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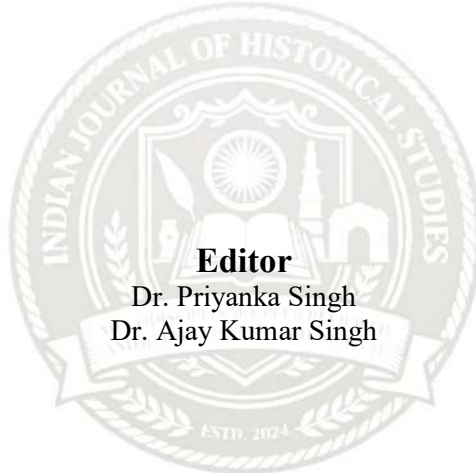
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EDITORIAL NOTE

It gives me immense pleasure to present *Volume II, No. 1 & 2 (January–March & April to June 2026)* of the *Indian Journal of Historical Studies*. This issue reflects our continued commitment to promoting quality research, intellectual inquiry, and interdisciplinary dialogue in the field of history and allied disciplines.

The articles included in this volume explore a wide range of themes encompassing historical thought, cultural traditions, heritage preservation, religion, archaeology, social movements, political developments, and contemporary interpretations of the past. The contributions represent diverse methodological approaches and geographical perspectives, highlighting the richness and complexity of historical scholarship in India and beyond.

A notable feature of this issue is its interdisciplinary orientation. Several papers engage with anthropology, heritage studies, political science, cultural studies, and emerging digital technologies, demonstrating how historical research continues to evolve through interaction with other academic disciplines. Such studies not only deepen our understanding of historical processes but also illuminate the relevance of history in addressing contemporary concerns.

The Editorial Board expresses its sincere gratitude to all authors for their valuable contributions and to the reviewers for their thoughtful evaluations and scholarly guidance. Their collective efforts ensure the academic quality and integrity of the journal. We also acknowledge the support of our readers, researchers, and academic institutions whose encouragement motivates us to continue fostering meaningful historical discourse.

We hope that the articles published in this issue will inspire further research, critical reflection, and constructive scholarly engagement. We welcome future contributions that advance historical knowledge through innovative perspectives, rigorous analysis, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Editor

Indian Journal of Historical Studies

Aim and scope of the Journal

The Indian Journal of Historical Studies is a peer-reviewed print publication dedicated to the advancement of scholarly research in history and its allied disciplines. The journal serves as a prestigious platform for historians, researchers, academicians, and practitioners to publish original studies, critical analyses, and interdisciplinary works that deepen the understanding of historical ideas, events, and interpretations.

By fostering intellectual dialogue, comparative perspectives, and innovative approaches, the journal seeks to broaden the horizons of historical inquiry within Indian, regional, and global contexts.

The journal aims to:

- Promote high-quality academic research in all branches of historical study.
- Encourage interdisciplinary perspectives linking history with other social sciences and humanities.
- Facilitate scholarly exchange and dialogue among national and international historians.
- Contribute to the understanding of India's cultural and historical evolution within a global framework.

The Indian Journal of Historical Studies welcomes original research articles, review essays, book reviews, and scholarly discussions related to a wide range of historical themes and methodologies.

The areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Indian History
- World History and Comparative Historical Studies
- Cultural, Social, and Economic History
- Political and Intellectual History
- Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Heritage Studies
- Historiography and Historical Methodology
- Interdisciplinary Studies connecting History with Literature, Sociology, Geography, Anthropology, and Political Science

The journal particularly encourages submissions that utilize new sources, adopt innovative methodologies, or engage in cross-disciplinary approaches to illuminate various aspects of India's past within a global and comparative perspective.

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नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच संबंधों का आत्म-चिंतन: प्रमुख चिंताएँ और भविष्य की सम्भावनाएँ

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सारांश

एक अनिवार्य मानवीय गतिविधि के रूप में, राजनीति में आमतौर पर नैतिक विचारों को राजनीतिक कार्यों से अलग रखने की प्रवृत्ति होती है। राजनीति का संबंध सत्ता से है और यह समाज के भीतर के संघर्षों को सुलझाने का एक माध्यम है। एक प्रक्रिया के रूप में राजनीति का मुख्य ध्यान सामाजिक सामंजस्य और सामाजिक एकीकरण बनाए रखने पर होता है फिर भी राजनेता और कूटनीतिज्ञ अक्सर ऐसी गतिविधियों में संलग्न होते हैं जो समाज के सामान्य नैतिक मानकों के अनुरूप नहीं होतीं। दूसरी ओर नैतिकता शुद्ध सिद्धांतों का एक ऐसा क्षेत्र है जो नैतिक अनिवार्यताओं द्वारा शासित होता है। एक सामूहिक प्रयास के रूप में नैतिकता इस बात पर केंद्रित होती है कि समाज को किस प्रकार एक नैतिक दिशा में आगे बढ़ना चाहिए। अतः प्रथम दृष्ट्या नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच का संबंध परस्पर विरोधी और विपरीत प्रतीत हो सकता है। इसलिए यह अध्ययन इस मूलभूत प्रश्न का समाधान करने का प्रयास करेगा कि क्या राजनीति में नैतिकता केवल एक मिथक है या एक वास्तविकता। इसके अतिरिक्त यह इस बात का भी आत्मनिरीक्षण करेगा कि राजनीति को संचालित करने वाले नैतिक सिद्धांत, सामान्य नैतिक जीवन को संचालित करने वाले सिद्धांतों से किस प्रकार भिन्न हैं। निष्कर्ष के तौर पर यह अध्ययन इस धारणा की पुनः पुष्टि करता है कि राजनीति और नैतिकता एक-दूसरे के साथ असंगत नहीं हैं और उनके बीच का यह अंतर लक्ष्यों या साधनों में भिन्नता के कारण नहीं बल्कि राजनीति और नैतिकता से जुड़े नैतिक मूल्यों के कारण उत्पन्न होता है।

मूल शब्द: राजनीति, सत्ता, संघर्ष समाधान, नैतिकता, सदाचार।

परिचय

राजनीति और नैतिकता के बीच का संबंध जटिल और समस्याग्रस्त है। आमतौर पर राजनीति और नैतिकता को एक-दूसरे के विपरीत माना जाता है। राजनीति की विभिन्न समझों के बीच राजनीति की अवधारणा बड़े पैमाने पर सत्ता से जुड़ी है और इसे समाज के भीतर संघर्षों के समाधान के एक साधन के रूप में देखा जाता है, इसलिए सामाजिक एकता बनाए रखने और सामाजिक एकीकरण को बढ़ावा देने के लिए राजनेता और कूटनीतिज्ञ अक्सर ऐसी गतिविधियों में

संलग्न होते हैं जो समाज के सामान्य नैतिक मानकों के अनुरूप नहीं होतीं। दूसरी ओर नैतिकता शुद्ध सिद्धांतों का एक क्षेत्र है जो नैतिक अनिवार्यताओं द्वारा शासित होता है। एक सामूहिक प्रयास के रूप में नैतिकता इस बात पर केंद्रित है कि समाज को किस प्रकार नैतिक दिशा में आगे बढ़ना चाहिए। यद्यपि यह प्रकृति में अत्यधिक मानक-आधारित है और समाज के मानदंडों तथा मूल्यों से संबंधित है। नैतिकता समाज की व्यावहारिक समस्याओं को कम करने के लिए आत्म-निरीक्षण भी करती है।

नैतिकता इस बात के लक्ष्यों और साधनों दोनों को ध्यान में रखती है कि सामाजिक समस्याओं का समाधान कैसे किया जाना चाहिए और सामाजिक लक्ष्यों को आसानी से प्राप्त करने का सर्वोत्तम संभव साधन क्या होना चाहिए। यह अक्सर यह मानती है कि नैतिक सिद्धांत प्रकृति में अत्यधिक व्यक्तिपरक और सार्वभौमिक होते हैं। यह सामाजिक समस्याओं को एक समान तरीके से समझने का प्रयास करती है अर्थात् प्रत्येक समाज अपनी जटिलता की परवाह किए बिना कुछ ऐसी समस्याओं का सामना करता है जो प्रकृति में सार्वभौमिक होती हैं और जिनके लिए तत्काल समाधान की आवश्यकता होती है। इस प्रकार मूल्यों की एक प्रणाली के रूप में नैतिकता उन मार्गों को निर्धारित करती है जो प्रासंगिक सामाजिक मुद्दों का समाधान कर सकते हैं। दूसरी ओर राजनीति प्रकृति में अत्यधिक व्यक्तिपरक होती है और राजनीतिक कानून सार्वभौमिकता के विचार के साथ असंगत होते हैं। राजनीति समाज के भीतर मौजूद विभिन्न विभाजनों को ध्यान में रखते हुए विभिन्न सामाजिक समस्याओं का समाधान करने का प्रयास करती है। राजनीति कभी भी सामाजिक मुद्दों का अंतिम या निर्णायक समाधान प्रदान करने का दावा नहीं करती। यह केवल सामाजिक मुद्दों की व्याख्या करती है और यह निर्धारित करती है कि किसी विशिष्ट संदर्भ के भीतर क्या किया जा सकता है।

प्रथम दृष्टया नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच का रिश्ता टकराव वाला और एक-दूसरे के विपरीत लग सकता है और ऐतिहासिक रूप से नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच इस अलगाव को बार-बार मज़बूती मिली है। राजनीतिक यथार्थवादी तर्क देते हैं कि नैतिकता और राजनीति एक-दूसरे से बिल्कुल अलग हैं। यथार्थवादियों के लिए राजनीति सत्ता पाने की एक सक्रिय कोशिश है और राष्ट्र-राज्य इस अराजक विश्व व्यवस्था में अपनी सुरक्षा को ज़्यादा से ज़्यादा बढ़ाने के लिए एक-दूसरे के साथ लगातार संघर्ष में लगे रहते हैं इसलिए अगर राजनेताओं और राजनायकों को इस अराजक व्यवस्था में असरदार बनना है तो वे कुछ ऐसे अमूर्त नैतिक सिद्धांतों से बंधे नहीं रह सकते जो उनकी इस कोशिश में रुकावट डालें। राजनीतिक यथार्थवादी नैतिक सिद्धांतों को इसलिए नकारते हैं क्योंकि वे राष्ट्रों को सत्ता पाने से रोकते हैं। उदाहरण के लिए, मैकियावेली ने अपने क्लासिकल सिद्धांत 'रेज़न-डी-एटाट' (raison-d'état) के ज़रिए राजनीति को धर्म और नैतिकता के दायरे से अलग करने का समर्थन किया और बाद में हॉब्स, मार्क्स और कई अन्य लोगों ने भी इसी राह पर चलते हुए इसका समर्थन किया। इसलिए, इस पूरे अध्ययन के दौरान कई अहम सवालों पर बहस होगी और साथ ही हम यह समझने की कोशिश करेंगे कि उन सवालों का सबसे अच्छा जवाब कैसे दिया जा सकता है। हम यह समझने और विश्लेषण करने की कोशिश करेंगे कि क्या राजनीति के लिए एक गतिविधि और एक विषय दोनों ही रूपों में नैतिक बातों से अलग रहना मुमकिन है और राजनीतिक चर्चाओं में नैतिकता की क्या अहमियत है।

नैतिकता और राजनीति के मध्य सम्बन्ध

समय के साथ राजनीति के मायने और उसका स्वरूप बदलता रहा है। प्राचीन यूनानी काल से लेकर जब राजनीति का मकसद एक राजनीतिक ढाँचे के भीतर एक बेहतर जीवन सुनिश्चित करना था और अब तक जब राजनीति का मतलब सत्ता का इस्तेमाल करना और उस इस्तेमाल की गई सत्ता के जवाब में विरोध करना है। राजनीति को कम से कम दो अर्थों में परिभाषित किया जा सकता है। एक संकीर्ण अर्थ में, राजनीति का संबंध सरकार से और सरकार जो काम करती है उससे है। दूसरे एक व्यापक अर्थ में, राजनीति का संबंध सत्ता से है जब कोई एक व्यक्ति या व्यक्तियों का कोई समूह, दूसरों के विरोध के बावजूद, उन पर अपनी सत्ता का इस्तेमाल करता है। यह दूसरा अर्थ सामाजिक रिश्तों का एक हिस्सा रहा है जैसे कि जाति, वर्ग, पेशा, धर्म, संस्कृति, वगैरह। कई परिभाषाएँ होने के बावजूद हम राजनीति का एक और अर्थ निकाल सकते हैं वह है विभिन्न सामाजिक मुद्दों पर इंसानों के बीच होने वाले टकरावों को आधिकारिक फ़ैसलों के ज़रिए सुलझाना। ये तीनों ही अर्थ नैतिकता से जुड़े हुए हैं।

सरकार को अपने काम नैतिक तरीके से करने चाहिए यह एक वांछनीय बात है और खासकर इसी वजह से सरकारों को लोगों से वैधता (legitimation) मिलती है। कभी-कभी मानवीय कार्यों में जो टकराव होता है यह तय करना मुश्किल हो जाता है कि कौन सा काम सही है या किसका नैतिक या सैद्धांतिक नज़रिया इतना मज़बूत है कि दूसरे लोग उसे मान लें। हर कोई अपने नैतिक नज़रिए से सही होता है लेकिन सवाल यह बना रहता है कि कोई व्यक्ति दूसरे पर अपनी ताकत का इस्तेमाल कैसे सही ठहरा सकता है। तीसरे अर्थ के जवाब में एक सवाल यह उठ सकता है कि इंसानी टकराव पैदा क्यों होते हैं? अगर हर कोई अपने सामाजिक नैतिक नियमों से चलता, तो सामाजिक टकरावों की कोई गुंजाइश ही नहीं होती। फिर भी इंसानी समाज में लोगों के अलग-अलग नैतिक और सैद्धांतिक झुकावों की वजह से सामाजिक टकराव पैदा होते हैं। राजनीति विज्ञान नैतिक और सैद्धांतिक रूप से सही आचरण के खास उदाहरणों की जाँच करता है लेकिन लोगों के व्यवहार में विविधता और इस बात पर नज़रिए में अंतर होने की वजह से कि नैतिक रूप से क्या सही है, यह तय करना लगभग नामुमकिन काम है कि क्या सही है और क्या गलत। राजनीति में भीमेटिकल साइंस और इंजीनियरिंग साइंस की तरह ही लोगों को अनुभवी और समझदार होना चाहिए ताकि वे खुद की आलोचना करके यह तय कर सकें कि क्या अच्छा है। इस तरह राजनीति विज्ञान का मकसद हमारे कामों से हासिल होने वाली सभी व्यावहारिक अच्छाइयों में सबसे ऊँचा है।

राजनीतिक अध्ययन का पहला प्रतिमान प्राचीन यूनानी काल से जुड़ा है और इसे आमतौर पर राजनीतिक दर्शन कहा जाता है, जो नैतिक और मानक प्रश्नों पर आधारित है। प्लेटो और अरस्तू जैसे राजनीतिक दार्शनिकों के कार्य क्या है कि बजाय इस दार्शनिक खोज पर केंद्रित थे कि क्या होना चाहिए या किसे एक अच्छा जीवन या आदर्श समाज माना जाना चाहिए। परंपरावादियों के लिए, किस समाज को एक न्यायपूर्ण समाज माना जाए? लोकतंत्र सरकार का सबसे अच्छा रूप क्यों है? और हमें राज्य की आज्ञा का पालन क्यों करना चाहिए? जैसे प्रश्न राजनीति का आध्यात्मिक (metaphysical) विश्लेषण करते समय उनकी प्राथमिक चिंताएँ थीं।

राजनीतिक दर्शन में नैतिकता की भूमिका न केवल सैद्धांतिक अर्थों में, बल्कि व्यावहारिक अर्थों में भी मौलिक थी।

कोलमैनका तर्क है कि अरस्तू के लिए नैतिकता सैद्धांतिक होने के बजाय अधिक व्यावहारिक है इसका उद्देश्य एक अच्छा जीवन जीना है। राजनीति का उद्देश्य पूरे समुदाय का कल्याण करना है। पारंपरिक खोज की एक अन्य शाखा राज्य की संस्थाओं जैसे कि विधायी निकाय, प्रशासनिक अंग और न्यायिक अंगके अध्ययन से संबंधित थी। उन्नीसवीं सदी के बाद से, राजनीति के अध्ययन का केंद्र पारंपरिक मानकवाद (normativism) से हटकर समकालीन अनुभववाद (empiricism) की ओर यानी मानवीय व्यवहार के अध्ययन की ओर खिसक गया। इस प्रक्रिया में राजनीति के अध्ययन में मूल्यों, मानदंडों और नैतिक खोज को दरकिनार कर दिया गया।

प्रत्यक्षवाद (positivism) तार्किक प्रत्यक्षवाद और भाषाई दर्शन जैसे सैद्धांतिक नवाचारों ने राजनीति के आध्यात्मिक विश्लेषणों की जगह ले ली। इन नवाचारों ने उन घटनाओं के अध्ययन पर जोर दिया जो क्या है पर आधारित थीं कि इस नैतिक खोज पर कि क्या होना चाहिए। एक और बदलाव भी स्पष्ट रूप से दिखाई दिया जो राजनीतिक दर्शन से राजनीतिक विज्ञान की ओर हुआ। नैतिक खोज के अभाव के कारण इस चरण को 'मानक-विहीनता' (normative aridity) के चरण के रूप में बेहतर जाना जाता है। व्यवहारवाद (behaviouralism) की वैधता पर प्रश्न उठने के बाद एक नया चरण सामने आया जिसे 'तर्कसंगत विकल्प सिद्धांत' (rational choice theory) कहा जाता है। इसका उद्देश्य राजनीति का विश्लेषण राजनीतिक अर्थव्यवस्था से जोड़कर करना था। अमेरिका के वर्जीनिया स्कूल ने इस औपचारिक राजनीतिक सिद्धांत को प्रतिपादित किया, यह सिद्धांत इसमें शामिल व्यक्तियों के तर्कसंगत रूप से स्व-हित-प्रेरित व्यवहार पर जोर देता है। जैसे कि मतदाताओं, लॉबिस्टों, नौकरशाहों और राजनेताओं के कार्य और साथ ही अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यवस्था के भीतर विभिन्न राज्यों के व्यवहार का भी अध्ययन करता है।

एक और मजबूत नज़रिया राजनीति का नारीवादी दृष्टिकोण है। ऐसा लगता है कि यह राजनीति और समाज की पितृसत्तात्मक सोच का नतीजा है, जो मूल रूप से सत्ता के बोलबाले पर आधारित है। इसमें महिलाओं को उस सत्ता संरचना से बाहर रखा जाता है, जिस पर पुरुषों या पितृसत्ता का दबदबा होता है। नारीवाद पितृसत्तात्मक सत्ता के बोलबाले से महिलाओं को आज़ाद कराकर सत्ता के पारंपरिक इस्तेमाल को बदलना चाहता है। मार्क्सवाद, मुख्यधारा की राजनीति विज्ञान की पद्धतियों का एक मजबूत विकल्प पेश करता है। यह पूँजीवाद की चाल और उसके शोषणकारी स्वभाव को समझने के लिए इतिहास की भौतिकवादी अवधारणा को अपनाता है। इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि कार्ल मार्क्स पहले ऐसे विचारक थे जिन्होंने राजनीति की वैज्ञानिक ढंग से व्याख्या करने की कोशिश की। मार्क्सवादियों के लिए राजनीति का मतलब है आर्थिक रूप से संपन्न वर्ग द्वारा दबे-कुचले वर्ग का शोषण करना और राज्य संपन्न वर्ग के हाथ में एक औज़ार की तरह काम करता है।

प्रारम्भ से ही राजनीतिचाहे एक गतिविधि के तौर पर हो या समाज विज्ञान की एक शाखा के तौर पर हमेशा नैतिक सवालों से प्रभावित और प्रेरित रही है। हालाँकि समाज विज्ञान की हर दूसरी शाखा, जो समाज का व्यवस्थित अध्ययन करती है नैतिक और सैद्धांतिक दुविधाओं का सामना करती है लेकिन राजनीति में नैतिकता और सदाचार का सवाल ज़्यादा अहम हो जाता

हैक्योंकि इसका सीधा संबंध सत्ता के बँटवारे से होता है। ऐतिहासिक रूप से, नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच का रिश्ता काफ़ी पेचीदा और विविध रहा है। यह पेचीदगी इसलिए पैदा होती हैक्योंकि इस दुविधा को सुलझाने का कोई एक सबसे अच्छा तरीका नहीं है। साथ ही राजनीति के अलग-अलग दृष्टिकोण और सिद्धांत इस रिश्ते को अलग-अलग नज़रियों से समझने की कोशिश करते हैं। नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच के दो-तरफ़ा रिश्ते को समझने से पहले, इन दोनों के बीच के ऐतिहासिक संदर्भों और टकरावों को समझना बेहद ज़रूरी है। इंसान एक सामाजिक प्राणी होने के नाते, हमेशा नैतिक मूल्यों की उस व्यवस्था से प्रभावित होता है, जो खुद सामाजिक संस्थाओं के भीतर ही मौजूद होती है।

प्राचीन यूनानी दार्शनिक सबसे पहले ऐसे लोग थे, जिन्होंने 'राजनीति' की अवधारणा को समझते हुए सीधे तौर पर नैतिक मुद्दों पर विचार किया। प्लेटो और अरस्तू दोनों के ही समाज और राजनीति के अध्ययन का मुख्य विषय यह था कि एक अच्छा जीवन कैसे जिया जाए; और उनके अनुसार, ऐसा तभी संभव है जब राजनीतिक सत्ता की नींव मज़बूत नैतिक और राजनीतिक सिद्धांतों पर टिकी हो। इंसान इस दुनिया का सबसे बेहतरीन प्राणी इसलिए नहीं है कि उसके पास सोचने-समझने की शक्ति है, बल्कि इसलिए है कि उसे कुदरती तौर पर यह शक्ति मिली है कि वह अच्छे और बुरे के बीच फ़र्क कर सके। अक्सर यह मान लिया जाता है कि राजनीतिज्ञों एक व्यावहारिक विमर्श है और समाज में वास्तविकता के आधार पर मूल्यों के आधिकारिक आवंटनका विश्लेषण करने का प्रयास करती है, नैतिकता के साथ असंगत है जो प्रकृति में अत्यधिक मानक और अमूर्त है। यथार्थवाद का तर्क है कि राजनेताओं और नीति निर्माताओं की अपनी मूल्य प्रणाली (राष्ट्रीय हित का संवर्धन, संरक्षण और संवर्धन) होती है जिसे सामान्य नैतिक मूल्यों के समान नहीं माना जा सकता। राजनीति और नैतिकता के बीच का अंतर तब और भी गहरा और समस्याग्रस्त हो जाता है जब नैतिकता को धार्मिक विश्वास के समान मान लिया जाता है।

नैतिकता को किसी दैवीय आदेश पर आधारित अलौकिक चीज़ के रूप में देखने की ग़लत धारणा इसे एक जटिल संबंध बना देती है। यह सत्य है कि मूल्यों और मानदंडों के एक समूह के रूप में नैतिकता प्रकृति में अत्यधिक मानक है, लेकिन व्यावहारिक नैतिकता सिद्धांत और व्यवहार के बीच सेतु बनाने का प्रयास करती है। व्यावहारिक नैतिकता किसी संघर्ष के मूल में जाने का प्रयास करती है; अपने मज़बूत नैतिक सिद्धांतों के साथ उसका आलोचनात्मक विश्लेषण और विस्तार करती है और नैतिक तर्क और नैतिक बोध दोनों का उपयोग करके व्यावहारिक समाधान प्रदान करने का प्रयास करती है। एक अनुशासन के रूप में राजनीति न केवल समाज में राजनीतिक शक्ति के वितरण पर ध्यान केंद्रित करती है, बल्कि यह उन कारकों को समझने का भी प्रयास करती है कि यह वितरण न्यायसंगत है या अन्यायपूर्ण। अन्य प्रकार की सत्ताओं के विपरीत, राजनीतिक सत्ता सर्वोच्च होती है, क्योंकि इसे नागरिकों का समर्थन प्राप्त होता है और साथ ही यह समाज के मूल्यों, मानदंडों, विश्वासों और नैतिकता को भी समाहित करती है। इसी प्रकार प्रत्यक्षवाद और व्यवहारवादी क्रांति के प्रभाव में राजनीति वैज्ञानिक समझ और राजनीतिक वास्तविकता के विश्लेषण पर अधिक ध्यान केंद्रित करती है जिससे नैतिक और मूल्य-आधारित पहलुओं से बचा जाता है। लेकिन राजनीति की यह अनुभवजन्य समझ त्रुटिपूर्ण है, क्योंकि सत्ता, अधिकार, वैधता,

सामाजिक एकीकरण आदि जैसे राजनीति के विषय या विषयवस्तु नैतिक सिद्धांतों पर आधारित होने के बावजूद अत्यधिक व्यक्तिपरक होते हैं। ज्यादातर ऐसे काम जो राजनीति और नैतिकता के बीच के आपसी रिश्ते को समझने की कोशिश करते हैं, वे आम तौर पर दो अलग-अलग और एक-दूसरे के विपरीत समझ में बँट जाते हैं। एक तरीका है राजनीति को सिर्फ नैतिकता तक सीमित कर देना; दूसरा तरीका है यह मानना कि नैतिकता और राजनीति एक-दूसरे से पूरी तरह आजाद हैं। लेकिन ये दोनों ही नज़रिए दूर की नहीं सोचते, क्योंकि ये दोनों के बीच के आपसी संबंध को समझने में नाकाम रहते हैं। इस संदर्भ में राजनीतिक नैतिकता इस दुविधा को दूर करने में एक अहम भूमिका निभा सकती है।

राजनीतिक नैतिकता, राजनीतिक प्रक्रिया के साथ-साथ राजनीतिक संस्थाओं को भी नैतिक नज़रिए से देखती है और उनके बारे में नैतिक फैसले लेती है। राजनीतिक नैतिकता का सवाल, राजनीति और नैतिकता के बीच के विरोधी स्वभाव की वजह से ही पैदा होता है। नैतिक मूल्यों की एक व्यवस्था के तौर पर, नैतिकता का स्वभाव सार्वभौमिक होता है यह नैतिक सिद्धांतों की सार्वभौमिक प्रासंगिकता पर जोर देती है, चाहे सामाजिक-राजनीतिक माहौल कैसा भी क्यों न हो। दूसरी तरफ़, एक साझा लक्ष्य तक पहुँचने की प्रक्रिया के तौर पर राजनीति अपने सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक संदर्भ को नज़रअंदाज़ नहीं कर सकती क्योंकि यह संदर्भ राजनीतिक प्रक्रिया पर गहरा असर डालता है। हालाँकि, नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच की इस असंगति को सबसे अच्छे तरीके से कैसे सुलझाया जाए, इस पर कोई आम सहमति नहीं है। इस मामले में, बॉबियो और बर्टेलसेन की राजनीतिक नैतिकता की परिभाषा सबसे ज्यादा सटीक बैठती है। राजनीतिक नैतिकता उन लोगों की नैतिकता है जो राजनीतिक गतिविधियों में शामिल होते हैं लेकिन उन लोगों की नज़र में जो पेशेवर नैतिकता के आधार पर इस विषय का अध्ययन करते हैं, राजनीतिक गतिविधि का मतलब सिर्फ सत्ता(power) हासिल करना नहीं है बल्कि ऐसी सत्ता हासिल करना है जिससे कोई साझा लक्ष्य या सामूहिक या आम भलाई पूरी हो सके। इसका मतलब सिर्फ 'सरकार' चलाना नहीं है बल्कि अच्छी सरकार चलाना है। अच्छी सरकार और बुरी सरकार के बीच फ़र्क करने के लिए पारंपरिक तौर पर जिस एक पैमाने का बार-बार इस्तेमाल किया जाता रहा है वह ठीक यही जाँच है कि क्या वह विशिष्ट लक्ष्य हासिल हुआ या नहीं, अच्छी सरकार साझा भलाई की तलाश करती है जबकि बुरी सरकार सिर्फ अपनी निजी भलाई की तलाश करती है।

निष्कर्ष

नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच के इस टकराव भरे रिश्ते को सुलझाने का सबसे अच्छा तरीका क्या है। आसान शब्दों में कहें तो ऐसा कोई एक तरीका नहीं है जिससे इस दुविधा को पूरी तरह से दूर किया जा सके। ऐतिहासिक और वैचारिक दोनों ही नज़रियों से देखें तो नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच का रिश्ता काफ़ी पेचीदा है। अलग-अलग दौर में अलग-अलग विद्वानों ने इसकी व्याख्या भी बहुत अलग-अलग तरीकों से की है। लेकिन यह सोच कि राजनीति का संबंध सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र से है और यह वास्तविक दुनिया को समझते हुए समाज में सत्ता के आयामों को समझने की कोशिश करती है जबकि नैतिकता (जो नैतिक दर्शन का एक क्षेत्र है) का संबंध निजी क्षेत्र से है यह सोच असल में पूरी तरह से भ्रामक और गलत है। यह सच है कि नैतिकता कुछ अमूर्त समझ और नैतिक सिद्धांतों से निर्देशित होती है लेकिन यह समझना भी उतना ही ज़रूरी है कि

नैतिकता समाज के नैतिक ताने-बाने को बनाए रखती है। अगर राजनीति नैतिकता से अलग हो जाए तो इसके परिणाम बेहद विनाशकारी होंगे। आज की राजनीति में कई संकट चल रहे हैं और फिर भी राजनीतिक विश्लेषकों के पास कोई पक्के जवाब नहीं हैं।

राजनीति और नैतिकता के बीच तालमेल की कमी और उन्हें आपस में जोड़ने में असमर्थता ही इसके पीछे का एक मुख्य कारण है तो इस मामले में क्या किया जाना चाहिए? हम राजनीति और नैतिकता के बीच सबसे अच्छा तालमेल कैसे बिठा सकते हैं? इस संबंध में बॉबियो और बर्टेल्सन का तर्क काफी विचारोत्तेजक है- सिर्फ सत्ता के लिए सत्ता चाहना एक साधन को जिसे उसके अंतिम लक्ष्य के आधार पर परखा जाना चाहिए अपने आप में एक लक्ष्य में बदल देना है। यहाँ तक कि जो लोग राजनीतिक कार्रवाई को एक साधन के तौर पर देखते हैं उनके लिए भी यह सिर्फ किसी भी ऐसे लक्ष्य को पाने का साधन नहीं है जिसे हासिल करना किसी राजनेता को अच्छा लगे। लेकिन एक बार जब अच्छे और बुरे लक्ष्य के बीच फर्क तय हो जाता है एक ऐसा फर्क जिसे नैतिकता और राजनीति के संबंधों पर बनी किसी भी थ्योरी ने कभी नज़रअंदाज़ नहीं किया है तो अच्छी और बुरी राजनीतिक कार्रवाई के बीच फर्क करना अनिवार्य हो जाता है। दूसरे शब्दों में उसे नैतिक कसौटी पर कसना ज़रूरी हो जाता है। नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच आपसी संबंधों को मज़बूत करने का एक और तरीका है राजनीतिक थ्योरी की भूमिका को सही संदर्भ में समझना और उसकी नई व्याख्या करना। राजनीतिक थ्योरी, राजनीतिक सत्ता और सरकारी संस्थाओं का मूल्यांकन करने का एक व्यवस्थित और तर्कसंगत प्रयास करती है और साथ ही नैतिक मुद्दों के प्रति भी संवेदनशील बनी रहती है। राजनीतिक थ्योरी के व्यापक दायरे के भीतर ही जो आदर्शवादी और अनुभवजन्य, दोनों तरह के मुद्दों को समेटे हुए हैं नैतिक सवाल को सही ढंग से सुलझाया जा सकता है। ऐसा इसलिए है क्योंकि राजनीतिक थ्योरी न केवल यह बताती है कि भविष्य में किस तरह की कार्रवाई की जानी चाहिए बल्कि यह समाज की मौजूदा समस्याओं का नैतिक दृष्टिकोण से भी गहन विश्लेषण करती है जैसे कि कोई राजनीतिक कार्रवाई समाज के लिए अच्छी है या बुरी और क्या राजनीतिक संस्थाएँ व सरकारें न्यायसंगत हैं या नहीं। तो संक्षेप में कहें तो राजनीतिक थ्योरी, नैतिकता और राजनीति के बीच मौजूद टकराव भरे संबंधों को दूर करने में एक अहम कड़ी का काम करती है।

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नवसाहसाङ्कचरित में वर्णित नारी-सौन्दर्य : एक अवलोकन

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सारांश:

प्रस्तुत शोध-पत्र में महाकवि पद्मगुप्त 'परिमल' द्वारा रचित प्रसिद्ध संस्कृत महाकाव्य नवसाहसाङ्कचरित में वर्णित नारी-सौन्दर्य का विस्तृत एवं विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन किया गया है। परमारवंशी शासक सिन्धुराज के ऐतिहासिक जीवन-वृत्त पर आधारित यह महाकाव्य वीर रस के साथ-साथ श्रृंगार रस का एक उत्कृष्ट एवं संतुलित उदाहरण है। शोध पत्र में यह स्पष्ट किया गया है कि 'अभिनव- कालिदास' की उपाधि से विभूषित पद्मगुप्त ने नारी सौन्दर्य को मात्र बाह्य शारीरिक आकर्षण तक सीमित नहीं रखा है, अपितु उसे एक बहुआयामी दृष्टिकोण से उकेरा है।

प्रस्तुत शोध-पत्र में इस अध्ययन को मुख्यतः तीन प्रमुख खण्डों में विभाजित कर विश्लेषित किया है-शारीरिक सौन्दर्य, आन्तरिक सौन्दर्य तथा वस्त्राभरण। महाकाव्य की मुख्य नायिका शशिप्रभा, दासी पाटला तथा उज्जयिनी की सामान्य नागरिक व वनवासी रमणियों के सन्दर्भ में कवि की सूक्ष्म पर्यवेक्षण दृष्टि को इस शोध-पत्र में उद्घाटित किया गया है। जहाँ एक ओर उत्कृष्ट उपमाओं के माध्यम से नारियों के नयन, केश, शारीरिक लावण्य व हाव-भाव का सजीव चित्रण किया गया है, वहीं दूसरी ओर उनके आन्तरिक भावों यथा लज्जा, प्रणय-उत्कण्ठा, विरह-वेदना, ईर्ष्या और कामोन्मेष का अत्यंत मार्मिक व कलात्मक अंकन भी हुआ है। इसके अतिरिक्त, स्त्रियों के विविध आभूषणों और वेशभूषा का विवरण भी प्रस्तुत किया गया है। निष्कर्षतः, यह आलेख प्रमाणित करता है कि 'नवसाहसाङ्कचरित' में नारी का रूप-सौन्दर्य, भाव-सौन्दर्य और अलंकरण परस्पर समन्वित होकर इसे संस्कृत काव्य परम्परा की एक विशिष्ट कृति बनाते हैं।

बीज शब्द- नवसाहसाङ्कचरित, नारी-सौन्दर्य, महाकवि पद्मगुप्त, चरित-काव्य

महाकवि पद्मगुप्त 'परिमल' प्रणीत नवसाहसाङ्कचरित संस्कृत साहित्य का एक महत्वपूर्ण महाकाव्य है। अट्टारह सर्गों में विभक्त यह महाकाव्य परमार वंश के शासक सिन्धुराज (साहसांक) के ऐतिहासिक और वीरतापूर्ण जीवन का काव्यमय आख्यान प्रस्तुत करता है। इसमें उत्कृष्ट काव्य-कला, वैदर्भी रीति का सरस परिपाक, उपमा, उत्प्रेक्षा, रूपक आदि अलंकारों का सुरुचिपूर्ण प्रयोग तथा प्रसाद और लालित्य गुणों के समायोजन के साथ ही

विषय-वस्तु का मनोहर ढंग से यथार्थ विवेचन, अनुभूति एवं अभिव्यक्ति के साथ प्रस्तुत किया गया है। भाव, भाषा, गुण, रस, शैली व अलंकार सब का औचित्य-पूर्ण समावेश है।

ऐतिहासिक महाकाव्यों में यह महाकाव्य वीर रस प्रधान न होकर वीर, शृंगार तथा अद्भुत रस का सुंदर समायोजन है जिसमें कवि द्वारा ऐतिहासिक घटनाओं को काव्य सौंदर्य के साथ पिरोया गया है जिससे यह न इतिहास मात्र है और न ही कल्पना मात्र बल्कि इतिहास और काव्य का सुसंयोजित रूप है। इस महाकाव्य में जहाँ सिन्धुराज के पराक्रम, राज्य-विस्तार, यश और वीर कृत्यों का महाकाव्यात्मक वर्णन वीर रस की प्रधानता का दिग्दर्शन होता है, वहीं सिन्धुराज का नागकन्या से परिचय, वार्तालाप, प्रणय तथा विरह के चित्रण वीर रस का उद्रेक, अपेक्षाकृत गौण कर शृंगार रस को प्रधान कर देता है।¹ सिन्धुराज और शशिप्रभा के पूर्वराग से लेकर उनके वास्तविक समागम तक शृंगार रस का ही प्रणयन किया गया है। काम के रूप में पुरुषार्थ की प्राप्ति ही काव्य का उद्देश्य है।

पद्मगुप्त ने अपने काव्य में कालिदास के मार्ग का ही अनुसरण किया है जिससे इन्हें 'अभिनव-कालिदास' की संज्ञा भी दी गयी। कवि ने उपमा के चमत्कार और कल्पना की निर्बन्ध गति की विशिष्टताओं से युक्त काव्य रचना की है तथा प्रकृति का रम्य-चित्रण कालिदास की रचनाओं के समान किया है।² काव्य की दृष्टि से यह महाकाव्य वैदर्भी रीति का उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण है जिसमें वैदर्भी अपने पूर्ण शृंगार के साथ प्रदर्शित है। परमारों के इतिहास के लिए तो यह चरित काव्य उपयोगी है ही, साथ ही साथ काव्य की दृष्टि से भी एक उत्कृष्ट कृति है।³

कवि ने अपनी रचना में विविध प्रकार की कल्पनाएँ की हैं जिससे इनके काव्य में वर्णित नारियों के सौन्दर्य में अभिवृद्धि परिलक्षित होती है। इन कल्पनाओं के माध्यम से काव्य में वर्णित नारी सभी प्रकार से समाकर्षक रूप में प्रदर्शित होती हैं। नारी सौन्दर्य का तो अर्थ ही होता है कि नारियों की वह आकर्षकता और सौम्यता, जो शारीरिक, मानसिक और बौद्धिक तथा भावनात्मक गुणों से युक्त हो जो कि केवल बाह्य रूप रंग तक सीमित न होकर, आन्तरिक गुणों और व्यक्तित्व की आभा से संयुक्त हो और पद्मगुप्त ने अपनी कृति नवसाहसाङ्कचरित में इन सभी गुणों से युक्त नारी सौन्दर्य का काव्यात्मक वर्णन किया है।

महाकाव्य में मुख्यतः दो नारी पात्रों नायिका शशिप्रभा और दासी पाटला का उल्लेख विशेष रूप से प्राप्त होता है। शशिप्रभा जो कि इस काव्य की नायिका है, हृदय-माधुर्य, लज्जा, अलौकिक शोभा तथा प्रगाढ़ अनुराग जैसे गुणों से संपन्न एक अद्वितीय रूपवती के रूप में चित्रित की गई है। कवि पद्मगुप्त ने उसकी सुन्दरता की उपमा अन्य दिव्य स्त्रियों से करते हुए लिखा है कि नागलोक की इस अनुपम सुन्दरी की तुलना रति, चित्रलेखा, शची, घृताची और तिलोत्तमा जैसी देवांगनाएँ भी नहीं कर सकतीं।⁴ कवि ने पाटला के सौन्दर्य का भी सरस एवं विस्तृत वर्णन किया है, साथ ही अनङ्गवती,

कलावती, माल्यवती आदि अन्य स्त्रियों के रूप-लावण्य का भी उल्लेख किया है। महाकाव्य में नारी-सौन्दर्य के व्यापक चित्रण के संदर्भ में कवि उज्जैन की रमणियों की भी चर्चा करता है। वह लिखता है कि उज्जयिनी का प्रत्येक गृह सुन्दर, आकर्षक एवं रूपवती स्त्रियों से परिपूर्ण था। इन स्त्रियों में विशिष्ट हाव-भाव और मनोहर चेष्टाएँ विद्यमान थीं, जिन्हें कवि ने कामदेव के अस्त्र के समान प्रभावकारी माना है।⁵ नारियों के जीवन-चित्रण में कवि यह भी दर्शाता है कि ये स्त्रियाँ विविध चिन्ताओं से मुक्त होकर विलास, सुख और भोग का उपभोग करती थीं तथा पुरुषों के साथ रति-क्रीड़ा में संलग्न रहती थीं।⁶ इतना ही नहीं, इसमें रात्रिकालीन रति-क्रिया के दौरान उनके शरीरों से रत्नों के समूह ढीले होकर भूमि पर गिर जाया करते थे, जिन्हें प्रातःकाल आँगन बुहारने वाली दासियाँ झाड़ुओं द्वारा इकट्ठा करती थीं, जैसा अत्यंत रोचक विवरण भी प्राप्त होता है।⁷ कवि ने इन नारियों के शारीरिक-आन्तरिक सौन्दर्य एवं उनके वस्त्राभरण का वर्णन अतिसूक्ष्मता एवं अनेक उपमाओं से युक्त किया है जो अग्रलिखित है—

शारीरिक सौन्दर्य—

पद्मगुप्त ने नवसाहसाङ्कचरित में नारी-शरीर के सौन्दर्य का अत्यन्त सूक्ष्म, कोमल एवं अलंकार-संपन्न वर्णन प्रस्तुत किया है। कवि के अनुसार उज्जैन की स्त्रियाँ घुँघराले, सुविन्यस्त केशों से युक्त थीं, जिनके बीच में सजे कनेर की कोमल पंखुड़ियाँ अपूर्ण चन्द्रमा को भी पूर्ण करने में सक्षम प्रतीत होती थीं। उनके कपोल चन्द्रबिम्ब के समान उज्ज्वल थे और उनमें व्यक्ति अपना प्रतिबिम्ब स्पष्ट देख सकता था; अतः उन्हें दर्पण की आवश्यकता नहीं पड़ती थी। कवि स्त्रियों की रतिक्रीड़ा-जनित थकान और पसीने की झिलमिलाहट का भी उल्लेख करता है। वह वर्णित करता है कि कालागरू-लेप से युक्त स्त्रियाँ जब घर की बावड़ियों में अपने कपोल धोती थीं, तो वहाँ का निर्मल जल भी मलिन हो उठता था। स्त्रियों के नेत्र कमल-दल के समान विशाल थे, जो मानो कर्णमार्ग का भी उल्लंघन करने को उद्यत हों।⁸

