits of expression. In the context, the article aims to understand the relationship between caste and censorship, explicating how caste hegemony is sustained through the mechanism of censorship.

Keywords

Caste, Censorship, Public sphere, Cinema

Caste system is a hierarchical structure based on a set of privileges and disabilities. The privileges pertain to the top-most in the hierarchy and corresponding disabilities to those at the lowest. Ambedkar termed it as 'graded inequality'. His intellectualism is an exposition of how the upper castes monopolised the domain of knowledge production. Caste ordains the superiority of intellectual labour and sustains itself on the constant devaluation of manual labour. Caste system, then, is a societal mechanism that is founded on the mind-body dichotomy. Reminiscent of the Western philosophy that eulogises the mind and debases the body, caste translates this abstraction into concrete tangible reality for the millions: the hegemony of the so-called 'intellectual' upper castes is ensured by a rigorous set of punishments marked for the Shudras and Dalits. As an epistemological paradigm, the continued dominance of mind-body dualist theoretical framework is difficult to deny. In a social scenario based on regimentation of roles, it is rigidity of all sorts that dictate the workings of the caste system. Ambedkar argues how caste has created a public sphere which is hardly a 'collective'. The public sphere in India is not guided by unified collective interests but is ridden with caste-consciousness. The making of the 'public' is an open-ended process based on social communications and solidarity. On the contrary, caste negates open channels of communication between different members of the society. Caste works on a number of prohibitions and therefore, no prospects. If a people lack means to come together to articulate or deliberate on shared issues, public opinion and public morality cannot be formulated. To quote Ambedkar: 'The effect of caste on the ethics of the Hindus is simply deplorable. Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. A Hindu's public is his caste. His responsibility is only to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste. Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound.' (Ambedkar, 2019) Such a constricted sense of morality is bound to reduce spaces for solidarity.

Censorship and caste have a reciprocal relationship. In its essence, caste is a mechanism for censoring many and privileging few. Censorship, on the other hand, is always employed to uphold the interests of the powerful castes. Working in tandem, caste and censorship have enabled the smooth

functioning of the caste system while suppressing dissenting voices. Counter-hegemonic expressions delineating alternative histories and narratives have been put under sanction despite decades of independence. A movie like 'Phule', based on the nineteenth century anti-caste social reformers Jotiba and Savitribai Phule, was asked to remove several caste-related terms as many Brahmin community associations raised objections. The Brahmin associations contended that the movie shows the Brahmin community in a poor light and portrays them insensitively. It doesn't talk about the Brahmins who came forward to help the Phule couple in their cause. Even the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) directed the removal of terms such as 'Mahar', 'Mang', 'Peshwa', and 'Manu's system of caste'. How do we understand such a blatant display of caste snobbery and hypocrisy? (Suryawanshi, 2025) How are we to make sense of it? The caste associations saying that the movie will enflame caste-based tensions is a masquerade to hide behind censorship to keep the public uninformed of historical injustices. Factually speaking, the movie discusses the Brahmins who helped the reformers and does not deny them any space in the narrative. It is a cruel irony that even after a century or more since the historical era depicted in the movie, caste associations are fearful of the people challenging caste. This is nothing but a repetition of the same historical episode the movie aims to portray: upper-castes ensuring that the shudras don't get to speak for their rights. The Phule couple was opposed back then and even today their voices are being silenced. Erasure of caste terms like 'Mahar' and 'Mang' amounts to erasing history of oppression, exploitation and injustice. Creative artists have a social role to play in creating a more just and open society. That such an attempt by filmmakers or authors is almost always thwarted by caste upholders reflect the stranglehold of caste in our society. That it was the caste system that made 'mahars' and 'mangs' is a historical reality; that it was the 'Peshwa' regime which cemented Brahmin hegemony is a documented fact; and that it was 'Manu's system of caste' can be understood while reading Manusmriti. What is more problematic is that the CBFC tiptoed the lines of Brahmin associations exposing how even the seemingly 'public' bodies in India are tainted by caste considerations. That a Brahmin-directed movie like 'Phule' can be censored for portraying historical caste injustice and 'truths' says a lot

about the society we live in.

For a democracy to flourish, caste needs to be annihilated and 'social endosmosis' to be proliferated. A democratic government equally needs a democratic society. Societal tyranny is more harmful for the individuals as it kills their determination and willingness to make a change. Reducing democracy to the political sphere has meant social stagnation. The promises of the Constitution have failed to translate into realities as the 'people' are guided by narrow caste interests. Anti-caste attempts have faced brutal opposition in post-independent India highlighting the nature of caste as solidified for thousands of centuries. The public sphere has remained restricted to the upper-castes cementing their exclusive right over intellectual domain. Given the perverted nature of public opinion in India which doesn't even acknowledge caste, this obstructs productive anti-caste discussions. Caste is an arrogating instrument that reserves powers for the privileged and delegates impairments to those already debased and disgraced. The majoritarian impulse in democracy has solidified what Ambedkar calls 'communal majority'. Contrasting it with 'political majority', he writes: 'In India, the majority is not a political majority. In India, the majority is born; it is not made.' (Ambedkar, 2019) He adds: 'A political majority is not a fixed or a permanent majority. It is a majority which is always made, unmade and remade. A communal majority is a permanent majority fixed in its attitude. One can destroy it, but one cannot transform it.' (Ambedkar, 2019) It is this communal majority which has debarred attempts at deconstructing systemic injustices perpetrated in the name of caste. The dominant savarna gaze is an all-exclusivist lens which has the power to dismantle opposition from the marginalised. In the case of 'Dhadak 2', a movie about inter-caste love, the CBFC made major cuts, modifications, and removals for it to be released. That Indian society uses caste names as slurs, is an everyday reality. There is no professed sensitisation about challenging such casteist mindsets but the same depiction in the movie is censored. Caste names like 'chamar' and 'bhangi' have been replaced with 'junglee.' (Deep, 2025) Even the word 'junglee' has specific connotations. Scenes with specific caste-based references, atrocities, and violence have been modified as well. Given how entrenched caste-based violence is in our society, censorship does nothing but forward an understanding that

these are exceptional cases while in reality India is changing. On the contrary, this is a reality that millions live but they neither have the resources nor power to highlight their injustices and struggles. The hegemony of the savarnas over what constitutes 'expression' and who has the legitimate right to express, keeps the marginalised in their caste-ordained position. The caste-conscious public sphere in India is unprepared to acknowledge the wrongs, it collectively condones in the name of caste.