प्रस्तुत महाकाव्य में उज्जैन की रमणियों की उपमा मृग-नेत्रों से की गई है, अतः वे "मृगनयनी" कही गई।⁹ कवि वन में राजा और पाटला के मिलन को वर्णित करते हुए कहता है कि राजा सिन्धुराज जब वन में पाटला को देखते हैं, तो उसका रूप उन्हें बादलों की गोद में स्थित चन्द्रकला के समान प्रतीत होता है। उसके कमल-नयन, कपोलों पर पसीने की बूँदें, ढीली पड़ी वेणी और कम्पित कुच उसे ऐसी रूपवती प्रदर्शित करते हैं जैसे रति-क्रीड़ा से थकी नववधू, वनदेवी या देवलोक से पृथ्वी पर उतरी अप्सरा हो। मंत्री रमांगद पाटला के कपोलों पर पसीने की बूँदों को अमृत-कणों की उपमा देते हैं।¹⁰ कवि पाटला को चन्द्र-कान्ति के समान कोमल, मधुर मुस्कान से युक्त तथा चन्द्रधवल चंवर को गोंद में धारण किए हुए चित्रित करता है। वह ऐसी प्रतीत होती है मानो चतुरता स्वयं मूर्तिमान रूप में विराजित हो।¹¹

शशिप्रभा के सौन्दर्य को वर्णित करते हुए उनकी सखी अनङ्गवती कहती है कि यह हरसिंगार के पुष्प के समान कोमल शरीर वाली है जो

विशाल नयनों से युक्त है तथा अनङ्गती अमृततुल्य आह्लादक चन्द्रमा की श्वेत कान्ति के समान दांतों वाली थी। ये सभी स्त्रियाँ शशिप्रभा के विषय में कहती हैं कि इसके स्तन पुष्प-कली के समान हैं और विरह-वेदना के कारण उसके ओंठ मुरझाये हुए हैं, बायां नेत्र तथा बायां कुच समझाने पर फड़कने लगता है, जो शुभता का सूचक है। तत्पश्चात् शशिप्रभा की सिन्धुराज से भेंट होती है तथा शशिप्रभा को देखकर सिन्धुराज को लगता है कि वह अमृत का पान कर रहा हो। शशिप्रभा के बाल खुले थे तथा इसके शरीर में हार पताके के श्याम रंग के समान तथा सोने की केतुयष्टि चिन्हध्वज की तरह प्रतीत हो रही थी।¹²

रमांगद शशिप्रभा की सुन्दरता से आकृष्ट होकर उसके विषय में सिन्धुराज से कहता है कि जिसने शशिप्रभा का सौन्दर्य नहीं देखा, वही रति के रूप को देखने की इच्छा करेगा। वह उसे 'उपमाओं की भी उपमा' कहकर संबोधित करता है। शशिप्रभा के अंगों पर हल्की लालिमा उसे और दैदीप्यमान बनाती है। उसकी आँखों की काली पुतलियाँ हिम-शुभ्रता से युक्त हैं, जिससे वे प्रवाल, नीलम और मोती की मिश्रित आभा जैसी प्रतीत होती हैं। उसके उन्नत कुच ऐसे शोभायमान हैं जैसे तारामालाओं से आभूषित चन्द्रमा। कवि आगे कहता है कि शशिप्रभा का सौन्दर्य ऐसा है कि जब तक वह नागलोक में थी, वहाँ का लोक-व्यवहार उसकी चन्द्रिका से आलोकित रहता था। जब वह मृत्युलोक में आई तो नागलोक अंधकारमय हो गया।¹³ शशिप्रभा द्वारा अत्यन्त कम्पित कुचों पर कर-कमलों का स्थापन कवि को ऐसा प्रतीत होता है मानो नख-किरणों की गोल आभा सुधा-धवल दुकूल की भाँति प्रस्फुटित हो रही हो।¹⁴

सिन्धुराज और रमांगद के वन भ्रमण के समय वन में उपस्थित कुछ नारियों का चित्रण कवि ने किया है, जैसे- हिरण के समान नेत्रों वाली हैं तथा परिश्रमजनित पसीने की बूँदें उनके कपोलों पर कामदेव-पूजा में चढ़ाए गए अर्घ-चढ़ावे जैसे चमकती हैं।¹⁵ जब ये स्त्रियाँ स्नान करने जाती हैं तो इनके स्तनों पर कुंकुम लगे होते हैं, स्नान करते समय कुंकुम धुलकर जल को रक्त-वर्ण कर देता है तथा एक रमणी जब अपने कुचों को ढकने हेतु भुजाओं को ऊपर उठाती है तो उसकी भुजाएँ मृदंग जैसी ध्वनि उत्पन्न करती हैं। जलक्रीड़ा में उनकी आँखों का काजल धुल जाता है और चंचल लहरें उनके नितम्बों पर फेन उत्पन्न कर उनकी आभा बढ़ाती हैं और जब ये स्त्रियाँ घनी फैली हुई पुष्पों की सुगन्ध को धारण करते हुए बिजली की कान्ति के समान पीले अंगों से युक्त अपने प्रियतम के साथ आलिंगन करती हैं तब कमल मालाओं को धारण किये हुए अत्यन्त सुन्दर व आकर्षक प्रतीत होती हैं।¹⁶

आन्तरिक सौन्दर्य-

पद्मगुप्त ने नवसाहसार्द्धकचरित में केवल नारी के शारीरिक रूप का ही नहीं, बल्कि उसके अन्तर्मन के सूक्ष्म भावों और मनोवैज्ञानिक अवस्थाओं का भी अत्यन्त कलात्मक एवं बिम्बात्मक वर्णन किया है। उज्जैन की स्त्रियाँ जब रात्रि के अन्धकार में अपने प्रियतमों से मिलने के लिए निकलती हैं, तो उस

अन्धकार से उपजी दहशत के कारण उनके कञ्चुक (वक्षावरण) कम्पित होने लगते हैं।¹⁷ यह कम्पन उनकी अन्तःस्थिति, आशंका और उत्कण्ठा को अत्यन्त प्रभावपूर्ण ढंग से व्यक्त करता है। युद्ध में सिन्धुराज द्वारा शत्रुओं के पराजित किए जाने पर शत्रु-पत्नियों के मनोभावों का भी कवि ने अत्यन्त मार्मिक चित्रण किया है। दुःख से व्याकुल होकर उनके अश्रुसिक्त रक्तवर्ण नेत्रों की आभा से उनके कुचमण्डल भी लाल प्रतीत होते हैं। यह दृश्य उनके शोक, भय और असहायता का प्रतीक बन जाता है।¹⁸

जब हंस पर लगा सिन्धुराज का बाण शशिप्रभा के पास पहुँचता है और वह उस पर राजा का नाम देखती है, तो उसके हृदय में ऐसी अनुभूति होती है जैसे विकसित कुमुदिनी में अचानक भ्रमर प्रवेश कर गया हो।¹⁹ यहाँ कवि ने शशिप्रभा की कामासक्ति, उत्सुकता तथा अनायास जागृत अनुराग का अत्यन्त सूक्ष्म चित्रण किया है। शशिप्रभा साहसाङ्क पर अतिशय आसक्त होती है और वह चित्र लिखित राजा की रूपराशिका का आस्वादन कर आनन्द की अनुभूति करती है और आनन्द के कारण रोमांचित होती है जिससे उसके स्तनों की शोभा बढ़ाने वाली पत्र-रचना अस्त-व्यस्त हो जाती है। साहसाङ्क के प्रति इस प्रकार से आसक्त होने से शशिप्रभा लज्जा का अनुभव करती है और लज्जा से पूर्ण अकारण मुस्कुराते हुए उसने राजा की अर्चना की जो ऐसी प्रतीत हो रही थी जैसे शब्द अर्धविकसित कमल की कलियाँ उस पर अर्पित कर दिया हो और जब वह सिन्धुराज के चित्र पर एक पूरी दृष्टि डालती है तब भी उसे लज्जा की अनुभूति होती है और अपने इन आन्तरिक मनोवेगों को छिपाने का प्रयास करती है जिसमें असफल होने के कारण उसकी सखियाँ भी उसके मनोभाव से अवगत हो गयीं और उनकी सखी अङ्गवती शशिप्रभा से कहती है कि लज्जा से युक्त तुम्हारी मुस्कान ऐसी प्रतीत हो रही है जैसे बाल्यकाल को जीतकर मुस्कुराहट के रूप में यौवन अपने यश को विस्तारित कर रहा हो। शशिप्रभा की उदासी और उसका काँपना ऐसा प्रतीत हो रहा है जैसे कामदेव उसके हृदय में जागृत हो गये हों।²⁰ सखी कलावती भी शशिप्रभा के अंतः सौन्दर्य को वर्णित करते हुए कहती हैं कि जिस प्रकार संसार को प्रसन्न करने वाला चन्द्रमा कमलिनी को पीड़ित करता है उसी भाँति वसन्त का समय जिसमें कामपीड़ा में वृद्धि होती है शशिप्रभा को प्रभावित करता है, कवि ने नायिका के कामपीड़ा को कई उपमाओं के साथ व्यक्त किया है वह वर्णित करते हैं कि जिस प्रकार पूर्णचन्द्र को देखकर समुद्र में ज्वार-भाटा आता है उसी प्रकार से अपने प्रिय के हाथों से हार को प्राप्त करने से शशिप्रभा की काम-भावना में भी वृद्धि होती है।²¹

शशिप्रभा के अन्तःमन में चल रहे द्वन्द का भी कवि ने अद्भुत विवरण उल्लिखित किया है तथा इसे उसके हाव-भाव द्वारा प्रदर्शित करने का प्रयास किया है यथा— शशिप्रभा द्वारा अपने मुख को राजा की ओर मोड़ लेना और बड़ी-बड़ी आंखों में अपनी दृष्टि को छिपा लेना यह इंगित करता है कि वह राजा को देखना चाहती थी परन्तु लज्जा के कारण वह उसे नहीं देख पा रही थी परन्तु उसके मन में राजा को देखने की प्रबल उत्कण्ठा होती है अर्थात् वह

अपनी अन्तः स्थिति में दोनों भावों से ग्रसित है, जब वह राजा को देखती है तो उसकी आंखें स्तब्ध हो जाती हैं, शरीर काँपने लगता है और शरीर में रोमान्च भर जाता है और उसके हृदय में कामदेव अंकुरित होने लगते हैं।²² शशिप्रभा के चित्त की एकाग्रता के विषय में वर्णित है कि जब स्वर्ण-कान्ति के समान बिजली चमकती है तो नायिका अपनी आँखों को बन्द करके राजा को न देखकर अपने प्रिय को हृदय में देखने हेतु अपनी चित्त की एकाग्रता के लिए अपने नेत्रों को बन्द कर लेती है।²³ नायिका के ईर्ष्या-भाव का भी पद्मगुप्त ने उत्कृष्ट वर्णन किया है। जब शशिप्रभा अपने प्रिय को किसी अन्य नारी का चुम्बन करते देखती है तो उसका शरीर काला पड़ जाता है, उसके अंगों की चेष्टाएँ उसके भीतर उठते मनोवेगों को पूर्णतः व्यक्त करती हैं।²⁴

प्रस्तुत काव्य में शशिप्रभा की विरह-वेदना का भी आकर्षक विवरण प्रस्तुत किया गया है जब पाटला सिन्धुराज से मिलती है तो शशिप्रभा की मनोदशा के विषय में कहती है कि जब से वह विन्ध्याचल के वन में सिन्धुराज से अलग हुई है तब से वह कामवेदना से पीड़ित घायल हिरणी के समान है तथा नायिका के सौन्दर्य कथा- विरह के वर्णन में पद्मगुप्त की कल्पना में नवोन्मेष प्रकट किया है जिसको कवि शशिप्रभा के कामज्वर का वर्णन करते हुए उल्लिखित करता है कि- कहाँ तो शिरीष से भी अधिक सुकुमार अंगों वाली यह विशालाक्षी और कहाँ दहकते भूसे की आग जैसा कर्कश यह कामज्वर? इस आन्तरिक पीड़ा में उसे न तो कोमल पत्तों की शैय्या पर सुख प्राप्त हो रहा है और न ही हिम- शीतल भवन में ही उसे शान्ति की अनुभूति हो रही है।²⁵ यह नायिका की मनोवैज्ञानिक पीड़ा और विरह-व्याकुलता की चरम अवस्था का द्योतक है।

वस्त्राभरण-

पद्मगुप्त ने नवसाहसार्कचरित में नारी-पात्रों को केवल रूप-सौन्दर्य से ही नहीं, बल्कि उनके वस्त्रों, आभूषणों, वेणी-विन्यास तथा सुगन्धित अलंकारों के माध्यम से अत्यंत मनोहर ढंग से चित्रित किया है। इन अलंकारों के माध्यम से नारी-सौन्दर्य का विस्तार, उसकी आभा और उसकी भाव-चेष्टाओं का सौष्ठव स्पष्ट दृष्टिगोचर होता है। कवि के अनुसार परमार शासक सिन्धुराज के उज्जैन राज्य की स्त्रियाँ मोतियों की कोमल धागों में पिरोई गई मालाओं से अलंकृत थीं। रात्रि में रति-क्रीड़ा के समय ये मालाएँ टूट जाया करती थीं, और इनके मोती इधर-उधर बिखर जाते थे।²⁶ इसी प्रकार स्त्रियों की मणि-मेखलाएँ भी विशेष रूप से वर्णित हैं, जिनकी मधुर झंकार को कवि कामदेव के प्रथम उत्सव की घोषणा जैसा प्रभावकारी मानता है। इन मणि-मेखलाओं की ध्वनि श्रोता के मन में कामभावना के उद्रेक का कारण बनती है। शिप्रा तट पर स्त्रियों के अपने प्रेमियों से मिलन के प्रसंग में टूटकर बिखर जाने वाली मोतियों की मालाएँ, उनके गुप्त प्रणय-संबंधों के साक्ष्य के रूप में चित्रित हैं।

कवि उज्जैन की भीलनियों का भी वर्णन करता है। वे अपने सिर के जूड़ों में सुगन्धित मालाएँ बाँधा करती थीं, जिनकी महक से स्वयं राजा

सिन्धुराज की थकान दूर हो जाती थी।²⁷ यह वर्णन दर्शाता है कि पद्मगुप्त ने केवल राजपरिवार की स्त्रियों की ही नहीं, बल्कि जनजातीय समाज की स्त्रियों के सौन्दर्य और वस्त्राभरण को भी अपनी कृति में स्थान दिया है। प्रस्तुत ग्रन्थ में नायिका शशिप्रभा के हार का ऐसा विस्तृत और काव्यात्मक वर्णन किया गया है जो साहित्यिक अलंकार-शक्ति का श्रेष्ठ उदाहरण है। शशिप्रभा का हार हंस के मुख में धारण है, जिसकी उपमा कवि ने कामदेवरूपी गजराज की सूँड से फेंके गए जलबिन्दुओं से की है। हंस द्वारा तालाब में फेंका गया हार ऐसा प्रतीत होता है जैसे वह कमलवन में भक्षण किए हुए मृणालों के जल को बाहर फेंक रहा हो। हार की कान्ति आकाश में फैली सूर्य-किरणों की भाँति एक गोल प्रकाश-आभा बना रही है। कस्तूरी-लिप्त मणियों के संयोजन से हार की आभा नीलवर्ण सी प्रतीत होती है।

मोतियों के विषय में कवि की कल्पना है कि वे गंगा-यमुना का जल पीने वाले मेघों में संचित जलकणों से बने होंगे। हार का सौन्दर्य इतना अनुपम है कि उससे प्रेरित कल्पना में यह महाराज के वक्षस्थल के लिए सजाया गया स्वयंवर-हार प्रतीत होता है। सिन्धुराज हार को देखकर सोचते हैं कि इसके मोती अवश्य ही चन्द्रमा की ज्योत्सना से सींची हुई समुद्री सीपों से उत्पन्न हुए होंगे; साधारण मेघ-जल से उत्पन्न मोतियों में ऐसी आभा सम्भव नहीं। हार पर शशिप्रभा नाम का अंकन होने की सूचना भी महत्त्वपूर्ण है, जो समकालीन आभूषण-शिल्प में निजी पहचान का परिचायक है।²⁸ रमांगद के वर्णन में कवि ने शशिप्रभा के आभूषण का अत्यंत प्रभावी वर्णन किया है। वे लिखते हैं कि उसके कानों में स्वर्ण कुण्डल सुशोभित हैं जिनकी कान्ति उसके कपोलों को दीप्त करती है।²⁹ काजल-युक्त नेत्रों से उसकी पलकों का सौन्दर्य कृष्ण वर्ण जैसा दिखता है। उसके नीलवर्ण अधोवसन और श्वेत उत्तरीय का संयोजन शरत्कालीन चन्द्रमा जैसा प्रभाव देता है।³⁰ पैरों में धारण किए हुए पाजेब की मधुर ध्वनि क्रीड़ागृह की बावड़ियों में रहने वाले हंसों को भी आकर्षित करती है।³¹ हाथों में रत्नजड़ित कंगन उसकी भुजाओं को दैदीप्यमान करते हैं।³²

दासी पाटला के सौन्दर्य का भी कवि ने बड़ा कोमल और भावपूर्ण वर्णन किया है। जब राजा सिन्धुराज पाटला को विध्यांचल के वन में अपने समीप आते हुए देखते हैं तो अपने मंत्री रमांगद से उसके आभूषणों की प्रशंसा करते हुए कहते हैं कि यह सुन्दरी अर्थात् पाटला अपनी बिखरी हुई वेणी में फूलों को गूँथ रही है और उसकी बिखरी हुई वेणी में गूँथे हुए श्वेत पुष्प ऐसे प्रतीत होते हैं जैसे काली रात्रि में फैले हुए तारागण, इस प्रकार काली वेणी और सफेद पुष्प की उपमा कवि ने रात्रि और ताराओं द्वारा प्रस्तुत करते हुए उसके वेणी की सौन्दर्यता को प्रकट करने का प्रयास किया है। उसके हाथों में धारण किये गये चंवर के आधार पर कवि ने दासी पाटली को देहधारिणी राज लक्ष्मी के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया है।³³ कवि ने पाटला के कानों में चन्दन-पत्र का भी वर्णन किया है, जो उसके सौन्दर्य को और सुगन्धित बनाते थे।³⁴

कवि ने प्रेक्षक स्त्रियों, वन की स्त्रियों और विद्याधारियों के आभूषणों का भी अत्यंत सूक्ष्म वर्णन किया है, जो कि रत्न जड़ित मेखलाओं से युक्त है

और इन रमणियों के रत्नजड़ित भाषाओं के नितम्ब कामदेव रूपी राजा के विलास की चौकियों के समान प्रदर्शित हो रहे हैं। विद्याधर स्त्रियाँ ऐसे मणिकुण्डल पहनती हैं जो गति करते समय कालागरु की पत्ररचना को गालों से मिटा देते हैं। वन की स्त्रियाँ बालों में नषमल्लिका की श्वेत, सुगन्धित मालाएँधारण करती हैं।³⁵ जलक्रीडा में संलग्न स्त्रियों के वस्त्रों एवं आभूषणों का भी वर्णन विवेच्य ग्रन्थ में मिलता है, यथा—स्नान करते समय कुंकुम धुल जाने से उनके वक्षों पर पड़े नख—चिन्ह दृष्टिगोचर होने लगते हैं जिन्हें गले की लड़ियों वाले चमकदार हार छिपा देते हैं। गंगा—स्नान के पश्चात स्त्रियाँ मुख पर कस्तूरी—पत्ररचना अंकित करती हैं जो स्वर्णकमल—तुल्य चमकती हैं। स्वर्ण—कर्णफूल, लाल आलता, विशिष्ट हार, कस्तूरी—तिलक तथा मणि—दर्पणों में मुखावलोकन, इन सभी का वर्णन स्त्री—सौन्दर्य की चरम अभिव्यक्ति प्रस्तुत करता है।³⁶

निष्कर्षतः यह कहा जा सकता है कि नवसाहसाङ्कचरित में पद्मगुप्त ने नारी—सौन्दर्य को बहुआयामी रूप में प्रस्तुत किया है जिसमें शारीरिक लावण्य, अन्तर्मन के सूक्ष्म भावों तथा वस्त्राभरण—इन तीनों का अद्भुत समन्वय मिलता है। शशिप्रभा और पाटला जैसे पात्र कवि की कल्पना, उपमाओं की समृद्धि और भावाभिव्यंजना की शक्ति का उच्च उदाहरण हैं। पद्मगुप्त ने नारी को केवल रूप—लावण्य की प्रतिमा नहीं माना अपितु उसके प्रेम, लज्जा, विरह, ईर्ष्या और कामोन्मेष जैसे मनोवैज्ञानिक पक्षों को भी अत्यन्त सूक्ष्मता से उकेरा है। इस प्रकार महाकाव्य में नारी—सौन्दर्य बाह्य संरचना तक सीमित न रहकर भाव—सौन्दर्य और मन—सौन्दर्य में रूपान्तरित हो जाता है। समग्र रूप से नवसाहसाङ्कचरित नारी—सौन्दर्य के शारीरिक, भावात्मक तथा वस्त्राभूषण जैसे तीनों आयामों का द्वितीय एवं कलात्मक समन्वय है जो इसे संस्कृत महाकाव्य परंपरा में विशिष्ट स्थान प्रदान करता है।

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सहोदरा स्थान (पश्चिमी चम्पारण, बिहार) से प्राप्त चामुण्डा प्रतिमा

डॉ० मनोज कुमार

सहायक प्राध्यापक, प्राचीन भारतीय इतिहास एवं पुरातत्त्व विभाग, पटना विश्वविद्यालय, पटना 800005

प्रस्तावना:

बिहार प्रदेश अपने धार्मिक समन्वय एवं प्राचीन कलात्मक अवशेष से परिपूर्ण रहा है। पश्चिमी चम्पारण जिला बिहार प्रदेश के उत्तर-पूर्व में 26°81' उत्तरी अक्षांश एवं 84°51' पूर्वी देशान्तर के मध्य स्थित है। पश्चिमी चम्पारण जिला वैष्णव, शैव, शाक्त, बौद्ध सम्प्रदाय की धार्मिक स्थली रहा है। प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र पश्चिमी चम्पारण जिले के सहोदरा स्थान क्षेत्र के सर्वेक्षित चामुण्डाप्रतिमा के अध्ययन पर आधारित है।

प्रमुख शब्द : पश्चिमी चम्पारण, सहोदरा स्थान, चामुण्डा, ऋग्वेद, वृहत्संहिता, महाभारत, विष्णुधर्मोत्तरपुराण, रूपमण्डन, मत्स्यपुराण

हिन्दू धर्म में देवी को मुख्यतः दो रूपों में पूजा जाता रहा है। प्रथम मातृदेवी के रूप में, दूसरा शक्ति के रूप में। मातृ-पूजन की परम्परा भारतीय समाज एवं संस्कृति की मूल धरोहर है। माता के रूप में देवी जनसाधारण के मध्य देवताओं की अपेक्षा अधिक निकट रही है। इन्हें महिमाता, जगदम्बा, अम्बा, मातृदेवी आदि नामों से जाना जाता है।

नरकंटियागंज से लगभग बीस किलोमीटर उत्तर दिशा में अवस्थित सहोदरा देवी स्थान पश्चिमी चम्पारण जिले का एक महत्वपूर्ण ऐतिहासिक पुरास्थल है। यह गौनाहा प्रखण्ड में स्थित है। इसका प्राचीन नाम देवाढ है जो सम्भवतः देवगढ़ का बिगड़ा हुआ रूप है। यहाँ पूर्व में कई टीले विद्यमान थे परन्तु स्थानीय लोगों द्वारा कृषि कार्य किये जाने के कारण ये टीले समाप्त हो गये हैं। इस ग्राम में एक प्राचीन मंदिर है। जिसे पाल कालीन बताया जाता है। इस पुरास्थल की खोज 1959 में बी०एन० प्रसाद के द्वारा किया गया है। सहोदरा स्थान से एक अभिलेख भी प्राप्त हुआ है। यह अभिलेख अप्रैल 1995 में सहोदरा स्थान मंदिर के प्रांगण में स्थित प्राचीन कुँ से प्राप्त हुआ था जो 25'10"2 सेंटीमीटर क्षेत्रफल वाले काले बेसाल्ट प्रस्तर की एक टूटी हुई पट्टिका पर उत्कीर्ण है। यह लेख कुटील लिपि एवं संस्कृत भाषा में है। प्राप्त अभिलेख यद्यपि खण्डित है फिर भी मूल अभिलेख का महत्वपूर्ण भाग प्रतीत होता है क्योंकि इससे राजा, कवि, देवता, राजा के द्विपक्षीय संबंध एवं उनकी उपलब्धियों की जानकारी प्राप्त होती है। सम्भवतः इस लेख में वर्णित राजा पालनरेश नारायणपाल का इकलौता पुत्र (सुतस्यस्यैकः) राज्यपाल है जिसने इस क्षेत्र पर 915 ई० से 948 ई० तक शासन किया था।²

पश्चिमी चम्पारण में पालकालीन मंदिरों के कम से कम पाँच स्थलों पर भग्नावशेष प्रकाश में आ चुके हैं जिनमें भैसालोटन, भैरोगंज (बगहा) से 12 किलोमीटर उत्तर दिशा में अवस्थित वैराटी ग्राम, बगहा के पठखौली ग्राम के पास रोहुआनाला के किनारे पाल मंदिर के साक्ष्य, सहोदरा स्थान से तीन किलोमीटर उत्तर दिशा में अवस्थित कुँवरगढ़ का नष्टप्राय पाल मंदिर के भग्नावशेष उल्लेखनीय है। ऐसा लगता है कि नेपाल सीमा से सटे पश्चिमी चम्पारण का पाल राजाओं के शासन काल में सैनिक छावनी के रूप में उपयोग होता था। इस इलाके के निवासी थारु जनजाति के हैं जो लड़ाकू कौम के माने जाते हैं। सहोदरा स्थान अभिलेख के महत्व का एक दूसरा पक्ष भी है। इसमें पाल एवं राष्ट्रकूट राजाओं का उल्लेख एक साथ हुआ है। नारायणपाल के पुत्र राज्यपाल का विवाह राष्ट्रकूट राजा कृष्ण द्वितीय की पुत्री भाग्यदेवी से हुआ था। इसी कारणवश सहोदरा स्थान अभिलेख में नृपतिसुंगदेव (सम्भवतः राष्ट्रकूट राजा अमोधवर्ष) तथा बंगसरोजभानो (नारायणपाल) का एक साथ उल्लेख है।

पुरुष-अर्धांगिनीके रूप में प्राचीन काल से ही आख्यात प्रजनन-समर्थ स्त्रीत्व में शक्ति रूप आकलित किया जा चुका था। भारत में देवी-शक्ति का अस्तित्व चौथी सहस्राब्दी ई० पू० की बलूचिस्तान में प्रस्फुटित होने वाली सभ्यताओं में दृष्टिगोचर होता है। कुल्ली से प्राप्त मृन्मूर्ति में नारी को दो शिशुओं को लिए अंकित किया गया है। झोब से प्राप्त नारी-मृन्मूर्तियों की आँख के कोटर खाली हैं जो अत्यन्त भयावह हैं। अतः ये मूर्तियाँ मातृ-शक्ति के उस स्वरूप को स्पष्ट करती हैं जिसमें वह भूमिगत जगत् की स्वामिनी समझी जाती है।³

सैन्धव संस्कृति मातृ-शक्ति पूजन प्राधान्त रही है। ये नारी-मृन्मूर्तियाँ नग्न रूप में प्रदर्शित की गयी हैं। वे कमर के नीचे एक पटका, मेखला से बँधा हुआ धारण किये हैं। पैर तने के समान हैं, गले में कई लड़ियों के हार तथा कण्ठाहार हैं, आँखें गोल, बल्लियों से प्रदर्शित की गयी हैं। सिर पर एक ऊँची कुल्हाड़ी की आकृति की शिरोभूषा हैं। यहाँ से प्राप्त एक नारी-प्रतिमा में स्त्री को वृक्ष के नीचे स्थानक मुद्रा में दिखलाया गया है-उसके दोनों ओर दो पुरुष अंजलिबद्ध मुद्रा में खड़े हैं। एक अन्य मुद्रा में पर एक नग्न स्त्री की आकृति बनी है, उसके उदर से एकवृक्ष को निकलता हुआ दिखलाया गया है, उसके समीप हाथ में खड्ग लिये हुए एक व्यक्ति खड़ा है और पास ही एक स्त्री ऊपर की ओर हाथ जोड़े सिर नीचा किये हुए बैठी है। मजूमदार महोदय ने इसे पृथ्वी-देवी की प्रतिमा बतलायी है, जिसे बलि चढ़ाई जा रही है।⁴

ऋग्वेद(ऋग्वेद 10/123) का वाक् सूक्त देवी सूक्त और रात्रि से सम्बन्धित सूक्तसृष्टि के अणु-अणु में शक्ति की सत्ता की व्यापकता की ओर संकेत करता है। वाजसनेयी संहिता, तैत्तिरीय ब्राम्हण और तैत्तिरीय आरण्यक में अम्बिका, उमा, दुर्गा, काली आदि के नामों का उल्लेख है जो शाक्त धर्म से सम्बद्ध हैं।(वाजसनेयी संहिता 3/53) ऋग्वेद में अदिति को प्रकृति का रूप माना गया है, वही आकाश, वायु, माता, पिता तथा पुत्र के रूप है। सृष्टि में जो

कुछ उत्पन्न हुआ है तथा उत्पन्न होगा, सब अदिति का रूप है। (ऋग्वेद 1/89) मैक्समूलर महोदय ने पृथ्वी और आकाश से परे एक अनन्त शक्ति का नाम अदिति बतलाया है।¹ अथर्ववेद विराज नामक एक नवीन देवी का उल्लेख करता है जो तीनों लोकों की माता है, जो अदिति के समान है जिन्हें 'स्वाहा' नाम से अभिहित किया जाता है। (अथर्ववेद 8/9/21) ऋग्वेद में अनेक देवों की पत्नियों का उल्लेख हुआ है। यथा—इन्द्राणी, वरुणानी, रुद्राणी, ब्राम्हाणी, वैष्णवी आदि।

महाभारत (महाभारत, 4/6, 6,23) में वर्णित दुर्गा की दो स्तुतियाँ तथा हरिवंश पुराण (हरिवंश 3/3) में वर्णित आर्यास्तव देवी के महत्व को पूर्णतः स्पष्ट कर देता है। मार्कण्डेय पुराण का देवी माहत्म्य खण्ड पौराणिक काल में देवी की महत्ता का प्रदर्शन करता है। ये देवी स्तुतियाँ देवी की आदि श्रेष्ठ एवं संरक्षित शक्ति का प्रकटीकरण करती हैं। देवी के लिए प्रयुक्त हुए जगन्माता तथा जगदम्बा आदि विशेषण उनके मातृरूप को परिलक्षित करते हैं। देवी का यह रूप पुराण साहित्य में अधिक स्पष्ट एवं विकसित हुआ। दर्शन जैसा विषयक ज्ञान भी देवी माहत्म्य से अछूता न रहा। वेदान्तियों का माया—सिद्धान्त महामाया देवी के महत्व का प्रदर्शन करता है। सांख्य, दर्शन का प्रकृति तथा पुरुष का सिद्धान्त इसी जगदम्बा आदिशक्ति का प्रतीक है। प्रकृति को देवी एवं आदि स्त्री शक्ति—रूप में स्वीकृत किया गया। अस्तु सभी धर्म एवं दर्शन देवी का यशोगान करते हुए दृष्टिगोचर होते हैं।

कालान्तर में ब्रम्हा, विष्णु और शिव इन त्रिदेवों के साथ तीन देवियों का अस्तित्व स्वीकार कर लिया गया। ब्रम्हा का सम्बन्ध सरस्वती, सावित्री, यागापत्री से, विष्णु का लक्ष्मी से तथा शिव का पार्वती अथवा (दुर्गा) से बतलाया गया। यद्यपि देवों के साथ देवियों का यह विभाजन प्रत्यक्ष रूप से सर्वत्र स्पष्ट किया गया है तथापि पुराणों में विष्णु की ही आदिशक्ति का विष्णु के अनेक रूपों एवं अवतारों में विभिन्न रूप धारण करने का वर्णन किया गया है। यदि विष्णु अपनी ब्रम्ही मूर्ति में ब्रम्हा का रूप धारण कर लेते हैं, तो शक्ति सावित्री बनकर उनके साथ रहती है, विष्णु के रूप में वह लक्ष्मी रहती है, उमा के रूप में शिव के साथ रहती है। मार्कण्डेय पुराण (मार्कण्डेय पुराण, 82) में महिषमर्दिनी के उदय में शैव, वैष्णव और ब्राम्हा उग्र—तेज का वर्णन है। देवगण जब शुम्भ और निशुम्भ से पीड़ित हुये तो हिमालय गये और देवी स्तुति प्रारम्भ की तो पार्वती से अम्बिका उत्पन्न हुयी। उसकी कौशिकी संज्ञा का आधार पार्वती के कोश (देह) से उत्पत्ति के कारण है, चूँकि अम्बिका कृष्ण वर्ण लेकर उत्पन्न हुयी अतः उनका नाम काली हुआ। चण्ड—मुण्ड के विनाश करने के पश्चात् जब ये पुनः पार्वती के पास गयी तो पार्वती ने इनका दूसरा नाम चामुण्डा रखा।

उपर्युक्त देवी माहात्म्य के कारण यह तथ्य तो स्पष्ट है कि प्रधानतया दो ही देवियाँ—वैष्णवी एवं रौद्री ही सर्वत्र अनेक रूपों में परिव्याप्त थीं, अतः प्रतिमाविज्ञान की दृष्टि से इन देवियों का अध्ययन करना अपरिहार्य हो जाता

है। इन देवियों के समस्त रूपों का अध्ययन हम निम्न वर्गीकरण द्वारा कर सकते हैं—सप्तमातृकाएँ, वैष्णवी, रौद्री,

सप्तमातृकाएँ :- सप्तमातृकाओं की कल्पना से सम्बन्धित महाभारत और पुराणों में रोचक प्रसंग आया है कि एक बार शिव अन्धकासुर से युद्ध कर रहे थे, तो उस समय अन्धकासुर के शरीर से जितनी रक्त की बूँदे गिरती थी, उतने ही अन्धकासुर उत्पन्न हो जाते थे। उस समय शिव ने घबराकर अपनी योगेश्वरी नामक शक्ति को उद्भूत किया। इसके साथ ही साथ ब्रम्हा, विष्णु, स्कन्द, इन्द्र, यम आदि देवों ने भी अपनी-अपनी शक्तियाँ छोड़ी। इन सप्त मातृकाओं ने अन्धकासुर के रक्त को भूमि पर गिरने से रोक लिया। (मार्कण्डेय पुराण 82,12) इस प्रकार ब्रम्हा की शक्ति 'ब्राम्ही', विष्णु की शक्ति 'वैष्णवी', शिव की शक्ति 'माहेश्वरी', कुमार की शक्ति 'कौमारी', वराह की शक्ति 'वाराही', इन्द्र की शक्ति 'इन्द्राणी' और यम की शक्ति 'चामुण्डा' कहलायी।

ऐतिहासिक परिप्रेक्ष्य में कुमारगुप्त प्रथम के शासनकाल में गंगधर शिलालेख में मातृकाओं के मन्दिर का उल्लेख किया गया है। किन्तु इस अभिलेख में इन मातृकाओं के नाम व उनकी संख्या का कोई विवरण नहीं मिलता है।¹⁰ पूर्वकालीन चालुक्य शासकों के अभिलेखों की प्रस्तावना में सप्तमातृकाओं की संख्या प्रस्तुत की गयी है और कहा गया है कि हारीति के पुत्रों ने सप्तमातृकाओं से ज्ञान प्राप्त किया था। प्रतिमाशास्त्रीय ग्रन्थों में इन सप्तमातृकाओं के अन्तर्गत चामुण्डा देवी प्रतिमा का पृथक् लक्षण प्रस्तुत किया गया है।

चामुण्डा — यम से उद्भूत शक्ति का नाम चामुण्डा है। विष्णुधर्मोत्तर पुराण में चामुण्डा को प्रेत पर बैठी हुई रक्तवर्णी, क्षीण, विकृत देहवाली बतलाया गया है। उनके दाँत निकले हुए होते हैं और उनका रूप भयंकर होता है, उनकी दस भुजाएँ होती हैं, जिसमें से दाहिने ओर की पाँच भुजाओं में मूसल, चक्र, वाण, अंकुश और खड्ग तथा बाएँ ओर की पाँच भुजाओं में ढाल, पाश, धनुष दण्ड और कुठार (कुल्हाणी) होती हैं।

चामुण्डा प्रेतगां रक्ता विकृतास्याहिभूषणा।

दण्डोग्रा क्षीणदेहा च गर्ताक्षी भीमरूपिणी॥

दिग्बाहुः क्षामकुक्षिश्च मुसलं कवचं शरम्।

अंकुशं विभ्रती खगं दक्षिणेष्वथ वामतः॥

खेटं पाशं धनुर्दण्डं कुठारं चेति विभ्रति॥

विष्णुधर्मोत्तरपुराण 123.8-10

अपराजितपृच्छा में उन्हें शव पर स्थित बतलाया गया है। (अपराजितपृच्छा पृ० 223) रूपमण्डन में इसी भयावह रूप वर्णन किया गया है।

चामुण्डा प्रेतगा रक्ता विकृतास्याहिभूषणा।

द्विभुजा वा प्रकर्तव्या कार्तिका कार्यमन्विता॥ रूपमण्डन, 5,72

अुशमद्भेदागम् में चामुण्डा को त्रिनेत्री और चतुर्भुजी बतलाया गया है, उनके दो हाथों में कपाल एवं शूल और दो हाथ अभय एवं वरद मुद्रा में होते हैं।

चतुर्भुजा त्रिनेत्रा च रक्तवर्णाध्वकेशिका।

कपालशूलहसता च वरदाभयपाणिनी ।।

प्रतिमा—विज्ञान में सप्तमातृकाओं को ई० शती के प्रारम्भ में ही स्थान मिल चुका था। इन सप्तमातृकाओं को प्रतिमाओं में प्रदर्शन शिलापट्टों पर संयुक्त रूप से और पृथक्-पृथक् भी दृष्टिगोचर होता है। कुषाणकालीन सप्तमातृका प्रतिमाएँ मथुरा संग्रहालय में संग्रहीत हैं। इस शिलापट्ट पर सात नारियों (देवियों) को स्थानक मुद्रा में प्रदर्शित किया गया है। इन देवियों का दाहिना हाथ अभय—मुद्रा में है बाएँ हाथ में कमण्डलु है, उनके दोनों ओर आयुध पुरुष हैं। जैसा कि रुपमण्डन में बतलाया गया है कि इन सप्तमातृकाओं के एक ओर वीरभद्र और दूसरी ओर गणेश को प्रदर्शित करना चाहिए। इस काल में दो—तीन मातृकाओं की साथ—साथ आकृतियाँ बनायी गयी हैं। इनमें भेद स्थापित करने के लिए कालान्तर में इन मातृकाओं के मस्तक भाग पर विभिन्न पशुओं की आकृतियाँ निर्मित कर दी गयी। इस काल के उत्तरार्ध में मातृकाओं को अपने—अपने देवताओं के वाहनों पर आसीन और आभूषणों से अलंकृत प्रदर्शित किया जाने लगा। मध्यकाल तक इन्हें चतुर्भुजी एवं अन्य देव शक्तियों के साथ प्रतिमाओं में निर्मित किया गया है।

पश्चिमी चम्पारण जिले के सहोदरा स्थानसे सर्वेक्षण के क्रम में देवी प्रतिमा चामुण्डा प्राप्त हुई है, जिनका विवरण इस प्रकार है।

पुरास्थल	—	सहोदरा स्थान
माध्यम	—	बलुआ पत्थर
प्रतिमा	—	चामुण्डा
काल	—	पूर्व मध्यकाल

चामुण्डा का सामान्य स्वरूप भयावह एवं संहारक है। कला में चामुण्डा देवी को कंकाल स्वरूपा, धसे कपोल, निकले दाँत वाली, हाथ में कपालमाला तथा मुकुट एवं चर्माम्बर से युक्त बतलाया गया है।⁸

सहोदरा से चामुण्डा की प्रतिमा प्राप्त हुई है। यह प्रतिमा खण्डित एवं भग्न अवस्था में है। त्रिरथपादपीठ पर शव के ऊपर ललितासन मुद्रा में आसीन चामुण्डा का बायाँ हाथ जंघे पर तथा दायाँ हाथ खण्डित एवं अस्पष्ट है। ऐसा देखने पर प्रतीत होता है कि चामुण्डा के इस प्रतिमा में चार भुजा है परन्तु वे खण्डित एवं अस्पष्ट हैं।

उनका कृश शरीर तथा संकुचित उदर भयंकरता को दर्शाता है। प्रतिमा के अत्यन्त घिस जाने के कारण चामुण्डा के चेहरे की भावभंगिमा, आभूषण एवं वस्त्र तथा आयुध आदि स्पष्ट नहीं हो सका है।

प्रस्तुत शोधपत्र में चामुण्डा की प्रतिमा के अध्ययन से ज्ञात होता है कि पश्चिमी चम्पारण जिले क्षेत्र में देवीउपासना की परम्परा पूर्वमध्यकाल में व्यापक रूप से व्याप्त थी। इस क्षेत्र में मुख्यतः स्थानक एक ललितासन मुद्रा की प्रतिमा विशेष रूप से प्रचलित रही।

सन्दर्भ ग्रन्थ सूची —

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सहोदरा स्थान से प्राप्त चामुण्डा देवी की प्रतिमा

भारतीय कला एवं साहित्य में गजांकन : एक अवलोकन

डॉ० अजेन्द्र प्रताप राय

पोस्ट डॉक्टरल फेलो, प्राचीन भारतीय इतिहास, संस्कृति एवं पुरातत्त्व विभाग,
काशी हिन्दू विश्वविद्यालय, वाराणसी

भारत में गज उर्वरता (जनन क्षमता), धन तथा समृद्धि का प्रतीक है, जिसका सम्बन्ध 'श्री' अर्थात् समृद्धि की देवी से किया गया है जो ऋग्वेद के 'श्री सुक्त' में पृथ्वी के देवी के रूप में व्याख्यायित है। शतपथ ब्राह्मण में 'श्री' को कमल से उत्पन्न बताया गया है और कहा गया है की वे गज के स्वर से आनन्दित होती है। महाकाव्य काल में भी 'श्री' और 'गज' के सम्बन्ध मिलते हैं। महाभारत में उल्लेख है कि 'श्री' कुमारियो एवं यज्ञ में, मेघ, कमल के पुष्प से युक्त झील में तथा गज में निवास करती है। 'श्री' के साथ गज का सम्बन्ध जीवन-समृद्धि एवं वैभव का प्रतीक होता था।¹

गज का प्राचीनतम अंकन शैल चित्रों में, हडप्पा तथा मोहनजोदड़ो की मुहरों पर देखने को मिलता है। हडप्पा से प्राप्त एक मुहर पर गज के समक्ष एक नाद इस तरह उत्कीर्ण है कि जैसे गज को प्रमुदित करने के लिये उसकी आराधना की जा रही हो, जिससे यह प्रतीत होता है की हडप्पा काल में गज पूजन की परम्परा थी।

वैदिक कालीन साहित्य में गज का उल्लेख इस बात का परिचायक है कि इस काल में गज एक उपयोगी पशु था। ऋग्वेद में गज का उल्लेख हुआ है साथ ही इसके गर्जना के सन्दर्भ अनेक बार मिलते हैं। वैदिक काल में हाथियों को एक सम्पत्ति के रूप में देखा जाता था। यही कारण है कि अग्नि के तेज की तुलना हाथी के वैभव से की गयी है।²

उत्तर वैदिक काल में इसकी महत्ता में वृद्धि हुयी और यह पशु अब देवताओं के साथ जुड़ने लगा। वैदिक देव रुद्र के सम्बन्ध में यह कहा जाने लगा की वे हाथियों पर बैठ कर शत्रुओं से युद्ध करते हैं। ब्राह्मण ग्रन्थों में हाथी को एक दान की वस्तु के रूप में चर्चित किया गया। अश्वमेघ में प्रजापति तथा हिमवत के लिये भी गज अर्पित होने लगा। इस काल में गज इन्द्र के वाहन (ऐरावत) के साथ-2 समृद्धि का प्रतीक भी समझा जाने लगा। गीता में 'लोक देवता' परम्परा का उल्लेख मिलता है। जिसमें लोक देवताओं से सम्बन्धित एक लम्बी सूची दी गयी है उसमें 'ऐरावत' गज का उल्लेख भी मिलता है। महाकाव्य काल तक गज वर्षा का प्रतीक बन चुका था ऐसा विवरण मिलता है कि इन्द्र अपने गज पर सवार होकर वर्षा करते हैं और हाथी पाताल से इन्द्र को वर्षा के लिये जल लाता है।³

पौराणिक कथाओं में हाथी ऐरावत के रूप में प्रसिद्ध था, जो समुद्र मन्थन के फलस्वरूप प्राप्त हुआ था। मत्स्य पुराण में समुद्रमन्थन के उल्लेख में

नौ (9) रत्नों की एक सूची प्रदान की गयी है जिसमें 'गजेन्द्र' का उल्लेख है।⁵ पुराणों में बाद के कालों में इन रत्नों की संख्या चौदह (14) हो जाती है। समुद्र मन्थन से उपलब्ध रत्नों की सूची में हाथी को गजेन्द्र या ऐरावत के रूप में विशिष्ट स्थान प्राप्त है जिसे शुभ, राजत्व, प्रभुसत्ता एवं सम्पन्नता के प्रतीकों के साथ जोड़ा गया है।

बौद्ध निकायों में भी हस्ति के महत्त्व को प्रमुखता से वर्णित किया गया एवं इसे चक्रवर्ती सम्राट के अंग के रूप में बताया गया है, जिसका प्रमुख कारण दिव्य पशु का होना है और यह प्रज्ञा का प्रतीक भी था। दूसरी बात बुद्ध में हाथी की भूमिका निर्णायक एवं महत्वपूर्ण थी जो 'गज सेना' के रूप में राजा की सेना का विशिष्ट अंग थी।⁶ बौद्धों में हस्ति को विशिष्ट स्थान प्राप्त होने का एक मुख्य कारण यह भी था। शुद्धोधन की पत्नी महादेवी का (गर्भकाल अथवा, जन्म से पूर्व) स्वप्न में श्वेत हस्ति का देखना⁷ भी उल्लेखनीय तथ्य है कि बोधिसत्व की अवस्था में गौतम बुद्ध ने हस्ति-यौनि में जन्म लिया जिसका उल्लेख छदन्त जातक में मिलता है। जैन आगमों में भी हस्ति (हाथी) का उल्लेख मिलता है। प्रथम तीर्थंकर की माता पहले स्वप्न में वृषभ अन्तिम तीर्थंकर वर्धमान की माता सिंह और शेष तीर्थंकरों (बाइसों) की माता स्वप्न में हाथी देखती हैं। जैनो के उत्तरवर्ती साहित्य में हाथी को श्वेत हाथी के रूप में चित्रित किया गया है।

लोक परम्परा में भी हाथी (हस्ति) के प्रति आदर भाव एवं सम्मान दिखाई देता है, जिसका प्रमुख कारण महाकाव्य काल की परम्परा में देवतत्त्व के साथ जुड़ाव एवं लोक रीति में हाथी का भगवान की तरह पूजित होना था। बौद्ध जातक कथाओं में भी हस्ति-मंगलोत्सव के उल्लेख मिलते हैं। *सुसीम जातक*⁸ के अनुसार यह उत्सव हाथी-मंगल-कारक (हाथी को मांगलिक करने) के लिये किया जाता था। जिसमें राज्य के नागरिक भाग लेते थे एवं हाथी को स्वर्ण आभूषणों से सुसज्जित किया जाता था। इस उत्सव को सम्पन्न कराने वाला तीन वेद तथा हस्ति-सूत्र का ज्ञाता होता था। *मातिपोसक जातक*⁹ के अनुसार उत्सव के लिये श्वेत गज का चुनाव किया जाता था। इसी जातक में यह भी वर्णित है कि मंगलोत्सव हाथी के मृत्यु हो जाने पर उस हाथी की शिला प्रतिमा का निर्माण किया जाता था तथा प्रतिवर्ष एकत्र होकर हस्ति-पूजा नामक उत्सव मनाया जाता था।

कला में गज—

कला के रूप में हस्ति का अंकन हड़प्पा काल से ही प्राप्त होने लगता है, जो उसकी उपयोगिता को सिद्ध करते हैं। हड़प्पा के विभिन्न पुरास्थलों से 100 से अधिक सीलों की संख्या प्राप्त होती है जिसमें हस्ति का अंकन अन्य पशुओं से ज्यादा है। मार्शल के मतानुसार इन पशु मूर्तियों या पशु चित्रों का कोई गुप्त प्रभाव हड़प्पा वासियों पर रहा होगा।

मौर्य काल से कला में हस्ति के अंकन मिलने प्रारम्भ हो जाते हैं, जिसकी पुष्टि अशोक के गजशीर्ष युक्त स्तम्भ करते हैं।¹⁰ प्रतीक के रूप में श्वेत गज को भारतीय मिथक में महत्वपूर्ण स्थान प्राप्त है। बौद्ध कला में इसे

बुद्ध के प्रतीक के रूप में अपनाया गया। भरहुत, साँची, अमरावती, नागार्जुनीकोण्डा तथा अजन्ता की कला में बुद्ध जन्म की कथा को बहुत ही प्रभावशाली ढंग से दर्शाया गया है। भरहुत स्तूप के एक फलक पर माया देवी को शयन करते तथा फलक के उपर एक हाथी को दर्शाया गया है। इस प्रकार का अंकन साँची से भी प्राप्त होता है, जिसमें हाथी को मेघ से उतरते हुये दिखाया गया है। अमरावती की कला में मायादेवी शयन मुद्रा में है और एक लघु हस्ति फलक के मध्य बनाया गया है। स्वप्न की कथा नागार्जुनीकोण्डा में कुछ ज्यादा ही नाटकीय ढंग से दर्शाया गया है। जिसमें हाथी को देवताओं द्वारा विमान से लाया जा रहा है। उल्लेखनीय है की गंधार बौद्ध कला में भी ऐसे विवरण उपलब्ध होते हैं।¹¹

बौद्ध कला में जातक कथाओं का भी अंकन प्रमुखता से किया गया है। हाथियों के राजा छदन्त अपनी पत्नी को सीख देने के लिये अपने दाँतों का दान कर देते हैं जो शिल्पकारों का प्रिय विषय रहा। भरहुत स्तूप के वेदिका पर हाथी द्वारा राजा के दाँत को शिकारी द्वारा काटते हुये दिखाया गया है। अमरावती का चित्रण भरहुत से व्यापक है जिसमें विशाल पशु को अपना दाँत अपने से ही काटते हुये दिखाया गया है। छदन्त जातक की कथा साँची स्तूप के तोरणों पर वर्णित है, जहाँ छदन्त को अपने झुण्ड के साथ दिखाया गया है वहाँ महान पशु समान्य आकार से चौगुना शरीर और छः दाँतों वाला दिखाया गया है, दायी ओर स्नान करते कुछ अनुयायी के साथ जो अपने दाँतों में छत्र एवं चँवर लिये हुये हैं।¹² दूसरी तरफ स्नान के पश्चात् नागेत्थ वृक्ष की तरफ बढ़ते हुये और अन्त में बायीं ओर जंगल में अकेले विश्राम करते हुये दिखाया गया है। इसी समय उपयुक्त समय देखकर एक शिकारी वह पत्थरो के पीछे छिपकर प्राण घातक प्रहार किया। गन्धार कला में शिकारी को गढढें में छिपा दिखाया गया है। अजन्ता गुफा स0 10 में छदन्त जातक की कहानी का चित्रण बहुत ही उत्साह पूर्वक किया गया है।

भरहुत की वैदिक, साँची, नागार्जुनीकोण्डा व अमरावती के कला में गजलक्ष्मी का भी अंकन बड़ी सहजता से किया गया है। कमलासीन देवी के दोनो तरफ प्रायः हाथी खड़े होकर जल-वर्षा करते हुये दिखाये गये हैं।

इन्द्र तथा ऐरावत का प्रारम्भिक प्रदर्शन भाजा की गुफा के द्वार पर मिलता है। गंधार से प्राप्त एक फलक में इन्द्र को ऐरावत के साथ बुद्ध से मिलते हुये दिखाया गया है।

मुद्रा-मुद्राओं पर गजांकन

मुद्राओं पर हस्ति अंकन सर्वप्रथम आहत सिक्को पर मिलते हैं जिसका अंकन अनेक रूपों में हुआ। शनियावाला से प्राप्त उत्तर पंचाल एवं जनपदीय आहत मुद्राओं पर विविध रूपों में दक्षिणाभिमुख और वामाभिमुख अंकित है। वहाँ के कुछ सिक्कों पर हाथी पर सवार भी अंकित मिलते हैं। चेदी, कौशल, आन्ध्र जनपद की आहत मुद्राओं पर भी हस्ति अंकन प्राप्त होता है। पटना संग्रहालय में चार चिन्हों वाली कुछ आहत मुद्रा संग्रहित है जिनपर हाथी का दोनो रूपों में अंकन प्राप्त होता है।

आहत मुद्राओं की तरह उत्तरकालीन जनपदीय सिक्कों पर भी हाथी अंकन प्राप्त होता है।¹³ तक्षशिला से प्राप्त सिक्को पर हाथी तीन रूपों दक्षिणामुख, वामामुख और सम्मुख प्राप्त होता है। इसी प्रकार जनपदीय और राजतंत्रीय सिक्को, जैसे अर्जुनायन औदुम्बर, यौधेय, काद उद्देहिक राजतंत्रीय राज्यो में अयोध्या, कौशाम्बी एवं मथुरा से भी हस्ति अंकित मुद्रायें प्राप्त होती है। विदेशी शासको के सिक्कों पर भी हस्ति का चित्रांकन प्राप्त होता है, जिसमें यवन शासक, मावेस, थियोस, हेलियोक्लीज, लीसियस एन्टियालकिड्स और अपोलोडिटस के सिक्कों पर प्राप्त होता हैं। कुषाण सिक्कों पर हाथी का अंकन हुविष्क के वाहन के रूप में प्राप्त होता है। गुप्त काल में कुमार गुप्त प्रथम के एक सिक्के पर हाथी पर सवार अंकित किया गया है।¹⁴

हस्ति या हाथी कला-सहित्य का एक प्रमुख बिन्दु रहा, जहाँ हस्ति को सुख सम्पन्नता, वैभव, देवत्व के प्रतीक के रूप में व्यख्यायित किया गया।

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City as Stage: Transforming Urban Space into Mythic Theatre

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Abstract

The Ramlila of Ramnagar, staged annually across the Ganga from Varanasi, stands as one of the most extraordinary spectacles of Dussehra. What might otherwise be an ordinary town in Uttar Pradesh is, during this season, transformed into a vast performative landscape that draws millions of devotees and visitors. The entire city becomes a living stage, where myth and theatre converge, and where everyday spaces are reimagined as sacred geography.

This paper explores how Ramnagar undergoes a dual metamorphosis: first, from civic space into an immense open-air theatre, and then into a mythic terrain that embodies the epic narrative of the Ramayana. Central to this transformation is the concept of bhavana—the collective imagination and emotional resonance that sustains the experience of Ramlila. The study also considers how the performance fosters community identity, continuity of tradition, and a unique form of participatory spectatorship that blurs the boundary between audience and actor.

From the perspective of the city as stage, Ramnagar itself becomes both performer and backdrop: its streets, ghats, and courtyards are not passive settings but active participants in the unfolding drama. The city's geography is choreographed into narrative movement, guiding audiences through shifting scenes that blur the line between urban space and epic storytelling. This performative reconfiguration demonstrates how architecture, ritual, and community together animate the city into a dynamic theatre of faith. By situating Ramnagar's Ramlila within broader discussions of performativity and cultural memory, the paper highlights its enduring significance as both a devotional practice and a world-class theatrical phenomenon.

Key words: Performance, Ramlila, transformation, sacred space, bhavana, cultural memory

Introduction

Ramlila, the annual enactment of the Hindu epic *Ramayana*, is at once ritual and performance. Traditionally staged during the auspicious period of *Sharad Navratras*, which inaugurates the autumn festival of Dussehra, Ramlila embodies the devotional retelling of Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas*. The term *charit* in Tulsidas's text signifies "acts," underscoring his conviction that the infinite can be apprehended through the finite deeds of the divine.

While Ramlila is performed across North India, the Ramnagar Ramlila near Varanasi stands apart for its extraordinary scale and spatial imagination (Eck, 1981). Here, the urban fabric itself is transformed into a performative geography: streets, ghats, ponds, and courtyards cease to be ordinary civic spaces and become active sites of mythic enactment. The town is not merely a backdrop but a living stage, choreographed into the geography of the *Ramayana*.

This transformation is both symbolic and material. Permanent structures and designated locales—Janakpuri, Ashok Vatika, Panchvati, Lanka—are embedded into the town's landscape, while ponds are renamed and courtyards consecrated as sacred sites. The audience moves with the performers across this mythic cartography, participating in a ritualized reimagining of the city.

The global significance of this performative transformation was recognized in 2005, when UNESCO proclaimed Ramlila a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity." Yet Ramnagar's Ramlila is not merely heritage; it is a living demonstration of how urban space can be ritually re-scripted into mythic theatre. The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) further documented this uniqueness in its film *Ramlila – The Traditional Performance of Ramayana*, situating Ramnagar alongside other regional traditions but acknowledging its unparalleled performative scale.

This paper therefore examines the Ramnagar Ramlila as a case study of the "city as stage," analyzing how civic space

undergoes dual metamorphosis: first into an immense open-air theatre, and then into a mythic terrain animated by collective imagination (*bhavana*) (Schomer & McLeod, 1987). Introduced in its elaborate style by King Udit Narayan Singh in 1830, the Ramnagar Ramlila continues to exemplify how ritual, architecture, and community converge to transform the city into a dynamic theatre of faith.

Mythic Cartography: Rescripting Civic Space into Sacred Terrain

The Ramlila of Ramnagar is unparalleled in its scope and imagination. Watched by millions each year, it fuses pilgrimage with performance (Singh, 2016), transforming the entire town into a month-long theatre of faith. Unlike most Ramlilas across North India, which are confined to a single stage, Ramnagar disperses the narrative across multiple sets embedded within the urban fabric. In this way, the city itself becomes the stage, and its geography is choreographed into the unfolding epic.

This spatial choreography is central to its uniqueness. Permanent structures and designated sites—Janakpuri, Ashok Vatika, Panchvati, Lanka—are mapped onto the town, creating a mythic cartography that re-scripts civic space into sacred terrain. Even ponds and courtyards are renamed and consecrated, with one pond called “Ganga,” while whitewashed platforms serve as ritualized performance zones. The Ramayana’s geography is thus permanently enfolded into Ramnagar’s civic landscape, making the town a living archive of myth.

Equally distinctive is the mobility of the audience. Spectators do not remain seated before a stage; instead, they move with the performers from one locale to another, following the narrative as it unfolds across the town. This ritualized movement collapses the boundary between viewer and actor, turning spectators into participants in the drama. The act of walking barefoot through streets and courtyards, chanting slogans, and engaging with the svarups (embodiments of divine characters) transforms the audience’s journey into a pilgrimage. The city is not a passive backdrop but an active participant in the performance.

The space of Ramnagar undergoes a dual transformation: first, from civic townscape into open-air theatre, and then into

mythic geography animated by collective imagination (*bhavana*). This layering of meanings—urban, theatrical, and sacred—creates a performative environment where architecture, ritual, and community converge.

Unlike other Ramlilas that have adapted to modern technologies such as amplified sound and disco lights, Ramnagar adheres to tradition, preserving its ritual authenticity. This fidelity to the past raises questions about sustainability in a rapidly changing cultural landscape, yet it also underscores the resilience of Ramnagar's performative identity. The Ramlila here is not merely a spectacle; it is a vast interlocking realm of human, divine, and demonic realities, covering many square miles and sustained by the patronage of the Kashi royal line.

In this sense, Ramnagar's Ramlila exemplifies how a city can be ritually re-scripted into mythic theatre. Its uniqueness lies not only in scale or tradition but in the way it transforms urban space into a dynamic stage where community, devotion, and myth converge in living performance.

City as Stage and the *Lila*

Ramnagar's Ramlila exemplifies the idea of the city as stage (Schechner, 2003). The town is simultaneously performer and backdrop: its architecture, streets, and courtyards are choreographed into narrative movement, guiding audiences through shifting scenes. The city's geography is not static but dynamic, re-scripted annually into the mythic cartography of the *Ramayana*.

This performative reconfiguration situates Ramnagar within a broader comparative framework. Like the Passion Plays of Oberammergau in Germany or the ritualized pilgrimages of the Kumbh Mela in India, Ramnagar demonstrates how civic space (Turner, 1982) can be transformed into sacred theatre. Yet its uniqueness lies in the scale and fidelity of its transformation: for one month, Ramnagar ceases to be a town and becomes a living mythic geography, sustained by collective imagination and ritual practice.

Urban temporality is altered in this process. Everyday rhythms of civic life are suspended, and the town exists in a liminal state where myth and reality converge. Architecture, ritual, and community participation together animate Ramnagar

into a dynamic theatre of faith, making it one of the most extraordinary examples of how cities can be ritually re-scripted into mythic performance.

Unlike selective portrayals of Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas*, the Ramlila of Ramnagar is enacted with strict fidelity to the text's letter and spirit. Each scene begins with the recitation of verses by the *Ramayanis*—singers and musicians who anchor the performance in scripture—before actors embody the characters. Audiences, carrying torches and copies of the *Ramcharitmanas*, chant along, transforming the act of listening into a collective ritual. In this way, the text animates not only the actors but also the city's architecture, as courtyards, ghats, and streets reverberate with sacred sound.

The royal presence further intensifies the performative atmosphere. The Maharaja of Kashi, seated on the throne during the enactment, presides symbolically as the custodian of tradition. Though largely ceremonial today, his role lends dignity, discipline, and authority to the proceedings. The Maharaja is popularly regarded as the representative of Shiva, and his arrival is greeted with chants of *Hara Hara Mahadev*, embedding royal patronage into the city's ritual fabric.

Central to the uniqueness of Ramnagar Ramlila are the *svarups*—young boys aged 10–13 who embody Ram, Lakshman, Bharat, Shatrughna, and Sita. Believed to be literal manifestations of divinity, these *svarups* are chosen through auditions overseen by the Maharaja and trained in a gurukul system. Their presence transforms ordinary streets into sanctified pathways, as devotees seek *sakshat darshan* (direct vision of the divine).

The ritualized movement of the audience is equally significant. Barefoot walking through the town's sets, chanting slogans such as *Raja Ramchandra ki jai!* and *Jai Siya Ram!*, and touching the feet of the *svarups* when possible, all contribute to the transformation of civic space into sacred geography. The belief that Ram himself walked barefoot during exile reinforces this practice, turning Ramnagar into a vast temple where footwear is avoided. Streets and courtyards thus become ritual pathways, animated by devotion and collective imagination.

At the heart of this transformation lies *bhavana*—the devotional imagination that enables audiences to perceive ordinary courtyards as Janakpuri or Lanka. The city's metamorphosis depends not only on physical structures but on the emotional and spiritual investment of its people. Through *bhavana*, Ramnagar ceases to be a town and becomes mythic terrain, where the Ramayana unfolds in lived experience.

Each episode culminates in an *arati*, performed in the presence of the *svarups*, accompanied by bells, gongs, drums, and conch shells. The atmosphere is charged with rhythmic chanting, and *jhankis* (tableaux) present iconic moments from the *Ramcharitmanas*. On the final day, Rama's victory over Ravana draws over a million pilgrims, and the city reaches its performative climax. For one month, Ramnagar is transformed into a mythic geography, teaching through enactment that the universe itself is *lila*—play, transient, and illusory.

The audience does not merely watch but internalizes the drama. As Parkhil (1993) notes, they enact the narrative in their psyche, living the characters through physical and psychological immersion. Families assume generational roles, and dedicated groups known as *nemis-premis* (regular devotees and lovers of Ramlila) sustain the tradition with unwavering participation. This continuity ensures that Ramnagar's Ramlila remains both a ritual of devotion and a performative reimagining of urban space.

Conclusion

The Ramlila of Ramnagar demonstrates that the transformation of urban space into mythic theatre is sustained not only by physical structures but by *bhavana*—the devotional imagination of its participants. It is through this collective attitude that ordinary courtyards become Janakpuri, ponds become the Ganga, and streets become ritual pathways. The city's metamorphosis depends on the willingness of its people to see beyond the material, to inhabit the mythic geography of the *Ramayana* through faith and imagination.

This transformation is renewed annually through cultural memory (Connerton, 1989). Generations of *nemis-premis*—devotees who dedicate themselves to the month-long performance—embody continuity, ensuring that Ramnagar's performative identity is never lost. Families inherit roles,

communities sustain traditions, and the city itself becomes a living archive of devotion. In this way, Ramnagar's Ramlila is not simply a festival but a collective act of remembering, where myth and memory converge to animate civic space.

Ultimately, Ramnagar's Ramlila offers a powerful model for understanding how urban space can be ritually re-scripted into mythic theatre. For one month each year, Ramnagar ceases to be a town and becomes a dynamic stage where architecture, ritual, and community participation fuse into a theatre of faith. In its scale, fidelity, and imaginative force, it stands alongside other global examples of performative cities—from Oberammergau's Passion Plays to the Kumbh Mela—yet remains unique in its ability to transform civic geography into sacred cartography. By situating Ramnagar within this broader framework, we see that its Ramlila is more than a spectacle; it is a living demonstration of how collective imagination can reconfigure urban temporality, turning city into stage, and stage into myth.

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Bihulā-Viṣaharī Festival of Bhagalpur

Region: An Anthropological Study of Bārī Kalaśa

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Abstract

Bihulā-Viṣaharī or Biṣharī is one of the famous festivals of the Bhagalpur district of Bihar. The festival is celebrated in the Bhagalpur region and adjoining districts annually during the monsoon season in July and August. The ongoing practice exists only in songs, ballads, and ritual practices, but there is no literary evidence to establish its antiquity. Snake worship has been very much in practice in all over India since time immemorial. This study reveals the deep historical roots of serpent worship of Bhagalpur region where goddess is worshipped in the name of Viṣaharī, Bārī kalaśaa kind of vase or pot is mainly used as ritual object and the evolving nature of its rituals, showcasing how contemporary practices have incorporated more decorative and vibrant elements.

Viṣaharī is worshipped in a symbolic form known as Bārī kalaśa. It is made by the Magahiavarna of the Kumhāra community. Traditionally, unbaked or sun-dried process has been used to make Bārī kalaśa, which resembles a pitcher with snakes carved around it. The Kumhāra community also makes miniature Bārī kalaśa for devotee offerings. This paper explores the relationship between religious practices and their impact on folk worship. The study also aims to trace the integral role of the Kumhāra community and their contributions to the Bihulā-Viṣaharī worship. The tradition passes from one generation to another so that one can prepare ceremonial object during the festival. Concisely, the paper discusses varied Bārī kalaśaused in worship and their influences on practices. Additionally, the role of both Bhagat and priest and, the involvement of the Tañtī, a weaver community are also discussed briefly.

Keywords: *Bihulā-Viṣaharī, Nāga cult, Bhagalpur, Kumhāra community, Bārī Kalaśa, Snake deity*

Introduction:

There is no literary evidence which authenticates the origin of the name Bhagalpur. According to history, Bhagalpur was spelt as Bouglipoor or Baugapur (Chaudhury, 1962: 01). Bhagalpur is popularly known as the ‘Silk City’ due to its extensive production of silk saris. It is one of the oldest districts in Bihar and is located in the southern region of the state. Bhagalpur has a rich diversity of castes and creeds, cultures, traditions, and ritual practices. The area is popularly known for its lush greenery, waterfalls, hills, mountains, and archaeological sites, along with Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples, contributing to its aesthetic beauty and cultural landscape.

Various interdisciplinary scholars, including anthropologists, art historians, sociologists, and philosophers, offer varied definitions of culture and religion. While providing a precise definition of culture is challenging, it can be described as a complex phenomenon encompassing everything humans collectively do, have, think, or express within a specific space and time. Culture reflects how people live in a particular society at a given time. If we consider culture to represent the ‘way of life of a people’, it becomes all-encompassing, influencing every aspect of human existence. However, some individuals may choose not to engage with culture or religious practices, suggesting that religion can be seen as a peripheral phenomenon. Like culture, the concept of religion is similarly vague and laden with complexities and ambiguities (Pohlong, 2004: xiv-xvi).

Bihulā-Viṣaharī is a famous festival in the Bhagalpur region of Bihar. Specifically, Champanagar, Nathnagar, (Bhagalpur) is the most renowned place where *Viṣaharī* festival has been celebrated since the ages. According to historical accounts, Champanagar’s *Viṣaharī* temple is considered one of the oldest temples in the Bhagalpur district. It is located 5 km away from Bhagalpur railway station. The ancient site of *Āmpā*, the capital of *Aṅga*, is represented by the two villages of *Champanagarī* and *Champapurā*, which are still part of the Bhagalpur region. Champanagar is currently a vital center where

the annual *pūjā* is performed. Earlier, Champanagar was also known as *Campā*. *Campā*'s ancient name was probably '*Mālinī*' or '*Mālinā*' as mentioned in epics and *Purāṇas* such as the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṃśa Purāṇa* (Law, 1932: 37-38).

Viṣaharī, also spelled Biṣharī, is the local Bihari name for the snake goddess. The goddess is particularly associated with the snake cult and is celebrated widely in Bhagalpur and surrounding areas with joy and enthusiasm. According to local resident, *Viṣaharī* is popularly known as *Viśaharā* in the Banka and Madhubani districts. However, in the eastern regions of India, such as West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura, she is referred to as *Manasā*. *Manasā*'s cult is widely spread throughout Bengal (Archer, 1978: 67-68). *Manasā* is identified by several other names as well, including *Viśaharā*, which means 'the destroyer of poison'. People believed that she offered protection from snake bites (Wilkins, 1882: 395; Vogel, 1972: 278-279).

The ballad of *Bihulā-Viṣaharī* is a very popular folklore from the Bhagalpur district of Bihar, and the story undergoes various transformations in the Bihari version. Archer writes, "According to this, Śiva sheds five of his hairs which fall and attach themselves to five lotuses from five girls are born. These five girls jointly play the role of *Manasā* and are called MaināBiṣharī, DevīBiṣharī, JarāBiṣharī, Dotālā Bhavānī (Biṣharī), and Padmā Kumārī (Biṣharī) (Archer, 1978: 69)." The central character of the *Bihulā-Viṣaharīgatha* is Chando Saudagar, a wealthy and renowned merchant of *Campā* (Sinha, 2021: 176). *Bihulā*, also known as *Satī* (the follower of truth), is the daughter-in-law of Chando Saudagar.

Nāga cult worship is a widespread practice across India, deeply rooted in various cultural traditions. It is particularly associated with progeny and the continuity of family legacies. The *nāga* cult, dedicated primarily to the local deities that are not part of the *Brāhmaṇical* religion, is reflected in distinct features of Bihar and the *Āṅgika* language. Byrne notes that the legend finds its basis in the *Āṅgika* language, a variant of *Maithīlī* and the primary language of the *Āṅga* region (Byrne, 1911: 45). The kingdom of *Āṅga* has been frequently referenced in *Pāli* literature (Law, 1932: 37). According to the Buddhist canon, the *Āṅgūttara*

Nikāya, *Aṅga* region was one of the sixteen *Mahājanapadās* (Morris, 1961: 213; Thapar, 2002: 138).

The worship of *Viṣaharī*, the snake goddess, is an important aspect of the snake-worshipping cult (Kumari, 2022: 141). Consequently, similar practices of snake cult worship are also prevalent in other parts of India, and their impact on culture, religion, and rituals can be traced back to ancient times. Snake worship has been a customary tradition throughout India since ages. Snakes are also associated with ancestors' worship. Ancient Indian texts such as *Vedas*, *Purāṇas*, and epics frequently mention serpents, emphasizing their symbolism related to fertility, prosperity, protection, and rebirth (Pandey, 1998: 24-42).

The worship of the mother goddess can be traced back to pre-Vedic times, with sites in the Indus Valley, such as Mohenjodaro and Harappa, depicting the cult of the mother goddess. Mother goddess is depicted as fertility, and ability of the nature to procreate. Archaeological evidence shows a wealth of snake goddess images in the form of terracotta figurines dating from the pre-Mauryan period onward (Dhavalikar, 1977: 18). The serpent goddess is associated with rain and water. Snake bites are common in monsoon season this has led people to worship the snake deity, a practice celebrated worldwide under various names. Serpents are often represented as female deities and women significantly participating in these rituals. Although there is some male participation, it is less common compared to women (Bhattacharyya, 1977: 128-129).

Predominantly, in the Bhagalpur area, the serpent deity is celebrated in a symbolic form rather than a figurative one. In contemporary times, idols based on mythology are created, but these are only made for fairs and festivals. In fact, statues are installed outside of the temples. Traditionally, only ceremonial objects such as *Bārī kalāśa*, brass *kalāśa* and *Mañjuṣā* are allowed to be placed on *pind* that is why sculptures are displayed separately from *pind*. Devotees offer their worship without creating any images; instead, an earthen pot adorned with snake motifs serves as her representation (Wilkins, 1882: 395). This is a recent induction, during the fair, statues are also installed in the

pandāls which is based on folklore and very much similar to the ongoing tradition of the yearly *pūjā* festival.

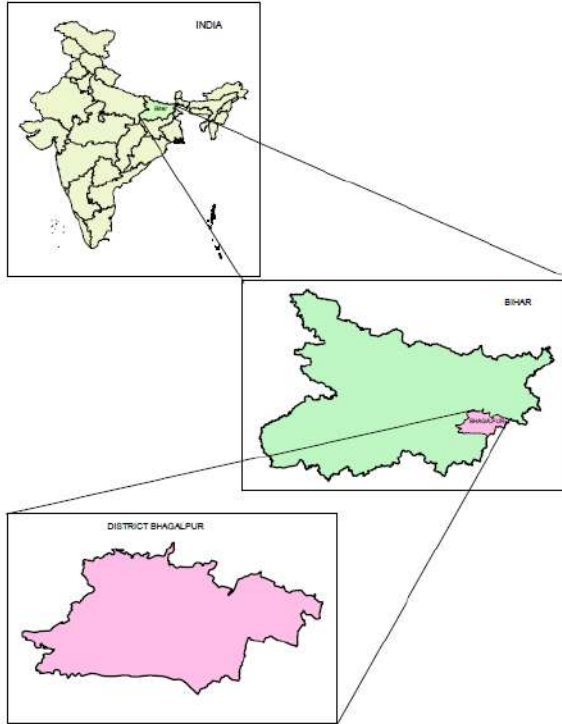


Fig. 1. Map of Bhagalpur District, Source: Author

Literature Review

The literature review is based on previous studies that explore the relationship between religion, rituals, and the serpent goddess. It encompasses published works from anthropological, historical, and art historical perspectives to gain a comprehensive understanding of snake worship. This includes an examination of the associated myths, folklore traditions, and the interplay between culture and religion. Through this multidisciplinary approach, the review aims to illuminate the significance of the snake cult in various contexts.

Serpent worship is associated with human forms and rites as well as it is also associated with rites of human sacrifice (Fergusson, 1868: 3-4). Both *Yakṣas* and *nāgas* are accompanied by fertility and rain (1868: 244). Snake cult is a ritualistic practice and it is not related to Hindus only but also found in the Persian culture. The ancient Persians incorporated the serpent

significantly into their mythologies (Wake, 1888: 83). The Snake is known for its guardian aspect; therefore, snake worship takes place, and snakes are the protector of children who have received supernatural inspiration from the divine (Kennedy, 1891: 480-481). Serpent worship is based on folklore, folk culture, myth and mythology, and one can see the association of snakes with ancestor worship and ritualistic practices. *Nāga* is considered the guardian of cattle and water springs as well as guardian of trajectory (Crooke, 1896: 595).

Nāga and the old Indian cult of *nāga* dragons are thought to be guardian spirits of the rivers. Vogel writes, according to the *Purāṇas*, *nāga* resides in *pātālalōka*. He further talks about ritualistic aspects and gives a brief overview of Bihar region in the context of snake worship (Vogel, 1972: 278-279). The serpent has ancient associations with magic, with medicine, with protection, with the power to bring rain and virility (Jayakar, 1980: 144). The anthropomorphic form of the serpent is also depicted in *Mithilā* painting as an integral part of the narrative floor or wall paintings, which is a popular folk painting of Madhubani district, Bihar (Archer, 1949: 24-33; Anand, 1984: 02-15). The book '*Handicrafts of India*' provides an overview of several genres of art, discussing terracotta and its cultural significance in detail (Chattopadhyay, 1975: 3-9).

Methodology

The present research incorporates both anthropology and ethnography, including various methods for documenting and investigating folklore and ritual classifications. It employs qualitative data to support the study. The research relies on primary and secondary data sources. Fieldwork includes photographic documentation, interviews, participatory observation, and systematic data collection. Data is gathered using both open and closed-ended questionnaires. Interviews with local residents, historians, writers, priests, *Bhagats*, and devotees have been recorded, transcribed and critically analyze the existing information to complete this paper.

Rationale and Intervention

In Bihulā-Viṣaharī festival clay pot has been used since ancient times and it is one of significant ritual objects used in worship. Earthen pots for ritual and household purposes have

been used since time immemorial. Eminent scholars such as O. C. Ganguly (1959), J. Dhamija (1970), Amy G. Poster (1986) and S. C. Kala (1993) extensively traced the antiquity of earthen pot, pottery making and its origin, terracotta figurines and their uses as a mother goddess and votive offerings.

Terracotta figurines can be traced back to the pre-Harappan period (Ganguly, 1959: 11). Finding of earthen pots can be traced back five thousand years (Dhamija, 1970: 43). There is evidence of toys, everyday household items found from third century BCE (Poster, 1986: 17). The terracotta figurines are filled with information and it also helps to understand the ritual practices of hoary tradition, religious rites and socio-economic condition of the society (Banerji, 1994: 01). The researcher concludes that since time immemorial earthen items were used frequently by the people for varied purpose such as rituals, utensils and decorating the house. Nevertheless, occasionally earthen objects are used for votive offerings but household uses are fading.

According to Saraswati (1979: 49-50), the *Kumhāra* community is divided into two sub-castes: *Kannaujia* and *Magahia*. The *Kannaujia* is regarded as superior to the *Magahia*, it is considered respectable. In addition to pottery, this caste also engages in various subsidiary functions, such as making *khapḍā* (straw or tile), kitchen appliances, and vase. The primary ritualistic object in *Viṣaharī* worship is the *Bārī kalaśa*, specifically made by the *Magahia* varna of the *Kumhāra* community. Within this community, the *Magahia* is considered an inferior caste, and their roles are assigned accordingly (1979: 49-50). Mahesh Pandit, a resident of Basantpur, Bhagalpur, says, “Major tasks involving the wheel, such as making utensils and pitchers, are carried out by the *Magahia* people. They are skilled in wheel work, while individuals from other *varnas* within the *Kumhāra* community focus on making various kitchen appliances and items like *khapḍā* (tile), *pyālī* (tea cup), glass, plate, etc. This knowledge of craftsmanship has been passed down through generation to generation.” As mentioned earlier, the *Kannaujia* caste is regarded as more respectable, and they are responsible for making idols of gods and goddesses for the festival.

At present, there are two distinct methods for making *Bārī kalaśa*: sun-dried, it is called unbaked (*kachhi mitt*), and kiln-fired known as baked (terracotta). According to legend, *Viṣaharī* narrates the rituals to Chand Saudagar, instructing him to bring an unbaked pot from the *Kumhāra*'s house. It is believed that Chando Saudagar was first to worship *Viṣaharī*, belonged to the *Baniyā* (*Sahukār*) caste. *Viṣaharī* narrates the worship process to Chand Saudagar, a pot should be unbaked and brought from the *Kumhāra* community and it is worshipped with turmeric, vermillion, flowers, and fruits. In consequence, unbaked pot has been traditionally used in the ritual. Today, both unbaked and baked pots are utilized in the ceremony. A simple unbaked pot is made with no decoration, while the baked version is painted in vibrant colours to enhance the visual aesthetics and appears more ornate. The pot is made by following the instructions given by *Bhagat*.

Table 1. Interview of Communities or Respondents

S. N.	Role of significant person	No. of Interviews
01.	<i>Kumhāra</i> (potter)	25
02.	<i>Mālākār</i> (gardener)	20
03.	<i>Kaśērā</i>	02
04.	<i>Tāñtī</i> (weaver)	05
05.	<i>Pandit</i> (priest)	04
06.	<i>Bhagat</i>	12
07.	<i>Devotee</i>	50

Table 1 presents the various communities that the author has interviewed, all of which play a significant role in the *Viṣaharī* worship. Without the involvement of these communities, the worship would be incomplete.

Kumhāra: This community is responsible for creating the *Bārī kalaśa*, a traditional pot is essential for the festival. During the *Bihulā-Viṣaharī* festival, the *Bārī* serves as the main ritualistic object and is crucial for the worship of the goddess.

Mālākār: This community prepares the *Mañjuṣā*, which features legends painted on a canopied structure made from *Shola* paper (pith-ball), *Sanai* (jute fiber soft wood), and regular paper. The *Mañjuṣā* is an integral part of the ritual, with the *Jhāñpī* serving

as its miniature form. Three colors are used to paint the *Mañjuṣā*: pink, green, and yellow.

Kaṣerā: The metal *kalaśa* is carved by the *Kaṣerā* or *Thatherā* community and is used in temple worship. This brass *kalaśa* is filled with sacred water, and local people believe that if someone is bitten by a snake, sprinkling the sacred water on the body can help prevent the poison from spreading.

Tāñtī: The *Tāñtī*, a weaver community, is a major participant in the ritual and worship of the goddess *Viṣaharī*. They own household temples dedicated to *Viṣaharī*, and they also serve as forerunners. It is often visited by community members living in the surrounding areas as well as from other communities.

Pandit: Pandit (priest) belongs to the *Brāhmin* family, performs the wedding ceremony of *Bihulā* during *Viṣaharī* festival. In some areas, priest serve as the presiding leader during the rituals. Typically, in urban areas, priest conduct worship in temples and lead the processions. They often fulfill both roles, acting as priest and *Bhagat*.

Bhagat or Bhagtain: *Bhagat*'s role could be performed by male or female. The role of *Bhagat* or *Bhagtain* can be seen in rural areas as well as in household temples. The *Bhagat* plays a vital role by carrying the *Mañjuṣā* and *Bārī Kalaśa* during the procession, accompanied by a number of devotees. *Bhagat* is also referred to as *Ojhāor Tāñtrik*. During *visarjan*, *Bhagat* wears a white cloth to cover his body and perform dance, whereas, musician accompanied with drums.

Devotee: The devotees participate in the procession, following the priest or *Bhagat* while holding miniature versions of the *Bārī kalaśa* and *Jhāñpi*. They also visit *Viṣaharī* temples and make vows for procreation, progeny and request the goddess to prevent their lives from snake bites.

Table 2. A List of Artisans's Interview (potters)

S. N.	Artisan's name	Location	Age & Gender	Generation	No. of Pieces made
01.	Mahesh Pandit	Basantpur, Bhagalpur	72 (M)	Third	30
02.	Shiv Narayan	Balu Ghat Road,	70 (M)	Second	03

	Pandit	Sultanganj			
03.	Bhikho Pandit	Abjuganj, Sultanganj	65 (M)	Second	03
04.	Parmila Devi	Kumhara Toli, Nathnagar	62 (F)	Third	20
05.	Devanand Pandit	Nathnagar, Bhagalpur	47 (M)	First	01
06.	Pappu Pandit	Basantpur, Bhagalpur	45 (M)	Third	20

Table 2 shows all the potters interviewed are above 40 years and belong to the various regions of the Bhagalpur district. Among the nine respondents, majority is male. It indicates that the pot is made by the male members but when it comes to the worship female takes the lead.

The Making of *Bārī Kalaśa*

Mahesh Pandit, lives in a remote area of Lodipur, Basantpur, Bhagalpur, prepares *Bārī kalaśa* according to the demands of the *Bhagat*. He comes from a Pottery family which is involved in pottery making from generation. Therefore, devotees or *Bhagat* commission potters to make the serpent pots for the rituals on the occasion of *Viṣaharī* festival. As mentioned above that according to *gāthā*, the votive object should be made by the potter community. He uses the colours that give the pots a modern and ornamental appearance (Fig 1). He incorporates flora and fauna designs to make it more decorative and attracting. The vibrant colour such as neon green, orange and golden yellow reflect the lively aesthetics of visual appearance of rural areas. Broadly speaking, in rural areas, garments are characterized by bright and bold colors. The application of these colors reveals the mindset, traditions, and backgrounds of the people.



Fig 1: Potter prepares *Bārī kalaśa* during *Bihulā-Viṣaharī* festival,

Source: Author

Shiv Narayan Pandit, 70 belong to Balu Ghat Road, Sultanganj, Bhagalpur, creates a two-story Bārī kalaśa. This pot features distinct characteristics, including its form, shape, size, and color, which differ significantly from previous image. In Figure 2, the color selection showcases as a representation of a snake. Generally, the wheel work is done by the male member, whereas, decoration and embellishment, including the application of colors, are handled by the females. The first layer uses grey as a base color, with design work added in a second layer. The artisan employs a variety of colors viz. red, pink, yellow, green, black, white, and golden colour is used to create intricate designs. Utilizing these colors, they incorporate flora and fauna motifs along with geometric patterns such as circles, triangles, stars, and semi-circles. Haddon and other scholars have noted that geometric patterns are extensively used in folk narratives often originates from the simplification of representative forms due to limitations in technique (Bunzel, 1938: 578).

The vase is adorned with five serpent hoods, four of which are attached to the belly of the pot, while the largest one is positioned at the tip. Each serpent hood features a spiraled serpent figurine, and the spiral design enhances the piece's liveliness and authenticity, bringing it to life.



Fig 2: Female member illustrate flora and fauna on votive objects, Source: Author

Bibhishan Pandit popularly known as Bhikho Pandit, hails from Abjuganj, Sultanganj, known for making different types of Bārī kalaśa. A descendant of Radhe Pandit, Bhikho's nāga kalaśa is seamlessly blending traditional techniques with various design and motifs, showcasing his mastery in pottery and wheel work. Bhikho's pot depicts sprouting or intertwined snakes, takes drawing inspiration from the folklore of Bihulā-Viṣaharī and showcases intricate details. The traditional use of vibrant pigments, including yellow, red and blue, is also evident. It appears that the repetition of triangular forms is essential in every single pot (Fig 3). However, the application of color and design on the pot is primarily done by female members of the household.