India's commonsensical understanding of caste is nothing but a reflection of its dominant savarna gaze. This makes the public sphere inaccessible to Dalits given how entrenched caste inequalities are. Moreover, such a public sphere professes a unidimensional and distorted worldview in which portrays Dalits as helpless victims seeking deliverance at the hands of a benevolent savarna or stereotyped as the lazy lot lacking ambition but banking on system's resources through 'unmeritorious' reservations. Almost never are they 'represented'. Representation requires honest truth-telling and authentic understanding. It goes beyond creating Dalit characters in movies or showcasing Dalit stories. Real representation can happen when the victims of the caste system or its resilient survivors get the opportunity to write their stories themselves. Benevolence can never be a substitute for rights and justice. The creation of an empathetic and just society is only possible when the dominant and powerful make rightful spaces for dissenting voices that have not been paid attention to. The 'voiceless' did not lack 'voice'; they lacked means and resources to make demands and call out oppression. Caste censored their voices. Even after independence, socio-economic-political structure is skewed in favour of the powerful and the marginalised are on the margins still. Movies like 'Phule' and 'Dhadak 2' are honest attempts at presenting stories that are, more often than not, sidelined in the mainstream cinema. The conventional cinema in India has not been receptive to the desires, wants and needs of those on the periphery. This has led to a cinematic discourse which has consistently failed to understand the peripheral viewpoint. Although the 'peripheral' is as diverse as the people and communities, it is inclusive of all the oppositional consciousness that is built on rebellion and rights. Both 'Phule' and 'Dhadak 2' are big-budget films produced by major production houses, directed by individuals from

upper-caste backgrounds and featuring upper-caste actors. Yet, despite this, they faced opposition from sections of the same community for depicting historical and continued injustices perpetrated by upper castes. This resistance may be read as a form of cultural censorship, reflecting discomfort with cinematic representations that challenge dominant caste narratives.

For the breakdown of the intimate relationship between caste and censorship, the public space needs reimagination by Dalits. The constitutional norms need to circumvent societal norms dictating public relations. Communal majority has illegitimately appropriated the narratives, histories and truths of the Dalits. Ambedkar, in an interview to a magazine, said that 'we are sick of merely being called Harijans, or done kindness to' and that 'we want to have equal opportunities with all other human beings.' (Ambedkar, 1942) The equal opportunities also include remodelling of Dalits as 'epistemic agents' in the form of Dalit public intellectuals, writers and filmmakers. In their capacity as individuals living caste reality, the public exposition of their lived experiences has the potential of subverting narratives that forward interests of the dominant. Given how caste has internally colonised the Shudras and the Dalits, a decolonised perspective in their storytelling will go a long way in dismantling hegemony of upper castes in articulating the terms of what constitutes public sphere. The marginalised have a right to 'represent' themselves and 'recalibrate' the conditions of their existence. In a radical upending of their caste positions, their determination of speaking the truth to power questions the censoring mechanism of the caste system. Cinema is a powerful medium of public awareness about social issues and concerns: 'Films are the best medium of teaching our people to see life, to laugh at it, to laugh at themselves, to indulge in self-inquiry and self-criticism.' (Ambedkar, 1942) It could become an educative instrument displaying the lives, trials and tribulations of the marginalised but the medium has remained under the stringent control of the upper-castes. So naturally, the choices for the marginalised are narrower. Even when it has reluctantly opened up to include the unheard voices and untold stories, the penmanship and direction continues to be with the savarnas. Ambedkar was speaking for the future as well when he expressed both the hopes he had from films

and limitations that came with it in a caste-bound society. He opined that 'our producers will do well to depict how the depressed class movement has outgrown its humanitarian and religious shell and broken into a self-reliant movement, demanding the Rights of Men.' (Ambedkar, 1942) Equally aware about caste-based foundations of commercial cinema, he added that: 'I do not expect any producer to do this and incur the displeasure and disfavour of his present docile clientele.' (Ambedkar, 1942) This, unfortunately, aptly describes the pathetic state of society and cinema in today's India too.

The article reflected on how caste and censorship have worked interdependently to sustain hegemony of the upper-castes. This is an undemocratic set-up which erases, dismisses and denies the plurality of voices and individualities. The predominant communal majority had rendered the alternative truths in the category of minority and, therefore, of lesser importance in national discourses. Only when counter-hegemonic expressions have been reconciled with the 'caste consciousness' can it be accepted by the larger society. But a robust democracy doesn't consider any minority 'insignificant'. Rather, democracy is about the peaceful co-existence of multiple minorities who all equally have a chance to become what Ambedkar called 'political majority'. Opposed to 'communal majority', Ambedkar's idea of 'political majority' is a signifier of a substantive democracy. The democratic public sphere in India needs a reconfiguration on the lines of 'constitutional morality'. It is only when people undergo a change of mindset can real stories take centre stage; as Ambedkar wrote about caste being 'a state of the mind' whose 'destruction' meant a 'notional change'. (Ambedkar, 2019) Movies, in discussion, should be welcomed for their anti-caste narrative but the opposition mounted on them by the caste community itself shows how persistent is the grip of caste hegemony over socio-public mediums of transmission and communication.

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Sacred, Spiritual and Societal Development Around Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham Corridor

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Abstract

The Kashi Vishwanath Dham corridor being situated at the heart of the spiritual capital of India, Varanasi is a testimony to our cultural identity. It is an embodiment to the enjoying spiritual and societal significance that has evolved over centuries. It is being dedicated to the Lord Shiva and considered as one of the very first Jyotirlinga. The particular temple is the focal point for the pilgrims and scholars alike, influencing the cultural and spiritual fabric of the region. Beyond religious importance, the temple is also significant in shaping the society around Varanasi. It has been a centre of learning, attracting scholars and pilgrims across the globe. The Hindu holy scriptures and the Vedas describe about the existence of temple in ancient times. The temple also fosters a vibrant cultural environment influencing music, art, literature. The local economy is also boosted by true tourism and related activities. Since Temple has been transformed into Dham, corridor has further enhanced accessibility leading to a huge tourist hub in the city. It is interesting for the historians and scholars to find out different dimensions of the society and culture that culminates into this spiritual city around the temple. This research paper is an attempt to address societal, spiritual and cultural contributions attributed through the existence of temple's influence in the city. Since Varanasi is also a centre of spiritual learning and discourse, this temple lies as the symbol of resilience and continuity of the past and the present, binding the social fabric in modern times. Its not just a religious temple but also a cornerstone of India's spiritual and cultural heritage.

Keywords
Kashi Vishwanath Dham Corridor, Temple, Society, Spiritual, Cultural History

I am Vishvanatha, the Lord
Kashi is the light of liberation
The waves of the River of Heaven are the wine of immortality.
What can these three not provide?

***Kasi Khanda*[1]**

Introduction

Kashi Vishwanath Temple- a pure and pious land of cultural hegemony of the city, Varanasi, since time immemorial. The Shiva's abode is wrapped uniformly in sacredness and spirituality, giving rise to a societal class intermingled with charm and mysticism. Discovering the multi-faceted Shiva's temple in true lights of homogeneous steps of *ghats* leading to river *Ganges.*

The magnificent architectural temple is situated at the western banks of *Ganges.* It is considered as one of the twelve *Jyotirlingas*. "It is believed that Varanasi is the place where the first *Jyotirlinga* manifested itself. This was that fiery pillar of light which broke from the earth's crust and flared right to the Heaven. It was through this light that *Lord Shiva* proclaimed His Supremecy over all the other Gods. Thus, the *Kashi Vishwanath temple,* also known as the *Shri Vishweshwar Temple,* is said to be dear to *Lord Shiva".*[2]

Elaborative Illustration in Kashi Khanda

The Kashi Khanda is such a priceless document inherited by human civilization in reconstructing Kashi, that it presents a powerhouse of enormous source material for drawing the connection between the past and present. The special mention of *linga* and the formation of Shiva's Kashi unfolds in Kashi Khanda. The author of *Luminous Kashi to Vibrant Varanasi,* K. Chandramouli establishes and narrates the linkage of *linga from Kashi Khanda:*

"The Skanda Purana, Kasi Khanda (13th cent. AD) describes, in its earlier chapters, the prominence of Avimuktesvara, and in its later chapters, the prominence gained by Visvesvara compared to Avimuktesvara. Brief extracts from the Kasi Khanda explain the point. Siva, never willing to forsake Kasi, established the Avimukta Linga in Kasi when He had to

reluctantly leave Kasi to honour the boon given by Brahma to Dvodasa. Thus Avimuktesvara became the first linga, Adi Linga. The Kasi Khanda emphatically tells that there is no linga equal to Avimuktesvara and further states that Visvesvara was the Jyotiringa. Avimuktesvara, worshipped by Visvesvara also, has to be served for mukti."[3]

Pious Purification of One's Own Spirit

Bathing at this holy river, *Ganges* is considered to be pure. The sight of ashes, dead following and thousands of pilgrims bathing, might look like a polluted one. However, the intensity and depth of clean and pure lies in the sacred scriptures of Hindus.

In *Purity and* Danger, the British Anthropologist Mary Douglas has exposed the many ways in which these terms are cultural constructs.[4] The author of *Banaras: City of Light,* Diana L. Eck holds similar grounds on the purity of the holy river, *Ganges:*

"*Dirt is disorder, 'matter out of place' and what is considered out of place depends upon one's notion of order. The bacterial understanding of 'purity' which is part of the scientific view of order, may contrast markedly with social and religious understandings of 'purity,' even in the modern cultures of the West. Quite apart from the issue of whether the Ganges is bacterially pure (and there are countless studies supporting both sides on this matter!) is the issue of its ritual purity and its symbolic purity. Hindus have affirmed for centuries that there is nothing quite as cleansing as living waters of the River of Heaven.*"[5]

The purification by water finds mention even in the great civilizations like Indus Valley Civilization. In fact, the excavations of the grand ceremonial tank at *Mohen-jo-daro* is a living proff of this ritual past thousand of years. To dig deeper, the flowing water is often considered an agent of purification because it only purifies but carries away the pollution. So great is the power of the Ganges to destroy sins that, it is said, even a droplet of *Ganges* water carried one's way by the breeze will erase the sins of many lifetimes in an instant.[6] One visiting *Kashi Vishwanath Temple*, cannot skip the ritual of bathing in the ultimately purest river of heaven, *Ganges.*