Fig 3: Potter engaged in preparing Bārī kalaśa, Source: Author

Parmila Devi, who lives in Nathnagar, Bhagalpur, carrying the legacy of her in-law families to create clay vases for rituals, she has been practicing this craft for thirty years. The neck of the pot features five intricately carved anthropomorphic *nāgini* images. The surface of vase is painted with mud yellow, while, orange, light lime green and pink are used for decoration. Blue is used to draw the outlines, enhancing the overall motifs (Fig 4). The repetition of the patterns is evident, contributing to an ornamental appearance. Traditionally, painting was not a common practice for clay vases, but modern changes have introduced this technique. Initially, natural colors were used for painting ritualistic items, but today, organic pigments have been replaced by industrial colors. The vase painting depends on linear elements, characterized by clear outlines and defined boundaries, with the mud yellow background providing a striking contrast.



Fig 4: Bārī kalaśa having anthropomorphic forms of nāginīs, Source: Author

Devanand Pandit hails from Champanagar, Nathnagar belongs to the *Kumhāra* caste, makes *nāga kalaśa* only for Champanagar's *Viśaharī* temple. His style is very much contemporary, using vibrant industrial chemical colours to enhance the visual appeal of his work. The hues he uses include golden yellow, silver, green, yellow, red, brown, pink etc., while, white, black and golden yellow are used to depict the snake hoods (Fig 5). A similar kind of *alpanā* design is used to decorate the *Bārī kalaśa*, and intricate elements and circular dot patterns are drawn in gold for embellishment. Throughout the year, Devanand makes deity statue for various occasions, including *Durgā*, *Kālī*, *Saraswatī*, etc. He also makes *Bihulā-Viśaharī* idols for Champanagar's *Viśaharī* temple which is installed outside of the temple.



Fig 5: Ornamental Bārī kalaśa with snake hoods, Source: Author
Pappu Pandit, 45, a resident of Lodipur, Bhagalpur also makes the *Bārī kalaśa* upon requests from Bhagat's demand. He

explains, “The method of terracotta is used to create the *Bārī kalaśa*, ensuring it doesn’t break. In Indian tradition, broken objects are not used in worship as they are considered inauspicious.” He incorporates *aṣṭanāga* in his *kalaśa* based on devotees demands (Fig 6). Generally, the potters make the *Bārī kalaśa* on the order that is why customer satisfaction is essential. His process of making *Bārī kalaśa* is akin to Mahesh Pandit’s pot (refer fig 6). The resemblance in their work may be attributed to the fact that both potters come from the same area.



Fig 6: Baked *aṣṭanāga Bārī kalaśa*, Source: Author

Findings

Bihulā-Viṣaharī is a festival dedicated to the serpent goddess, celebrated predominantly in the Bhagalpur region, Bihar. This study specifically examines ethnographical study of *Bārī kalaśa*, a significant ritual object used in the worship, and the variations in its use and preparation across urban and rural contexts. Traditionally, the *Bārī Kalaśa* was crafted from unbaked clay. However, with evolving practices and a growing need for durability and efficiency, modern techniques such as sunbaking and terracotta firing are now employed in the preparation of these ceremonial objects. Today, both sun-dried (unbaked) and kiln-fired (baked) methods are commonly used to prepare the ritual object. The study also explores the involvement of various communities and their influence on the festival’s socio-religious framework. Devotees play a vital role in ensuring the successful observance of the festival, contributing to both its spiritual and cultural significance.

Discussion & Conclusion

The *Bihulā-Viṣaharī* worship embodies a rich array of tradition, community, and cultural significance. The paper

discussed the origin and history of serpent worship, the associated myths, belief systems, and enduring cultural traditions in the context of Bhagalpur region. The paper highlights the ritualistic practices associated with *Bihulā-Viṣaharī* worship, emphasizing the integral role of the *Kumhāra* community in making the sacred pots used in the rituals, particularly the *Bārī kalaśa*, which is a significant part of the *pūjā*. Additionally, the central focus of the paper is the *Bārī kalaśa*, showcasing its variations and evolutions over time. Traditionally, unbaked and simple pots were crafted, but in contemporary practice, terracotta pots also have been introduced into the worship, characterized by their decorative and colorful designs.

The festival relies heavily on community involvement, with local people playing a vital role in its execution. Through community participation and the continued significance of these rituals, the *Bihulā-Viṣaharī* festival not only preserves age-old traditions but also adapts to the changing cultural landscape, ensuring its relevance for future generations. *Bārī kalaśa* stands as a symbol of devotion, protection, and the enduring connection between the people and their beliefs.

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Preserving Temple Heritage through Immersive Technologies: A Case Study of Odisha

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Abstract

Odisha's temple heritage represents one of the richest architectural and cultural traditions in India, yet many of its monuments remain vulnerable to environmental degradation, urban pressure, structural decay, and limited public accessibility. This paper explores the potential of immersive technologies, particularly Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and 3D digital documentation as innovative tools for preserving temple heritage in Odisha. Using a case study approach, the paper examines how the aged old temples such as Konark, Lingaraj, and Mukteswar and others can be digitally documented and represented to create interactive heritage experiences. It argues that immersive technologies not only support conservation by generating accurate visual records, but also enhance education, tourism, and cultural engagement by enabling users to experience monuments beyond physical and geographical constraints. At the same time, the study critically reflects on the challenges such as technological cost, authenticity, digital ethics, and infrastructural limitations in heritage institutions. By situating Odisha's temple heritage within the broader discourse of digital preservation, the paper highlights how immersive technologies can bridge gap between traditional conservation and contemporary digital innovation, offering new lens for the preservation of sacred and architectural legacy of the region for future generations.

Keywords: Heritage, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Odisha

Introduction

In the current age, preservation of cultural heritage demands innovative methods that transcend conventional documentations. In this regard, Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) have emerged as ground-breaking instruments for the preservation of cultural heritage in the digital era. The main focus of the study is to look at the capacity of emerging tech which can conserve Odisha's ancient temples, paying special emphasis to the aged old magnificent institutions viz., the Konark Sun Temple, Lingaraj Temple, Jagannath Temple, Mukteswar Temple and others. Through case studies of platforms like Tirtha, the research explores how immersive technologies boost conservation, and engagement via interactive 3D models and virtual walkthroughs. A mixed methods approach is employed in the study for say, qualitative analysis drawn from interdisciplinary literature and official reports from Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), UNESCO, Ministry of Culture, and INTACH, providing insight into heritage politics and preservation frameworks whereas quantitative analysis involves a comparative assessment of urban and rural Odisha using secondary data from NHFS-5, Census 2011, Odisha Tourism Bulletin (2023) and the NSS 75th Round. Descriptive statistics are used to examine disparities in digital access, cultural participation and educational attainment, highlight challenges in implementing technologies equitably across regions. Findings suggest that VR and AR hold immense promise in democratizing heritage access at the same time enhancing education and tourism. By keeping Odisha's temple heritage at the junction of both global and local digital ecosystem this research support for sustainable, ethical and regional responsive technological interventions to preserve sacred spaces for future generations.

Literature review

The preservation of cultural heritage has traditionally relied on archival practices, material conservation, and institutional custodianship. However, with the emergence of digital technologies and cultural studies, a new lens has emerged, one that emphasizes accessibility and user engagement. Immersive technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) have become central to this preservation,

offering alternative ways to experience, document, and disseminate cultural heritage beyond the limitations of physical space. Globally, immersive technologies have been adopted across a wide range of heritage settings. An experimental study on the use of mobile AR in the Taiwanese town of Lukang, where cultural elements such as decorated facades and religious installations were reconstructed using photogrammetry (Shih et al., 2020). This study also illustrates how learning is enabled through AR enhanced cultural understanding and tourism engagement in remote or heritage-sensitive zones. Similarly, wearable AR applications such as Microsoft Holo Lens for urban heritage trails in Kocaeli, Turkey (Ibis and Cakici Alp, 2024). Findings suggest that interactive interfaces, layered historical reconstruction, and user-led navigation promote not only visitor immersion but also long-term retention of cultural knowledge. Bibliometric studies such as those by Pujari and Verma (2023) reveal disproportionately low presence of Indian case studies in global immersive heritage literature, particularly in regions rich in vernacular or sacred architecture. However, Karka et al. (2022) point out, most Indian projects lack interdisciplinary integration, long-term funding, and public-private collaboration. The educational potential of immersive heritage is further explored by Paulauskas et al. (2023), he propose VR-based serious games in museum settings to foster kinaesthetic learning, i.e., the convergence of education, digital storytelling, and spatial reasoning within virtual museums, thereby enriching visitor experience and historical empathy. Bozzelli et al. (2019) present ArkaeVision, an AR platform for archaeological documentation that leverages mobile interfaces to reconstruct fragmented or lost architectural features.

Despite these advances, several scholars point to limitations and concerns. Technologies such as AR and VR require high-end devices and stable digital infrastructure, raise issues of accessibility, particularly in under-resourced regions. While digital reconstructions can fill temporal gaps, they risk oversimplification or distortion of nuanced cultural heritage. In the Indian context, the integration of immersive technologies into heritage preservation remains relatively nascent. The Tirtha platform, which focuses on digitally reconstructing Indian temples

sites through crowdsourced photographs and Structure from Motion (SfM), represents a significant step toward democratizing temple heritage documentation. While efforts like the 3D scanning of the Konark Sun Temple have been initiated, the broader application of AR/VR in Odisha's heritage conservation is still developing. This limitations suggests the need for regionally focused research which would not only documents heritage but also engages local communities and cultural stakeholders. Collectively, the literature reveals both the possibilities and perils of immersive technologies in cultural preservation. Odisha's temple heritage, with its unique architectural grandeur and living traditions, presents an ideal case for such a locally grounded, technological approach.

Methodology

This research paper employs a mixed methods approach integrating qualitative and quantitative data analysis to examine the potential of immersive technologies, i.e., Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in the preservation of Odisha's ancient temple heritage. The qualitative dimension of the study draw supona close analysis of scholarly articles alongside key heritage reports by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), UNESCO (2003, 2015), and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). These institutional sources provide essential context regarding global and national policies on heritage documentation, cultural sustainability, and digital preservation. INTACH's policy briefs on digital conservation in India stress the importance of integrating community participation and technological tools for long-term sustainability. UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and its 2015 initiative on the digital documentation of world heritage emphasize the role of emerging technologies in transmitting cultural memory across generations. A case study in the paper guides the qualitative exploration of some selected heritage sites in Odisha, viz the Lingaraj Temple, Konark Sun Temple, and Mukteswar Temple. These sites were selected based on their architectural complexity, vulnerability to degeneration, and ritual significance. The study analyses the potential of immersive technologies in capturing the structural forms as well as ritual dimensions of the temples. Special attention is given to the Tirtha

platform, a digitization initiative that uses crowds our cedimagery and photogrammetric modelling to generate 3D models of Indian temples. Aquantitative analysisis also in corporate dusing data derived from studies conducted in previous AR/VR heritage projects. Data from Governments ources, ASI, UNESCO 2003 & 2015, INTACH are reanalysed using SPSS software to draw comparisons and theoretical extrapolations that are relevant to the Indian context. For instance, high usability scores among younger and middle-aged users suggest the importance of tailoring immersive heritage platforms for digitally literatede mographics and also point toward the need broad eruserbases.

Role of VR and AR in Cultural Heritage

Urbanization, unregulated tourism, and environmental deterioration are making it harder and harder to conserve cultural assets around the world. Ancient temples in Odisha, such as the Konark Sun Temple, Lingaraj Temple, and Mukteswar Temple and others, are also affected by these same risks. Such heritage can be rightly preserved with the help of digital technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), which offer immersive and interactive experiences that can reduce the physical strain on fragile monuments and expanding access to education and culture globally (Bekele et al., 2018). VR and AR enable the preservation of endangered cultural monuments by mean of digital restorations, and virtual walkthroughs. These technologies also help with the issue of limited accessibility, especially for people who can't physically visit these places. Several notable domestic and international projects have demonstrated how VR andAR have the potential to transform heritage conservation. For example: The restoration of the ancient Roman homes in Pompeii in Italy, is among the most notable instances of VR-based heritag epreservation. Utilizing Unity 3D, drone photography, and laser scanning, researchers at Lund University created immersive virtual reality experiences of the "House of the Greek Epigrams." Through the analysis of visitor eye-tracking data, archaeologist scande termine which architectural details attract the greatest interest, facilitating restoration planning in addition to allowing virtual tourists to explore the historic city (Artnet, 2022; Bekele et al., 2018). In Cambodia, the Virtual Angkor project offers a completely

comprehensive virtual reality representation of the historic city of Angkor, making it another strong argument. The initiative gives scholars and students throughout the world a virtual glimpse of the cultural richness of ancient Angkor by fusing temple architecture, local markets, and ceremonial venues. Virtual Angkor is a popular model in classrooms throughout the world that shows VR can be used to combine history, archaeology, and immersive narrative into one educational platform (Virtual Angkor, 2021). The Konark Light and Sound Show is a notable example of a pioneering use of technology to promote heritage in India. Presented by the Odisha government in 2017, this 3D laser projection performance engages both local and foreign tourists by telling the stories and historical significance of the Konark Sun Temple in Odia, Hindi, and English (The New Indian Express, 2017). In contrast to physical restoration, this immersive projection raises public awareness of culture while requiring less human participation. Furthermore, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has made the Konark Sun Temple one of the global heritage sites accessible through Google Arts & Culture's virtual platform. High-resolution 3D scans and panoramic walk-through allow users to take a virtual tour of these historic sites. This project enables participation in tourism and education regardless of geography by democratizing access to cultural sites (Google Arts & Culture, 2022).

Figure 1 Comparative Analysis of VR/AR Applications in Cultural Heritage Conservation

Case Study	Country	Technology used	Preservation Impact	Tourism/ educational benefit
Pompeii VR Reconstruction	Italy	VR, Drone, Eye Tracking	Supports Digital reconstruction and restoration	Enable virtual tourism and academic research
Virtual Angkor project	Cambodia	Full site VR	Digitally preserved entire cultural spaces	Provide classroom learning globally
Konark light and sound show	India	3D laser projection	Enhances awareness without	Attracts multiple visitors,

			physical alteration	evening tourism
ASI virtual Tours (Google Arts and Culture)	India	3D scans, mobile AR	Digitally archived temples features	Offer free global virtual site access

Sources: Compiled by the author based on data from Artnet (2022), VirtualAngkor (2021), The New Indian Express (2017), and GoogleArts & Culture (2022).

How VR/AR is for Odisha?

In order to facilitate in-depth virtual research and digitally rebuild damaged temple buildings, Odisha can imbibe inspiration from the Pompeii VR project and use LiDAR and drone technologies. Learnings from the Virtual Angkor project can guide the development of VR-based educational resources that introduce temple architecture, ceremonies, and Odisha's cultural narratives to a global audience. The success of the Konark Light and Sound Show indicates that other noteworthy locations, including the Mukteswar and Lingaraj Temples, could also adopt similar 3D projection experiences. Additionally, the ASI–Google Arts & Culture partnership might be extended to cover lesser-known temples and regional historical sites in Odisha, thereby opening them up to scholars and virtual visitors from around the globe. Odisha has the opportunity to strengthen cultural education, promote eco-friendly tourism, and preserve its rich temple heritage for future generations through the effective use of VR and AR technologies.

Digital Disparities and Cultural Access in Odisha

In order to assess the readiness of Odisha's for immersive cultural technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), it is essential to comprehend the current digital ecosystem and socio-cultural engagement patterns. Numerous measures of internet access and cultural activity show notable disparities between urban and rural allocations, according to new survey data. These differences in participation and infrastructure hinder the adoption of equitable AR/VR heritage preservation programs. The following table provides a comparative overview of key digital, educational, and cultural factors.

Figure 2: Urban – Rural Comparison of Digital Access, Education, and Cultural Participation in Odisha

Indicator	Urban %	Rural%	Total%
Internet user women (15-49)	39.7	21.3	24.9
Internet User Men (15-49)	64.2	47.2	50.7
Own mobile phones (women)	58.8	48	50.1
Women literate (15-49)	81.9	66.7	69.5
Men literate (15-49)	88.8	83.4	84.6
Women with 10+year of scholling	47.9	29.6	33
Men with 10+ year of schooling	46	36.6	38.6
Visiting temple (annual %)	70	58	64
Awareness of heritage schemes (%)	40	15	27.5

Sources: Compiled from NFHS-5, NSS 75th Round, Census 2011, Odisha Tourism Bulletin (2023), and Ministry of Culture Reports.

These figures reveal a consistent trend: urban Odisha still has significantly more access to mobile devices, internet services, and education, all of which are necessary for adopting and utilizing immersive technologies. For example, urban women use the internet nearly twice as much (39.7%) as rural women (21.3%). The reach of AR apps or online VR-based temple tours in rural area is severely constrained by this discrepancy. In addition, just 29.6% of women in rural areas have finished ten or more years of education, whereas 47.9% of women in metropolitan. Digital literacy is impacted by this educational disparity. Cultural participation, such as visiting temples (58% rural), is nevertheless high in both areas despite the digital differences, suggesting a large opportunity for outreach with a cultural foundation. The fact that only 15% of rural Odisha residents are aware of heritage schemes, compared to 40% of urban residents, is very alarming. Both informational and infrastructure-based exclusion are reflected in this knowledge gap, indicating that community-based sensitization and digital literacy campaigns must be implemented alongside VR/AR projects. It is accurate to state that although immersive technologies have a lot of promise, their implementation needs to take into account Odisha's demographic reality.

Challenges and Ethical Concerns

While Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) offer many new possibilities for preserving and sharing cultural heritage, the iruseinsacred and historical place slike Odisha's temple salso brings many important challenges. The seinclude technical difficulties, questions about accuracy, limited access, and concerns related to cultural sensitivityordisrespectforthe heritage they are meant to protect. Digital inequalities are another challenge. While these technologie scan help people in citiesorabroadexplore Odisha's heritage, they may leave out the very communities who liven earthese temples. This create sarisk that local voices and knowledge will be ignored, even though these communities have been the guardians of these temples for generations.

One of the main challenges is the lack of infrastructure. Creating high-quality VR and AR experiences requires advanced equipment such as software, special cameras, and viewing devices, along with high-speed internet and computer systems. However, many heritage-rich regions in Odisha, especially in rural areas, do not yet have this kind of digital infrastructure. There are also concerns about authenticity. When a temple or ritual is turned into a digital experience, many thing sare left out, suchas the atmosphere, the soundofprayers,thesmellof incense,orthespiritualfeelingsofworshippers.Avirtualmodelmightshowdetaileddcarvings, butitcannotfullyrecreatetheemotionalorsacredexperienceofbeingi nthetemple.Ifvisitors or students rely only on the digital version, they may get an incomplete or even incorrect understanding of the site.

At the policy level, India does not yet have clear guidelines on how VR and AR should be used for heritage. While institutions like the ASI and INTACH have started some digital projects, there is no backing for any unified national plan. As UNESCO (2015) warns, digital materials also need to be preserved properly; if storage system sarepoor, the data becomes out dated, and even these virtual models could be lost in the future. Cultural sensitivity is another major concern. Forinstance, in living temples like the Lingaraj temple, Jagannath Temple, filmingor scanningsacred spaces with out permission could be

seen as disrespectful. Religious rituals are not just events to be recorded; they are part of a living tradition. And before creating digital versions of such practices, it is important to ask: Who owns this cultural knowledge? Who decides how it is shown or used? Without involving local priests, temple authorities, and communities, digital efforts may unintentionally cross ethical boundaries. Finally, there is the risk of turning temples into entertainment. Many immersive technologies are designed to be fun and exciting. This can be useful for education, but it can also turn sacred places into games or tourist attractions rather than places of worship. Spiritual and cultural meanings might get lost if the focus is only on visual appeal or interaction.

In a nutshell, using immersive technologies to preserve Odisha's temples must be done carefully. These tools are powerful, but they must be guided by respect, cultural understanding, and community involvement. Without this, digital preservation could harm the very traditions it hopes to save. A balanced approach combining innovation with sensitivity can help ensure that both the physical and spiritual value of Odisha's temple heritage are protected for future generations.

Discussion

Using Virtual and Augmented Reality to preserve cultural heritage is an important development in how we protect, share, and understand our past. In the case of Odisha's aged old temples, these digital tools offer new ways to document sacred spaces and make them more accessible to people across different regions and generations. This paper has shown that platforms like Tirthas, which build 3D model soft temples, are a good example of how digital tools can involve local people in preservation. Although they may not use advanced equipment like some international projects, such as ARKON or ARKae Vision, they still provide meaningful ways to save and share heritage in places where resources are limited. In Odisha, where many temples are still not fully documented and are slowly decaying due to weather and age, such low-cost, inclusive methods can be extremely helpful.

It is important to understand that, however this digital experience can not fully replace the physical experience of visiting a temple. Although a VR or AR tour can provide in

formation, sounds, or images, it still cannot recreate the feeling of standing inside a temple, hearing real chants, or being part of a festival. These tools should be seen as a support system that helps in education, tourism, and global awareness, and not as a substitute for real-world heritage. Insights from international project shelpus to understand how similar tools mightwork for temple visitorsin Odisha, but there is still a gap; no such studies have yet been conducted in the Indian temple context. Inthefuture, surveys orinter views with local usersin Odisha could help design apps or technologies that are easier to use and are more culturally respectful with better suited to Indian audiences. The ethical side of this work is equally important as the technical side because not everything can or should be turned into a digital model. Temples are not just buildings; they are places of deep faith and emotion. The decision about what to record, what to show, and how to show it must involve the localc ommunity, especially priests,scholars,and temple caretakers. Without their voices, digital models may end up being incomplete or even disrespectful, no matter how well-made they are. Collaboration between technologies, researchers, designers, and local communities is key to making these projects both meaningful and responsible. In the case of Odisha, digital tools offer not only an exciting opportunity but also a duty to protect not just the temples but the traditions and feelings that live inside them. With the right balance of technology and tradition, Odisha could become a model for how to use immersive technologies in a way that is smart, sensitive, and sustainable.

Conclusion

This study explored how Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) can be used to preserve and share the ancient temple heritage of Odisha. As technology becomesa significant part of cultural preservation, these tools offer new way stoprotect and present temples that are both artistically valuable and spiritually meaningful. Odisha's temples, such as Lingaraj temple, Jagannath temple, Konark, Mukteswar, and others, represent more than stone monuments; they embody living traditions, cultural identity, and community memory. In this context, VR and AR can support preservation efforts by documenting delicate carvings, offering educational experiences, and reconstructing damaged

elements that make heritage accessible across distances and generations.

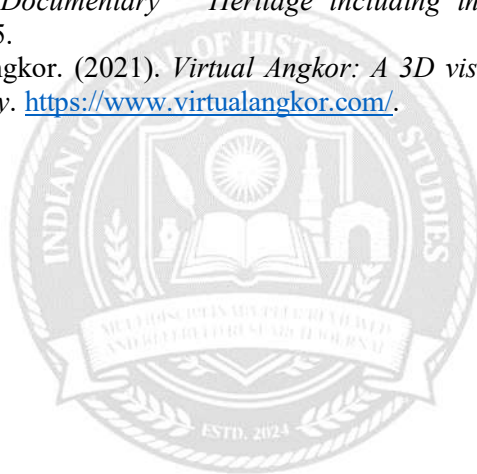
This research emphasizes that immersive heritage must go beyond visual reconstruction; it must be grounded in cultural respect and community participation. Strong institutional policies from institutions such as the Ministry of Culture and ASI are needed to provide clear ethical guidelines and sustainable digital practices. The inclusion of temple caretakers, priests, scholars, and residents in the design and implementation becomes more imperative to ensure that what is being preserved digitally aligns with the living reality of these sacred spaces. Hence, immersive technologies offer a powerful supplement and not a substitute for traditional methods of heritage conservation. When used thoughtfully and inclusively, they can enhance our understanding of complex cultural traditions and protect vulnerable heritage in ways that are engaging, informative, educational, and enduring. Odisha, with its vibrant temple legacy, is uniquely positioned to lead such efforts. By blending innovation with tradition, the state can become a model for responsible and culturally rooted digital preservation.

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Reading an Era of Heroic Ballads through the Oral Narratives of Alha and Udal

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Abstract

Folk tradition is an important part of Indian culture which helps in formulation of sense of history. India has rich blend of traditions, beliefs, customs, and artistic expressions that are an integral part of the life of any community. It is not just the recitation of poem or narratives rather a dynamic event with layers of meanings and significances. Early Medieval North India has numerous folk traditions and narratives with significant role in the cultural and literary life. Alha and Udal, legendary brothers of 12th century in Bundelkhand, is an important example of it whose bravery and achievements are celebrated in epic form through Alha-Khand. Alha is a historical identity that has been solidified in the society. These heroic ballads were created and shared across the region, and were transferred orally from generation to generation. They offer a glimpse of the social, political, cultural and collective memory of an earlier time. This article delves into the age of folk epic in the tradition of Alha-Khand. Themes of valour, courage, loyalty, kinship, regional culture, local population and orality are used in the analysis of the stories, which not only document historical or semi-historical events, but also produce the social norms and popular practices of a region.

Keywords: *Folk tradition, Alha-Udal, oral narratives, heroic ballads, Bundelkhand, valour, kingship, regional identity, customs, storyteller, cultural memory.*

Introduction

Heroic Ballads form an important segment of folk literature, in which stories of heroism, bravery, and the sacrifice

of heroes are sung. It presents itself as a medium of life, a medium of recollection, a medium of reconstruction, and a medium of commemoration of the past. These ballads narrate military combats and the noteworthy accomplishments of kings and soldiers; consequently, it stimulates a sense of warmth and loyalty among the people. There are variety of oral histories in the Bundelkhand region. Alha was an important tradition in storytelling. People used to sing Alha in the monsoons, at community rallies and most especially during the time of *kajari visarjan* (wheatgrass sowing in the soil). This is a story about two *banaphar* warriors, Alha and Udal, who were generals under the Chandel king Parmardidev Varman at Mahoba in the 12th-century Bundelkhand (Dikshit, S.K. 1968, P.45). The stories of their courage are collectively known as the *Alhakhand*, which is written by the poet Jagnik, who belongs to the *Adikal* period, who was a contemporary of Chand Bardai (Shukla, R. 2022, pp.53-54). The ballad was sung in different dialects, which helped to instil courage and brave attributes in citizens, and fostered a military culture that remains strong today.

It is not documented in these stories; hence, they are vigorous and versatile. Each performance is transformed into a play, influenced by the person performing the role, the audience's perception of the role, and the setting. In particular, it was fascinating to see how culture and society coexist and produce layers of history that still have an impact on the present. The features of heroic ballads are discussed in this article, as well as their ability to give insight into the socio-cultural atmosphere of the time they represent.

The first era in the history of literature is called *Veer Gatha Kaal* (Era of Heroic Ballads). This was a time of coming together and change. In this era, the history of moments was written in blood as this phase talks about the sacrifice, warriors' strength, and courage. At this time, heroic pride and self-respect are prevalent. This was a time when poets were able to write poetry with a pen, but also with a sword, and when they were able to fight in battle. There were three strongholds of power in North India in those days, namely Kanauj, Mahoba and Delhi (Waterfield & Grierson, 1923, p.13). Alha is the poetic epic about the wars between these three kingdoms. It was the time when

people were willing to sacrifice their lives for honour, dignity and glory.

The Nature of Heroic Ballads

The *Alha-Udal* oral ballads are an extremely rich and dynamic source of information about the Indian heroic ballad period (*Veergatha Kaal*). These ballads are extremely impressive, and their detailed description of valour, prowess and martial skill brings the protagonists into a realm where they become extraordinary beings as a result of their courage, gallantry and battlefield skills (Mayaram, A.P. 2008, p. 9). They are intended not just for enjoyment, but to instil pride, enthusiasm and heroism within society. As the ballads have been orally transmitted from one generation to the next, they have been altered in form and content by the time, place and singer, and this fluid quality has prevented them from becoming rigid and rigidifying the folk traditions of which they are a part.

These ballads are simple, natural, and in vernacular language (*Bundeli*) to be understood by the common people (Chauhan. S. 2017, p.8). Moreover, they are based on history, but also on imagination, hyperbole, and elaborate descriptions, making them even more interesting and powerful. Battle scenarios, for example, and descriptions of the hero's power and bravery are sometimes exaggerated to add even more excitement and thrill to the listeners.

One of the most notable features of these heroic songs is that they are not simply stories of war and valour, but also elevate lofty social and moral values like loyalty, self-sacrifice, dutifulness, brotherhood, fealty to the master and honour. Heroes like Alha and Udal are always at the service of *Dharma* (rightful duty) and obligations and will do anything to maintain it and their values; it is a clear reflection of their ideals and core values at that time. Further, these ballads have a strong collectivistic flavour, with loyalty to society, state and the community.

The musical quality and performance style of such ballads are another factor to remember concerning the nature of these ballads. They are sung to particular notes and rhythms, creating a strong emotional bond with the audience, thus making the story even more moving and meaningful. These ballads are generally

sung collectively at the fair, the festival and in the monsoon, thus promoting social cohesion and continuity of culture.

Therefore, the Alha and Udal oral sagas are not just tales of valour but are a comprehensive picture of the social network, culture, ethics, and daily life of that time. Their character is multi-dimensional and they have a fantastic mix of history, imagination, folk culture, and human emotions, and hence they continue to be alive and relevant to the Indian folk culture today.

Historical and Cultural Context

Bundelkhand is an area of rich heritage, culture and history located in the central part of India with parts of the states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The area is rocky, hilly, and has seasonal rivers (Atkinson, E.T. 1874, p.1). It has a glorious history, wherein the Chandel rulers commissioned the construction of magnificent forts and temples. Among such folk traditions, the *Alhakhand* is a medieval North Indian epic, which is rich in the oral history of the people of Bundelkhand, and is an expression of the valour and cultural identity of the people of the region. This epic deals with the stories of Alha-Udal, which are linked with the medieval era, c. 12th century, when the Chandel dynasty ruled the central part of India. The history of this time is marked with the complicated political turmoil, societal transformation and extreme feudal warfare between the three powers by the rulers like Prithviraj Chauhan of Delhi, Jaichand of Kanauj, Parmal of Mahoba, etc. in the 12th century. But, Authenticity of the Alha is substantiated by the fact that it has been engraved in the mind and heart of the people since the start of the 12th century, and its history has also been proven through Prithviraj Raso, owing to the adaptability of Alha; therefore, its history has been a part of debate among intellectuals. The story places them in a familiar political context of the regional wars, loyalty of warriors and the beginning of state formation.

The central conflict often revolves around battles between Parmal's kingdom and rival powers such as Prithviraj Chauhan and these conflicts have proven by the inscriptional records such as Madanpur Jain Temple inscription 1182 CE, Samra inscription 1166 CE, and Mahoba inscription 1173 CE, and it is important to note how communities remember these figures because the ballads transform historical figures into cultural icons,

embodying ideals of strength, sacrifice, and honour. In the context of other texts, it is a breathing document which survived for a long time among the communities of Bundelkhand and has its strong cultural significance as it involves the common people with their culture, which is still alive in their day-to-day life, like various rituals for marriage, *Samdhaura*, *Kuwar Kaleva*, *Tel, Mandap*, etc (Chauhan, S. 2017, p.8).

Social Structure and Identity

Alha and Udal describe oral history, which can provide us with a great deal of information about the social organization of these people. The social order depicted in the Alha narratives is feudal and warrior-centred. The social stratification and roles of the king, chieftain, warrior, priest and common subjects are clearly differentiated. The power of the king is paramount, but is continually rivalled by devotion and personal bravery. Loyalty is an important element of medieval polity; for example, the loyalty of Alha and Udal towards King Parmal of Mahoba, but their relationship with the king also highlights the various issues of a feudal society in which personal honour may be stronger than blind loyalty. The ballads point to the role of warriors as land guardians and protectors, stressing the importance of bravery and triumph in battle for the good of society. Here, heroism is a responsibility for the people and a part of their identity.

The significance of caste and clan identity in social relationships is also pointed out in oral sources. Alha and Udal belong to the *Banaphar* clan, which is mixed-race (Ahir and Rajput) as is stated in the stories. Their identity turns into a ground of struggle as competing elites challenge their social status and appropriateness. The ballads reveal the caste consciousness of the era that was so solidly established, but they question it as well. Although when confronted, they demonstrate bravery, loyalty and sacrifice in overcoming criticism from other higher-ranking Rajput groups (Waterfield & Grierson, 1923, p.12). So, perhaps the stories suggest, at other times, bravery and goodness will triumph over the conditions of birth in society. In this way, oral traditions become spaces of contestation, struggle, for marginalized and contested identities for recognition and dignity.

The collective identity of the area, which can be traced in Alha ballads, is the second important aspect of the social sphere. The stories, in general, convey a prideful attitude of the community of Bundelkhand and their own identity. Oral performance, most commonly in the local language, is a means of communication between communities, a reminder of resistance, warfare and sacrifice. The heroes are not only heroes of the individuals but they are heroes of the region. These ballads were sung from generation to generation and helped to keep local history and culture alive outside of writing. These were performed, and they did provide an opportunity for the common people to be involved in the heroic history in their emotions, thereby strengthening people's unity.

The roles of men and women in these tales also reflect the patriarchal nature of medieval society. Generally speaking, women are depicted as symbols of honour, loyalty and emotional strength. They do not fight, but they are essential in inspiring heroic deeds and maintaining family honour (Sharma, S.R.1996, p.75). Within a patriarchy, the social expectation of women is to maintain moral values and family honour, which is often the case with mothers and wives encouraging warriors to uphold the honour of their clan.

Moreover, the popularity of these sagas in rural areas suggests that these stories were not only of the elite but were also very significant to the general population. These stories might have helped marginalised communities to feel empowered and included by celebrating heroes who were mixed- or contested-heroes.

Performance Tradition of Alha Singing

Alha singing is an important aspect of the oral and folk culture of North India and particularly of the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The stories of Alha and Udal are not literary works, but are oral traditions alive and vibrant in public performance, village meetings, fairs, and seasonal festivals. The ballads are traditionally sung by folk performers called *Alhais*, who keep and pass on the stories from generation to generation through memory and performance, not in written form. The oral tradition offers a flexibility to narration, which enables singers to tailor the stories to the local audiences,

social contexts and regional histories. Alha tradition is thus an expression of a dynamic relationship between folklore, performance, and the collective cultural memory.

Alha singing is known for its dramatic narration, emotional intensity and strong voice. The singers typically sing at a high pitch and with great energy, in a martial style characteristic of the ballads. The instruments such as *dholak*, *manjira*, and harmonium add to the heroism and excitement in the performance (Tiwari. L. 1989, p.1). Songs help to remember stories and emotions involved with the story through repetition and rhythm. The theme of war, valour, sacrifice and fidelity are often highlighted in the songs and the audiences of the singers are appealed to with feelings of pride and admiration. The performative element of Alha singing creates an oral narration which unites the history, entertainment and culture together as a communal experience.

The performances of Alha are traditionally linked to the monsoon season, mainly during the months of *Shravan* and *Bhado*. These are the villages where people sit together in open areas, at the temple, or at the village square and listen to these ballads, which are sung all night long. The events create a sense of community and maintain cultural heritage. These oral performances are also a means to preserve regional history and the values of heroes in society, particularly in a society with limited written historical materials. The singers repeat stories of battle and bravery, maintaining a living history of the warrior culture of the medieval period and local customs. So, this is a double-edged sword of tradition of performance as art and tradition of performance as society.

A singer-audience interaction is also a vital part of Alha singing. Oral performance is very interactive with the audience, while written literature is not. Hearing stories of courage, loss or revenge has an emotional impact on listeners; occasionally, actors will alter the narration according to the emotion of the assembly. This helps to make each show special and keeps the tradition alive and current. There is a great respect for the singers as entertainers as well as folk historians and inheritors of cultural heritage.

Continuity and Relevance in Modern Times

The *Alha-Udal* narratives continue to be present and recognized today, as these ballads highlight a sense of succession and union to cultural roots. They can be attributed to their inexhaustible motifs and adaptability. In the present day, people use modern musical system to celebrate their happiness and in the rural area people have of late preferred to perform the Alha on the special occasions like, birth of a child, marriage ceremony etc, *Alhais* in the Bhojpur region are usually performed on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan and in the Bundelkhand are performed on the occasion of birth of a child and marriage ceremony.

In modern performances, new instruments (like heavy use of sound system, or staged performance) have been introduced, but the basic story is still played using the traditional instruments (Dholak, Manjira, Tanpura, Talwar, etc.). This shows the strength and belief associated with oral storytelling.

In addition, the notion of heroism and resistance is intriguing to today's audiences, particularly related to social and political resistance. The stories instil a sense of pride and identity and remind people of the importance of the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Conclusion

For human beings, poetry is an object of such utility that it is found—in one form or another—among all the peoples of the world, whether civilized or uncivilized. Even if history, science, or philosophy were absent, the prevalence of poetry would undoubtedly endure. It can be argued that the thematic essence of any poem or epic holds far greater significance than mere questions regarding its authenticity or lack thereof; the existence of a literary work cannot be negated solely on the grounds of a lack of precise and verifiable knowledge concerning its specific geographical setting, historical era, or circumstantial context.

It is true that literature adapts itself to society and serves as a mirror reflecting it. When the need arises, it transforms itself to remain in harmony with the spirit of the age. Just as every endeavour, there was a time when heroic epics were composed to infuse the nation with vitality and to awaken the spirit of valour within its people. While some of these heroic epics were short-

lived, others have endured and are still invoked today to inspire bravery. In this tradition, numerous heroic epics were written; indeed, many of them survive to this day. However, among all such heroic works, the fame and renown enjoyed by *Alhakhand*, authored by Jagnik, is a distinction that very few have claimed. This is also seen in the *Alhakhand* which transforms or adapts itself according to the demand of society but its authenticity remains in the performative style. Alha-Udal were considered like Ram-Lakshman in the *Ramcharitmanas*. The narrative shows the immense love between the two brothers.

Moreover, this Alha narrative is not just a way of singing but it is also a form to reveals the condition of gender relations as during this period, the condition of women in Bundelkhand was deplorable. Women remained subservient to their husbands in every respect. Practices such as child marriage, polygamy, and mismatched marriages were prevalent in this society. Widows were compelled to lead a life of neglect and marginalization within society. Among the middle and lower strata of society, the practice of spousal abandonment—whether by the husband or the wife—was also common. The custom of observing *ghoonghat* (veiling) was prevalent across all three upper classes of society. Furthermore, the practice of Sati was also in vogue among women in this region.

At the conclusion of all this, a reading of Alha and Udal can teach us about the past, but the past as it has been remembered and remembered differently. It does so by promoting the importance of oral tradition as an integral component of cultural heritage or collective identity.

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Guru Gorakhnath's Life and Teachings

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Abstract

Guru Gorakhnath is one of the most prominent and mysterious individuals in Indian religious, philosophical and yogic history. He is considered as the founder of the Nath Sampradaya, or the supreme organizer of it, and he stands at the very center of Shaivism, Vajrayana Buddhism, Tanitra and vernacular devotional traditions of medieval South Asia. The article is an attempt to reconcile textual, hagiographical and ethnographic evidence to explore the life, teachings and lasting legacy of Guru Gorakhnath. The article unfolds in three related strands: (a) Historical and biographical background of Gorakhnath's life, (b) the philosophical and theological content of his teachings, and (c) the practical yogic and ascetic path he advocated. The analysis reveals that, Gorakhnath's creative genius was in the unification of mystical currents, creating a cohesive, comprehensible and impactful religious organization whose impact resonated across Hindu poetry, politics, social reform and global yoga dissemination. The article concludes that Gorakhnath's legacy is not just historical, but continues to be actively shaping religious identity, political power and spiritual yearning in today's South Asia.

Keywords: *Guru Gorakhnath, Nath Sampradaya, Hatha Yoga, Kanphata Yogis, Siddhas, Matsyendranath.*

Introduction

There are few persons in Indian spirituality with such a huge geographical imagination and long and still powerful cultural impact as Guru Gorakhnath. The name of Gorakhnath echoes through the snows of the Himalayas, into the temples of the Deccan, from the court of medieval Rajput kings, into the poetry of Kabir—a symbol of yogic strength, spiritual freedom and social change. Today, millions of people throughout South

Asia celebrate Gorakhnath as not only a saint or a philosopher, but as a being of superhuman stature, whom they consider to be an avatar of Lord Shiva himself (Briggs, 1938; Bevilacqua & Stuparich, 2022).

However, even in this extraordinary position, the historical Gorakhnath is difficult to find—or perhaps this is for the best. The cult of his name is marked by a wealth of legends, a profusion of hagiography, and a reluctance to be reduced to a simple chronology. His birthplace is not certain, the time of his life is a matter of debate among scholars and the texts assigned to him span from the lofty Sanskrit yogic treatises to the vernacular Hindi verses of incredible philosophical and spiritual profundity. This complexity is approached with the aid of two registers: the historical and the devotional, the critical and the empathetic.

This article does just that. It is based on a large number of primary and secondary sources, providing a detailed picture of Guru Gorakhnath's life and teachings. The discussion is organized into four major sections. The first offers background and history—what is known (and what remains unknown) of Gorakhnath's origins, family, and travels. The second explores the philosophical and theological aspects of his thought, especially his combination of Shaiva tantra, yogic physiology, and social ethics. The third deals with his systematized practical system of yoga, especially that of Goraksha Sataka, the key work of his school, which is usually said to be written by him. The fourth section reflects his lasting impact on literature, politics and modern yogic culture. These threads together show us not only how Gorakhnath plays a role in the history of Indian religion, but the pulse of it.

The historical and biographical context.

The Problem of Dating and Origin.

The dating of Gorakhnath is one of the most controversial issues in the analysis of Indian religious history. The legends about Gorakhnath make him a “being outside the ordinary laws of time” (Briggs, 1938, p. 228), and he is reported to have come to earth in various cosmic eras (yugas). To the devotees this framing of the mythological is meaningful but to the historian the task is much complicated. Believers in the tradition believe that Gorakhnath is older than the world was created, as one tradition

was that when Vishnu appeared at the first moment of the cosmos, Gorakhnath was already in the nether world and that Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva were his first disciples (Briggs, 1938, p. 245).

Much serious effort was put into finding a date for Gorakhnath, with various dates emerging. The origin of Gorakhnath has been suggested by Mallik (1954), Dasgupta (1946), and White (1996), all of which point to Punjab; Briggs (1938) suggested eastern Bengal; and Mallinson (2011) Deccan. The best one can say, as summarised by Bouillier (2012) and confirmed by Bevilacqua and Stuparich (2022), is that Gorakhnath was probably a resident of the twelfth century CE, while Matsyendranath was probably a century to two centuries earlier, in the ninth or tenth century CE. This dating is upheld by circumstantial evidence: mention of Gorakhnath's disciple Guga in contexts related to events in connection with the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni (which ended in 1024 CE), evidence in Sikh literature dating from Baba Nanak's (1469-1538) lifetime, and the general character of the spread of nath influence in the medieval political and literary landscape of North India. It seems undeniable that a historical core around which traditions rapidly formed did exist, there was a real Gorakhnath. There may have been a real Gorakh, as Muñoz (2021) states, "there are a fair number of accounts so as to think" (p. 179). The stories of the Punjab are particularly rich in references to Gorakhnath as a powerful figure with a large following and the monasteries of Tilla in the Punjab and Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, have a history of institutional continuity going back over a number of centuries. After much study in the field in the 1920s and 30s, Briggs decided that the weight of tradition suggested the Punjab as Gorakhnath's homeland, although he recognized the possibility of an origin from the east as well, based on the traditions of that region.