The much celebrated author, E.B. Havell, in *Benares: The Sacred City* describes the significance of *Ganges:*

"The sacrificial virtue of Shiva's city is no doubt enhanced by the

circumstance that the Ganges at this point takes a great sweep round, so that its current while it passes Benares is flowing in a northerly direction, or towards the Himalayas, where Shiva is said to dwell."[7] *"At every few yards there is a temple, or a shrine, on which passers-by will sprinkle holy Ganges water or place a garland."*[8]

Darshan, Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat

The city of traveler's delight, Varanasi has many amazing parts with different cultural beliefs. Many festivals, *melas* are celebrated here, with pomp and show. *Ganga Dusshera* and *Dev Deepwali,* are some of them. The most spectacular angle of the social life is the *Ganga Aarti* in the evenings after the morning *darshan* of Kashi Vishwanath temple. The intensely popular *Ganga Aarti* at *Dashashwamedh ghat* is full of sacred vibes and energies. It is also said that, one must be the part of the three aartis at Hardiwar, Rishikesh and Varanasi, to experience the universal divine. Often said as a visual treat, the *aarti* is the shining beacon of belief, bliss and bounty.

The priests performing the *aarti* are seen wrapped up in a traditional dhoti and a neat kurta well-tied with a really long gamcha on the shoulder. The entire setup is prepared by five elevated planks, idol of *Ganga Devi,* a layered brass lamp, conch shell, flowers, incense sticks and other ritual paraphernalia. On special occasions, thousands of devotees are gathered to witness the awe-inspiring spectacle. Many of the enthusiastic visitors hire boat and see the *aarti* from their boat parked in the holy waters on the banks of *Dashashwamedh ghat.* The priest of Gangotri Seva Samiti heads the *aarti* and only the learned pandas of Vedas and Upanishads are involved in this. Every evening, it is organized by lighting up the multi-layered ceremonial brass lamps and chanting the rhythmic holy mantras. All the priests worship Mother Ganga by either waving the incense sticks or blowing the conch shell. For securing a good place to attend the *aarti,* one must reach half and hour prior to the beginning of it.

Social Fabric in the Vishwanath Gali

One of the most famous and chaos lanes around the temple, is Vishwanath Gali. It is situated in the east to the road, connecting ghats, Raj Ghat to Assi Ghat. It is approximately 500 meters long, commencing at Dedas-ka-pul and merging finally in the Annapurna and Vishwanath temples.

In the panoramic settlement, lies the loophole of construction. The narrow

lanes chocked with shops, religious institutions, temples, *maths, dharmashalas,* constitute the outer segments of the lane, surrounding the temple. This clearly reflects that there is no proper planning for the construction and settlement. However, one cannot deny the expertise of shopkeeper's skills to attract customers to shops.

Such is the demand and popularity of *Shiva* images and lingas for worship and ritual purposes, that they are available in almost all the shops. Every shop owner tries their luck to lure the clients on their shop. Pilgrims and tourists are easy prey for higher prices. Otherwise experienced and local customers move on from one shop to another until they find objects at the reasonable prices. The major selling commodities in the Vishwanatha lane are toys, ornamnets, utensils, jewellery, god's images and similar decorative pieces.

Such is the magnificence and aura of the *gali,* that it presents a mesmerizing circumcenter of the sacred, spiritual, societal, cultural, and economic life. An ordinary day at this *gali*, begins with the devotees chating *Har Har Mahadev* and takking a holy dip at the Ganges. Then, they visit the Vishwanath temple. The rush of devotees diminish by 10 a.m. And the usual, office-going and students rushing to their offices and schools is witnessed. By 11 a.m., shopkeepers open their shops and start their business. Although real crowd is noticed in the early hours of evening. Everyone in the city seems to get along with the Vishwanath Gali in the evening. Poets, singers, writers, students, staffs, working professionals, politicians, and everyone finds solace in this *gali* in evening. Tea shops, and *paan* shops seem glittered at this fascinating dusk hours. Many gather here for the world-famous *Ganga Aarti.*[9]

Sight of the Social Harmony

In the growing differences, a religious inter-mingling among the communities is also noticed. Dating back to medieval times, the upper-class Hindus mainly Brahmins and upper-class Muslims mainly Ulemas maintained the conflict zone on the religious lines. However, the lower classes like artisans and cultivators grew on the similar lines of rituals and ceremonies in connection. With slight variations, similar pattern of occasions and gatherings is observed.

Furthermore, the *Bhakti* saints of the 16th and 17th centuries took a blend approach to preach their messages. Among the greatest of mystic saints, Kabir and Nanak spread the monotheism and unity dialects among the

masses. After their death, their followers organized their religious independent communities namely, Kabir-Panthis and Sikhs. They preached their oneness message and attacked the regular institutionalized religion. The Bhakti movement has undoubtedly, sparked the fusion among the two communities. This is witnessed in many fields. Firstly, the weaver class comes forward. Inspired and influenced by Persian motifs and techniques, a new profession of carpet weaving emerged in the adjacent regions of Varanasi. The communal synthesis glorified all the arenas of society, namely music, art, architecture, painting and language.

Amidst the situational riots and tensions, lies the communal harmony between the two communities. Best example of this is the fair of *Gaji Miyan ka Byah* which is celebrated by both Hindus and Muslims, alike. Most remarkable bond among these two communities is presented by the Banarasi Sarees. Silk Banarasi Sarees symbolizes the communal harmony as it being woven by Muslims artisans & weavers and sold by Hindu shopkeepers. Draped mutually by women of both religions, it reflects the unbreakable bond between the two.[10].