The lineage of Adinath, Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath.

The entire significance of Gorakhnath lies in his position in the lineage of the Nath spiritual lineage. The tradition's own story (from a number of hagiographical sources, and encapsulated in the Sanskrit commentary on the Goraksha Sataka) starts with Adinath, who is also known as the "Primordial

Lord” and corresponds to Lord Shiva himself. Adinath passed on his yogic knowledge to Matsyendranath (also known as Minanath or Macchendranath) who then became Gorakhnath’s teacher and the first human to receive the secret of yoga (Briggs, 1938; Mallinson, 2011a).

The relationship of Matsyendranath with Gorakhnath is the most elaborately described in Indian hagiographical texts. Such is the persona of Matsyendranath that he is worshipped in Nepal as a Buddhist Bodhisattva (Padmapani or Avalokitesvara), revered in Maharashtra as a Shaiva saint and considered by the Nath tradition to be the first human guru to hear the secret teachings of Shiva while he lived in the belly of a fish (Briggs, 1938, p. 251). Gorakhnath is forced to “recue” his own guru from the traps of worldly temptation, most notably a kingdom of women in Ceylon, highlighting one of the main themes of the tradition, that the power of the disciple is greater than that of the master; that the practitioner can overcome even devotion’s restrictions through mastering the inner body.

This genealogical sequence, Adinath, Matsyendra, Gorakhnath, has been argued by Muñoz (2021) to be more of a “paragmatic reformulation” of archtypical symbols and to be a method of systematizing the making of the Nath tradition’s claim to divine origin and human realization (p. 177). Gorakhnath ki Gosthi, attributed to Kabir, presents in his formulation the duality of the tradition; genealogical and cosmic at the same time: “the son of Matsyendranath and the grandson of Adinath” (Briggs, 1938, p. 248).

The Kanphata Yogis: Institutional Identity

Gorakhnath’s teachings came in an institutional form, the order of the Kanphata Yogis (literally, “split-eared” Yogis), where the center of both ears was split and large ring-shaped earrings (kundal or darshan) were inserted as the definitive symbol of initiation into the order (Briggs, 1938; Bevilacqua & Stuparich, 2022). This is a technique that Briggs (1938) found to be practiced by Gorakhnath himself and in the tradition is believed to open a subtle channel (nadi) in the ear cartilage to enable the acquisition of yogic power (p. 23). Tradition has it that the Yogi with the mudra, “becomes immortal” (Briggs, 1938, p. 23).

In addition to the physical mark, Kanphata Yogis are recognized by the sheli, a long, black twisted cord that features a rudraksha seed, a flat ring, and a small horn known as singi, which was used to identify Yogis since at least the 10th century, according to Bevilacqua and Stuparich (2022). The order was structured around twelve sub-sects (panths) related to a member of Gorakhnath's disciples, a formalisation of the older divisions (Briggs, 1938; Bouillier, 2008) which did not become official until the twentieth century by the Yogi Mahasabha. From Tilla monastery (Punjab) to Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh); from Dhinodhar (Kacch) to Kadri (Karnataka), the Kanphatas maintained monasteries (maths) throughout India that functioned as networks of interrelated institutions with shared practice and ideals, as Bevilacqua and Stuparich (2022) explain, "religious, social, and political" (p. 16).

Philosophical and Theological Teachings

The fusion of Shaivism, Tantra and Buddhism.

At the heart of all Gorakhnath's philosophy was a synthetic understanding. These various threads were connected in a coherent system with one goal: the transformation of the physical body into an incorruptible, immortal vehicle of liberation (Bevilacqua & Stuparich, 2022; White, 1996), drawing on the esoteric traditions of Shaiva tantra (particularly the Kaula and Kappalika traditions), the techniques of Vajrayana Buddhist Siddhacharyas, and the alchemical practices of the rasa siddhas. This first synthesizing orientation is manifested in the merging of terminologies between traditions: for instance, the medieval lists of natha-siddhas feature individuals who are venerated both in Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and the terms siddha, natha, yogi, and avadhuta are used interchangeably by contemporaries (Muñoz, 2021).

When he received Shaivism from his Guru Gorakhnath, he was given the understanding that the supreme god is the Mahayogi, the great ascetic, and that he is the master of yoga and thus has cosmic sovereignty. According to the Nath Tradition, Shiva is Adinath, the first Guru, origin of all knowledge of Yoga. The tradition borrowed its advanced knowledge of the subtle body, a system of nadis (channels), chakras (energy centres) and kundalini shakti (the serpentine power coiled at the base of the

spine), and the concept of the diamond body, the “vajra deha” or “diamond body” as the textual tradition of the Naths describes it, that is the target of yogic transformation (Bevilacqua & Stuparich, 2022, p. 9). The rasa siddhas who had passed on to him the alchemical imagery and practices were the ones who brought to him the notion that the human body is a laboratory in which the practitioner can transform the base metals of normal human consciousness into the gold of liberation by means of breath control, posture, and visualization.

The synthesis that came out of this tradition is a synthesis that Lorenzen and Muñoz (2011) have aptly termed a tradition that “constructed its own identity with concepts drawn from Hindus (both orthodox and heterodox) and Buddhists, Muslims, and Sikhs alike” (p. x). This is a very open formation in terms of historical precedent as the Nath tradition learned from Sufi masters and employed Islamic mysticism while simultaneously retaining its distinctly Shaiva identity, a process which Bouillier (2015) has detailed in the encounters between the Nath Yogis and the Muslim saints in North India.

The knowledge of Mysticism and the path of the Guru.

The subject of the guru is central to Gorakhnath’s teaching, that is not just as a teacher or guide but as the living presence of realized yogic power, the necessary intermediary between the normal waking state and the state of liberation. The Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati is a text with a close association with the Nath tradition, which states that the path of yoga (yogamarga) and the path of the Siddhas (siddhamata) are one and the same, and that the initiatory grace of the Guru is the catalyst for the awakening of kundalini and the journey through the inner landscapes of the subtle body (Mallik, 1954; Muñoz, 2021).

In the hagiographical sources, Gorakhnath does not appear as otherworldly god, but rather as a teacher who was very attentive, the one who saved his own guru from sin, the one who taught kings and peasants alike alike, the one who gave Guru to the disciples. His paranormal abilities (siddhis) were not seen as goals to be achieved but as a result of his practice; they were interpreted as evidence for a yoga that was well accomplished, a body so clear and pure of yogic energy that it was transparent. This reputation for supernatural abilities lent the Nath gurus

“optimal gurus for those who wished to channel their magical skills to worldly ends” (Bevilacqua and Stuparich, 2022, p. 9), and they gained royal patronage and political influence that was second to none for most ascetic groups.

The Yogic System, Hatha Yoga and the Subtle Body.

The Goraksha Sataka and its place in yogic literature.

The Goraksha Sataka, ‘The Hundred Verses of Goraksha’, is a Sanskrit work considered within the hatha tradition to be the definitive statement on hatha yoga philosophy and practice and is the most popular work through which the yogic system is known. The text traditionally attributed to Gorakhnath was translated in full into English for the first time by Briggs (1938) who stated that it had been quoted in almost every verse in existing translations, but that previous English translations had been “oft in very free renderings” (p. xii). The Goraksha Sataka is a philosophical treatise, and a manual of yoga practices, providing a detailed description of the subtle body, an elaboration of the main yoga practices, and the definition of the aim of yogic liberation, all remarkably concisely and economically.

Mallinson (2011a, 2011b) has contextualized the Goraksha Sataka in the context of the evolution of the Hatha Yoga texts: that it was Gorakhnath who organized the practice of Hatha Yoga, rather than the creator, and that the practice was synthesized and systemized from a variety of tantric traditions. A closely related work of the Hathapradipika of Svātmanāma (c. Though not a Nath work itself, is a work that is heavily influenced by the teachings of the Gorakhnath school and includes Gorakhnath among the great masters who taught the principles of Hatha Yoga (Briggs, 1938; Muñoz, 2021). These texts, and the prolific publishing of the Gorakhnath Temple at Gorakhpur, have helped to solidify the correlation of the Nath tradition with Hatha Yoga, and to spread it into the modern world (Bevilacqua & Stuparich, 2022).

The human body hold the subtle energy system consisting of nadis, chakras and kundalini.

The yogic system of Gorakhnath is based on a detailed map of the “subtle body” (*sukshma sharira*) which is the subtle energetic structure lying beneath and within the gross physical body. This subtle body is composed of 72,000 channels of energy (*nadis*) which connect it to the 72,000 points of energy (*chakras*). The most significant are the *ida*, left channel, connected to the moon, to cooling and to feminine principle; the *pingala*, right channel, connected to the sun, heating, and the masculine principle; the *sushumna*, central channel, the pathway for spiritual liberation. Once the two subsidiary channels are balanced, and the central channel is stimulated, the dormant serpentine energy called *kundalini*, which sits in a lotus-like posture in the base of the spine, known as the *kanda*, is awakened and ascended through the *sushumna* to the crown of the head (Briggs, 1938; Muñoz, 2021).

According to Briggs (1938, p. 310) the *kundalini* is described vividly in the *Goraksha Sataka*: “She forms an eight-fold coil above the *kanda*, and remains there constantly with her mouth covering the door of *Brahma*” (verse 47). She is awakened by the combined disciplines of yoga, “she is drawn upward like a needle draws a thread” (verse 49) ascending “like a serpent, auspicious, gleaming like a filament of a lotus” (verse 50). This climb is for the purpose of bringing *kundalini* (the latent energy) to unite with *Shiva* consciousness (*Brahman* or *Shiva*) at the crown of the head.

It is not just a theoretical physiological and metaphysical framework in the Nath way of life, it is in use. “As one may force open a door with a key, so the Yogi may force open the door of release with the *Kundalini*, (verse 51, Briggs, 1938, p. 311) The unequivocal nature of this language and its usefulness—its focus on the active role of the Yogi, on technique, on transformation in the body—that sets the Nath tradition apart from the devotional language and the more philosophically-oriented language of the schools of Indian spirituality.

Focus on the breath, posture and the Central Practices.

The three practices of Gorakhnath—body posture, breath control, and energetic seals or gestures (*asana*, *pranayama* and *mudra*)—are interdependent. According to Muñoz (2021), in pre-modern texts, the emphasis of Hatha Yoga as it was practiced by

the Nath school is not on the catalogue of poses that are typical of modern practice but is instead on the regulation and retention of the breath, pranayama. The instructions in the Goraksha Sataka for pranayama give instructions that the aspirant should perform the practice of counting the breath, 21,000 times in the course of a day and night on the natural cycle of the exhaling breath “ha” and the inhaling breath “sa,” generating the spontaneous mantra “hamsa” (verse 43, Briggs, 1938, p. 310). The giver of liberation to the Yogis, it is this practice of ajapa-gayatri, the “unspoken gayatri”—the mantra that arises naturally with each breath.

The mahamudra (the great seal) and the khechari mudra (the space-wandering seal) are given special emphasis among the mudras mentioned in the text. The khechari mudra is the turning of the tongue backwards to the hollow above the throat and directing the gaze between the eyebrows; it is said to give the yogi extraordinary powers: “neither disease nor death nor sleep nor hunger nor fainting is there for him who knows the khechari mudra” (verse 65, Briggs, 1938, p. 313). This is a lavish boast of the Nath tradition’s emphasis—when the body is sufficiently organized, it is invulnerable to the commonplace of human life.

These physical disciplines are accompanied by a strict set of lifestyle rules—such as being “chaste,” or refraining from sexual activity; eating sparingly; abstaining from material pleasures; and practicing Yoga (verses 54, Briggs 1938, p. 312 of the Goraksha Sataka). This injunction is the foundation of the Sattvic dietary philosophy that is followed in the practice of Nath diet, which is based on wholesome, plant-based food, minimal stimulants, and mindful eating. These food laws continue to be relevant for the current day community as demonstrated by the ethnographic observations at the Gorakhnath Temple by Ranjan (2024) who noted that consumption of food continues to be seen as “a sacred ritual that directly influences one’s spiritual progress” (p. 122).

Legacy: Literature, Politics, and Contemporary Yoga

The school's literary and cultural impact. The school's literary and cultural impact.

Gorakhnath's impact on Indian literary culture has been profound and far-reaching. This tradition gave rise to a wide range of vernacular literature, in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi and other languages, that ultimately influenced the nirguni bhakti of Kabir and other sant poets, and that spread across sectarian divides in ways which were hard to categorize (Barthwal, 1978; Lorenzen & Muñoz, 2011). Such stories of kings who gave up their thrones under the guidance of Gorakhnath were widely spread in medieval North India and were sung at festivals, both by itinerant bards and by the living oral culture of the subcontinent.

Kabir, who criticized the formal religious establishment, took to his own verses many of Gorakhnath's images, terms, and formulations, in what Barthwal (1978) termed "more or less reverence toward Guru Nath." (p. 5, trans. From Hindi). In the allegorical stories of the journey of the soul, the Sufi poets of the Hindi tradition, such as Malik Muhammad Jayasi in his work *Padmavat*, made use of the Nath symbolism. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, had a famous conversation with Nath Yogis as recorded in the *Sidh Gosht*, which is a testament to the Nath's role in the religious scene of fifteenth-century Punjab. What Bevilacqua and Stuparich (2022) call one of the Nath tradition's hallmarks is its ability to serve as a kind of spiritual commons, augmenting and being augmented by the whole spectrum of religious life in South Asia, is evident in these cross-traditional engagements.

The political authority and royal patronage were paramount.

The political aspects of Gorakhnath's impact are equally astounding. Bevilacqua and Stuparich (2022) have traced in detail how the reputation of the Nath Yogis built up over the centuries for their supernatural powers made them "optimal gurus for those who wished to channel their magical skills to worldly ends" (p.9) and won the patronage of kings in the Himalayan kingdoms, petty states of Rajasthan, Mughal Punjab and Nepal. The figure of the raj-yogi, the "King of Yogis" who ruled monastic communities with quasi-royal authority, can be seen as a development of the ancient institution of the raj-guru, which

was a figure deeply connected to ascetic charisma and political power.

Yogic charisma could be institutionalized directly, as the career of Siddha Bhagavantnath, who was given land grants and appointed as central overseer of all the Yogis in the newly unified kingdom of Nepal, demonstrates, with the Nath tradition becoming particularly integrated with royal legitimacy (Zotter, as cited in Bevilacqua & Stuparich, 2022). The name Gorkha itself is derived from “Gorakhnath”, and the fact that the kingdom of Gorkha is named after the famous soldiers of the kingdom proves its rich cultural roots in the Himalayan region.

Facing the modernity and the reappropriation of hatha yoga

Twenty centuries of change have created new challenges and opportunities for the interaction between the Nath tradition and Gorakhnath’s yogic legacy. The globalisation of yoga, as well as its fast evolution from an ascetic practice into a health and wellness movement, offered a complex situation for the Nath sampradaya which had the oldest and most authoritative institutional affiliation with Hatha Yoga, but was fast being marginalised within the yoga industry occupied by yoga practitioners without any affiliation with the Nath tradition whatsoever.

As described in Chapter 10 of Bevilacqua & Stuparich (2022), a number of Nath mahants have responded to this challenge by claiming a primal relationship of their tradition with Hatha Yoga and by teaching a more accessible form of yoga, geared towards lay audience and international practitioners. The yoga training camps (yoga shivir) organized at the Gorakhnath Temple in Gorakhpur on International Yoga Day and the temple’s publishing program, which the press has organized vastly, are part of a conscious effort to restore the rightful identity of the Nath tradition in global yoga.

In the field of Indian electoral politics, however, the Nath tradition has never been as visible as it has been in 2017 when the mahant of the Gorakhnath Temple, Yogi Adityanath, was elected as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh (Bevilacqua & Stuparich, 2022; Dwivedi, 2019). This political trajectory, as Muñoz (2021) and Marrewa-Karwoski (cited in Bevilacqua & Stuparich, 2022) have shown, culminates from a lengthy process of ideological

reinterpretation where the siddhis or the transcendental yogic powers of the Nath masters have been increasingly redefined and restructured as notions of social service, political action, and the sacred protection of Hindu dharma.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Guru Gorakhnath is the figure of irreducible complexity and inexhaustible significance. He is the historical ascetic who existed somewhere in the twelfth century, whose traces remain in the monastery and literature of the Nath tradition. The mythological entity who existed before the Universe and is an ever present yogi who comes at the end of every cosmic age to bring back the discipline of yoga in a forgetful mankind. He's the social reformer whose name is inscribed on the vernacular scriptures of the Gorakh Bani, and the political power, whose name graces a Himalayan kingdom, whose institutional descendants rule one of India's most populous states. He was the philosophical genius who integrated Shaivism, Tantra and Buddhism and established a practice of embodied liberation and the practical teacher who provided the practitioner with the 100 verses of the Goraksha Sataka, details of how the practitioner should sit, breathe, eat and think to make the body a vessel of the infinite. The common denominator of these myriad Gorakhnaats is perhaps the essence that has made the Nath tradition so enduring: The conviction that liberation is not a far-fetched theological possibility, but a bodily accomplishment, attainable by anyone who is willing to practice the disciplined inner work that Gorakhnath codified. A conviction, still radical, still challenging for the seeker, that the divine is not an other, but this here, in the breath and the bone, in the blood: this is still as relevant, as demanding, as liberating in an age of rapid change and spiritual searching that was in twelfth-century South Asia.

The use of regional vernacular literature in Telugu, Kannada, Bengali and Marathi that has been largely overlooked so far will greatly aid future scholarship of Gorakhnath, while more systematic archaeological and epigraphic enquiries of the institutional sites of Nath would further benefit this scholarship. The relationship between Gorakhnath and gender, caste and political identity in present day India is a topic that is also worth of inquiry. While historians continue to debate the exact nature of this extraordinary person, Gorakhnath's legacy remains unchanged: he brought the ancient wisdom of the yoga—the wisdom of the body, the breath and the boundless inner sky—to the many—making it available to the common people—and thus forever forever changed the history of South Asian and world spirituality.

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Writings of Vidyapati and Bhavpritanand Ojha and Their Impact on Contemporary Society

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Abstract

This article explores the literary works of Vidyapati (1350-1448 CE) and Bhavpritanand Ojha (1886-1970 CE) and their long-lasting impact on the contemporary society. The article is based on the qualitative historical approach using textual analysis, contextual study, and archival research which maps the continuity and transformation of the Mithila literary and devotional tradition in six centuries. Vidyapati was hailed as Maithili Kavi Kokil (Nightingale-Poet of Mithila) and he made Maithili a language that can allow serious literary, philosophical and devotional expression in his compositions of Padavali, Nachari and his Sanskrit and Avahattha works. This continued in the twentieth century with the compositions of Bhavpritanand Ojha, who is regarded as Abhinav Vidyapati, who sang Jhumar, Ghaira and Kamardhaua at the temple of Baidyanath Jyotirlinga at Deoghar. It shows that the four mechanisms of oral/ritual embedding, institutional patronage, creative formal innovation and cultural migration are overlapping and interrelated to the contemporary relevance of the tradition. The results have relevance on the current disputes regarding linguistic rights, cultural heritage, social integration and the maintenance of endangered regional literary cultures.

Keywords: Vidyapati, Bhavpritanand Ojha, Mithila tradition, Maithili literature, Baidyanath cult, vernacular devotional poetry, Jhumar, Padavali, critical traditionalism, cultural transmission

Introduction

Literary traditions are not left behind. They survive by the choices made by the poets, priests, institutions and communities who, generation after generation, have determined that a certain collection of expression is worth preserving, performing, and reinventing. One of the most instructive examples of the literary and devotional tradition of Mithila, the ancient cultural area of the northern plains of Bihar and the Terai of Nepal, is that of the Mithila Kalikas and the Nagnadevata, whose lives are celebrated in the Vedas and Tantras. Mithila, the ancient cultural region of the northern plains of Bihar and Terai of Nepal, offers one of the most instructive examples of such endurance in south Asian history through the literary and devotional tradition of the Mithila Kalikas and the Nagnadevata, whose lives are celebrated in the Vedas and Tantras. The two most articulate poles are Vidyapati (1350–1448 CE) and Bhavpritanand Ojha (1886–1970 CE), separated by five centuries, but united by overlapping aesthetic interests, devotional sentiments, and democratic cultural agendas.

As Jha (2017) noted, the first step towards the cultural nation of Mithila was taken when Vidyapati, a poet, legal scholar, and cultural statesman, chose to write serious literary and devotional texts in the vernacular language of his people Maithili and not Sanskrit, the prestige language. His Padavali, a vast collection of lyric songs, which recorded both the devotional and the erotic side of the Krishna–Radha relation, became part of the cultural life of the region, and was adopted in Bengal, Assam, and Nepal and influenced the Bhakti devotional poetry for centuries. His Nachari songs for Shiva marked a new devotional style and his Sanskrit and Avahattha compositions provided the legal and ritualistic structures for the social institutions of Mithila.

This tradition was continued by Bhavpritanand Ojha, who served as Sardar Panda at the complex of Baidyanath Jyotirlinga in Deoghar for four decades (1929–70), who not only inherited the tradition from his predecessors, but was also challenged to renew it in a very complex cultural context. Ojha wrote hundreds of Jhumar, Ghaira, and Kamardhaua songs between Maithili, Bengali, Hindi and tribal cultures and infused folk song forms with sophisticated theological reflections. He was known by his

contemporaries and scholars as Abhinav Vidyapati the (New Vidyapati) (Jha, 2002). The focus of this article is on the poets and the ways in which they have affected contemporary society, but the article also reflects the fact that the texts are not static, and that what it calls 'traditionalism' has long been alive to the traditions of contemporary society through what this study calls critical traditionalism: radical fidelity to traditional values plus formal innovation.

Vidyapati's literary works are a Multilingual archive of culture.

One needs to have a basic understanding of the range of Vidyapati's work in order to appreciate the impact of his work. He was not any single author, but many at once, he was also described by Jha (2017) to be at work in Sanskrit, the language in which they worked, the intermediary literary language Avahattha, and the vernacular Maithili, and across genres as diverse as epic narrative, moral philosophy, legal compilation, devotional song, and political romance. The multi-faceted capacity of Maithili for philosophical, devotional and aesthetic expression was itself a cultural declaration, leading to the transformation of the cultural consciousness of a people as Vidyapati did.

The earliest known work, Bhuparikrama (1368 CE), is a Puranic genre, a description of the pilgrimage route from Naimisaranya to Tirhut, and his most accessible moral-philosophical work, the four-chapter, forty-four-tale Sanskrit prose-poems (Purusapariksa), is also of this genre. The Purusapariksa is similar in structure to the Pancatantra but unlike the latter, it is based on historical anecdotes rather than fables, and was translated to Bengali at Serampore in 1815, published in London in 1826 and later made a required reading for students at Fort William College set by the East India Company (Jha, 2017). This global circulation highlights the universalistic nature of Vidyapati's ethical outlook which emphasises the complete human being (Supurusa) who lives dharma, artha, kama, and moksha at the same time with none being subordinate to the other.

The Kirtilataa and Kirtipataka written in Avahattha are the most politically charged works of Vidyapati. The Kirtilataa, composed after the death of his patron Shiva Singha in 1406 CE,

was partly composed as cultural diplomacy with the Jaunpur Nawab, and its remarkable amount of Persian and Arabic has been taken as an intentional act of goodwill towards the new political system (Jha, 2017). During the last few decades of his life, Vidyapati created compilations like the Gangavakyavali with instructions for the Ganga pilgrimage, and Durgabhakti-Tarangini, a guide to the Durgapuja festival written at the age of eighty. The works reflect a facet of Vidyapati's career that is not always captured by his literary scholarship, namely, his knowledge of the production of a text as a mode of social governance and community care.

What has been most significant for the living tradition is however the Maithili Padavali. The lyric songs are of three types: those for domestic life cycle rituals like birth (Sohara), marriage (Sadao), and married daughter's departure (Samadaona); devotional songs of Shiva and Nachari; and love songs on the Krishna–Radha theme. Vidyapati's most innovative form contribution was the Nachari genre, created to be sung in ecstatic dance and to mimic the drum of Shiva. It quickly spread beyond Mithila: Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari* (sixteenth century) mentions all of Vidyapati's songs as 'Lachari' and the Malla kings of Nepal extended 'Lachari' to include devotional songs for Vishnu, Ganesha, Surya, or Durga (Jha 2017).

The most politically charged part of the Padavali is its focus on the private lives of women. Vidyapati dedicated the *Purusapariksha* to not only young men but educated women as well and his aim in the love songs is to sing after contemplating the hundred of mute pleasing desires and longings that are sneaking through the heart of a woman (Jha 2017). The outcome was a collection of poems that mirrored female desire, uncertainty, bravery and loss in a psychological way which was unmatched in medieval Indian literature. With his portrayal of women's internalities as legitimate literary objects, Vidyapati challenged the social ethos of his times in a way that continues to reverberate in the tradition.

The Literary Works of Bhavpritanand Ojha: Critical Traditionalism in Practice

Bhavpritanand Ojha's literary work, which lasted for about seven decades, was the most continuous revival of the

Mithila tradition of the modern period. Ojha, a Maithili Brahmin priest and a polyglot poet who composed in four languages – Maithili, Hindi, Bengali and Sanskrit, produced a published work that included the Jhumar Rasamanjari, Jhumar Rasatarangini, Jhumar Rasa Parijat, Brihat Jhumar Rasamanjari (c. eight hundred verses in a fourth edition), Bhavpritanand Padavali, Ghaira-Manjusha, and the Kamardhaua collection (Jha, 2002). It is extremely interesting that many of these early works appeared in Bengali script in Calcutta, as it was a cultural negotiation that in the absence of adequate Devanagari printing presses using Maithili typefaces in the Santhal Parganas, this choice ensured their circulation in the most literate and culturally active publishing market in eastern India.

Ojha definitely influenced a genre of Jhumar folk song, which is historically linked to the seasonal, agricultural and festival culture of the Jharkhand region. Its circular dancing style and tripadi (three-line) stanza had long been considered by educated Brahmin communities as being unsuitable for classical literary or devotional purposes, and more related to popular entertainment. Ojha achieved what could be termed a rhetorical reversal, maintaining the formal structure of the Jhumar – its tripadis, internal rhymes, and seasonal melodies – and also infused it with dense intertextual links to Sanskrit devotional poetry, Krishnaite padavali (following the tradition of Vidyapati), and Vaishnava theology of prema-bhakti (Jha, 2002). This achievement was acknowledged explicitly by the Ramakrishna Mission's Vidyapith at Deoghar, who stated in its published Sangit-Sangrah that Ojha had elevated the Jhumar to a classical music status, which had hitherto been considered a low-class genre in educated circles (Jha, 2002).

Ojha's other significant contribution to the literature was to the Ghaira (or Khemata) form, the thirteen-and-eleven-matra doha-chand which was quite popular, and to the Kamardhaua form of pilgrimage songs composed for Shiva devotees during their bare foot march from Sultanganj on the Ganga to the temple of the Lord at Deoghar. The Bhavpritanand Padavali, thirty-eight Jhumar and Ghaira selections in sequential presentation of the Krishna-Radha love story from childhood play (Kanha-leela) to union, separation and estrangement, is remarkably faithful to the

logic of the Padavali cycle of Vidyapati (Jha 2002). Not a copying but a conscious dialogue with the classical tradition, in the idiom of the Jhumar.

Of equal importance, however, was Ojha's social ethical posture as a literary and institutional personality. He was also Sardar Panda from 1929, who opposed corrupt practices in the panda community at Deoghar, particularly the piling up of demands for donations on pilgrims and actively took part in Acharya Vinoba Bhawe's visit to the Baidyanath temple in 1953 as part of Bhawe's temple entry campaign for Harijans (Jha, 2002). The social implications of his use of the sakhi figure – an established companion-narrator from the padavali tradition – also lie in his compositions: while the padavali's sakhi is a princess, in Ojha's poems it is a rural woman, whose vehicles of sacred knowledge are not the elite but rather the everyday, seasonal labour and domestic reality.

Contemporary cultural survival and mechanisms of cultural transmission.

The answer to the question "what does the Mithila tradition produce" is just as significant as the answer to the question "how did it survive five centuries of political upheaval, the fall of the Oinabara dynasty, the impositions of the Sultanate and Mughal rule, British colonialism, and postcolonial linguistic politics? The study reveals four mechanisms of transmission that have interlocked and played an important part in the perpetuation of the tradition in the present.

Oral and ritual embedding was the first and longest lasting mechanism. Vidyapati's songs were never simply texts, but were written for a specific ritual occasion, set to a particular tune, and connected to a particular point in the social and agricultural year of the community. The Sohara songs were used at birth, the wedding songs were used on occasions of marriage, the Samadaona songs for the departure of the married daughter and Malara songs used during the rain time period were a literary whole that spanned the life of the Maithil community (Jha, 2017). Jhumar compositions continued this seasonal format of songs in the monsoon season (varsha-varnan), Holi or phagu (spring), Sharadiya rati (autumn full moon), and Karthik festival (karthik vrishti), each offering communities with seasonally appropriate

and emotionally potent texts (Jha, 2002). The participatory nature of the Jhumar dance form made it easy for Ojha to slip his songs into the communal performance, as opposed to reading them privately.

Support from institutions was the second mechanism. Its survival was nothing less than miraculous, and was aided by institutional structures that ensured it: the patronage systems of Oinabara courts and subsequently the Darbhanga raj, the Panjiprabandha genealogical records, which provided community cohesion, and in the colonial/postcolonial era, through the Sahitya Akademi and universities (Jha, 2017; Kumar, 2016). This institutional aspect is most evident in Ojha's role as a sardar panda: he was tasked with composing the Kamardhaua pilgrimage songs, had a captive audience of millions at the annual pilgrimage festival Shravana Mela, and endowed pilgrims with social legitimacy that magnified the impact of his literary legacy (Jha, 2002).

Creative formal innovation was the third mechanism. The tradition did not continue in the form of copying Vidyapati's creations, rather than their reinvention. Like Vidyapati had made a change in the cultural landscape by using vernacular Maithili instead of Sanskrit, Ojha changed the face of Jhumar from a folk show to a classical literary venture. This approach to innovation in the traditionalism with respect to the inherited forms and not in opposition to them enabled the tradition to be recognisably the same, but to address new audiences and new contexts. Kumar (2015) has suggested that Ojha's eclectic theological strain, which oscillates between the Shaiva and Vaishnava perspectives, and includes Bengali Kirtan and Santhal folk music rhythms, is not eclecticism; but theological intelligence, fitting the cultural pluralism of Deoghar.

The fourth mechanism was Migration. Jha (2017) has recorded the migration of Maithil Brahmin families from the north from as early as the tenth and eleventh centuries CE, setting the foundation of Mithila literary tradition in a frontier cultural environment where it was faced with, absorbed, and revitalized by tribal, Bengali Shakta, and Islamic cultural influences. The absence of this migration would have led to the absence of Bhavpritanand Ojha, and its presence would have given it a

frontier expression, which would have made it more vibrant and renewed its vitality across cultures.

Language, identity and social justice in the present day.

The use of the Mithila literary tradition is not nostalgic nor is it overly antiquarian in contemporary usage. Tackles directly some of the most salient cultural and political issues of the day. The first is linguistic. For decades, the support for the recognition of Maithili as the Eighth Schedule language of the Indian Constitution was upheld in part with arguments based on the name and legacy of Vidyapati as a proof of the linguistic seriousness and historical depth of the language (Kumar, 2016). The Sahitya Akademi's formal recognition of Maithili as a modern Indian language in 1965 was a precursor of the institutional success in the same struggle. The fact that a fourteenth-century poet's cultural selections can be used as a tool to think about constitutional arguments in the twenty-first century is evidence of the political legacy of literary tradition. The Mithila case provides a historical case study that illustrates how an oral performance, ritual practice, institutional support and creative adaptation can help to sustain a vernacular literary culture across many centuries of political marginalisation for those contemporary activists who work for linguistic minorities in South Asia (Kumar, 2016).

The tradition also addresses the current issues of regional identity in India. In an era of greater awareness of cultural homogenisation and the triumph of national over regional forms Mithila's literary heritage shows that regional identity need not be exclusionary or antagonistic to the cultures of its neighbours and can be strong and assertive without being unfamiliar or new. As relevant as fifth century Mithila was Vidyapati's theological vision in the formulation of his famous statement "there is but one Almighty and naught is there in the worlds that has not been created by Him; only in their names is their sublimity distinct" (Jha, 1972, p. 22). In the syncretism of Bengali Shakta devotion, Santhal folk music and Islamic cultural influences in Deoghar, Ojha provides a living example of how regional traditions can absorb difference without losing the distinctiveness of their traditions.

Perhaps the most powerful reminders of the present-day relevance are the afterlives of both poets in performance. Vidyapati's songs are still being chanted at marriage ceremonies, birth and festivals in the temple in the Maithili area. Even today his home village of Bisapi in Madhubani subdivision is a place of pilgrimage and admirers throughout the country celebrate Vidyapati Day on the 13th day of the bright half of the Kartika month, which is believed to be the day of his death (Jha, 2017). The Kamardhaua songs of Ojha are still sung at the annual Shravana Mela at Deoghar, one of the biggest religious gatherings in South Asia, attended by millions of pilgrims every year, many of them anonymously, and are part of devotional practice so much so that they have no need for an author's name to validate their use (Jha, 2002). In the oral tradition this anonymisation is the ultimate literary influence bestowed upon a vernacular composer: it indicates that the songs are fully integrated into community life.

The justice aspects of both poets' work also resonate with today. The use of vernacular as a democratising tool, making the pleasures of high literary and devotional expression accessible to men and women of all caste, class and educational backgrounds anticipated the bhakti humanist impulse which scholars like Das (2012) and Sinha (2010) have traced throughout the North Indian devotional tradition. Kumar (2021) traces a long line of subaltern reformers from the Dalit bhakta Chamukarmkar in the seventeenth century, to the reformist Brahmin Fucho Pande, to Ojha himself, through his active support for entry into the temple for Harijans, his critique of priestly extortion, and his subtle repositioning of spiritual authority in the female domestic sphere through the sakhi figure. In the case of Mithila, this genealogy places doubt on the idea that Brahmanical literary traditions have always been decidedly exclusive; the bhakti humanism at its heart has always had tendencies towards social inclusion even in a caste structured social order.

Last but not least, with respect to intangible cultural heritage. Ojha's songs, which are many of them now anonymous and in the oral tradition, are a living cultural heritage that could be at risk from the effects of rapid commercialisation and social change (Jha, 2002). The Shravana Mela at Deoghar has become a

mass religious event and has seen the influx of tens of millions of pilgrims, all of which have brought with them the pressure of commercialisation and infrastructure development, threatening to strain the living devotional culture. The traditional cultural approaches of cultural survival outlined in the Mithila tradition, ritualisation, institutional support and creative formal adaptation provide proven models for the preservation of endangered linguistic and cultural heritage in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

It is not a typical tale of the transmission from master to disciple from Vidyapati to Bhavpritanand Ojha. It is a tale of creative endurance, a tradition that endured five centuries of political turbulence, cultural contact and social change because it was prepared to change, to learn new languages, new genres, new influences, but never to give up its commitment to vernacular expression, to devotional intensity, to democratic inclusion. Vidyapati had not only a collection of songs, but a set of priorities; Ojha showed that such priorities can be respected, revived, and made to resonate with situations their creator could never have envisioned.

This tradition is very relevant today. The Mithila literary tradition provides historical evidence, but also models of the survival and flourishing of an endangered vernacular culture in debates about linguistic rights, cultural heritage, regional identity and social justice. Vidyapati's songs are still sung during Maithil weddings and Ojha's Jhumar songs are still played to accompany pilgrims on the road to Deoghar. The tradition is continued, not by stopping, but by moving forward. Tradition and creativity are not at odds with each other but are "buddy partners" as this study has proposed, and the best method of maintaining an inheritance is to keep it alive rather than freezing it.

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रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर की स्थापत्य कला

देवेश कुमार

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शोध सार (Abstract)

भारत के प्राचीन मन्दिर भारतीय सभ्यता के आधार स्तम्भ हैं जो राष्ट्र की संस्कृति, आध्यात्मिकता एवं कला-स्थापत्य की विरासत का प्रतीक हैं। यह अध्ययन महोबा के रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर की स्थापत्य कला का विश्लेषण करता है। उत्तर भारत के बुन्देलखण्ड क्षेत्र के महोबा जिले में स्थित रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर का निर्माण नौवीं-दसवीं शताब्दी में चन्देलवंशीय नरेश राहिल देव वर्मन द्वारा करवाया गया था। 1203 ईस्वी में आक्रमणकारी कुतुबुद्दीन ऐबक ने इस मन्दिर पर आक्रमण करके इसे भारी नुकसान पहुँचाया। वर्तमान में इस मन्दिर के भग्नावशेष विद्यमान हैं।

रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर का निर्माण राहिल सागर बाँध के किनारे ग्रेनाइट शिलाओं से करवाया गया था। इस मन्दिर का निर्माण उत्तर भारत में प्रचलित नागर शैली में हुआ है तथा नागर शैली की उप-शैली पंचायतन शैली का भी प्रयोग हुआ है। रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर चन्देलकालीन स्थापत्य कला के आरम्भिक चरण का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है। रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर स्थापत्य विशेषताओं के साथ-साथ धार्मिक आस्था और सौंदर्य का समन्वय प्रस्तुत करता है। प्रस्तुत शोध में स्थापत्य विशेषताओं — अलंकरण, संरचनात्मक योजना एवं शैलीगत प्रभावों का विश्लेषण किया गया है। यह मन्दिर चन्देलकालीन शिल्पकला की दृढ़ता एवं तकनीकी कौशल को दर्शाता है। गर्भगृह का प्रवेश-द्वार पूर्व दिशा की ओर है जिससे सूर्योदय के समय सूर्य की किरणें सीधा गर्भगृह में प्रवेश कर सकें। इस मंदिर में अलंकरण और नक्काशी का प्रयोग दिखाई देता है।

बीज शब्द (Key words) — महोबा, रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर, नागर शैली, पंचायतन शैली, बुन्देलखण्ड, चन्देल

शोध प्रविधि

यह शोध-कार्य स्थापत्य कला को जानने की अनेक पद्धतियों को अपनाता है। इसमें प्राथमिक व द्वितीय स्रोतों का अध्ययन शामिल है। इसके साथ-साथ पुरातात्विक रिपोर्ट का अध्ययन भी शामिल है। इस शोध प्रविधि में क्षेत्र कार्य भी शामिल है।

भारतीय मन्दिर स्थापत्य की विभिन्न शैलियों का परिचय

रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर उत्तर प्रदेश राज्य के बुन्देलखण्ड क्षेत्र के महोबा जिले में स्थित है। यह क्षेत्र ऐतिहासिक एवं सांस्कृतिक दृष्टि से समृद्ध रहा है। यह क्षेत्र बुन्देलखण्ड के पठारी भाग में आता है। बुन्देलखण्ड का यह क्षेत्र प्राचीन काल में चन्देल शासकों के अधीन था। महोबा, जो प्राचीन काल में 'महोत्सव नगर' के नाम से ख्यात था, के रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर का निर्माण राहिल देव वर्मन के द्वारा नौवीं-दसवीं शताब्दी में करवाया गया था। (कनिंघम, 1975) राहिल देव वर्मन ने

890 ईस्वी में एक विशाल बाँध का निर्माण करवाया जिसे राहिल सागर बाँध के नाम से जाना जाता है तथा इस बाँध के किनारे उसने इस देवालय का निर्माण करवाया। इस मन्दिर का निर्माण राहिल सागर बाँध के किनारे ग्रेनाइट शिलाओं से हुआ है। इस मन्दिर का आकार भी बड़ा है। राहिल सागर महोबा के दक्षिण-पश्चिम भाग में स्थित है। रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर राहिल सागर के पश्चिमी छोर पर स्थित है। 1203 ईस्वी में आक्रमणकारी कुतुबुद्दीन ऐबक द्वारा इस मन्दिर को भारी नुकसान पहुँचाया गया। वर्तमान में इस मन्दिर के भग्नावशेष विद्यमान हैं। यह मन्दिर चन्देलकालीन स्थापत्य कला का उदाहरण है। यह मन्दिर बुन्देलखण्ड के समृद्ध इतिहास को दर्शाता है।

किसी भी संस्कृति में कला या स्थापत्य का अद्वितीय महत्व होता है। भारत भी इसका अपवाद नहीं है। वैदिक साहित्य से लेकर संस्कृत साहित्य तक वास्तुकला की विविध तकनीकों एवं अनेक रूपों का प्रचुर विवरण प्राप्त होता है। प्राचीनतम साहित्य ऋग्वेद में धार्मिक तथा लौकिक, दोनों प्रकार के वास्तु का उल्लेख हुआ है। मंदिरों का निर्माण, पूजा, आध्यात्मिकता, सांस्कृतिक प्रतीकों के तौर पर, एवं अन्य धार्मिक उद्देश्यों के लिए करवाया जाता है। मंदिरों का निर्माण देवी-देवताओं की पूजा करने और ऐसी धार्मिक क्रियाएँ एवं मान्यताओं को संपन्न कराने के लिए किया गया होगा, जो पूजा पद्धति से जुड़ी होती हैं। समय के साथ आगे चलकर मंदिर महत्वपूर्ण धार्मिक और सामाजिक संस्थाओं के केन्द्र के रूप में विकसित होने लगे। कालान्तर में मंदिरों का विकास राजनीतिक एवं प्रशासनिक केन्द्रों के रूप में भी हुआ।

नागर शैली

उत्तर भारत में मन्दिरों के निर्माण में मन्दिर स्थापत्य की नागर शैली लोकप्रिय हुई। "नागर" शब्द का प्रयोग यहाँ नगर के अर्थ में नहीं, बल्कि उत्तर भारतीय मंदिर स्थापत्य परम्परा के संदर्भ में किया जाता है। नागर शैली के आरम्भिक मन्दिरों के कुछ पुरातात्विक साक्ष्य मौर्योत्तर काल से प्राप्त होते हैं किन्तु यहाँ मंदिर स्थापत्य की संरचनायें बहुत स्पष्ट नहीं हैं। "सबसे प्राचीन स्वतंत्र धार्मिक भवन जिसके अवशेष बचे हैं, वह जयपुर के पास बैराट में स्थित एक छोटा गोलाकार हॉल है, जो संभवतः मूल रूप से एक बौद्ध स्तूप था। यह तीसरी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व का है और ईंट एवं लकड़ी से बना था, जिसकी अब केवल नींव ही बची है"। (बाशम, 1986) मंदिर संरचना में नागर शैली के तत्व मूल रूप से गुप्त काल से मिलने लगते हैं। "गुप्त काल उत्तर भारत में संरचनात्मक मंदिर वास्तुकला की शुरुआत का प्रतीक है, जिसमें सरल वर्गाकार गर्भगृह शामिल हैं"। (ब्राउन, 1971)

गुप्त काल के मंदिरों के विकास को दो चरणों में देखा जा सकता है। पहला चरण, पूर्ववर्ती चरण है और दूसरा चरण, उत्तरवर्ती चरण है। गुप्तकाल के पूर्ववर्ती चरण में मन्दिर संरचना में गर्भगृह व खुले मण्डप पाये गये हैं। "नचना कुठार मंदिर भारत में हिन्दू संरचनात्मक मंदिर वास्तुकला के सबसे प्रारम्भिक उदाहरणों में से एक है"। (ब्राउन, 1971) इन मन्दिरों से मन्दिर स्थापत्य के विषय में आरम्भिक जानकारी प्राप्त होती है।