Negotiating Sacredness in Hidden Peripheries of Kashi Vishweshvara

The lord *Shiva* is considered as the constructor and protector of the entire landscape, situated across the banks of *Ganges.* This is a testimony found at innumerable places in *Puranas* and *Kasi Khanda.* It seems as if the dweller *Shiva* lives in the all living and non-living entities of the holy land. Guiding and leading the masses, at the circumference in totality and operating at the focal point of *Kashi Visweshwara Temple.*

The *linga of Shiva* is believed to be immersed in the well nearby. The authors in *Bhairva in* Banaras, namely Sunthar Visuvalingam and Elizabeth Chalier- Visuvalingam throws light on this context:

"Between the modern Vishvanath temple and Aurangzeb's mosque, which is itself a Muslim transformation of the earlier 16th century Vishvesvar temple, stands the Gyanvapi well. "In the beginning" long before the descent of the Ganges when there was no other water on earth, it was dug out by Siva himself with his trident in order to cool the linga of Visvesvar with its water. According to legend, the linga was preserved from Aurangzeb's discretion only by being thrown into the deep waters of the well. The royal inscription of the Queen of Indore, who sponspred the construction of the present Vishwanath temple, makes no mention of her

having established a different linga."[11].

The social fabric of this sacred land revolves around the self-exploited riots of two communities. The sparks flamed and in due course of time, only went higher and higher. The horror prevailed in the minds of weavers across the area of Vishweshara temple. Aurangzeb not only demolished the Vishwevara temple and built Masjid on the same place, but also ignited fear in minds. The mighty bloodshed between the followers of Vishwehvara and Islamic believers of Masjid turned the place into turmoil. The encroachment and marches in the area is being witnessed by the dwellers. The sacredness of the reconstructed temple also puts a question to the ideologies of Brahmins. Even the Brahmins started considering this as a polluted site. Not covering the insights on the cow-slaughter and riots, but sincerely putting forward the steps of sacredness argumenting the happenings of centuries. The hallmark of sacredness is being negotiated with the human endeavours of shaking humanity in Shiva's own land.

Escaping the above realities of past, which is still illuminated at times in present context also, lies the layer of the area around Vishweshwara temple. Within this panoramic view, the frame of Vishweshvara Temple, Annapurna, the steps of river Ganges, and the entire area being populated by the devotees and worshippers put forward the picture of sanity and sacredness of spiritual power of lord Shiva.

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The Chishti Sufi Order in Medieval India : A Study

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Sufism is Islamic mysticism and the term Sufi and darvish are often used with reference to muslim mystics who endeavour to attain communion with God through the practice of meditation and concentration.Abul Fazal mentions 14 Sufi orders prevalent in his time.[1] Among all the Silsilahs Chishti order became more popular during the medieval period because of its adaptation to the usages and customs of the country and the personality of its early leaders.

This order was founded by Khawaja Abu-Ishaq in the 12th Century. The order got its name, not from the founder but from a village called Chishti near Herat where the founder had lived for time. The credit for establishing the Chishti order in India goes to Muin-ud-din who reached India before the Turkish conquest of Hindustan.[2] He set up the main centre at Ajmer, from where the order spread to other parts of India in course of time. His saying, as recorded by his disciples gives the quintessence of his religious and social ideology and reveals him as a man of wide sympathies, catholic views and deep humanism.[3] For him the highest form of devotion to God was to redress the misery of those in distress and to feed the hungry. He uphold the doctrine of 'Wahadat al Wuzud' and his pantheistic approach brought him very close to the treasure of ancient Hindu religious thought, particularly the Upanishads, creating an atmosphere favourable for the exchange of ideas at a higher level.[4]

Two very eminent disciples of Sheikh Muinuddin popularized the Chishti order in India: Sheikh Hamiduddin Sufi in Rajputana and Sheikh Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki in Delhi. One worked in rural settings, the other in urban settings.[5] Sheikh Hamiduddin lived a self-sufficient life like an Indian farmer in Suwal, a small village in Nagaur.[6]

The other distinguished Khalifah of Muin-ud-din was Sheikh Bakhtiyar Kaki. He avoided the company of kings and nobles. Siyar-ul-Arfin and some other sources contain many instances showing deep respect of Sultan Iltutmish for Sheikh Bakhtiyar Kaki. It is said that after having failed to persuade the Sheikh to live near the palace, the Sultan made it a point to visit the Sheikh twice a week.[7] Iltutmish also offered the post of Sheikh-ul-Islam to him but he declined to accept it. Though Sheikh Qutub-ud-din Bakhtiyar did not associate himself with the ruler or the bureaucracy in building the political institution of the Delhi Sultanate, he extended the moral support to the Sultan in the construction of public works and centre of cultural activity.[8]

Sheikh Qutub-du-din Bakhtiyar Kaki left two chief Khalifas - Sheikh Badru'd din Ghaznavi and Sheikh Farid-ud-din Masu'd Ganj-i-Shakar. The former attained some popularity in Delhi but did not succeed because he had deviated from the path of Chishti saints and attached himself with the ruler class.[9] The later lived and worked mainly in Hansi and Ajodhan. He gave to the Chistia the momentum of an organised spiritual movement and made it very popular. His Khanqah Ajodhan at had become the centre of the mystic activities and its door was open till midnight to all the needy people without any distinction of cast and creed. Even Yogis used to visit his Khanqah and discuss various religious and mystic matters. Sheikh Farid was the first Indian Sufi who had cordial relation with the Hindu thinkers.[10] Sheikh Farid trained a large number of disciples, who later established branches in many important cities of India and spread the teachings of the Chishti order.

Sheikh Farid was the first poet in the Punjabi literary tradition who truly initiated humanist poetry. Sheikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya was Sheikh Farid's most prominent disciple. It was during his time that the Chishtiyya order reached the pinnacle of its popularity. He lived and worked in Delhi for almost half a century. He was a leading figure in the socio-religious sphere of Delhi. The contemporary historian Zia-ud-din Barani writes,[11] "Sheikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya had opened the doors of his discipleship to everyone, including the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, city dwellers and villagers, soldiers and warriors, free men and slaves. The effect of the Sheikh's company was that people began to abstain from many wrongdoings and bad habits, and their inclination towards religion

increased. He could not bear the suffering of people. “He used to say, “There is no one in the world more sorrowful and distressed than me. Many people come to me and tell me their troubles and sorrows. All this grieves my heart and soul.”[12]

Hundreds of caliphs and disciples received Islamic mystical knowledge and training at Nizam-ud-din Auliya’s khanqah (spiritual center), and they spread his message of humanity and teachings to different parts of the country. Among his most prominent disciples were Sheikh Nasir-ud-din Chiragh of Delhi, Khwaja Burhan-ud-din Gharib of Daulatabad, Maulana Shamsuddin Yahya, Sheikh Hisamuddin, Maulana Alauddin Nili, Maulana Fakhruddin Zarradi, Amir Khusrau, and Amir Hasan Sijzi. They strived to eradicate social evils and create a conducive environment for fostering harmonious cultural relations among people of different communities.

The Chishtiya Sufis considered social service the highest objective of all their spiritual endeavors and never discriminated between Hindus, Muslims, and others while performing social service. Their hospices (khanqahs) remained open until midnight. People of all kinds—courtiers, administrators, soldiers, shopkeepers, artisans, laborers, and slaves—came there. Their khanqahs became centers for the treatment of mental and physical ailments.[13] They considered fasting a remarkable means of weakening desires or overcoming worldly attachments. They fasted for many days throughout the year. Even when they were not fasting, they ate as little as possible. They maintained a distance from rulers but accepted zakat (charity), which they distributed in cash and kind among all those present on the very day they received it. A life of asceticism and self-denial was their ideal.

The Sufi saints of the Chishtiya order made a significant contribution to promoting communal harmony and inculcating high spiritual and moral values among the common people. Saints like Moin-ud-din Chishti, Baba Farid, and Nizam-ud-din Auliya were truly men of profound spiritual attainment, who viewed the entire world as a manifestation of the Supreme Power. With this understanding, they treated all who came to them with great respect, regardless of caste, colour or religion and dedicated themselves to serving humanity. In this way, they played a crucial role in bringing different communities closer together and fostering a composite culture. Thus, through their spiritual achievements, benevolent deeds, and

broad-mindedness, the Chishti saints left a lasting impact on the social and religious life of the country.

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Historical Traditions in Indian Knowledge System : A Preliminary Study of the Vayu Purana

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Abstract

This paper investigates the significant yet often dismissed role of the Puranas in preserving ancient historical traditions. Early Orientalist scholarship, while utilizing the Vamshanucharita (dynastic histories) of the Puranas, often dismissed them as unreliable due to the presence of mythology, didactic content and their use of prophetic future tense. This study however, examines the Vayu Purana, widely considered one of the oldest Puranas, as a structured and conscious historical tradition. Following the approach that seeks to understand the text as it was originally intended within the Indian Knowledge System, this paper argues that the Vayu Purana exemplifies a systematic indigenous methodology for recording history and an epistemic system that brought together geographical awareness, cosmology and explanation of origin and ancient history of humans together.

Keywords

Purana, Vayu Purana, Indian Knowledge System, Historical Tradition.

The view that people in India, before the colonial encounter lacked any sense of historical consciousness and did not produce any works of history (except the 12th century text Rajatarangini) has for a long time dominated historians' understanding of the past. Historians have attempted to understand how this notion was created and have traced its roots to the colonial exercise of knowledge production. British administrators engaged in this task were trained in the 19th century positivist tradition of history that characterised it in terms of objectivity, a unilinear narrative based on facts and evidence and a quest for finding the true version of events. Viewed

in this light Indian texts lacked objectivity; they did not differentiate between fact and fiction, the religious and the secular and thus stood disqualified as lacking any coherent sense of history. In recent years this narrow definition of history with its emphasis on a single, overarching 'Truth' has been questioned and this in turn has led to a re-examination of potential sources of history as well as a reconsideration of literary works that may contain multiple historical traditions.

Several historians are now acknowledging the diversity and heterogeneity of historiographical cultures in pre modern India. This is based on a questioning of the distinction made between literature and history, the former being understood as 'fictive narrative' and the latter as a 'rational positivist academic discipline.'[1] This distinction is inappropriate for pre-modern historiography since it is premised on a particular understanding of history. In Western Europe, history even before the 19th century had emerged as a fixed genre with a certain degree of specialization associated with it.[2] In India history was not a distinct genre, but as pointed out in *Textures of Time*, history is written in the dominant literary genre of a particular community which may change in time as the community changes its preferred mode of literary production. Thus cultures across the globe have had their own traditions of recording the past that have been denied the status of history because they did not accord to the standards of the Western European model of history writing. Similarly, Shonaleeka Kaul has argued that instead of viewing Kalhana's Rajatarangini as a work of history from modern positivist standards, we should view it as it was originally written and intended, i.e., as a kavya. Thus Kaul has argued for reading ancient texts as they were originally intended rather than from the perspective of modern understanding of history.[3]

As many early Orientalists attempted to recreate India's ancient history, the Puranas with their Vamshanucharita were consulted to establish dynastic chronology. However, they were not considered very reliable as they were full of hoary legends and myths. Moreover their use of the predictive future tense was seen as a clever ploy on the part of brahmanas to project their own powers. They were also (and to some extent continue to be) seen as inferior representation of Sanskrit didactic literature in comparison to the Vedas and Upanishads and used to popularize Hinduism in the Gupta and post Gupta period. This entailed Shaiva, Vaishnava or Shakta temple centred worship, pilgrimage and fasting. They were seen

as containing legends and myths to popularize the worship of Shiva and Vishnu in specific sacred sites and temples among the masses.