गुप्तकाल के उत्तरवर्ती चरण में नागर शैली का पूर्ण विकास दिखाई देता है। इस काल में मंदिरों की संरचना में रेखाशिखर, वर्गाकार व क्रूसाकार आधार योजना, गर्भगृह, मण्डप, अंतराल, पंचायतन शैली आदि का प्रयोग दिखाई देता है। उत्तर प्रदेश के ललितपुर जिले के देवगढ़ में स्थित

दशावतार मंदिर का निर्माण छठीं शताब्दी में गुप्तकाल के उत्तरवर्ती चरण में हुआ था। देवगढ़ का दशावतार मंदिर पहला मंदिर है, जिसमें पंचायतन शैली का प्रयोग मिलता है।

इसके पश्चात् गुप्तोत्तर काल में नागर शैली और विकसित रूप में देखने को मिलती है अर्थात् मंदिर और अधिक वृहद हुए। इनमें उच्च व आकर्षक शिखर बनाये गये तथा मंदिरों के अलंकरण के क्षेत्र में वृद्धि हुई।

पूर्वमध्यकाल में नागर शैली का विकास अपनी सर्वोच्चता पर पहुँच गया। दूसरे शब्दों में कहें तो मंदिरों के विभिन्न अंगों का विकास सर्वोच्च स्थिति में दिखाई देता है। इसी क्रम में उड़ीसा के क्षेत्र तथा मध्य भारत के बुन्देलखण्ड क्षेत्र के खजुराहो में स्थित मन्दिरों के समूह में नागर शैली का विकास देखने को मिलता है। नट मण्डप/नट मन्दिर, भोग मण्डप जैसी संरचनायें कलिंग शैली/ उड़ीसा के मन्दिरों की विशेषतायें हैं। खजुराहो के मन्दिरों में अधिष्ठान व जगती, गर्भगृह, रेखा शिखर, कलश, मण्डप, उरु श्रृंग, अन्तराल, तोरण, प्रदक्षिणापथ आदि विशेषतायें पाई जाती हैं। उरु श्रृंग नागर शैली के मन्दिरों का विशिष्ट लक्षण है। खजुराहो के मन्दिरों की दीवारों पर कामुक मूर्तियाँ देखने को मिलती हैं।

वेसर शैली

वेसर शैली जो उत्तर भारत में प्रचलित नागर शैली एवं दक्षिण भारत में प्रचलित द्रविड़ शैली के मिश्रण का प्रतिनिधित्व करती है, का विकास कर्नाटक क्षेत्र में हुआ। इस शैली का विकास कर्नाटक के क्षेत्र में होने के कारण से इसे 'कर्नाटक शैली' के नाम से भी जाना जाता है। वेसर शैली का विकास क्रमशः बादामी के चालुक्य शासकों, कल्याणी के चालुक्य शासकों तथा होयसल शासकों के शासनकाल में हुआ।

बादामी के चालुक्यों द्वारा निर्मित पृष्ठभूमि पर कर्नाटक में कल्याणी के चालुक्यों के समय वेसर शैली का विकास हुआ। कल्याणी के चालुक्य शासकों के बाद होयसल शासकों के समय वेसर शैली ने सर्वोच्चता प्राप्त की। वेसर शैली के मन्दिरों की आधार योजना तारा सदृश होती है। वेसर शैली में जगती, अनेक गर्भगृह, अलंकृत छतें, उत्कृष्ट शिल्पकारी, मुलायम पत्थरों का प्रयोग, टेम्पल टैंक आदि विशेषतायें शामिल हैं।

द्रविड़ शैली

द्रविड़ शैली का विकास क्रमशः पल्लव काल, चोल काल, पाण्ड्य काल, विजयनगर काल, नायकों के काल में हुआ। द्रविड़ शैली की शुरुआत पल्लवों के शासनकाल में हुई। पल्लवों के शुरुआती काल में मन्दिरों का निर्माण चट्टानों को काटकर किया गया था जबकि बाद के शासकों के काल में संरचनात्मक मन्दिरों का निर्माण हुआ। पल्लव शासक राजसिंह के शासनकाल में सर्वप्रथम संरचनात्मक मन्दिरों के उदाहरण मिलते हैं। “काँची स्थित कैलाशनाथ मन्दिर पूर्ण विकसित द्रविड़ संरचनात्मक मन्दिर की शुरुआत का प्रतीक है”। (ब्राउन, 1971)

पल्लवों के बाद आने वाले चोलों के काल में द्रविड़ शैली का और विकसित रूप दिखाई देता है। चोल शासकों ने न केवल द्रविड़ शैली के विकास को आगे बढ़ाया बल्कि कुछ नये तत्वों का समावेश भी किया। प्रारम्भिक समय में चोल शासकों के द्वारा छोटे व मध्यम आकार के मन्दिरों का निर्माण करवाया गया था। राजराज प्रथम के काल से मन्दिरों के आकार में परिवर्तन दिखाई देता है। इस चरण में वृहद् आकार के मन्दिरों का निर्माण हुआ।

पाण्ड्य शासकों का शासन जो दो शताब्दियों से अधिक समय तक चला, के दौरान द्रविड़ शैली का उत्कृष्ट विकास जारी रहा। पाण्ड्य शासकों में गोपुरम का सर्वोत्कृष्ट विकास दिखाई देता है। पाण्ड्य शासकों के काल में गोपुरम अपेक्षाकृत अधिक बड़े बनाए जाने लगे तथा इनकी संख्या में भी वृद्धि हुई।

विजयनगर काल में ऊँचे विमानों का निर्माण निरन्तर जारी रहा। 'अमन' का प्रचलन विजयनगर काल में शुरू हुआ था। विजयनगर कालीन मन्दिर स्थापत्य में कल्याण मण्डप, हजार स्तम्भ मण्डप, रंग मण्डप जैसे मण्डपों के अनेक प्रकार देखने को मिलते हैं।

नायकों के काल में द्रविड़ शैली का अन्तिम रूप दिखाई देता है। केवल कुछ ही नायक शासकों के द्वारा मन्दिर स्थापत्य के क्षेत्र में योगदान दिया गया।

रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर का स्थापत्य

रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर उत्तर भारत में प्रचलित नागर शैली का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है। इस मन्दिर के विद्यमान भग्नावशेषों में नागर शैली की विशेषताओं को देखा जा सकता है। इसके साथ-साथ नागर शैली की उप शैली पंचायतन शैली का प्रयोग भी हुआ है। यह महत्वपूर्ण है कि इस देवालय का निर्माण राहिल सागर बाँध पर ग्रेनाइट पत्थरों से हुआ है। यह देवालय सूर्योपासना का प्रतीक है।

रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर चन्देलकालीन स्थापत्य के आरम्भिक चरण का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है, जिसने आगे चलकर चन्देलकालीन स्थापत्य कला के विकास में होने वाले उत्कृष्ट विकास जिसे खजुराहो के मन्दिरों में देखा जा सकता है, की आधारशिला रखी।

रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर की योजना में तीन दिशाओं क्रमशः पूर्व, उत्तर और दक्षिण दिशा की ओर प्रवेश द्वार दिखाई देते हैं। इस मन्दिर में अधिष्ठान व जगती, मण्डप, स्तम्भ, गर्भगृह और टूटा हुआ रेखाशिखर देखने को मिलता है। मन्दिर की दीवारों में अलंकरण इस मन्दिर को और अधिक सुसज्जित बनाता है। मन्दिर के विद्यमान भग्नावशेषों में नक्काशी के भी उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण प्राप्त होते हैं जो इस मन्दिर को स्थापत्य की दृष्टि से और अधिक महत्वपूर्ण बनाते हैं।

‘अधिष्ठान’ व ‘जगती’ की विशेषता सामान्यतः नागर शैली के मन्दिरों में देखी जाती है। नागर शैली के मन्दिरों को ऊँचे प्लेटफार्म पर बनाया जाता था। इस मन्दिर में अधिष्ठान व जगती को देखा जा सकता है, जिसके ऊपर इस देवालय का निर्माण हुआ है। इसमें नक्काशी और अलंकरण को भी देखा जा सकता है जो इसकी सुन्दरता को बढ़ाने का कार्य करते हैं।

‘शिखर’, यह एक ऐसी संरचना है जो गर्भगृह के ऊपर बनाई जाती थी। इसके शीर्ष पर ‘आमलक’ और ‘कलश’ होता है। इस मन्दिर में टूटा हुआ रेखाशिखर देखने को मिलता है। वर्तमान में इस मन्दिर में आमलक और कलश देखने को नहीं मिलता है। रेखाशिखर के विद्यमान भग्नावशेषों में सुन्दर अलंकरण तथा नक्काशी देखने को मिलती है, जो इसे सुशोभित करती है।

गर्भगृह के आन्तरिक भाग में चार स्तम्भ दिखाई देते हैं जिनमें अलंकृत पट्टियाँ दिखाई देती हैं। गर्भगृह की छत का हिस्सा पिरामिडनुमा आकार का है जिसमें नक्काशी और अलंकरण को देखा जा सकता है, जो इसे और अधिक सुन्दर बनाता है। गर्भगृह के अन्दर की सभी दीवारें सादी हैं जिनमें किसी भी प्रकार का अलंकरण नहीं है। गर्भगृह का प्रवेश द्वार पूर्व दिशा की ओर है, जिससे

सूर्योदय के समय सूर्य की किरणें सीधे गर्भगृह में पड़ती थीं। यह स्थापत्य कला की परिपक्वता को दर्शाता है।

मन्दिर में तीन दिशाओं में प्रवेश द्वार मिलते हैं। प्रत्येक प्रवेश द्वार में दो स्तम्भों की संरचना देखने को मिलती है। स्तम्भों में अलंकरण भी नजर आता है। वर्तमान में मन्दिर के पूर्व और उत्तर दिशा के प्रवेश द्वारों के ऊपर किसी भी तरह की संरचना नहीं मिलती है, वहीं दूसरी तरफ दक्षिण दिशा में स्तम्भों के ऊपर पिरामिड के आकार का अलंकरण और नक्काशी से युक्त संरचना देखने को मिलती है। इस आधार पर यह कहा जा सकता है कि यह संरचना सभी प्रवेश द्वारों पर स्तम्भों के ऊपर रही होगी।

मन्दिर में प्रवेश के बाद मण्डप की उपस्थिति है। इसके मध्य में दो स्तम्भों के ऊपर एक अलंकृत पत्थर की शिला है। इन स्तम्भों के मध्य से नीचे के भाग में अलंकरण दिखाई देता है तथा ऊपरी भाग में अलंकरण नहीं है। मण्डप में अनेक स्तम्भों की उपस्थिति है। इन स्तम्भों के निचले भाग में अलंकरण दिखाई देता है तथा ऊपरी भाग में अलंकरण नहीं मिलता है। मंडप के चारों ओर अलंकृत पट्टियाँ भी दिखाई देती हैं जो इस मन्दिर की सुन्दरता को बढ़ाती हैं।

इसके अलावा मन्दिर स्थल में विद्यमान भग्नावशेषों में भी अलंकरण और नक्काशी से युक्त भिन्न-भिन्न प्रकार के अवशेष प्राप्त होते हैं। इनमें से अनेक ग्रेनाइट शिलाओं पर उकेरी गई आकृतियाँ देखने को मिलती हैं। इसके अलावा ग्रेनाइट शिलाओं को तराशकर भिन्न-भिन्न रूप प्रदान किया गया है।

मन्दिर के उत्तर दिशा में अधिष्ठान जैसी एक संरचना है। इसके बारे में जानकारी प्राप्त नहीं होती है। इसकी सीढ़ियों में आकृति का रूपांकन मिलता है, जिसे देखने पर शंख की आकृति भी नजर आती है। इसके अलावा भी अलंकरण दिखाई देता है। इसके अलावा भग्नावशेष से प्राप्त एक शिला पर नवग्रह और त्रिदेव उकेरे गए हैं जिसमें बायीं(Left) ओर भगवान ब्रह्मा, मध्य(Middle) में भगवान विष्णु एवं दायीं(Right) ओर भगवान शिव की आकृति उकेरी गई है और इनके मध्य में नवग्रह की आकृतियाँ उकेरी गई हैं।

रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर के किनारे राहिल सागर बाँध भी है, जो जल के धार्मिक महत्व को दर्शाता है। इसके साथ-साथ इसका प्रयोग अन्य कार्यों यथा पेयजल, सिंचाई आदि के लिए भी किया जाता रहा होगा।

मन्दिर के निर्माण में पंचायतन शैली का भी प्रयोग हुआ है, इस शैली में एक मुख्य देवालय बनाया जाता है और चार कोनों पर चार छोटे सहायक देवालय बनाए जाते हैं। जिससे पता चलता है कि मुख्य गर्भगृह में भगवान सूर्य की मूर्ति थी तथा इसके चारों कोनों पर भगवान शिव, गणेश, शक्ति और विष्णु की मूर्तियाँ स्थापित थीं, जो सूर्य की महत्ता के साथ अन्य देवी-देवताओं की महत्ता को भी दर्शाता है।(खान,2012)

निष्कर्ष

रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर का निर्माण उत्तर भारत में प्रचलित नागर शैली में हुआ है। इस मन्दिर के निर्माण में नागर शैली की उप शैली पंचायतन शैली का भी प्रयोग हुआ है। मन्दिर के विद्यमान भग्नावशेषों में अधिष्ठान व जगती, मण्डप, स्तम्भ, गर्भगृह, टूटा हुआ रेखाशिखर आदि देखने को मिलते हैं। मन्दिर में अलंकरण व नक्काशी का प्रयोग किया गया है जो मन्दिर की संरचना

को और अधिक के भव्य बनाती है। सूर्य मन्दिर से प्राप्त भग्नावशेषों में अलंकरण देखने को मिलता है और अनेक ग्रेनाइट शिलाओं को तराशकर अलग-अलग प्रकार की आकृति प्रदान की गई है। दक्षिण दिशा के प्रवेश द्वार में स्तम्भों के ऊपर पिरामिड के आकार की अलंकरण और नक्काशी से युक्त संरचना देखने को मिलती है।

रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर महोबा की केवल पहचान नहीं है बल्कि यह मध्यकालीन भारत के इतिहास की एक महत्वपूर्ण कड़ी है। यह मन्दिर चन्देलकालीन वास्तुकला के आरम्भिक चरणों का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है। रहेलिया सूर्य मन्दिर भारत की सूर्योपासना परम्परा का महत्वपूर्ण उदाहरण है जो न केवल चन्देल कालीन स्थापत्य कला बल्कि तत्कालीन धार्मिक विश्वास एवं शासन की प्रकृति को भी दर्शाता है।

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Priestly Community of Baidyanath Dham : Migration of Maithil Brahmins and the Expansion of Shiv-Shakti Cult in Eastern India

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Abstract

This article examines the historical role of Maithil Brahmins in shaping the priestly traditions, ritual structure, and sacred identity of Baidyanath Dham in present-day Jharkhand. The migration of Maithil Brahmins from Mithila into Eastern India between the tenth and twelfth centuries significantly contributed to the expansion of Shaiva and Shakta traditions across the region (Jha 1991; Majumdar 1971). Their movement coincided with broader processes of Sanskritization, temple institutionalization, and the growth of pilgrimage networks under the political milieu of the Pala-Sena period (Sircar 1966). Through ritual authority, scholastic traditions, genealogical preservation, temple management, and scriptural interpretation, Maithil Brahmins transformed Baidyanath Dham into a major centre of Shiv-Shakti worship and pilgrimage (Jha 2017).

The study further argues that the emergence of the “Baidyanath Cult” was not solely a Brahmanical development but rather the result of interaction between Maithil ritual traditions, local folk practices, tribal religious culture, and Tantric influences (Bhattacharyya 1982; Dasgupta 1946). This synthesis enabled Baidyanath Dham to evolve into a composite sacred centre attracting pilgrims from Bihar, Bengal, Odisha, Assam, and Nepal. The article analyses migration patterns, ritual systems, sacred geography, temple economy, pilgrimage traditions, and the role of hereditary priesthood in order to understand how the priestly community contributed to the wider cultural transformation of Eastern India. It also highlights the manner in which sacred centres developed through interaction

between orthodoxy and regional traditions rather than through rigid religious uniformity.

Keywords : *Baidyanath Dham, Maithil Brahmins, Shiv-Shakti Cult, Mithila, Sanskritization, Pilgrimage, Tantra, Sacred Geography, Eastern India, Temple Economy.*

Introduction

Migration has historically shaped religious institutions and sacred traditions across the Indian subcontinent. Among the many Brahmanical migrations in medieval India, the movement of Maithil Brahmins from Mithila towards Bengal and Eastern India occupies a particularly significant place (Jha 1991). Their migration influenced ritual systems, temple administration, sacred geography, and the spread of Shaiva-Shakta traditions across the eastern region. The movement of learned Brahmanical groups was often encouraged by political rulers who sought religious legitimacy, ritual specialists, and administrators for temples and sacred institutions (Majumdar 1971).

Baidyanath Dham at Deoghar emerged as one of the most important centres of this religious transformation. Although primarily associated with Shiva as one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, the shrine gradually developed into a major centre of Shiv-Shakti synthesis (Bhattacharyya 1982). The interaction between Maithil Brahmanical traditions and local folk-Tantric practices created a composite sacred culture which became characteristic of the Baidyanath tradition. The sacred importance of the shrine further increased with the expansion of pilgrimage routes connecting Bihar, Bengal, Odisha, Assam, and Nepal (Sircar 1973).

The contribution of Maithil Brahmins to Baidyanath Dham extended beyond priesthood. They institutionalized ritual worship, organized pilgrimage systems, maintained genealogical records, interpreted sacred texts, and expanded the intellectual prestige of the shrine (Jha 2017). Through these processes, Baidyanath Dham evolved from a regional Shaiva centre into a pan-regional pilgrimage complex. The hereditary pandas associated with the shrine became important intermediaries between pilgrims and sacred authority, thereby strengthening the continuity of pilgrimage traditions over generations.

The study of Baidyanath Dham also provides insight into larger historical processes operating in Eastern India during the medieval period. The rise of temple institutions, the spread of Tantra, the integration of local religious traditions, and the movement of Brahmanical communities collectively contributed to the development of sacred centres across the region (Dehejia 1986). In this context, Baidyanath Dham emerged as an important example of religious synthesis and cultural interaction in eastern India.

Historiography and Historical Debate

The historiography of Baidyanath Dham and the migration of Maithil Brahmins remains scattered across regional historical studies, religious scholarship, and works on sacred geography. Scholars such as J. C. Jha emphasized the migration of Maithila Panditas as a wider intellectual movement which spread Mithila's scholastic traditions throughout Eastern India (Jha 1991). Amar Nath Jha interpreted the rise of the "Baidyanath Cult" as a regional religious phenomenon integrating Shaiva, Shakta, Tantric, and folk traditions. The emergence of this sacred culture also developed as a result of the migration of Maithil Brahmins into the region, who contributed significantly to ritual organization and intellectual activity (Jha 2017).

The migration traditions associated with Adisura remain debated among historians and the historical authenticity of Adisura is also a matter of further historical research. However, Amar Nath Jha, keeping in view other evidences, is of the opinion that Adisura is not only a historical character but also the most important one in this context. He remains the key to understanding the later historical developments which took place in the entire region including Bengal (Jha 2017). Historians like R. C. Majumdar and D. C. Sircar argued that such migrations were closely related to changing political patronage, land grants, and the increasing demand for Brahmanical ritual specialists (Majumdar 1971; Sircar 1966).

Modern scholarship increasingly views Baidyanath Dham not merely as a temple but as a sacred complex. The shrine functioned as a centre of pilgrimage, ritual economy, Tantric practice, cultural exchange, and social integration (Bhattacharyya 1982). This broader perspective allows the role of Maithil

Brahmins to be understood within larger historical processes rather than as isolated priestly activity. Recent studies also emphasize the interaction between local tribal traditions, folk practices, and Brahmanical ritual systems in shaping the sacred identity of the shrine (Dasgupta 1946).

The historiographical debate surrounding Baidyanath Dham therefore reflects wider questions concerning migration, sacred geography, and cultural synthesis in medieval India. Earlier scholarship often focused primarily on dynastic history and temple traditions, whereas modern approaches examine pilgrimage networks, social interaction, ritual economy, and regional identity formation. Such perspectives help situate Baidyanath Dham within the broader religious and cultural history of Eastern India.

Methodology

The present study is based upon historical and analytical methods. Primary emphasis has been placed on textual interpretation, regional historical analysis, and secondary scholarship related to Mithila, Baidyanath Dham, Shaivism, Shaktism, and Tantra in Eastern India. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining history, religious studies, and cultural anthropology.

The article relies upon works by Amar Nath Jha, J. C. Jha, D. C. Sircar, R. C. Majumdar, Vidya Dehejia, N. N. Bhattacharyya, S. Narayan, and other scholars dealing with sacred geography and religious synthesis in Eastern India. Particular attention has been given to the interaction between Maithil Brahmanical traditions and indigenous religious culture.

Migration of Maithil Brahmins into Eastern India

The migration of Maithil Brahmins accelerated between the tenth and twelfth centuries during the Pala-Sena period. Political transformation, changing patterns of royal patronage, and land-grant systems contributed significantly to the movement of Brahmanical groups toward Bengal and Eastern India (Jha 1991; Majumdar 1971). The rulers of eastern India increasingly depended upon learned Brahmanical groups for legitimizing political authority, conducting royal rituals, and organizing temple institutions. Land grants in the form of agraharas encouraged the settlement of Brahmins in newly developing

sacred and administrative centres. Such grants not only provided economic stability but also enabled the spread of Sanskritic learning into frontier and tribal regions (Sircar 1966).

Mithila had already established itself as a major centre of Vedic scholarship, Nyaya philosophy, Smriti traditions, and ritual orthodoxy (Jha 1991). Maithil Brahmins were widely respected for their mastery over Sanskrit learning and religious ceremonies. Their intellectual prestige enabled them to occupy influential positions within temple administration and ritual institutions throughout Eastern India. As pilgrimage centres expanded across Eastern India, rulers and temple authorities increasingly sought Brahmins capable of organizing formal liturgical systems, preserving scriptural traditions, and maintaining ritual discipline (Upadhyay 1968).

The movement towards the Baidyanath region was particularly important because Deoghar had already acquired sacred significance as a Shaiva centre. The growing popularity of the shrine required institutionalized ritual systems, temple administration, and priestly hierarchy. Maithil Brahmins fulfilled these requirements and gradually became central to the functioning of the shrine (Jha 2017). They standardized worship procedures, supervised festivals, preserved sacred traditions, and helped establish hereditary priestly networks associated with the temple. Through these activities, they transformed Baidyanath Dham into a highly organized pilgrimage centre connected with wider sacred networks of Eastern India.

Their migration also reflected broader cultural expansion. Through settlement, marriage networks, pilgrimage activity, and scholastic exchange, Maithil Brahmins extended the cultural influence of Mithila far beyond its geographical boundaries. Their migration contributed not only to religious transformation but also to the spread of language, ritual customs, educational traditions, and Brahmanical social values into eastern regions (Majumdar 1971). In many areas, Brahmin settlements became centres of Sanskrit learning and religious interaction where local traditions encountered broader Brahmanical culture. This movement therefore played a significant role in shaping the religious and cultural landscape of Eastern India during the medieval period.

At the same time, migration should not be understood merely as a one-sided cultural process. Maithil Brahmins themselves adapted to regional traditions and local ritual environments after settling in Eastern India. Interaction with local populations, folk beliefs, and regional sacred traditions gradually produced a modified ritual culture that reflected both Mithila's orthodoxy and eastern India's indigenous practices (Bhattacharyya 1982). Thus, the migration of Maithil Brahmins contributed to a larger historical process of cultural interaction, adaptation, and synthesis.

Mithila's Intellectual and Ritual Influence

The influence of Mithila upon Baidyanath Dham was not limited to priesthood alone. Mithila was one of the foremost intellectual centres of medieval India, particularly known for Nyaya philosophy, Mimamsa traditions, Smriti literature, and Tantric scholarship (Jha 1991). Maithil Brahmins carried these traditions into Eastern India and contributed to the intellectual prestige of Baidyanath Dham. Their scholastic reputation enhanced the religious authority of the shrine and connected it with wider centres of Sanskrit learning across northern and eastern India.

The ritual system introduced by Maithil Brahmins helped standardize worship procedures, festivals, purification rituals, pilgrimage conduct, and temple offerings. Their authority derived from scriptural knowledge as well as hereditary ritual rights. The pandas associated with Baidyanath Dham gradually evolved into a powerful priestly institution responsible for managing devotional practices and maintaining continuity of ritual traditions (Jha 2017). The organization of temple worship under Maithil priestly supervision contributed significantly to the institutional stability of the shrine and reinforced its position as a major centre of pilgrimage.

Maithil Brahmins also preserved genealogical records of pilgrims. Such records became important not only for religious purposes but also for maintaining long-term pilgrimage networks linking Deoghar with Bihar, Bengal, Odisha, Assam, and Nepal. Through these activities, Baidyanath Dham became deeply integrated into the sacred geography of Eastern India (Sircar 1973). Pilgrims visiting the shrine often established hereditary

ritual relationships with specific priestly families, creating enduring bonds between sacred institutions and regional communities.

The intellectual culture introduced by Maithil Brahmins also encouraged the circulation of Sanskrit texts, ritual manuals, theological discussions, and oral traditions. Religious debates, scriptural recitations, and ritual instruction became part of the temple environment, thereby transforming Baidyanath Dham into a centre not only of worship but also of learning. Such developments strengthened the prestige of the shrine among devotees and scholars alike (Majumdar 1971).

In addition, Maithil Brahmins played an important role in integrating local sacred traditions within broader Brahmanical frameworks. Rather than rejecting indigenous practices outright, they often interpreted local rituals and deities through Sanskrit religious categories. This enabled regional traditions to coexist alongside orthodox ritual systems. The resulting synthesis contributed to the flexibility and inclusiveness of the Baidyanath tradition and increased its acceptance among diverse social groups (Bhattacharyya 1982).

The ritual influence of Mithila was also visible in festival organization, pilgrimage discipline, temple hierarchy, and sacred observances associated with Baidyanath Dham. Over time, these practices acquired hereditary continuity and became deeply embedded within the religious life of the region. Consequently, the intellectual and ritual traditions of Mithila became inseparable from the historical identity of Baidyanath Dham itself.

Sanskritization and Cultural Synthesis

The role of Maithil Brahmins in the Sanskritization of the Baidyanath region represents an important historical process. Through ritual formalization, textual traditions, and Brahmanical authority, they introduced more structured forms of worship and social organization into the region (Upadhyay 1968). The spread of Sanskrit rituals and Brahmanical customs helped integrate the shrine into wider networks of orthodox Hindu pilgrimage and temple culture.

However, this process did not eliminate local traditions. The religious culture of Santal Parganas already contained tribal rituals, folk deities, goddess worship, and Tantric practices (Jha

2017). Instead of replacing these traditions, Maithil Brahmins interacted with them and gradually integrated them into a wider Shaiva-Shakta framework. This interaction produced a complex religious environment in which local customs survived alongside formal Brahmanical practices.

This interaction produced a distinct religious synthesis. Shaivism, Shaktism, Tantra, folk practices, and local beliefs coexisted within the ritual environment of Baidyanath Dham. Such synthesis became one of the defining features of the “Baidyanath Cult” (Bhattacharyya 1982). The shrine’s popularity expanded precisely because it accommodated multiple religious traditions within a unified sacred framework. Pilgrims from different regions and social backgrounds could participate in worship without abandoning their own local traditions and devotional identities.

The process of Sanskritization also transformed patterns of social organization around the shrine. Temple institutions encouraged the growth of priestly hierarchies, pilgrimage services, ritual occupations, and religious patronage systems. Local populations increasingly became connected with temple-centred economic and social structures. At the same time, many indigenous rituals and folk ceremonies continued to be practiced alongside formal temple worship, demonstrating the coexistence of multiple religious layers within the same sacred space (Dasgupta 1946).

The integration of tribal and folk traditions into the Baidyanath sacred complex also reveals the adaptive nature of Hindu religious culture in Eastern India. Local goddess worship, sacred groves, healing rituals, and nature-centred beliefs were gradually absorbed into the broader ritual framework of the shrine. Rather than imposing rigid orthodoxy, the Baidyanath tradition evolved through accommodation and interaction. This flexibility contributed greatly to the enduring popularity of the shrine across regional and cultural boundaries.

Furthermore, the synthesis visible at Baidyanath Dham reflected broader historical processes occurring throughout Eastern India during the medieval period. Religious interaction between Brahmanical, Tantric, Buddhist, and tribal traditions shaped many sacred centres across Bengal, Bihar, and Jharkhand.

Baidyanath Dham therefore emerged as an important example of how cultural synthesis contributed to the development of regional religious identity (Dehejia 1986).

Tantric Traditions and the Shiv-Shakti Cult

Baidyanath Dham emerged as one of the major centres of Shiv-Shakti synthesis in Eastern India. Though dedicated primarily to Shiva, the shrine also absorbed powerful Shakta and Tantric influences. The spread of Tantra in Bengal and Eastern India during the medieval period deeply influenced the ritual culture of Baidyanath (Bhattacharyya 1982). Tantric traditions emphasized the worship of divine energy, sacred power, esoteric symbolism, and ritual transformation, all of which became important elements within the broader religious culture of the shrine.

The proximity of major Shakta centres such as Tarapith strengthened the interaction between Shaiva and Shakta traditions. Pilgrims, ascetics, Tantric practitioners, and priests travelled between these sacred centres, carrying rituals and devotional practices across regions (Dehejia 1986). Such movement facilitated the circulation of Tantric ideas and contributed to the development of a connected sacred geography in Eastern India where multiple centres shared ritual and theological influences.

The role of Maithil Brahmins within this process was complex. While representing Brahmanical orthodoxy, many among them were also familiar with Tantric traditions prevalent in Mithila and Bengal. Consequently, the ritual system of Baidyanath Dham incorporated both Sanskritic orthodoxy and esoteric Tantric symbolism. Ritual practices associated with goddess worship, sacred diagrams, mantras, and ritual offerings gradually became integrated into the broader framework of Shaiva worship at the shrine (Kinsley 1998).

This synthesis contributed significantly to the expansion of the Shiv-Shakti cult throughout Eastern India. Baidyanath Dham emerged not merely as a Shaiva shrine but as a composite sacred centre integrating multiple dimensions of devotion. Shiva and Shakti came to be understood as complementary and inseparable cosmic principles, reflecting broader Tantric

philosophical ideas concerning the unity of consciousness and energy (Padoux 1990).

Tantric influence was also visible in the practices of ascetics, mendicants, and ritual specialists associated with the shrine. Many wandering practitioners carried ritual traditions across sacred routes connecting Baidyanath with Tarapith and other centres of goddess worship. Such interactions strengthened the spread of Tantric symbolism and reinforced the shared ritual culture of Eastern India.

Moreover, the Shiv-Shakti synthesis visible at Baidyanath Dham reflected the wider cultural adaptability of Eastern Indian religious traditions. Rather than maintaining rigid sectarian divisions, Shaiva and Shakta traditions increasingly merged within ritual practice and pilgrimage culture. This convergence enabled the shrine to attract devotees from diverse backgrounds and contributed to its emergence as a major centre of regional spirituality (Urban 2003).

Pilgrimage, Sacred Geography, and Temple Economy

Pilgrimage networks played a crucial role in the rise of Baidyanath Dham. The movement of pilgrims created economic activity, cultural interaction, and religious exchange across Eastern India (Sircar 1973). Maithil Brahmins became central to this pilgrimage structure through their role as ritual mediators and custodians of sacred tradition. Their priestly authority helped regulate pilgrimage conduct and maintain continuity within ritual practices associated with the shrine.

The annual Shravani pilgrimage transformed Baidyanath Dham into a major centre of mass devotion. Pilgrims travelled from different regions carrying sacred water to offer at the Jyotirlinga. The temple economy expanded around these pilgrimage practices, generating revenue, patronage, and institutional growth. Markets, rest houses, transport services, and ritual occupations developed around the shrine and contributed to the emergence of Deoghar as a major sacred town (Jha 2017).

Through pilgrimage management and ritual organization, Maithil Brahmins contributed to the transformation of Deoghar into a major sacred town. The shrine gradually acquired pan-regional significance extending across Bihar, Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam, and Nepal. Pilgrimage routes connected distant

regions and facilitated the exchange of cultural practices, devotional traditions, and religious ideas among pilgrims from different backgrounds.

The sacred geography associated with Baidyanath Dham thus represented more than physical space. It became a cultural network sustained through pilgrimage, ritual authority, and religious memory. Sacred narratives, oral traditions, and mythological associations strengthened the spiritual importance of the shrine and linked it symbolically with other centres of Shaiva and Shakta worship across Eastern India (McDaniel 2004).

The temple economy also played an important role in sustaining religious institutions and local society. Pilgrimage activities generated employment opportunities for priests, traders, craftsmen, transport workers, and local communities. Religious festivals stimulated commercial activity and transformed the sacred town into an important economic centre during pilgrimage seasons. In this way, pilgrimage contributed not only to religious life but also to regional economic integration.

Furthermore, the continuity of pilgrimage traditions helped preserve the historical importance of Baidyanath Dham across centuries. Hereditary relationships between pilgrims and priestly families maintained long-term connections between the shrine and distant communities. Through ritual interaction and sacred memory, Baidyanath Dham remained deeply embedded within the religious consciousness of Eastern India and beyond.

Results and Discussion

The study demonstrates that the migration of Maithil Brahmins played a decisive role in shaping the institutional and ritual identity of Baidyanath Dham. Their contribution extended to temple management, pilgrimage organization, ritual codification, genealogical preservation, and the spread of Sanskrit culture (Jha 1991). Through their scholastic traditions and ritual authority, they helped transform the shrine into a major centre of organized religious activity in Eastern India.

At the same time, the evidence clearly indicates that Baidyanath Dham evolved through synthesis rather than cultural domination. Tribal traditions, local folk practices, Shakta worship, and Tantric influences remained integral to the shrine's

identity. The interaction between these traditions and Maithil Brahmanical culture produced a composite religious environment unique to Eastern India (Bhattacharyya 1982). This synthesis reflected broader historical patterns of interaction between Brahmanical and regional traditions throughout medieval India.

The emergence of the “Baidyanath Cult” therefore reflected a broader process of cultural integration. The shrine became a sacred complex where different religious traditions interacted, adapted, and coexisted. This flexibility enabled Baidyanath Dham to achieve enduring popularity across regional and social boundaries. Its ritual environment appealed simultaneously to orthodox Brahmanical devotees, folk practitioners, Tantric ascetics, and ordinary pilgrims.

The findings also demonstrate that sacred centres such as Baidyanath Dham cannot be studied merely as isolated temples. They functioned as dynamic institutions connected with pilgrimage routes, regional economies, sacred geography, and social networks. The migration of priestly communities, circulation of ritual traditions, and movement of pilgrims all contributed to the growth of such centres over time (Sircar 1973).

Another important result of the study is the recognition that religious development in Eastern India was deeply shaped by cultural accommodation and interaction. The success of the Baidyanath tradition depended largely upon its ability to integrate diverse practices and beliefs within a shared sacred framework. This adaptability enabled the shrine to maintain continuity despite changing political, social, and cultural conditions.

Finally, the study highlights the importance of examining regional religious traditions within broader historical contexts. The rise of Baidyanath Dham illustrates how migration, pilgrimage, sacred geography, Tantra, and cultural synthesis collectively shaped the religious history of Eastern India. The shrine therefore represents not only a sacred institution but also a historical example of how diverse traditions interacted to create enduring forms of religious identity and devotion.

Conclusion

The migration of Maithil Brahmins into Eastern India marked a major phase in the religious history of the region. Their contribution to Baidyanath Dham went far beyond hereditary

priesthood. Through ritual organization, pilgrimage management, Sanskritic learning, and cultural integration, they transformed the shrine into one of the most important centres of Shiv-Shakti worship in Eastern India.

Yet the significance of Baidyanath Dham lies equally in its composite character. The interaction between Maithil Brahmanical traditions, tribal religious culture, folk beliefs, and Tantric practices produced a unique sacred synthesis which became central to the identity of the shrine. The resulting “Baidyanath Cult” represented a wider geo-cultural phenomenon extending across Eastern India.

The priestly community of Baidyanath Dham therefore symbolizes not merely a temple institution but a broader historical process through which migration, sacred geography, pilgrimage, and cultural interaction shaped regional religious identity.

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Shree Ram janmabhoomi Mandir Moment : A Historical Narrative

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Abstract

One of the most important religious, political and cultural events in the postcolonial world is the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, India, and the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. The aim of this article is to shed light on how the Ram Janmabhoomi became an icon of Hindu cultural nationalism and collective memory in contemporary India, and from a contested religious locality. Through political sociology, religious studies and postcolonial theory, it traces the history of this conflict, looks at the process of its instrumentation in the discourse of the Hindu nationalists and its implications for plural democracy and minority communities. The article points out that the site is not only a theological clubhouse, but also a mnemonic of the civilisational pride and a political instrument which has changed the face of Indian political life. The year 2019 and the 2024 consecration of the temple are pointed out as significant events that have expressed divergent conceptions of Indian nationalism. The analysis suggest that the temple is a symbol of a majoritarian cultural project, and its prospects for India's national image will be shaped by what it can do beyond what it can't – to be integrated into, rather than challenged, the constitutional principles of Indian pluralism.

Abstract: The Ram Janmabhoomi movement is not a contemporary event, but rather a historical event and phenomenon, however, the Ayodhya issue over the construction of a temple for Lord Rama is a relatively recent one. The Ram Janmabhoomi movement is both historical and historical phenomenon, while in the meantime, the issue of constructing a temple for Lord Rama at Ayodhya is a recent one.

The meaning of Ram Janmabhoomi in the modern India. Ram Janmabhoomi as a Symbol of Cultural identity in modern India.

Introduction

In modern India, no geographical location is as sacred as Ayodhya, and runs much deeper than just a historical location. Not only a geographical landmark for the hundred of millions of Hindus, this historic city marks the place where the cosmic sovereign Lord Ram, whose life story is recounted in Valmiki's Ramayana and numerous local versions, inspired and guided South Asian civilization for over 2000 years. The Ram Janmabhoomi, literally 'the birthplace of Ram', thus has an exceptionally sacred place in the Indian religious psyche. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, this holy geography evolved into the seat of one of the most heated and contentious political and legal issues in independent India, culminating in the tearing down of the Babri Masjid in 1992, the Supreme Court's landmark judgement in 2019 and the consecration of a massive Ram temple in January 2024.

The trajectory of Ram Janmabhoomi's history is an interesting example of the cultural dynamics at work in building cultural identities in postcolonial societies. It reveals the ways in which symbols from the distant past are brought to light, reframed and deployed in the cause of contemporary nationalist agendas. It poses pressing questions on how assertions of majority culture and minority rights intertwine in democratic polities. It calls for thinking about collective memory, a memory which is constructed for communities to serve as a basis for present claims and future hopes (Assmann, 2011; Nora, 1989). The article thus reflects on these issues, taking the movement of Ram Janmabhoomi into the domain of the major intellectual moves that have been defining the Hindu nationalist, postcolonial political and the sociology of religion.

The argument is complicated. The article first traces the historical and mythological underpinnings which confer spiritual legitimacy on Ayodhya. It then follows the contemporary political story of the conflict from colonial days to communal antagonisms to the aggressive mobilization campaigns in the

1980s and 1990s. The Third section explores how the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) have developed a Ram in the image of a symbol of Hindu civilisational identity. The article then looks at the legal resolution and the cultural associations given to the consecration of the Ram temple before concluding with a reflective evaluation of the meaning of the Ram temple for the plural democratic ethos of India in the year 2024.

The history and the mythological aspect of Ayodhya's sacred geography was discussed. The sacred geography of Ayodhya, its history and mythology were discussed.

The Ramayana tradition and sanctity of Ayodhya.

It is not enough to recognize the emotions and politics of Ram Janmabhoomi movement if not in its religious and cultural context of Ayodhya. In the Hindu religion, which has two great epics, Valmiki Ramayana, Ayodhya was the seat of the solar dynasty and, according to this text, where Ram, the seventh avatar of Vishnu, was born, and his life served as a role model of dharmic kingship, conjugal fidelity, and righteous governance as understood by the Vedic people (Lutgendorf, 1991). The Ramayana tradition was not static, but a tradition which has been alive through songs, stories, stage plays and devotional songs, over the centuries. One of the most revolutionary and ground breaking works of this period was the Ramcharitmanas, a sixteenth century Hindi translation by Tulsidas, which removed the caste barrier and made Ayodhya a high holy place of pilgrimage (Lutgendorf, 1991).

It has been a long time recognised by scholars of religion that the power of sacred sites is not in the objective historical attestation, but in several modes of community imagination and ritual investment – in other words in the power they have gained through their histories and through the imaginations and ritual choices of those who use them (Eliade, 1959; Eck, 2012). The case of Ayodhya is a textbook case. The question which is significant for sociological and political purposes is whether or not the archaeologist is able to identify the exact location of Ram's birth site or janmabhoomi, or not, but the depth and breadth of faith that Ayodhya is Ram's birth site. This conviction among hundreds of millions inside South Asia and also outside

gives a numinous power to the site that surpasses standard spatial definitions. India's sacred geography, which was investigated by Diana Eck (2012), has a vertical dimension from the mundane to the cosmic, contesting one's birthplace or descent is perceived as an assault on the sacred.

This is Colonial Encounters, the beginning of Dispute.

The Babri Masjid-Mosque vs Temple issue has been a 19th century one, as the Babri Masjid was built by the Mughal emperor Babur's General Mir Baqi in 1528. Colonial ethnographers, census takers and administrators were the ones who, by demarcating the boundaries between the religious communities, helped to establish the boundaries to their difference, as described by scholars as the "enumeration of difference" (Cohn, 1987). It is important to remember that the British policy of determining and settling the claims of the two religious groups in contested religious sites such as Ayodhya actually gave rise to the competition between the two religious groups around the sacred places (van der Veer, 1994).

Peter van der Veer (1994) in his authoritative study, notes the long history of negotiations between religious specialists of the town (pandits and imams) and the fabric of the built environment of town in Ayodhya. With the coming of the British colonial rule, a new juridical logic was imposed, which turned these negotiations into legal claims and counterclaims, thus putting the sacred landscape on a political plane. The turning point was when Ram idols were installed in 1949 in the mosque with the administrative clearance, which is believed to have been given by local Hindu activists, putting both communities in an antagonistic position that would only be possible to overcome when they are safe at a distance.

The development of Ram as a civilisational symbol and Hinduism Nationalism.

This is an ideology, called Hindutva. It's an ideology called Hindutva.

The ideology of Hindutva provided the base for the ideological justification of Ram Janmabhoomi movement which was its repository of intellectual framework. The cornerstone of the ideology of Hindutva is the pamphlet 'Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?' written by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923. Because

of this, in Savarkar's mind, Muslims and Christians were not considered Hindu, or Indian for that matter, and Hinduism was to be redefined as 'pitribhumi' (fatherland) and 'punyabhumi' (holy land). This ethnic-territorial conception of the nation was the ideology that motivated the later projects to "reclaim" buildings that were deemed to be integral to the Hindu past under the control of buildings from the Mughal era.

In 1996 Christophe Jaffrelot followed the history of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) since its inception in 1925, a movement that developed an 'anti-identity politics' of 'Hindu pride' in reaction to Muslim separatism and secular nationalism. In this context Ram became a symbol of Hindu resistance and Hindu continuity of the Hindu civilisation and as such was no longer a devotional figure. In 1984, when the VHP decided to initiate the Ram Janmabhoomi liberation movement (Jaffrelot, 1996), the place where he was born had a strong emotional impact, establishing a pan-Hindu constituency without regard to caste or region.

The 1992 Demolition and Its Aftermath

One of the most ghastly incidents in the history of post-Independent India was the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6th December 1992 by 150,000 kar sevaks (religious activists), led by the highest rank leaders of the BJP & VHP. The demolition caused a lot of counter-violence activities in India and Pakistan, resulting in the deaths of over 2,000 people, as well as retaliatory events like the bombings in Bombay in 1993, and a great impact on the psyche of the Muslim minority in India, which never healed fast (Brass, 2003; Engineer, 1991). To the Hindu nationalists, however, the act was a symbol of enlightenment in the march of civilisational history; it was an honour being restored after long centuries of subjugation.

In 2003, however, the sociologist Paul Brass theorised that communal violence in India was not random, but rather a part of a system of politicians, local enforcers, and media personalities who could initiate and oversee communal violence for political gain. The demolition of Babri Masjid and the ensuing events were representative of this. But the demolition also had a counter-protest: The BJP which had its taint on it, was struck off of state governments and soul searching took place in

India regarding the fragility of the secular compact. The event in turn, further strengthened and enhanced the Hindu nationalist cause, boosting the emotional momentum of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and also demonstrating the cost of majoritarian violence.

In the early 1970s, the author used to have a Ram card as a memory aid.

Jan Assmann's (2011) theory of cultural memory is useful in exploring the nature of Ram as a memory culture in the Hindu nationalist consciousness. For Assmann, communicative memory, the memory alive in the collective of the last three or four generations, is different from cultural memory, the normatively formed, mythical, ritual and monumentalised image of the collective's past. As preserved through thousands of years of scripture, performance and pilgrimage, the story of Ram is a classic case of how culture can become memory in what Assmann called a 'floating gap' – "a set of myths" that are elevated in this way to represent a past that is not inevitably true, but rather serves as a basis for collective identity.

The Ram Janmabhoomi campaign took advantage of this mnemonic infrastructure to its full extent. The emotional appeal of Ram also enabled activists to mine a treasure trove of devotional emotion that they then translated into political organisation by linking that feeling to the physical site they were targeting – Ayodhya. The conversion of religious symbol to political stageplay was exemplified by a Ram idol tumbling on a Ram's chariot truck (sponsored by Toyota) down the Indian highways in 1990, when L.K. Advani took up the role of the chariot driver for his Rath Yatra. A usual instance of this metamorphosis of a religious symbol into a political stageplay was the famous Rath Yatra of L.K. Advani in 1990 when he rode a Ram's chariot truck down the Indian highways (Jaffrelot, 1996). The yatra had galvanized the Hindu voters and was instrumental in bringing down the V.P. Singh government, proving that cultural identity can be a more powerful political tool than class and caste.

Political Consecration, Legal Resolution.

The supreme court ruling of 2019

On November 9, 2019, in a five-member bench of the Supreme Court, the SC gave a uniform verdict on the long-standing dispute over the land at Ayodhya. The court has allotted 2.77 acre of the disputed land to the construction of a temple for the Hindus and five acres to the government to build a mosque for Sunni Waqf Board. Remarkably, the court had done a proper balancing of the jurisprudences, acknowledging that the demolition of the Babri Masjid was an illegal act and that it could not be attributed to the victorious party, but also that the Hindu claimants had proved to have a better title to the land, having based their claim on faith and long standing belief (Supreme Court of India, 2019).

There was a split in views on legal aspects and commentaries. A number of them hailed the pragmatism of the judgment in resolving a dispute which had been convulsing the Indian polity for decades for years and years and others said that the court could be interpreted as rewarding a mob demolition, as it awarded the land to the people whose coreligionist had demolished the mosque, creating a disturbing precedent in the settlement of land disputes through force (Dhavan, 2020; Sathyamurthy, 2020). The ruling was felt as a cruel reminder of the marginalisation of Muslims in the dominant political system that came together under the BJP since 2014. The desired plot was considered more of a consolation prize, an equivalent remedy was not thought of.

In 2024, the Consecration and its Cultural Resonances will be celebrated.

The event of the dedication of the idol of Ram Lalla on January 22, 2024, at the recently constructed Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple was the largest and most symbolic. Outside of the religious rituals, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also performed the prana pratishtha (consecration) ceremony, in a nationally televised event, with a host of religious leaders, celebrities and BJP leaders, in the guise of state pageantry. The event was very clearly defined as it was in the process of restoring the rightful abode of Ram and asserting the cultural sovereignty of the Hindus over the public space of India (Sharma, 2024).

A complex bundle of cultural cues arose in the event. Those who were truly devout experienced a stirring spiritual moment: the triumphant return of the Divine child Ram to his place of birth, after 500 years of his story of exile. It was proof of the special prowess of

the BJP to convert Hindu dreams into government dreams. It challenged the liberal and secular intellectuals with uncomfortable, awkward questions of the blurring of the lines between state and organized religion in a secular constitutional republic. It was a reminder to many Muslims as to how far the terms of the public culture in India had changed since the Babri Masjid was demolished. The consecration was also broadcast on the internet, drawing huge audiences, as Ram was perceived as a symbol not only Hindu, but also ‘transnational’—particularly for the Indian community abroad, which was well represented in the United States, the United Kingdom and the Gulf countries, who saw it as a moment of pride for their civilisational identity (Sharma, 2024; Bhatt, 2001).

The consequences of Plural Democracy and Minority Identity

The Ram Janmabhoomi episode prompts some elementary questions about the image that India has of itself as a plural and secular democracy. The Constitution was drafted by a man who had a vision of secularism different from the French or American model – B.R. Ambedkar with his vision of secularism meant that the state should treat all religions with equality and fairness, without showing any preference to any religion (Bhargava, 2010). This model has been challenged since the beginning, by the Hindu nationalists who asserted that the Indian secularism was pseudo-secularism, that it had appeased the minorities and disrespected the Hindu majority. The Ram Janmabhoomi was one of the many attacks on this secular commitment.

One of India's foremost political philosophers, Rajeev Bhargava (2010), has proposed that it would be protected and required to meet the challenges posed by deep religious differences, given the unique characteristics of the Indian religious demography and history. If one thinks of it this way, it can be understood that the danger of the Ram Janmabhoomi trajectory is not due to the celebration of the Hindu religion but because it is celebrated in a manner that systematically excludes the Muslim citizens. The symbolic message minorities are given when the state leader has participated in the consecration ceremony of a temple on stolen land as a result of communal violence is one of ex-communication and not inclusion. While the cultural politics of the Ram movement may seem to have no substantial impact beyond symbolism, Zoya Hasan (2011) has pointed out that the BJP's ascendance has matched a quantifiable decline in the representation of Muslims and their economic prospects in India.

However, it was unhelpful to consider the Ram Janmabhoomi issue only in terms of the conflict between majority and minority groups. In general, the Hindus who favor the temple project are not anti-Muslim, but rather offer their sacrifices for the sake of a beloved deity, and sacrificing one's life for the sake of a beloved deity is not the same as being anti-Muslim (Lutgendorf, 1991; Eck, 2012). But the challenge for democracy in India is to recognize the depth and legitimacy of the Hindu faith without allowing it to be used as a political tool which is detrimental to the full and equal citizenship of religious minorities. The dreams of the latter are not mutually exclusive; the choices leading to realization of those dreams must be in the form of political leadership and institutional constraints, which are lacking in the Ram Janmabhoomi saga of Indian history.

The study of nationalism has always been aware of the reality that national identity is always a selective construction – a story a community tells about itself, one that highlights certain aspects of the past that are heterogeneous, while downplaying others (Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). It's not a breaking of the Hindu nationalist narrative on Ram Janmabhoomi. It emphasises continuity of the Hindu Civilisation, the trauma of the medieval destruction, the triumph of cultural reclamation, and in the process marginalises the “pluralist and syncretic” aspects of the Ramkathamarg as a shared cultural resource, and not exclusively one of the Hindu religion, as it had been for centuries (Lutgendorf, 1991). It would not be an insult to Hindu appeasement to say that these traditions are rich, but it would be a statement to give a more palatable and nuanced account of the meanings of Ram in South Asia.

Conclusion

Ram Janmabhoomi-Ayodhya temple is one of the most striking cultural phenomenon and political phenomenon of modern times in India. They are the by-product of a piety of the majority culture that seeks to honour the most sacred of its religious sentiments, the project of a political party determined to forge the Indian National identity in a decidedly Hindu manner and the site of the current debate on the nature of Indian National identity – a plurality of cultural claims, political projects and constitutional struggles.

This article has argued that the shift from a devotional figure to a symbol of civilisational identity is not a natural progression, but

a result of some concerted ideological toil by the Hindutva movement, which has been based on a long tradition of collective memory, communal politics during the colonial era, and postcolonial fears of cultural sovereignty. This movement has received a lot of closure with the Supreme Court ruling in 2019 and the consecration in 2024; but the issues raised by this conflict, as well as the tensions that have been revealed, have not been confronted.

But a more fundamental question confronts India: Can the Ram temple be part of a more inclusive understanding of Indian nationhood, one that respects the religious and cultural traditions of the majority Hindu community, and the equal dignity and belonging of Muslims, Christians, sikhs, Dalits and others who represent the human diversity of the subcontinent. History is no guarantee, but a lesson. In many variants of the Ramayana, the story is one of success and one of compassion, the listening-to-the-people king, who carries the burden of justice with anguish, with care. If the temple at Ayodhya can be a place from where that fuller vision of Ram – the just king, of all his people – is proclaimed and practised, it might be able to play a part in the civilisational project of a truly plural India not just as a symbol of Hindu cultural pride but as a contribution to it. This may turn to be one of the ultimate litmus test of Indian democracy in the coming years.

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Article 370 abrogation and it's impact

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The Abrogation of Article 370

Constitutional Transformation and Its Far – Impact on Jammu and Kashmir

Introduction

The 5th of August 2019 witnessed a major constitutional change made by the Indian Government; namely, the scrapping of Article 370 which had granted the former state of Jammu and Kashmir special autonomous status for more than seven decades. Additionally, there was reorganization of the state into two Union Territories - Jammu and Kashmir (which will have a legislature) and Ladakh (which will not have a legislature). This move made by the BJP government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was subjected to much discussion domestically and internationally and has altered the political scene of the region ever since.

To properly analyze the implications of this historical development, it is important to understand the significance of Article 370 not only as a constitutional law but as an emblem of Kashmiri identity, as well as the constitutionally agreed federal arrangement between India and Jammu and Kashmir (Noorani, 2014). This paper attempts to discuss the political context that necessitated this move, the three-phase process through which the constitutional amendment was made, as well as its domestic and international reactions.

Historical Context: Article 370 and Its Evolution

The merger of Jammu and Kashmir with India took place on 26 October 1947 at the same time when Maharaja Hari Singh executed an Instrument of Accession following threats from invading tribesmen coming across Pakistan's border (Government of India, 1947). The merger included only three subjects, namely Defense, External Affairs, and Communications, and was thus followed by a special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir that was established with the help of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution previously numbered 306-A (Teng & Gadoo, 2002).

One of the most important aspects of the relationship was certainly a restriction on the jurisdiction of the Indian Parliament. Laws in connection with the three specified subjects applied to Jammu and Kashmir automatically, and for any other extensions of law-making power, the consent of the Jammu and Kashmir state government became necessary, and in certain cases, the consent of its Constituent Assembly (Wadhwa, 2001). In this sense, Article 370 was designed according to specific historical circumstances: the failed idea of a plebiscite, political aspirations of Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference, and the idea of a special relationship expressed by Jawaharlal Nehru (Bose, 2003).

Throughout the next decades, the constitutional relationship between the two entities was changed by several Presidential Orders, the most important being the ones adopted in 1950 and 1954 and aimed at bringing the legislation of Jammu and Kashmir into line with Indian laws and institutions (Anand, 1998). However controversial they might be, those Orders made Article 370 a center of an extremely polarized ideological confrontation by 2019.

Political Background: From Coalition Collapse to Abrogation

From the political standpoint, the backdrop against which the abrogation took place involved the collapse of the BJP-PDP alliance government on 20 June 2018. At this time, the Bharatiya Janata Party withdrew its support from the ruling coalition that included the People's Democratic Party headed by Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti due to political and security reasons. Governor N. N. Vohra exercised his powers according to Section 92 of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir, thus imposing Governor's Rule. In six months, the President's Rule was introduced and extended by another six months, starting on 3 July 2019, thus paving the way for developments on 5 August.

In addition to these technicalities, the abrogation had been one of the major ideological goals of the Bharatiya Janata Party for quite some time. The 2019 election manifesto of the party clearly indicated the intention of integrating Jammu and Kashmir into the constitutional system of India (Spandana & Venkataramanan, 2023). Furthermore, the party emerged victorious in the elections in May 2019, which provided the Modi

government with sufficient political authority to take further actions.

Specifically, in February 2019, terrorists belonging to the organization Jaish-e-Mohammed committed a suicide attack that resulted in the death of over forty police personnel in the district of Pulwama. As a result of the terrorist activities, India decided to respond to the threats with its military by organizing the airstrike in Balakot. These actions helped the Modi government gain additional support in the elections. According to the Congressional Research Service (United States), the possibility of a mediation attempt initiated by the United States government to settle disputes between India and Pakistan in July 2019 may have played a role in prompting India to make changes in its constitutional system (Chaudhury, 2020).

Other security concerns include terrorism, including infiltration along the Line of Control, militant activities that gained momentum after the death of the commander Burhan Wani in 2016, and Taliban resurgence due to the expected US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The Three-Stage Constitutional Mechanism

The abrogation process involved a complicated three-step procedure that was later validated by the Supreme Court of India in December 2023 (Supreme Court of India, 2023).

Part I

On August 5, 2019, President Ram Nath Kovind promulgated the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019 (C.O. 272), thereby nullifying the earlier 1954 Order. Through this constitutional amendment, all the provisions and amendments in the Indian Constitution were applied to Jammu and Kashmir. Significantly, it also provided for an amendment to Article 367 (interpretation clause), wherein the mention of the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly was substituted with that of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, allowing the legislature to assume the duties instead of the defunct Constituent Assembly under President's Rule.

Part II

Amit Shah, the Home Minister, moved resolutions in both Houses of Parliament using his parliamentary powers as representing the dissolved assembly of Jammu & Kashmir, recommending: (i) Abolition of Article 370; and (ii) creation of two UTs from the erstwhile State.

Part III

The President passed an order making Article 370 inoperative on 6th August 2019. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019, thereafter came into force on 9th August 2019 and implemented on 31st October 2019, thus constituting Union Territory of J&K (having a Legislative Assembly of 107 members), and UT of Ladakh (without a legislature consisting of Leh & Kargil districts). The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council created in 1957 was dissolved, while the number of seats of representation for the state in Lok Sabha was cut down to five seats from six.

Scholars as well as regional politicians argued that the procedure violated the essence of Article 370 by invoking the procedures provided under the same Article to make it ineffective, and it was constitutionally questionable for a Presidential Rule Governor to be compared to a democratic state legislature (Noorani, 2014). However, a five-judge constitutional bench of the Supreme Court delivered its ruling in December 2023, validating the decision as constitutionally sound since, from the very beginning, Article 370 remained a temporary one (Supreme Court of India, 2023).

Domestic and International Reactions

In the Indian context, the abrogation generated stark polarization in India's entire political arena. While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and other political entities including the Bahujan Samaj Party, Aam Aadmi Party, Biju Janata Dal, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Shiv Sena, and Shiromani Akali Dal strongly endorsed the decision, which was termed by BJP leaders as one of the greatest corrections in the history of India's constitution, the opposition comprised of Indian National Congress, National Conference, and People's Democratic Party vehemently criticized the move as constitutionally unjustified, politically motivated, and harmful for the Kashmiri citizens' trust.

In Rajya Sabha, the Congress party leader Ghulam Nabi Azad raised fears about the constitutional identity destruction of the state. Furthermore, regional political organizations like the National Conference and People's Democratic Party were of the view that the reduction of status of Jammu and Kashmir from a state to Union territory amounted to undermining Kashmiri political dignity.

International Responses

Pakistani response was prompt and aggressive. After an emergency joint meeting of the Parliament on 7th of August 2019, Pakistan's National Security Committee decided to downgrade its diplomatic relationship with India through a series of actions, including expelling the Indian High Commissioner from Pakistan, suspending the Samjhauta and Thar Express trains, ending all cultural interactions, and stopping bilateral trade with India. Furthermore, Pakistan tried to elevate the issue at the UN Security Council but was unable to achieve any binding resolution due to silence or indirect support from some of India's Arab allies, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE (Kuchay, 2019).

The creation of the Union Territory of Ladakh raised concerns in China due to unilateral modification of India's legal status and its impact on the border region which may be considered a threat to China's interests. According to some experts, the subsequent violent confrontation between the Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan Valley region in June 2020 could be attributed to heightened bilateral tensions triggered by the recent changes in Ladakh's status (Shah & Krishnan, 2020).

Post-Abrogation Governance Changes

Structural Changes in Governance in Jammu and Kashmir

With the abrogation of Article 370 came drastic changes to the structure of governance in Jammu and Kashmir. The distinct Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir passed in 1956 became defunct on 17 November 2019, along with its state flag and right to legislate without prior parliamentary approval. Among these structural changes are the replacement of the Governor with a Lieutenant Governor (which suggests more central involvement); mandatory assent of the Lieutenant Governor on any bills introduced and approved by the Jammu and Kashmir assembly; and direct jurisdiction of the Lieutenant

Governor over issues pertaining to public order and policing (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2019). Moreover, a maximum number of ministers (ten, including the Chief Minister) could be nominated to the government (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2019).

Reconstitution of Judiciary

Following the division of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court has been reconstituted into the Common High Court for J&K and Ladakh Union Territories. The High Court, initially set up on 26 March 1928 under Maharaja Hari Singh, continues to work in rotations between Srinagar (summer) and Jammu (winter), after the pattern of common high courts of states like Punjab and Haryana.

Panchayati Raj System

One of the major developments following the abrogation of Article 370 is the adoption of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments into the law of Jammu and Kashmir, which led to implementation of a three-tiered Panchayati Raj system in the UT with Gram Panchayats at the Halqa level, Block Development Councils (BDCs), and District Development Councils (DDCs). BDC polls conducted on 24 October 2019 marked the beginning of people participating in polls in J&K, with the highest-ever voter turnout rate of 98.3%. While mainstream political parties boycotted the election, independents won 217 out of 310 posts of BDC chairpersons. DDC polls were held in November–December 2020 in eight phases covering all twenty districts, with a voter turnout of 51.42%. People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an alliance of seven regional parties opposing Article 370, won 110 seats against 75 won by BJP and 26 by Congress party. Today, approximately 34,000 representatives are working at the village, tehsil, and district level Panchayat Raj institutions of Jammu and Kashmir (Rashid, 2020).

Delimitation and Electoral Reorganisation

The Delimitation Commission led by retired Supreme Court Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai was constituted in March 2020. In its final order in May 2022, the number of assembly constituencies increased from 83 to 90, with the addition of six seats to the Jammu division, taking it to 43 and one to the

Kashmir division to bring it to 47. Nine seats were allocated to the Scheduled Tribes category, and the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency was created through the amalgamation of certain segments of the Pir Panjal range and southern Kashmir. This exercise was contested by various political parties owing to its skewed proportion of seats allocation that favored Hindu majority Jammu compared to the Muslims-dominated Kashmir Valley (Bhardwaj, 2022; Drabu, 2022).

Legislative Unification and Social Transition

After the abrogation, there followed a detailed process of legislative harmonization that involved the implementation of about 890 central laws and the repeal of around 205 state-level legislations that were seen as discriminatory in nature, such as those that restricted the ownership of land by non-residents. As part of this exercise, the J&K Official Languages Act, 2020 if Kashmiri, Dogri, Hindi, Urdu, and English will be regarded as official languages of Jammu and Kashmir. A domicile law was introduced, allowing people who have been residing in the state for more than 15 years, Central Government employees of J&K, and the Pakistani refugees to become domiciles of J&K (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019).

One of the most notable social changes was the abrogation of Article 35A that prohibited women in J&K who married non-residents from owning properties. The scrapping of Article 35A was presented as a tool for ensuring gender justice but its critics saw it as a ploy to bring about demographic changes in the region (Aggarwal, 2023).

In addition, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Amendment) Act, 2023 provides that five more members can be nominated to the Legislative Assembly by the Lieutenant Governor to represent Kashmiri migrants, displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (one woman included), and women nominees.

Economic Development

The lifting of restrictions on property ownership through the implementation of Article 35A was expected to be the catalyst of economic change. The total investment commitments for industrial summits amounted to around Rs. 38,000 crores. Special Economic Zones were planned for setting up information

technology facilities, industries, and other services. Expenditures were budgeted for the development of agriculture and horticulture at Rs. 2,835 crore and Rs. 646 crores respectively. Investments in infrastructure included the creation of the Z-Morh tunnel to ensure all-weather access to Sona Marg, upgrading railways, construction of new airports, and smart city projects. Completion of 29 cluster tribal model villages as part of the Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana was reported at Rs. 10 crore each (Economic Survey of Jammu and Kashmir, 2022–23).

Security Environment: Improvement and Fragility

There have been clear changes to the security environment in Jammu and Kashmir since the month of August in 2019, although the changes have not been even and balanced. Perhaps the most significant change in terms of politics has been that of the disappearance of large-scale rock pelting protests, which came to characterize popular agitation in Kashmir Valley during the years 2008 to 2016 and posed considerable problems for both civilians and security forces. There have been considerable reinforcements of military and para-military forces in crucial South Kashmir districts—namely Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam, and Anantnag—along with strengthening in the border areas. A systematic clampdown on militant and separatist groups included banning Jamaat-e-Islami J&K in February 2019, JKLF in April 2019, dismantlement of Hurriyat Conference, and invocation of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against several individuals.

Improvement in security has been suggested by electoral statistics, where the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in Pulwama saw turnout of only 1%, whereas the first phase of 2024 elections saw 50.42% turnout, while in Shopian, the turnout was less than 2% for the same year of Lok Sabha Elections, but for 2024 elections, it rose to 57.01% (Bureau, 2024). However, there is fragility in the security situation. Assassination of elected panchayat members, sarpanches, and political activists continues, which creates a climate of fear in the rural parts of South Kashmir. New challenges arise from 'hybrid militancy', involving radicalized youth engaging in targeted strikes through social media networks and subsequently reverting to normalcy. There continue to be

instances of infiltration across the Line of Control and delivery of weapons by means of drone aircraft.

Elections Transformed: Elections 2024

General Elections

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections were the first major elections in the newly reorganized union territory of J&K. Voter turnout for the five constituencies in the region was 58.46%, the highest since 1989 and a dramatic rise from 19.16% seen in the last assembly election in 2019. Even in the regions that are historically considered to have poor voter turnout, the results improved significantly. Voter turnout in the constituency of Baramulla was 59.1%, whereas voter turnout in Sopore within Baramulla district – which has long been considered a hotbed for militant-imposed boycotts – exceeded 44%. The BJP won both the seats in the constituencies of Jammu and Udhampur, while National Conference managed to win two seats. The Independent candidate Engineer Rashid won the seat of Baramulla after defeating former chief minister Omar Abdullah by a margin of around 200,000 votes (Bureau, 2024; Bhat, 2024; Geelani, 2024).

Assembly Elections

J&K Legislative Assembly elections were the first after a gap of ten years. These elections were held in three phases between 18 September and 1 October 2024. Voter turnout was 63.88% overall, and it rose to 69.65% in Phase 3. In the assembly elections, National Conference was the largest political party, winning 42 out of 90 seats, thus beating their previous record of 1996. The BJP won 29 seats, and all were in the constituency of Jammu. Congress and PDP won 6 and 3 seats, respectively. The government was constituted as an alliance between NC and Congress, and Omar Abdullah was sworn in as Chief Minister. For the first time, voters in West Pakistani refugees, Valmiki Samaj, and Gorkha communities became eligible to vote after being granted domiciles (HT News Desk, 2024; Ramachandran, 2024).

The Supreme Court Judgment of December 2023.

In another monumental judgment handed down on 11 December 2023, a five-member bench of the Supreme Court of India validated the constitutional propriety of the abrogation of Article 370. According to the Supreme Court, Article 370 was

itself a temporary clause; and in light of this, the President had the constitutional power to abrogate Article 370 especially considering the dissolution of the J&K Constituent Assembly. In addition, the court instructed the Election Commission to hold assembly elections in J&K before 30 September 2024 and hoped for reinstating statehood in Jammu and Kashmir at the earliest (Supreme Court of India, 2023).

While the ruling was celebrated as a conclusive constitutional triumph by the government, critics pointed out that the court had failed to conclusively establish whether relying on the consent of a dissolved Constituent Assembly's equivalent to abrogate an important constitutional provision was democratic in principle (Prakash, 2021).

Unanswered Questions and Enduring Challenges

Restoration of Statehood

The downgrading of the status of Jammu and Kashmir to Union Territory is still considered one of the foremost political concerns by people within the region. The Supreme Court of India, in 2023, expressed an optimistic outlook regarding the restoration of statehood, which has been prioritized as the political goal of the coalition government formed by the National Conference and Congress. It is essential to assess whether the central government will make the necessary efforts to restore the statehood or opt for some politically motivated move to address the concern.

Kashmiri Pandits

It is estimated that up to half a million Kashmiri Pandits had to migrate from the valley during the militant activities of the early 1990s, and they have not been able to return to their homes since then. Although the legislature has made provisions for nominated members to represent Kashmiri Pandits in the assembly, the issue of their return along with the problems related to rehabilitation is yet to be sorted out.

International Dimension

The militants working under Pakistan's patronage are still active in the regions of Jammu and Kashmir, and the diplomatic actions taken by Pakistan against the abrogation of Article 370 have failed to bring a unanimous decision of the United Nations Security Council. Moreover, the Chinese government's

opposition to the formation of the Union Territory of Ladakh has brought another geopolitical angle to the constitutional transformation of the state.

Human Rights and Civil Liberties

It was reported that the extended internet shutdown imposed in August 2019, the preventive detention of political leaders, and the continued deployment of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in many parts of Jammu and Kashmir continue to attract condemnation by various human rights organizations. It would not be easy to win back the confidence of the people living there without making any effort at political reconciliation.

Conclusion.

The repeal of Article 370 and the re-constitution of Jammu and Kashmir are, therefore, the most important constitutional acts to have taken place regarding the region ever since the signing of the Instrument of Accession in 1947. This has led to a major constitutional change with regards to the region and its constitution. This has meant an end to a constitutional arrangement which has remained in place for almost seven decades, an expansion of the jurisdiction of the Indian Constitution, and finally, bringing the region's election, judiciary, and administration in line with India.

The justification provided by the government—constituent integration, national security, socioeconomic development, gender equality, and protecting historically disadvantaged communities—are all valid considerations to consider. Concrete achievements like voter participation being higher, the introduction of Panchayati Raj and other benefits can be seen in the area. However, the Kashmir issue cannot be solved merely through constitutional or administrative measures alone. Ultimately, the issue of Kashmir deals with matters of trust and democratic legitimacy amongst a people who have suffered and had a very traumatic history. The abrogation is, therefore, a constitutional act and not a political solution to a problem. In the future, to secure long-term stability, it would be required to give Kashmir its constitutional autonomy once again and develop the region economically and politically as well.

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“Who are the Backward?”: The identification of Backward Classes in Colonial and Pre-Independence India (1871-1947)

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Abstract

The category of backward classes in India discusses the historical layering and conditioning of Indian post-colonial categorisation of backward classes starting from pre-Independence days where including or excluding specific populations into the "backward classes" category was achieved not only at the administrative level but also through a complex set of political, social, economic, and cultural processes involving colonial census, Non-Brahmin social movements, experiments by princely states with their own approach of backward class reservation, and a series of constitutional debates and processes from the 1930s onwards. It examines the three intertwined trajectories of constructing, contesting, and institutionalizing the concepts of “backwardness” through data and census documents (from 1871 to 1921), princely state policies (from 1902 to 1935), and the transitional constitutional moment (between 1927 and 1947) using B. R. Ambedkar's writings, census reports, and commission documents. The article argues that the deliberate ambiguity of the Article 340 of the Indian Constitution resulted from a conscious choice rather than a mistake and was brought with it from the pre-independence disagreement that there exists a better metric of social disadvantage that is either caste or class.

Keywords: Backward classes; Caste; Colonial India; Census; Article 340; Ambedkar; Reservations; Non-Brahmin movement

Introduction

There is no self-evident answer to the question 'who are the backward classes'. Post-independence of India, it was to be left to the presidential commission, state governments and finally

the Supreme Court to answer this question. But the categories, criteria and the contentious issues which made this question so difficult to decide are all venerable and traceable back to the colonial era. The designation of 'socially and educationally backward classes' was by no means a creation of post-1950 political and constitutional system in India,¹ but a mere result of almost a century of the colonial rule, social mobilisation and constitutional debates.

This article outlines such a Pre-Independence genetics. It suggests that the identification of so-called "backward classes" of colonial India followed three stages that were interrelated yet different. The first one was the colonial census; this changed caste from an assortment of very localized practices into a taxonomy that could be counted, ranked and governed. The second occurred in the politics of identification of non-Brahmin identities that lead to the first formal policies on amelioration of non-Brahmin castes in princely state of Mysore and Kolhapur in the early twentieth century. The third represented the 'constitutional era' (1920s-1940s) during which some notable personalities such as B. R. Ambedkar brought the matter of social disadvantage to the attention of the British authorities and the INC with the view of its offering a solution in the form of political and legal rights. The sum of these times demonstrates that they represent indeed not a lack of imagination of constitutional framers of the constitution in Article 340 but an unspoken testimony of the pre-independent difficulty of identification between parallel constitutional frames.

I. Making of Caste Hierarchy (1871-1921) in the Colonial Census

The process of identification of backward classes began with Decennial census in India till the advent of modern definition of BCs. The first census, of all India, was done in 1871-72 and since 1881 it has been an annual exercise every 10 years² under the auspices of the Census Commissioner of India.

1 Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 11–28.

2 Census of India, 1871–72 (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1872); Census of India, 1881 (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1883).

These operations were not measurements of size, but selections of numbers. They needed to assign the name of a named caste to each Indian inhabitant and this resulted in a new level of standardisation and rigidification of individual caste identities throughout the subcontinent.

H.H. Risley, Census Commissioner of the 1901 census, and the most important ethnographic theorist of colonial caste administration, brought in an explicit hierarchy of castes that was based on his criterion of 'social precedence' (the level of respect given to a caste by neighbouring communities).¹ According to him, social precedence is associated with the racial origin and if castes could be ranked as per their ranking that would create an Indian map based on science. In the actual running of the system, this process led to strong opposition by communities who wanted to be ranked higher, and it led to a system of record keeping, based on relative socially positions, which would have long term administrative consequences.

However, this census also promulgated and disseminated the concept of "depressed classes" (a term which was not quite used uniformly from one census to the next, but which steadily grew in usage for communities which were felt to be suffering from "extreme social disabilities", such as being barred from entering the temples, barred from using the public wells, from living in the same neighbourhoods, and from hereditary occupation of particular trades). In 1911 (E. A. Gait) the census made a more detailed attempt to count the minorities,² but continued to have an ill-defined and objective threshold question. Although the census was fuzzy, what it did do was to create a social taxonomy that was reported, and in which the disadvantages recorded were made quantifiable and in theory treatable.

One might read into the colonial census an unvarnished picture of pre-existing social realities and historians have warned of such scholarly description as "the caution of the sensible

1 H.H. Risley, *The People of India* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1908); H.H. Risley and E.A. Gait, *Census of India, 1901, Vol. I: India—Report* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1903).

2 E.A. Gait, *Census of India, 1911, Vol. I: India—Report* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1913), 112–120.

historian. Yet the colonial census should never be interpreted as a true map of pre-existing social reality, as the “caution of the sensible historian” has rightfully implied- or reminded us. The census is an active "production" of the caste system, in the sense that it created a unifying and coherent caste system from highly localized, fluid social practices, as Nicholas Dirks has pointed out.¹ A new order in a single hierarchy of the empire had been given a fixed position to all communities which had previously determined themselves by claiming superiority over their neighbours. On the political front this had far-reaching repercussions as it provided numbers to disadvantaged communities in order to speak their concerns to the colonial state in the parlance of proportional representation,² and thus a language that was acceptable to the state.

II. The Princely State Experiments: Mysore, Kolhapur and the first reservations

The colonial census has been building the infrastructure of a knowledge of social disadvantage; while there are political figures in a number of princely states, these are implementing what may be called "policy ecology" out of that assemblage of knowledge. The early experiments of amelioration as an approach to the problems of castes highlighted in the Constitution debate of the 1940s happened in the princely state of Mysore and the estate of Kolhapur.

However, the Kshatriya rulers of Kolhapur had some sympathy with the non-Brahmin movement and in 1902 set up of fifty per cent reservation of posts in the government for the non-Brahmin communities,³ Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj was the one who issued the proclamation. His justification was clearly put

1 Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 5.

2 Arjun Appadurai, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination,' in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 314–340; Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 95–130

3 Kolhapur State Proclamation on Reservation, 1902, reproduced in Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-Brahman Movement in Western India, 1873–1930* (Bombay: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976), 145–148.

forward: the dominance in the state mechanism by the Brahmins had resulted in one where social status was transmitted from one to another through educational and occupational gains. The Kolhapur proclamation is in fact one of the earliest formal castes based affirmative action by a machinery by any Governmental /Semi Governmental body in the modern history of India, even by half a century before the Constitution.

The formalisation of the identification of the backward classes was taken one step further with the Miller Committee (1918-1919)¹ which set out to look into educational and industrial activities of non-Brahmin communities and make recommendations in that regard. The Committee called out for certain "backward communities" (based on caste and education) and suggested reserved seats in educational institutions and quotas in the jobs offered to the state. The recommendations of these were accepted by the Mysore government which took the bold step of implementing the first government order for reservations among the OBCs in 1921² for specific community listed in non-Brahmin, non-Scheduled caste groups.

The most important feature of the Mysore and Kolhapur experiences was their duration and secondly that they gave him the opportunity to absorb both. They first demonstrated that backward communities can be identified by considering a mixed definition, which includes both social and educational aspects, and that it does not necessarily have to be uniform throughout the country. Secondly, they gave birth to politics. The extension and defence of reservations became an important political demand in the context of non-Brahmin movements in Mysore, Maharashtra and subsequently, in Madras, which had brought up ideas since the 1870s by thinkers like Jyotirao Phule,³ who wrote that the

1 Government of Mysore, Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider Steps to Secure Adequate Representation of Communities in the Public Service [Miller Committee Report] (Bangalore: Government Press, 1919).

2 Mysore Government Order No. 368, 1921, cited in Galanter, Competing Equalities, 162–165.

3 Jyotirao Phule, Gulamgiri (1873), in Collected Works of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Vol. I, trans. P.G. Patil (Bombay: Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya ani Sanskriti Mandal, 1991), 22–24.

"utkopa" of the Brahmins had been the leading agency of lower-caste subordination.

Formed in 1917, Justice Party,¹ the first organised non-Brahmin political party, brought pressure to bear on the Madras Presidency which led to the replacement of communal Government Orders reserving colonial jobs for non-Brahmin groups of people. It was the first reservation policy in a big Indian province in the British Empire and the policy which would eventually make its way to the Supreme Court in Champakam Dorairajan (1951)². These southern models made clear that the call for backwardness as an administrative problem was firmly on the political agenda even before Independence — and, that it was an integral element of anti-Brahmin mobilisation.

III. Legislative Frameworks and Communal Representation (1909–1935)

The colonial government has taken a legislative turn towards caste based political identity in 1909 with the Morley-Minto Reforms,³ which provided for separate electorates for Muslims, the first formal recognition of religious community as a political community different from any other. In 1919, this was extended further through the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms,⁴ which declared there would be distinct political parties for Sikhs, Anglo-Indians and the European people in the provincial assemblies. These had been combined by the Government of India Act 1935⁵ which, crucially, provided for reserved seats in the provincial legislatures and separate electorates for the 'depressed classes' (as Scheduled Castes were then called) and Scheduled Tribes.

1 Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916–1929* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 17–35; Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 31–40.

2 *State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan*, AIR 1951 SC 226.

3 *Indian Councils Act, 1909*, 9 Edw. 7, c. 4 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1909).

4 *Government of India Act, 1919*, 9 & 10 Geo. 5, c. 101 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1919).

5 *Government of India Act, 1935*, 26 Geo. 5, c. 2 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1935).

The Simon Commission (1927-1930),¹ appointed to do a study on the constitutional aspects of 1919 did a systematic attempt in the first place, to face the issue of 'backward classes' at an all-India level. The Commission's Report called for setting up committees at the local level in each province to identify backward classes and providing their representatives a "fair share" to legislative bodies. Appropriately, the Commission did not give a definition of backwardness as this was too ambiguous or too general for the nation as a whole.

In 1928, B. R. Ambedkar in his role as a representative of the 'depressed classes' of the Bombay Presidency submitted evidence to the Simon Commission.² His submission was a watershed document on the issue of backwards identification of categories. Ambedkar's main argument was that the depressed classes (others preferred to call them 'untouchables') were a different class from other backward classes of society because the latter were endowed with the following disabilities due to their special status in society: physical untouchability, prohibition from entering temples, and allotment of a separate place for habitation as per the custom of society. He claimed that these communities were not needing merely training from the education system or reserved reservations from the job market, they needed political reservations alone, as the only way to protect their interests from the opposition of the upper caste Hindu society.

IV.Round Table Conferences, Poona Pact, Hardening of categories (1930-1932)

The most fateful action that took place during the pre-independence era that led to the recognition of backward classes was the action taken at the Second Round Table Conference (1931-1932)³ and immediately thereafter. The Conference convened the leaders of all major political parties of India

1 Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, 2 vols., Cmd. 3568–3569 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930), Vol. I, 36–42.

2 B.R. Ambedkar, 'Evidence Before the Simon Commission, 1928,' in Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 2 (Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1982), 459–491.

3 Proceedings of the Second Round Table Conference, Cmd. 3997 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1932).

(Congress, Muslim League, Depressed Classes, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and others) for a debate on the future constitution of an autonomous India. Ambedkar was there as an official of the depressed classes and opposed the proposal of the prevailing classes by demanding separate electorates for untouchables which meant that untouchable communities could have constituencies of their own and had the rights of choosing their own representatives.

In August 1932, Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister announced the Communal Award¹ in favour of Ambedkar's demand for the depressed classes for having separate electorates instead of his demand in favour of having combined electorates, thereupon Mahatma Gandhi, who was in Pune jail, commenced a fast unto death and made a statement that separate electorates would not lead towards the eradication of untouchability but would perpetuate this evil and divide Hindu society. This political turmoil also led to an agreement stood up on 24th September 1932 between Ambedkar and the representatives of caste Hindu organisations called as Poona Pact.² Ambedkar gave up the demand for separate electorates and for a large number of reserved seats – 148 instead of the Communal Award's stipulation of 71 – in the provincial legislatures, to be chosen by joint electorates where all voters would vote.

The Poona Pact has given rise to some diametrically different views. For Ambedkar it was a surrender imposed upon him by the 'fast' of Gandhi on whom businessmen were subjected to 'emotional blackmail' and who succeeded in depriving them ('untouchable communities') of the only means (political separatism) by which they could obtain any degree of autonomy from upper caste Hindu domination. It was the minimum measure of unity of the Hindu community but also provided significant legislative representation to the depressed classes, for Gandhi and Congress. For the purposes of the present argument, the

1 Communal Award, Cmd. 4147 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1932).

2 Poona Pact, 24 September 1932, reproduced in B.R. Ambedkar, What Congress and Gandhi Have Done too the Untouchables (Bombay: Thacker and Co., 1945), Appendix I.

significance of the Pact is this, that it established the present administrative classification that was drawn between the depressed classes (the future Scheduled Castes) on one hand and the other backward classes, which were an unspecified residual class in between, on the other hand, the former being assured reserved seats in accordance with the language of the Constitution and the latter not receiving equal protection.

V. From 'Colonial Category' to 'Constitutional Provision' - The legacy of Identification in pre-independence days

When the Constituent Assembly met in December 1946, the issue of backward classes in India had a lot of background—administrative, political, and legislative—of almost a century. A clear delineation of three categories had evolved: the "Scheduled Castes" the identification of which, and the reservation system for which, resonated with the 1935 Act and the Poona Pact; the "Scheduled Tribes," communities with a tribal custom that were identified according to geographic separation; and the "other backward classes," for whom no corresponding national definition or enumeration was available.

With regard to the Constituent Assembly's discussion on Article 340, it is clear that this conflict has been inherited from the pre-Independence days. As the chairman of the Drafting Committee, Ambedkar knew that if the definition of 'backward classes' was to be caste based, it would fly in the face of the entire purpose of the Constitution, which he and others had laboured to eradicate. The Nehruvian faction of Congress which was an ardent champion of a modern India presciently thought that a caste-less nation was in the birth process and uncomfortable about any probability of constitutional provisions that sanctified the caste differences. In an attempt to untangle India's caste system, non-Brahmin political and social structures were brought in from the South to argue the opposite; caste, they said, was an inescapable path of social deprivation in India and practically any attempt to manage it without considering the caste was an attempt to avoid it.

The forward inheritance was the solution manifested in Article 340 which is merely procedural in nature and called for the setting up of commissions rather than a definition of backwardness. There was no common understanding and the

framers were unable to agree on the definition for two reasons: one the colonial period had produced several frameworks of identification, such as the hierarchical caste theory of census and mixed, social-educational framework of the princely states; two, Ambedkar's emphasis on untouchability as the only specific and unchanging form of social handicap. Article 340 did do the same thing as it avoided resolving these conflicting models and hoped for the miracle to happen that the future commissions will make a success, where colonialism failed.

Conclusion

Backward classes identification was not an institutionalized and easy-going endeavour during pre-independence era in India but was something that did not fit into the mainstream. It was a complex and contentious history of the implementation that saw and echoed multiple understandings of the backwardness from the colonial census officials, the non-Brahmins political elites, the princes within their states, the British constitutional negotiators and the Indian nationalists, all pointing at their own backwardness, and offering their own definitions of what kind of recognition or a redress their backwardness merited.

Gleaned from this history, three main conclusions come to light. First, that colonial census was not just descriptive; it was also constitutive as it enumerated and ranked every caste and laid out all of the framework for claiming backwardness, in a way that defined how it would be claimed and what would be considered as its validation. Third, the different kinds of experiments that took place in the princely states of Kolhapur and Mysore showed that a policy of reservation based on caste was not constitutionally unheard of, but rather was likewise not administratively unfeasible, having been tried in the princely state of Kolhapur a few decades before the proclamation of independence. Thirdly, the distinction between the Scheduled Castes and backward classes was reinforced during the constitutional process of 1930s – at the very time of Independence - in the course of Round Table Conferences, the Communal Award and Poona Pact; the last of these left the class as an undefined group in politics which was subordinate to the majority community.