Nonetheless, the Puranas have been used by historians to shed light on the political, religious and social histories of ancient India. For instance, F.E. Pargiter has used Vayu, Brahmanda, Matsya, Garuda and Bhavishya Puranas to reconstruct the dynastic history of ancient India.[4] Pargiter was also a strong defender of the Puranas and the epics as repositories of ancient historical tradition. Romila Thapar views the Puranas as important historical sources, particularly the Vamshanucharita section, which are based on the Itihasa Purana tradition. She sees these as an example of an emerging historical tradition, separate and independent of the previously embedded historical traditions in the Vedas.[5] The Vayu Purana, which is the subject of our study has also been used by historians to cull out political, social and religious histories. V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar's *Some Aspects of the Vayu Purana* focuses on establishing the chronology of the Purana, classifying its contents and offering some commentary on its religious philosophy, music, painting and astronomical data.[6] *Cultural History from the Vayu Purana* by D.R. Patil focuses on the social and cultural aspects found in the Vayu Purana.[7] He covers aspects such as the social organization of ancient India, the position of women, religion, particularly Shaivism, towns and villages, food and drinks, music and dancing, flora and fauna etc that can be found in the Vayu Purana.

We first come across the term Purana in later Vedic texts where Itihasa and Purana are enumerated besides the Vedas and other branches of learning.[8] In fact, Itihasa Purana is even called the fifth Veda. They are mentioned immediately after the Atharva Veda to which they are said to be closely related. M. Winternitz has argued that like the Vedic Samhitas, there existed one or several collections of Itihasas and Puranas made up of myths, legends and stories of gods, sages and kings. Whether this existed in the form of a book cannot be ascertained but it is definite that there were professional storytellers known as Aitihasikas and Pauranikas since very ancient times. Moreover, by the time of the Buddha, there was in existence several narrative forms such as Akhyanas, Itihasas, Puranas and Gathas forming a literary public property which was drawn upon by epic poets and even the Buddhists and Jainas. Winternitz has shown that from the time of Sutra literature, i.e., 5th-4th century BCE the existence of Puranas in the form we know of today can be attested.[9]

It is probable that the Puranas known to us are recasts of older works of the same species, i.e., religious didactic works in which were collected ancient traditions of the creation, the deeds of the gods, heroes, saints and ancient ancestors of the human race and the beginnings of famous royal families. Scholars like P.L. Bhargava believe that there was originally one Purana Samhita on which all subsequent Maha Puranas were based.[10] However, Winternitz has argued that several Puranas existed and the ones that are known to us are based on this corpus. The Puranas existed even before the final redaction of Mahabharata as there are several similarities between the two. The Mahabharata calls itself a Purana and also begins exactly as many Puranas do – with Ugrahravas, the son of Suta Lomaharshana appearing as the narrator. Puranas are frequently mentioned in the Mahabharata when recounting tales of the past. Moreover there are some serious overlaps between the later portions of Mahabharata and some of the oldest Puranas like Vayu and Matsya Purana.

There are said to be eighteen Maha Puranas and eighteen Upapuranas although in reality many more exist. It is believed that the number of eighteen Maha Puranas was fixed between 3rd century CE and 7th century CE.[11] According to the Amarakosha, a Purana is said to have five characteristics or Panchalakshana: 1. Sarga (creation) 2. Pratisarga (dissolution and recreation) 3. Vamsha (genealogy of gods and sages), Manavatara (epoch of the Manus) and Vamshanucharita (dynastic histories). These characteristics show that the Puranas in their original form were histories recording the history of humans from their origins. However these characteristics are not found in all the Puranas. The majority of Puranas have more relevance as religious texts. The historical tradition in Puranas, which encompasses the panchalakshana is found in the Vayu, Brahmanda, Matsya, Garuda and Bhavishya Purana.[12]

The Vayu Purana is considered one of the oldest existing Puranas. The Mahabharata speaks of a Purana proclaimed by Vayu; Banabhatta, in Harshacharita says that he attended a reading of Vayu Purana in his village and Al Biruni repeatedly quotes and names the Vayu Purana.[13] Dikshitar believes that the earliest portion of the Purana go back to the 5th century BCE and latest to 500 CE.[14] The Vayu Purana is a key text, along with Matsya and Brahmanda Purana to reconstruct early dynastic history of India. It is one of the main accounts of the dynasties that reigned India during the Kali Age. Thus the text is of great significance in reconstructing dynastic history and as a representation of one of the oldest traditions of recording

history. The Vayu Purana bears a very close similarity to the Brahmanda and Matsya Purana. In fact the Vayu and Brahmanda Purana bear such a close similarity that they seem to be two recensions of the same text. Pargiter believes that they were both based on one original text.[15]

The Vayu Purana records how ancient genealogies, tales and ballads were preserved by the sutas and it describes a suta's duties. "The Suta's special duty as perceived by good men of old was to preserve the genealogies of gods, rishis and most glorious kings and the traditions of great men, which are displayed by those who declare sacred lore in the Itihasa and Puranas." [16] The suta's origin is explained by a fable where the suta and the maagadha (a term used interchangeably with suta) were born during the sacrifice held by the primeval king Prithu. Prithu assigned the Anupa country (Bengal) to Suta and the Magadha region to the Maagadha. Thus the Vayu Purana, clearly shows an awareness of a class of men whose business it was to know the ancient genealogies and tales. Moreover, it contains several allusions to various terms of authoritative exponents of ancient events such as puravid, purana gyana, and pauranika.[17]

It has also been argued that a linguistic analysis of Vayu, Brahmanda and Matsya Purana show that they were originally in Prakrit or that they are a sanskritized version of older Prakrit shlokas.[18] This is tenable as the texts were composed by bards. Pargiter believes that the original shlokas may even have been composed in Magadhi perhaps reflecting Magadha's centrality in political activities from 6th century BCE. The maagadhas were celebrated as bards as well.

The Vayu Purana gives an account of how the original Purana came into existence thus tracing the history of the textual tradition it was a part of. It records how the original Purana came into existence. Krishna Dvaipayana divided the single Veda into four and arranged them and so was called Vyasa.[19] He entrused them to his four discpiles Paila, Vaishampayana, Jaimini and Sumantu. Then with tales, anecdotes, songs and lore that had come down from the ages he compiled a Purana and Itihasa and taught it to his fifth disciple, the suta Lomaharshana. Lomaharshana made this Purana Samhita into six versions and taught them to his six disciples. Three of them, Kashyapa, Savarni and Shamshapayana made three more Purana Samhitas and these four became the mula samhita. They consisted of four divisions or padas and were to the same effect but differed in their diction. Each contained 4000 verses. These are lost to us now but their

creators frequently appear in the Vayu and Brahmanda, the oldest Purana. It is also in only these two Puranas that the four fold division of the text is followed. The two texts also state that that their versions are based on Bhavishya Purana (not the one familiar to us today) whose contents were repurposed in these Puranas. Thus, Vayu Purana shows awareness of its sources and acknowledges that it was a part of a long lineage of historical tradition. The text frequently refers to a long line of remembered history by using phrases such as *smrta* or remembered, *aushushruma* or we have heard it handed down, *iti nah shrutam* or so we have heard.

The entire narrative of the Vayu Purana is framed as the discourse of Vayu to an assembly of sages, specifically at the twelve year sacrificial session led by sage Shaunaka.[20] The early chapters of the Vayu Purana meticulously detail Sarga (creation), establishing a coherent cosmological model. This includes the subtle principles of creation – from the unmanifest Brahman to the creation of the tattvas or elements. This follows an exploration of kala or time and the detailed description of Yuga cycle shows sophisticated ancient temporal conceptualization. This cyclical time shows an intellectual tradition committed to defining existence within an immense, non-linear and cyclical temporal framework. Every event, including creation and destruction is contextualized within this time-frame. Thus the Vayu Purana, provides the necessary cosmic scale against which all human history is measured. It sets the temporal framework within which historical events take place.[21]

The Vayu Purana not only fixes its historical narrative in cyclical time frame of the yugas but also anchors it in space.[22] The section dedicated to Bhuvana Kosha (cosmic geography), particularly the division of the earth into dvipas (continents), varshas(regions) and the central continent of Jambudvipa and its subdivision Bharatavarsha create a geographical space, mapping known and imagined territories within which history unfolded. It was in this geographical space that mythical, epic and historical events recorded in the Purana take place. Moreover, such a delineation of geography helped in the creation of sacred geography by which tirthas or pilgrimage to sacred places could be encouraged. Thus disparate regions became unified in a common map of sacred places. The Gaya Mahatmya, an early medieval text which was a later addition to the Vayu Purana enumerates the sanctity of Gaya and the importance of performing the shraddha ritual here.

The text also dedicates considerable attention to the vamsha or genealogies

of rishis and the recurring epoch of Manus.[23] The accounts of Svayambhuva Manu and his progeny and their colonization of the world's regions is a mythical blueprint of social organization. These genealogies are not just mythical and historical lists; by linking the lineages of sages, kings and the varnas back to the Prajapatis and the Manus, the Vayu Purana gives coherence to the social order and a clear narrative of where humanity came from.

This is followed by the Suryavanshai rulers who became the kings of Ayodhya and the Chandravanshi rulers who became kings of the doab and Mathura region. The line of mythical and legendary rulers ends with the Mahabharata war that is treated as a great watershed – the end of the heroic era and the beginning of the Kali Yuga. Vayu Purana then goes on to provide a continuous list of dynasties that rule over Magadha and other regions after the Great War. A great portion of the text's focus is on the dynasties that held power in Magadha. This was perhaps due to Magadha increasingly becoming the loci of power in north India. It begins with the Brihadratha dynasty whose founder established his capital at Rajagriha. They are followed by the Pradyotas, Shishunagas, Nandas, Mauryas, Shungas and Kanvas.[24] The Vayu Purana also reflects significant political shifts. Its primary focus is on the succession of dynasties ruling from Magadha and it reflects the growing centralization of power in the eastern Gangetic plains. The subsequent rise of the Andhras or Satvahanas shows the text's awareness of the political dynamism of the period. The text provides a framework not just of understanding the timeline of dynasties but also the changing locus of power and authority in the subcontinent. This section concludes with a description of the Gupta kings.

This paper has argued that the Vayu Purana must be re-evaluated not as a flawed or unreliable chronicle, but as a systematic and comprehensive indigenous historical tradition consciously intended by its compilers to record the past. By setting aside the narrow, positivist criteria inherited from colonial-era scholarship, we recognize the Purana as a sophisticated epistemic system that effectively integrated historical narration into what were largely sacred texts. It served as a memory bank for recording political history of India. Its encyclopaedic nature reveals the remarkable scope and interconnectedness of ancient Indian intellectual tradition. Contrary to traditional belief the text is not just a collection of legends and myths but a structured system for understanding the universe ranging from the

metaphysical to the mundane.

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