However, the results of this inheritance were as follows: There was an article 340 in the Indian Constitution which was so designed that only because of the struggles that were unresolved prior to Independence, the article could have been so formulated. All these are part of a colonial history of caste enumerations that started with the Kalelkar Commission in 1955,¹ the recommendations by the Mandal Commission in 1980² and finally, a constitutional amendment in 2019,³ is linked to understanding why the identification of Other Backward Classes has been so emotive in the histories of post-Independent India, and why it has been such a matter of contentious struggle.

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From the Margins to the Mic: Women, Student Politics, and the Contested Terrain of Leadership at the University of Delhi (1950s–2020s)

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Abstract

This article traces the history of women's involvement in student politics and leadership in the University of Delhi (DU) from the early post-Independent decades to the present. It moves beyond such stories of women's academic careers as a physical and/or academic performance to call attention to the arena of students' governance, the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU), college unions and affiliated cultural and service unions, as a space in which gendered power has been reproduced and challenged, and which has not received adequate scrutiny. It draws on the institutional records, annual reports, scholarly works on the politics of Indian students, and historiography of the Indian women's movement to map the evolution of structural exclusions in the culture of campus politics, and the gradual and incomplete dismantling of the same due to the efforts of individual women, feminist activism and changing social norms. It also explores the paradox that lay at the core of this history, namely that women's colleges, often considered 'peripheral' to the 'real intellectual and political life of the university', were in fact 'laboratories of leadership' that the mainstream co-educational setting never offered. The final section offers some thoughts on what true political inclusion in a big public university would entail, and why the gains that have occurred are more partial than structural.

Keywords: Delhi University, DUSU, women's leadership, student politics, women's colleges, feminist activism, gender and higher education, India

Index Terms: *University of Delhi • DUSU • Women's Colleges • Student Politics • Feminist Activism • Gender and Higher Education • Leadership • Campus Politics • Indian Women's Movement • Co-education*

1. Introduction

Institutions, especially Universities, develop a special form of blindness with regard to the progress of women in their premises. The figures at the gate are taken with a pinch of salt, as are pass rates, medals won and so on. That's how much less carefully counted that the distribution of power within the institution is organized, who's able to say in the rooms where decisions are made, and what women who do so actually cost. The University of Delhi, one of South Asia's largest and most historic universities, is a place where there is a high visibility in the academic arena but a relative invisibility in the political arena, for women.¹

This is not to dismiss the decades-long feminist scholarly debate that formally-integrated university membership is not necessarily equivalent to substantive involvement in the day-to-day life of a college or university. The scholars like Radha Kumar, Nandita Gandhi and Nandita Shah have come together to suggest that women's education is shaped and determined by institutional arrangements which open some doors and close others in the process of women empowerment.² One such door is student politics, which is represented by the DUSU elections, the college union debating rooms, the committee rooms and the campaign trails. It is not a tale of continuous exclusion and nor is it a tale of a progressive inclusion at the University of Delhi. It is, however, a history of contestation, of an uneven change, and of a sometimes paradoxical one; it is this history this article aims to explore.

The argument is broken down into multiple steps. It starts by contextualizing the culture of student politics in DU in the larger context of Indian higher education and the national political culture, highlighting the embeddedness of the culture of student politics in normative understandings of gender in the early forms of student governance. Then it moves on to the special experience of the women at co-educational colleges and

at women's colleges, respectively, and claims that these generated very different attitudes towards political agency. The article then documents how women's votes for the presidency in DUSU has evolved from the 1990s to the present, how feminist consciousness has influenced the dynamics of campus politics and concludes with a look at the lesson of representation and power that can be gleaned from this history.

2. Historical Background: Gender and Politics in Student Governance

The student politics in India are inextricably linked with the history of the nationalist movement. *[Nationalist Movement]* In British India student associations were intimately connected with the movement for independence, and they developed the leadership styles that were the public speaker, street agitator, back room negotiator, and a style that was almost absent: the respectable women.³ The student politics that came with the independence and universities' blossoming under the new developmental state continued to carry these cultural legacies, while simultaneously modernizing and democratizing the formal aspects of student politics.

Student government was formalised at the University of Delhi in 1922, and was greatly expanded in 1947 and beyond, through the Delhi University Students' Union. *[DUSU]* All the students including women were granted their rights under the constitution of DUSU.⁴ However as all students of political history are aware, formal political enfranchisement is a far cry from real political inclusion. The culture of the DUSU elections; the importance of factional networks that are based on caste and regional allegiance, the physical requirements of a big campus campaign and the close relationship between student groups and national political parties created a highly unfriendly structure for participation of women.

Students' political penetration of the national political structures has been observed by scholars in student politics in postcolonial India to repeat at the Campus level the gender hierarchy found in national parties.⁵ The leadership of the two dominant student organisations of the Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party, the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)

respectively, was predominantly male and traditionally men were only selected to contest seats in which they were not sure of their chances or to fill lower-ranking posts in the organisation.[*NSUI*][*ABVP*] This created a political climate where women participation was encouraged in an ancillary, but always subordinate, position to those of actual authority, symbolized and competitive positions.

But it would be wrong to say it was a deliberate evil or to cynically say that this was done because they thought it would be beneficial. Much of it was structural, involving the public culture of DUSU elections, and the methods of public presence — rallying across several campuses, going out to canvass at night, holding large outdoor rallies — that clashed with the social norms regarding women's respectability and mobility, thus providing tangible disincentives to vote.⁶ The women at DU in the 1950s and 1960s faced not only informal disrespect from friends and families, but also formal restrictions of the institution, such as a curfew in hostels for women, which did not exist for men; rules on the use of buses between campuses at night, which were present only for male students; and a norm that a woman's place on campus was restricted to being a serious, respectable scholar and not a political activist.

This focus on women's ambition on to academic success and not political engagement had repercussions that can be seen in the archive.⁷ The percentage of DU women who topped in the exams was astounding. Some of them earned gold medals and came in first place in the classes ranging from English to Economics to Chemistry. However these women were seldom present on the platform at political rallies, on short lists for union presidencies or on committees that discussed and formed student welfare policies. It was during this time that the examination hall and the union office operated in two worlds, one for women and one for men, with the men predominantly present in the latter and the former being somewhat filled by women.

3. The Women's Colleges: Laboratories of an Invisible Leadership

An account of political activity of women at Delhi University which ignores the social, political and cultural terrain of the co-educational colleges, and the DUSU, will miss an

arguably most important part of the story. The women's colleges of DU (Miranda House, Lady Shri Ram College, Indraprastha College for Women, Lady Irwin College, and more) were not only different spaces in which the women pursued the same activities with their male counterparts in the mixed gender colleges; they were also sites of difference that performed femininity in their own specific fashion. **[Women's Colleges][Miranda House][Lady Shri Ram College]** The women's colleges of DU (Miranda House, Lady Shri Ram College, Indraprastha College for Women, Lady Irwin College, and others) are not just different spaces in which the women pursue the same activities as their male counterparts in the mixed gender colleges; they are also spaces in which femininity is itself performed differently. They were, as a term might be allowed, a different sort of a university; a university without the natural given, "authority," which we are all used to, where no assumption from the outside as to who was to be the authority existed.

In the women colleges all the students' leadership positions were occupied by women. They were not special things that a student had to do against the resistance of the system, such as being a student union president, the debate society convener, the head of the cultural committee, or the sports captain. They were just the normal way of life in a place of institution. This was quite normal and easily overlooked, but very important for development. Leadership is in part a learnt function; as any serious student of organisational behaviour can tell you.⁸ These are not natural abilities and skills, of chairing a meeting, of building a case to an administration, of rallying a set of people around a common goal, of dealing with conflict within a coalition without destroying it. They are developed through applying the skills. For the women at DU's women's colleges they were purchased in practice rather than during the deliberations of a college council, and were mostly filled by men in a rote way, out of mind of the man in charge for that reason alone.

A pair of debating societies, one from Miranda House and the other from Lady Shri Ram College, gained a special fame in the intellectual scene of the city of Delhi. Women trained in these societies learned not just the technical aspects of the 'forensic'

(rapidly making an argument and responding to objections in a coherent manner) but also something more intangible and difficult to describe: a sense of entitlement to hold the floor, disagree with authority and creep into the public intellectual space without apology. It was an authentic transformative element for women going on to become lawyers, journalists, politicians and civil servants, one that in a sense would be recognized as a form of cultural capital by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.⁹

Other aspects of this institutionalization were the college fests, such as Tarang at LSR and Tempest at Miranda House. *[Tarang/Tempest]* These were no little ones. They attracted participants and audiences from all over Delhi as well as other cities' universities, and needed significant organisational skills to handle. The women who were assigned the responsibility to organize these events gained expertise in financial management, inter-institutional negotiation, logistics planning and managing large teams in true pressure situations. In essence, it was a learning of executive leadership, for which there was no formal education. That it happened in the context of the 'real' university, when it was invisible, unvalued, unrecorded in any official evaluation of women's educational outcomes is testimony to the extent to which it was influenced by the institutional imagination of DU that was dominated by the presumption that only certain types of activity are deemed 'serious'.¹⁰

However, the world of the women's college was not an all-forgiving one, and there were other hierarchies and constraints. However, sometimes the faculty did use its authority in an authoritarian fashion at these institutions. The social composition of the student bodies – predominantly from the upper caste, upper middle class families of Delhi in the earlier decades – resulted in a leadership culture that did not necessarily lead to a cohesive community of women – but rather to a more cohesive community of women whose experience was that of the upper caste, upper middle class.¹¹ The women's colleges were laboratories but the products were greatly affected by the ingredients of these laboratories, and the ingredients were not socially neutral.

4. DUSU and the Slow Opening of Contested Ground

4.1 Turning Point in the '90s

The 1990s decade in the last quarter of the 20th century was indeed a turning point in the lives of women's involvement in DUSU elections, albeit limited to some extent. This change came about as a result of a number of factors. By the 1990s, the Indian women's movement had achieved significant success since the late 1970s, with feminist ideas being a part of the public dialogue as a result of anti-rape campaigns after the Mathura case and anti-dowry campaigns after the early 1980s. *[Mathura Case]*¹² From 1991, the economic liberalisation process started to shift the social landscape in an ambivalent, yet significant manner: some social restrictions on the mobility and public appearance of middle-class women were already beginning to loosen, alongside with the emergence of new economic opportunities for educated women, and an increasingly 'diversified' media space that started to represent women in a somewhat more diversified way.¹³

The DUSU's numbers of female candidates contesting the elections saw a marked rise from the early 1990s, within the DU itself.¹⁴ But more importantly, women started challenging and then taking over the presidency of DUSU which had hitherto been the bastion of the male. These wins were not only symbolic, but they also had a symbolic line, but this one shouldn't be forgotten. They showed in the most practical institutional context that women could mobilise the type of support which is needed for electoral success to DUSU. They proved that women candidates were up to the rigors of the campaign trail both physically and socially. And they built visible role models for the next generation of women students who were mulling over if politics was possible.

But assuming these gains to be a sign of simple democratization of campus political culture is ill-informed. The women that were elected to the majority of DUSU's offices were elected via the party student wings of the dominant male party and not on their own. However, their success depended on the tolerance of other male-dominated factional networks to perform their duties and, in turn, their tolerance depended on strategic decisions instead of just rejections, related to electability in

specific election arenas rather than a genuine concern for gender parity in representation.¹⁵ Sometimes, specifically feminist issues – such as the curfew for women in hostels or safety on campus, sexual harassment and the distribution of welfare services – were not taken up by their political parties as a whole but rather excluded into the periphery.

4.2 The Structural Persistence of Masculine Political Culture

The most interesting thing about the DUSU record is not the examples of women's political achievements but the fact that the circumstances, which were conducive to political achievement by women, were still rare, rather than commonplace, occurrences. Researchers on student politics in India have documented that the formal opening up of electoral competition to women, without itself changing the culturally male nature of the student political organizations, is due to the fact that informal rules, social networks and factional loyalties are also culturally masculine and are not reachable by formal rules.¹⁶

This tenacity manifested itself at the University in various ways. Even as women started to engage more in the campaign culture of DUSU elections, the culture of such elections did not change significantly, with the aspect of aggressive public canvassing, large-scale outdoor rallies and assertive presence (of a man) that is culturally coded as male in India. Women candidates found themselves using a double standard with regards to the political assessment: that some behaviours that appeared as confidence and authority in male candidates, appeared as aggressiveness or impropriety in female candidates.¹⁷ As for social costs, women may have been more likely than men to face informal pressures from male political circles, and the pressures women face regarding respectability with their families and/or the informal expectations of others on campus were still high.

The agenda items presented to DUSU for its formal business of were also indicative of the issues that DUSU stressed. Female students' welfare issues—like the need to provide adequate facilities for female students in the hostel, to implement policy against sexual harassment, to provide equal access to campus at night—were put lower in the agenda than issues which

were broadly political and were considered as central by the male dominated leadership of the union.¹⁸ It was no coincidence. It had come forth from a political culture that made the public appear as the same as the political and the gendered aspects of campus life appear invisible or secondary.

5. Feminist Activism and the Reshaping of Campus Politics

The connection between feminist activism and the mainstream student politics at DU has by no means been smooth. The unease between feminist activists and mainstream student politics at DU has never been smooth and it makes sense. The women's movement in India (which had been revived in the late 1970s) had a lot of cause to be critically skeptical of the big political parties and student groups under the auspices of the big political parties. *[Women's Movement]* The knowledge that women had gained in the Left, in the Congress and in organisations which were affiliated with the Hindu nationalist right had in general been that when gender issues clashed with the 'main' political agenda, gender lost.¹⁹

The cross-over between feminist activism and campus political culture was as much a part of the atmosphere at DU, on the strength of its size as the largest university in the national capital, as anywhere else. Women students at DU colleges were also involved in the anti-rape campaigns of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the protests against dowry deaths that rocked the city of Delhi in the early 1980s and the general mobilisation of civil society around women's rights that these campaigns stimulated. *[Anti-Rape Campaign][Dowry Deaths]*²⁰ It was activism that was not an add-on to their academic work; in fact for many of these women it was the most intellectually and politically powerful experience of their college years. It gave them a means of organization, a way to make alliances across institutional lines, a method of making arguments to the public, and a way of maintaining political action when it ran into opposition – exactly the kind of political education that formal student government did not provide them.

The feminist activism which had been building up for several years had now crystallised into the institutionalisation of gender sensitisation committees, women development cells and in-house grievance handling committees in the colleges of DU

since the 1990s.*[Gender Sensitisation Committees][Internal Complaints Committee]*²¹ These bodies were not all equally successful: their effectiveness ranged from one institution to another; their remit was often interpreted in a very narrow way; and they were often placed in structures that were not very supportive of their objectives. But the very presence of such a group implied a real recognition of the university as a community that was collectively responsible for the safety and dignity of women, rather than simply that they were unlucky individuals, and that this recognition came about via organized political action, rather than through administrative grace.

A related, but separate kind of political work involved in the establishment of gender studies courses and, eventually, gender studies centers in some of the departments of the DU.*[Gender Studies]* The scholars who led the drive were many women faculty members who had, themselves, been saddled with the task of overcoming the obstacles in the hierarchy of academic life at DU, and were involved in intellectual politics that were directly tied to the larger effort of democratic inclusion. Their refusal to treat the issue of gender as peripheral to the “real work” of the university and its political and intellectual life raised issues of gender to the core of the university’s work, and therefore to the surface of women’s marginalization, a marginalization that had been supported by epistemological assumptions for a long time.²²

6. Discussion: Representation, Power, and the Limits of Progress

From the entire history of women’s participation in the political life of the University of Delhi, what are the important conclusions that can be drawn with respect to the nature and extent of the achievements of women? There can be a number of observations made analytically that seem worthwhile.

The first is that of what is formally included and what has really power. For women, the entry into DUSU elections, the roles of union leaders in colleges, and to formal academic governance roles are tangible and bitter-sweet improvements. However, on the formal side of things and real power are not equal. In some settings, women’s political participation has depended on men’s patronage networks, in others, the issues that

concern women students are on a lower priority on the agendas of the student representative bodies, and in others, the culture of campus politics has evolved slower than the formal rules that are followed in deciding on the outcomes of elections.²³

The second one is the differential experience of women as a result of living in different areas of the DU system. The women's colleges gave rise to an everyday political competence which in the co-educational setting never could be duplicated. Frequently the case for women's colleges, which is often denied any relevance by those who show interest in liberal co-education, is therefore, at least politically and developmentally, worthy of more serious consideration, while being fully recognized as social and class bound.²⁴ Again, the answer as to what type of institutional setting is conducive to the politicization of the young woman is not simply black or white—it isn't even as easy as co-education and equality.

The third point of observation deals with the feminist activism relation to institutional change. The forms of internal institutional change that brought the most important changes in space for women in the university at DU were not the result of internal institutional logic, but rather of organized political pressure, exerted from inside and out of the institution.²⁵ This indicates that political agency of women and indeed feminist political agency is a more important causal factor in the study of institutional change in the history of women's education in India than it has received attention. The story of women at Delhi University is not the story of an institution that slowly emerged as a liberalized, tolerant, generous and welcoming one for them; it is, at least in part, a story of women who, in their often great, sometimes small, numbers, pushed an institution to become liberalized, tolerant, generous and welcoming.

7. Findings

Analysis of the issues developed in preceding sections suggests the following substantive conclusions of this article:

In the early post-independence decades, the excellence of women at DU was at least in part due to their exclusion from other aspects of the campus life, such as politics and governance. The reorientation of ambition towards exam success – the actual

outcomes of that ambition – also made it difficult to notice the structural conditions that required the reorientation.²⁶

The electoral record of the DUSU since the 1990s reveals a mixed picture of women's participation—with some positive gains—but hampered by the continued existence of male factional cultures, and a lack of a feminist agenda on party support for women candidates, as well as women's issues being sidelined from the formal agenda of the union.²⁷

The women's colleges of DU served as important political spaces which have not been acknowledged as such in the official history of the college. Although this leadership had not been recognized in the institution, it was very real for women's future careers as they had gained it through their participation in college unions, debating societies and festival organization.²⁸

Institution change, not change in response to feminist activism, was one of the main drivers of feminisms on campus, and feminisms in social movements to which DU women contributed. The current welfare systems, gender studies courses and changing attitudes towards women's political involvement that are part of the character of "DU" today are a result of organized feminist rather than administrative efforts.²⁹

The case of women at DU reflects the larger scenario of the formal democratization of institutions and the changes of norms, culture and social networks that shape the distribution of power, which does not necessarily lead to substantive equality.³⁰

8. Conclusion

The story of women's involvement in the politics of students and their leadership at the University of Delhi is by no means a pleasant one of progressive inclusion but it would be unedifying to tell it as such. It is a story of actual, but not easy, accomplishments made in the context of structural retardation and social opposition, sometimes by women whose names are absent from the institutional records which formed the institutional culture they were trying to transform. It is also the story of ongoing structural inequities which have not been fully represented by formal structures, and of political possibilities which have yet to be fully realized.

The most important lesson to be learned from this history is that the importance of a university's commitment to gender

equity is not measured by the percentage of males and females who enroll there or its examination scores – all of which are important. This must be looked at in the way it allocates power in its governance systems, in the culture of its student political organizations, in the issues it gives importance to in its representative bodies and those it ignores, and in the institutional environment it establishes for the formation of all its students politically. The University of Delhi has taken a great leap forward since Independence thanks to these. It has so much further to go by these measures.

In such unfriendly political settings, in institutions that were yet to be convinced of the need to pay attention to women's welfare, on stages that had been erected without women in mind, the students who contested elections, organized women's welfare campaigns, debated on stages, and created space in curricula and campus cultures that were resistant to feminist consciousness – these women were also, and not incidentally, engaged in a form of political education, which also, and not incidentally, was a form of institutional transformation. It would mean that the University of Delhi would become a place that is truly for all its students, if it would recover that history and make it real, and make it serious, as history.

Endnotes

- 1 University of Delhi, DU Centenary Publication 1922–2022 (New Delhi: University of Delhi, 2022), pp. 143–147; see also University of Delhi Annual Reports, 1950s–2020s, University of Delhi Archives.
- 2 Radha Kumar, *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800–1990* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1993), pp. 128–172; Nandita Gandhi and Nandita Shah, *The Issues at Stake: Theory and Practice in the Contemporary Women's Movement in India* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1992), pp. 156–160.
- 3 Aparna Basu, "The Role of Women in the Indian Struggle for Freedom," in *Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity*, ed. B.R. Nanda (New Delhi: Vikas, 1976), pp. 16–40.
- 4 University of Delhi, *Annual Report 2019–2020* (New Delhi: University of Delhi, 2020), pp. 114–116.
- 5 Suhas Palshikar, "Student Politics and Transition to Democracy," in *Democratic Politics in India*, ed. R. Vora and S. Palshikar (New

- Delhi: Vistaar, 2008), pp. 187–201; S.K. Agarwal, *Student Politics in India* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing, 1988), pp. 67–73.
- 6 University of Delhi Annual Reports, 1950s–1970s, University of Delhi Archives; see also Karuna Chanana, *Socialization, Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1988).
 - 7 University of Delhi, DU Centenary Publication 1922–2022, pp. 143–147; University Grants Commission, Annual Report 2005–06 (New Delhi: UGC, 2006), pp. 34–37.
 - 8 For organisational behaviour perspectives on leadership as learned practice, see Diane Reay, “A Useful Extension of Bourdieu’s Conceptual Framework?,” *Sociological Review* 52, no. 3 (2004): 431–450.
 - 9 Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), pp. 241–258.
 - 10 University of Delhi, Annual Report 2019–2020, pp. 114–116.
 - 11 Sharmila Rege, *Writing Caste/Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women’s Testimonios* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2006); Satish Deshpande, *Contemporary India: A Sociological View* (New Delhi: Viking, 2003).
 - 12 Flavia Agnes, *Law and Gender Inequality: The Politics of Women’s Rights in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 88–94; Kumar, *The History of Doing*, pp. 128–172.
 - 13 Leela Fernandes, *India’s New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), Chapter 4.
 - 14 University of Delhi Annual Reports, 1990s–2000s, University of Delhi Archives.
 - 15 Palshikar, “Student Politics and Transition to Democracy,” pp. 187–201.
 - 16 Bishnu Mohapatra and K.K. Kailash, “Student Politics in India: An Overview,” in *Student Politics in India: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. K.M. Seethi (New Delhi: Rawat, 2012), pp. 1–34.
 - 17 Agarwal, *Student Politics in India*, pp. 67–73.
 - 18 University of Delhi Annual Reports, 2000s–2010s, University of Delhi Archives; University Grants Commission, Annual Report 2005–06, pp. 34–37.
 - 19 Kumar, *The History of Doing*, pp. 128–172; Gandhi and Shah, *The Issues at Stake*, pp. 156–160.

- 20 Agnes, Law and Gender Inequality, pp. 88–94; Kumar, The History of Doing, pp. 128–172.
- 21 University Grants Commission, Saksham: Measures for Ensuring the Safety of Women and Programmes for Gender Sensitization on Campuses (New Delhi: UGC, 2013); The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, Government of India.
- 22 Gandhi and Shah, The Issues at Stake, pp. 156–160.
- 23 Palshikar, “Student Politics and Transition to Democracy,” pp. 187–201.
- 24 Chanana, Socialization, Education and Women.
- 25 Kumar, The History of Doing, pp. 128–172; Gandhi and Shah, The Issues at Stake, pp. 156–160.
- 26 University of Delhi, DU Centenary Publication 1922–2022, pp. 143–147.
- 27 University of Delhi Annual Reports, 1990s–2020s; Agarwal, Student Politics in India, pp. 67–73.
- 28 University of Delhi, Annual Report 2019–2020, pp. 114–116; Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” pp. 241–258.
- 29 Gandhi and Shah, The Issues at Stake, pp. 156–160; Kumar, The History of Doing, pp. 128–172.
- 30 Mohapatra and Kailash, “Student Politics in India,” pp. 1–34; Deshpande, Contemporary India.

Subject Index

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- Anti-Rape Campaign (1979–80s) — see Section 5
- Bourdieu, Pierre (Cultural Capital) — see Section 3, Endnote 9
- Co-education — see Sections 2, 3, 6
- Delhi University Students’ Union (DUSU) — see Sections 1, 2, 4, 6, 7
- Dowry Deaths — see Section 5
- Feminist Activism — see Sections 1, 5, 6, 7
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The Buddhist view on Nature

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Abstract

The contemporary profit-driven world has led to increasing alienation between human beings and nature. Industrialization, excessive materialism, and the relentless exploitation of natural resources have intensified environmental degradation, resulting in severe pollution of air, water, and other natural ecosystems. While environmental pollution was not a recognized issue during the time of the Buddha, Buddhist philosophy offers timeless ethical principles that encourage harmony, moderation, and respect for nature. As a comprehensive philosophy of life aimed at eliminating human suffering, Buddhism emphasizes values such as non-violence, compassion, and restraint, which are highly relevant to addressing today's ecological crisis. Drawing upon references from the Pāli Canon, this study explores the Buddhist perspective on the natural environment and demonstrates how its teachings can contribute to contemporary environmental ethics and sustainable living.

In the current profit-driven global age, man has become alienated from himself and Nature. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the acquisition of wealth by mechanical exploitation of natural resources, man has become more and more materialistic in his attitudes and values. In his greed for more and more possessions he has adopted a violent and aggressive attitude towards nature. Invaluable gifts of nature, such as air and water, have been polluted with severely disastrous consequences. Now he is searching for ways and means of overcoming the pollution problem. Buddhism limits itself to the delineation of a way of life designed to eradicate human suffering. Environmental pollution was unheard of and unsuspected during the time of the Buddha. But, as Buddhism is a full-fledged philosophy of life reflecting

all aspects of experience, so we find some references in the Pali canon to delineate the Buddhist attitude towards nature.

The word "nature" means everything in the world which is not organized and constructed by man. The Pali equivalents which come closest to "nature" are loka and yathabhuta. The words dhammata and niyaa are used in the Pali canon to mean "natural law or way."

According to Buddhism changeability is one of the perennial principles of nature. Everything changes in nature and nothing remains static. Everything formed is in a constant process of change. The world is, therefore, defined as that which disintegrates (*lujjati ti loko*); the world is so called because it is dynamic and kinetic, it is constantly in a process of undergoing change. The very elements of solidity (*pathavi*), liquidity (*apo*), heat (*tejo*) and mobility (*vayo*), recognized as the building material of nature, are all ever-changing phenomena. Even the most solid looking mountains and the very earth that supports everything on it are not beyond this inexorable law of change.

The world passes through alternating cycles of evolution and dissolution. Though change is inherent in nature. The Buddhism believes that natural processes are affected by the morals of man. The moral degradation had effects on the external environment too." Thus, Buddhism believes that though change is a factor inherent in nature, man's moral deterioration accelerates the process of change and brings about changes which are adverse to human well being and happiness. The *Cakkavattisihanada Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya* predicts the future course of events when human morals undergo further degeneration." Thus Buddhism maintains that there is a close link between man's morals and the natural resources available to him.

According to a discourse in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, when profligate lust, wanton greed and wrong values grip the heart of man and immorality becomes widespread in society, timely rain does not fall. When timely rain does not fall crops get adversely affected with various kinds of pests and plant diseases. Through, lack of nourishing food the human mortality rate rises. Thus, early Buddhism believes there to be a close relationship between human morality and the natural environment. This idea has been

systematized in the theory of the five natural laws (panca niyamadhamma)."

According to this theory, in the cosmos there are five natural laws or forces at work, namely utu niyama (season law), bija niyama (seed law), citta niyama, kamma niyam, and dhamma niyama. They can be translated as physical laws, biological laws, psychological laws, moral laws and causal laws, respectively. Modes of thinking determine moral standards. The morals of man influence not only the psychological makeup of the people but the biological and physical environment of the area as well. Thus the five laws demonstrate that man and nature are bound together in a reciprocal causal relationship with changes in one necessarily bringing about changes in the other.

The commentary on the Cakkavattisihanada Sutta goes on to explain the pattern of mutual interaction further. When mankind is demoralized through greed, famine is the natural outcome; when moral degeneration is due to ignorance, epidemic is the inevitable result; when hatred is the demoralizing force, and widespread violence is the ultimate Outcome. When mankind realizes that large-scale devastation has taken place as a result of his moral degeneration, a change of heart takes place among the few surviving human beings. With gradual moral regeneration conditions improve through a long period of cause and effect and mankind again starts to enjoy gradually increasing prosperity and longer life. The world stands or falls with the type of moral force. Thus, greed, hatred, and delusion produce pollution within and without. Generosity, compassion, and wisdom produce purity within and without. The Buddha pronounces that world "cittena niyati loko." Thus, man and nature are interdependent.

For survival, mankind has to depend on nature for his food, clothing, shelter, medicine, and other requisites. For optimum benefits man has to understand nature so that he can utilize natural resources and live harmoniously with nature. The resources of the world are limited whereas man's greed knows neither limit nor satisfaction. Modern man in his unbridled voracious greed for pleasure and acquisition of wealth has exploited nature to the point of near impoverishment.

Ostentatious consumerism is accepted as the order of the day. Within forty years Americans alone have consumed natural

resources to the quantity of what all mankind has consumed for the last 4000 years. This consumerism has given rise to an energy crisis on the one hand and a pollution problem on the other.

Buddhism advocates the virtues of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion in all human pursuits. Greed breeds sorrow and unhealthy consequences. Contentment (*santutthi*) is a much praised virtue in Buddhism." The man, leading a simple life with few wants easily satisfied, is upheld and appreciated as an exemplary character. Wealth has only instrumental value; it is to be utilized for the satisfaction of man's needs. The vast hoarding of wealth in some countries and the methodical destruction of large quantities of agricultural produce to keep the market prices from falling, while half the world is dying of hunger and starvation, is really a sad paradox of the present affluent age. Buddhism commends frugality as a virtue in its own right. Once Ananda explained the economic use of robes by the monks." Thus nothing is wasted. Those who waste are derided as "wood-apple eaters." A man shakes the branch of a wood-apple tree and all the fruits, ripe as well as unripe, fall. The man would collect only what he wants and walk away leaving the rest to rot. Such a wasteful attitude is certainly deplored in Buddhism as not only anti-social but criminal.

Buddhism advocates a gentle non-aggressive attitude towards nature. According to the *Sigalovada Sutta* a householder should accumulate wealth as a bee collects pollen from a flower." The bee harms neither the fragrance nor the beauty of the flower, but gathers pollen to turn it into sweet honey.

The well-known Five Precepts (*pancasila*) form the minimum code of ethics that every lay Buddhist is expected to adhere to. Its first precept involves abstention from injury to life. In its positive sense it means the cultivation of compassion and sympathy for all living things. The Buddhist layman is expected to abstain from trading in meat too." The Buddhist monk has to abide by an even stricter code of ethics than the layman. He has to abstain from practices which would involve even unintentional injury to living creatures. For instance, the Buddha promulgated the rule against going on a journey during the rainy season because of possible injury to worms and insects that come to the surface in wet weather. The same concern for non-violence

prevents a monk from digging the ground." Once a monk who was a potter prior to ordination built for himself a clay hut and set it on fire to give it a fine finish. The Buddha strongly objected to this as so many living creatures would have been burnt in the process. The hut was broken down on the Buddha's instructions to prevent it from creating a bad precedent for later generations." The scrupulous nonviolent attitude towards even the smallest living creatures prevents the monks from drinking unstrained water. It is no doubt a sound hygienic habit, but what is noteworthy is the reason which prompts the practice, namely sympathy for living creatures.

Buddhism prescribes the practice of metta, "loving-kindness" towards all creatures of all quarters without restriction. The Karaniyametta Sutta enjoins the cultivation of loving-kindness towards all creatures timid and steady, long and short, big and small, minute and great, visible and invisible, near and far, born and awaiting birth." All quarters are to be suffused with this loving attitude. Just as one's own life is precious to oneself, so is the life of the other precious to himself. Therefore a reverential attitude must be cultivated towards all forms of life. The Nandivisala Jataka illustrates how kindness should be shown to animals domesticated for human service. Even a wild animal can be tamed with kind words. The infuriated elephant Nalagiri was tamed by the Buddha with no other miraculous power than the power of loving-kindness. Man and beast can live and let live without fear of one another if only man cultivates sympathy and regards all life with compassion.

The understanding of karma and rebirth, too, prepares the Buddhist to adopt a sympathetic attitude towards animals. According to this belief it is possible for human beings to be reborn in subhuman states among animals. It is possible that our own close relatives have been reborn as animals. Therefore it is only right that we should treat animals with kindness and sympathy.

The Buddhist notion of merit also engenders a gentle non-violent attitude towards living creatures. It is said that if one throws dish-washing water into a pool where there are insects and living creatures, intending that they feed on the tiny particles of food thus washed away, one accumulates merit even by such

trivial generosity. According to the Macchuddana Jataka the Bodhisattva threw his leftover food into a river in order to feed the fish, and by the power of that merit he was saved from an impending disaster. Thus kindness to animals, be they big or small, is a source of merit needed for human beings to improve their lot in the cycle of rebirths and to approach the final goal of Nibbana.

Buddhism expresses a gentle non-violent attitude towards the vegetable kingdom as well. It is said that one should not even break the branch of a tree that has given one shelter. Plants are so helpful to us in providing us with all necessities of life that we are expected not to adopt a callous attitude towards them. The more strict monastic rules prevent the monks from injuring plant life.

Prior to the rise of Buddhism people regarded natural phenomena such as mountains, forests, groves, and trees with a sense of awe and reverence. They considered them as the abode of powerful non-human beings who could assist human beings at times of need. Though Buddhism gave in a far superior Triple Refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, these places continued to enjoy public patronage at a popular level, as the acceptance of terrestrial non-human beings such as devatas" and yakkhas" did not violate the belief system of Buddhism. Therefore among the Buddhists there is a reverential attitude towards specially long-standing gigantic trees. They are vanaspati in Pali, meaning "lords of the forests. As huge trees such as the ironwood, the sala, and the fig are also recognized as the Bodhi trees of former Buddhas, the deferential attitude towards trees is further strengthened." It is well known that the ficus religiosa is held as an object of great veneration in the Buddhist world today as the tree under which the Buddha attained Enlightenment.

The open air, natural habitats and forest trees have a special fascination for the Eastern mind as symbols of spiritual freedom. The home life is regarded as a fetter (sambadha) that keeps man in bondage and misery. Renunciation is like the open air (abbhokasa), nature unhampered by man's activity." The main events in the life of the Buddha took place in the open air. He was born in a park at the foot of a tree in Kapilavatthu; he attained Enlightenment in the open air at the foot of the Bodhi

tree in Bodhgaya; he inaugurated his missionary activity in the open air in the sala grove of the Malas in Pava. The Buddha's constant advice to his disciples also was to resort to natural habitats such as forest groves and glades. There, undisturbed by human activity, they could zealously engage themselves in meditation."

Environmental pollution has assumed such vast proportions today that man has been forced to recognize the presence of an ecological crisis. Pollution to this extent was unheard of during the time of the Buddha. But there is sufficient evidence in the Pali canon to give us insight into the Buddhist attitude towards the pollution problem. Several Vinaya rules prohibit monks from polluting green grass and water with saliva, urine, and feces." Cleanliness was highly commended by the Buddhists both in the person and in the environment. They were much concerned about keeping water clean, be it in the river, pond, or well. These sources of water were for public use and each individual had to use them with proper public-spirited caution so that others after him could use them with the same degree of cleanliness.

Noise is today recognized as a serious personal and environmental pollutant troubling everyone to some extent. It causes deafness, stress, and irritation, breeds resentment, saps energy, and inevitably lowers efficiency. The Buddha's attitude to noise is very clear. He was critical of noise and did not hesitate to voice his stern disapproval whenever occasion arose." Once he ordered a group of monks to leave the monastery for noisy behavior." He enjoyed solitude and silence immensely and spoke in praise of silence as it is most appropriate for mental culture. The Buddha and his disciples reveled in the silent solitary natural habitats unencumbered by human activity. Even in the choice of monasteries the presence of undisturbed silence was an important quality they looked for." The Bhayabherava Sutta beautifully illustrates how even the rustle of leaves by a falling twig in the forest sends tremors through an impure heart.

About the Buddhist attitude to music, it is recorded that the Buddha has spoken quite appreciatively of music on one occasion." When Pancasikha the divine musician sang a song while playing the luie in front of the Buddha, the Buddha praised

his musical ability saying that the instrumental music blended well with his song. Again, the remark of an Arahant that the joy of seeing the real nature of things is far more exquisite than orchestral music shows the recognition that music affords a certain amount of pleasure even if it is inferior to higher kinds of pleasure. But it is stressed that the ear is a powerful sensory channel through which man gets addicted to sense pleasures. Therefore, to dissuade monks from getting addicted to melodious sounds, the monastic discipline describes music as a lament. The sage who succeeded in quelling this inner speech completely is described as a muni, a silent one." His inner silence is maintained even when he speaks. Buddhism commends speaking at the appropriate time, speaking the truth, speaking gently, speaking what is useful, and speaking out of loving-kindness; the opposite modes of speech are condemned." The Buddha's general advice to the monks regarding speech is to be engaged in discussing the Dhamma or maintain noble silence." Silence is serene and noble as it is conducive to the spiritual progress of those who are pure at heart.

In his greed for more and more possessions man has adopted a violent and aggressive attitude towards nature. Forgetting that he is a part and parcel of nature, he exploits it with unrestrained greed, thus alienating himself from nature as well. The net result is the deterioration of man's physical and mental health on the one hand, and the rapid depletion of non-replenishable natural resources and environmental pollution on the other.

In the present ecocrisis man has to look for radical solutions. "Pollution cannot be dealt with in the long term on a remedial or cosmetic basis or by tackling symptoms: all measures should deal with basic causes. These are determined largely by our values, priorities, and choices."⁴ Buddhism teaches that mind is the forerunner of all things, mind is supreme. If one acts with an impure mind, i.e. a mind sullied with greed, hatred and delusion, suffering is the inevitable result. If one acts with a pure mind, i.e. with the opposite qualities of contentment, compassion, and wisdom, happiness will follow like a shadow, 5050 Dhammapada. vv. p. 1, 2

Man has to understand that pollution in the environment has been caused because there has been psychological pollution within himself. If he wants a clean environment he has to adopt a lifestyle that springs from a moral and spiritual dimension. Buddhism offers man a simple moderate lifestyle eschewing both extremes of self-deprivation and self-indulgence. Satisfaction of basic human necessities, reduction of wants to the minimum. frugality, and contentment are its important characteristics. Each man has to order his life on normal principles, exercise self-control in the enjoyment of the senses, discharge his duties in his various social roles, and conduct himself with wisdom and self-awareness in all activities. With such a lifestyle, man will adopt a non-exploitative, non-aggressive, gentle attitude towards nature. The Buddhist admonition is to utilize nature in the same way as a bee collects pollen from the flower, neither polluting its beauty nor depleting its fragrance.

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The system of land tenure and revenue under the Mughal era

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Abstract

One of the most important administrative pillars of pre-colonial India was the Mughal system of land tenure and income. In order to control land ownership, agricultural output, and state income collection, the Mughal emperors created an intricate agrarian system. Although cultivators had customary rights of occupation and cultivation, land was typically considered the property of the king. Raja Todar Mal's reforms during Emperor Akbar's reign brought the tax administration to its pinnacle of organization. The state was able to collect a significant portion of agricultural produce in cash or kind thanks to the introduction of systematic land measurement, soil classification, crop yield assessment, and the zabt revenue system. A number of land grant types, such as jagir, zamindari, and madad-i-maash, were essential in establishing a connection between the local community and the imperial government. The system significantly burdened peasants at times of high assessment and environmental misery, even while it improved state control and contributed to the empire's economic stability. The form, operation, and effects of the Mughal land tenure and tax system are examined in this paper, with a focus on its administrative innovations, socioeconomic ramifications, and long-lasting impact on later colonial land revenue policies in India.

Keywords- Land Tenure, Revenue Administration, Zabt System, Jagirdari, Zamindari, Agrarian Economy.

Introduction

Land taxation is a historical reality that has generated controversy in the present and calls for constructive changes in the future. In India, land taxes have existed for as long as states and governments have existed. It has the distinction of being the

ancient government's primary source of income. There have been several experiments, continuations, and shared attachments throughout the land tax's lengthy history. Land revenue has consistently demonstrated its vitality in the state's financial system in practically every nation. Land has always been considered a particularly suitable subject for taxes, and land revenue is one of the earliest and most popular types of mandatory contributions. However, the impost's economic nature and the specific techniques used to address it have varied. Nonetheless, there is nearly always some kind of public charge on land, and it is unlikely to be abandoned. The land tax was first levied as a tribute by a conqueror on the subjects in the earliest stages of civilisation. Eventually, the sovereign used it as a regular levy in the form of a uniform charge on land. This resulted in a convenient assessment approach. The earliest type of land tax was a proportional levy on actual gross produce. Therefore, approximately one-fourth of the total produce of all privately held land in India used to be given to the king as his due.¹

The Land tax system saw some changes in the mediaeval ages and early modern era. A few nations expanded their tax base to include other kinds of property, such as homes and moveable personal belongings.

However, the Aryan tribes' presence in the northern areas is when the Indian land tax systems originated. The description of the Indo-Aryan social polity, agrarian organization, and land revenue system, which was reconstructed from the Vedic literature dating back to 1200 B.C., can support it. According to Mr. U. N. Ghoshal,² "the Vedic Aryans at the end of their history appear before us as a settled people largely devoted to agriculture, although the tending of domestic animals occupied an important place in their economy. The patriarchal family served as the unit of Indo-Aryan society. The VIS in the sense of clan stood above it, and several VIS groupings made up the entire "Jana," or the populace."

Once more, a very thorough description of the fiscal system can be found in the Dharmasutras, of which the institutions of Manu are the most renowned. According to Manu's writings, the primary source of governmental revenue

was a portion of everyone's gross produce, which varied depending on the labour costs and land quality. Normally, the share ranged from one-twelfth to one-sixth, but during times of war or other public disaster, it could increase to as much as one-fourth.³ Naturally, the entire village community shared responsibility for the payment, but even so, it was logically still subject to land taxation. Relief was automatically given when the crops failed in a difficult year.

Individual land ownership existed throughout the Vedic Period, and the king or chief tain had the right to collect "Bali," a mandatory tax from individual peasant owners. As part of the gross agricultural produce, this "Bali" was paid in kind, such as in cattle or grain. However, "Bali" is mentioned as one-sixth of the total produce in the Indian epic Mahabharat. Buddhist writings that depict the early circumstances of the fifth century B.C. note that the state's demands were the sole thing limiting each peasant owner's property rights and make a passing reference to agricultural taxes.⁴ "Tithes" on row crops were gathered in kind at the threshing floor or bron doors during this time. A village syndic or headman known as "Gramabhojaka" measured the crops, which were surveyed by Mahamatra. Although the system of special levies was also often employed, it was rarely applied during circumstances such as hunger or war. The specified grainaries were used to store the results of the special levy. In addition, other tolls in those days included forced labour and sporadic exactions like "milk money."⁵

The fragmented narrative of Megasthenes, Ashoka's edicts, and the massive treatise "Arthashastra" are examples of historical materials pertaining to the Mauryan Empire that provide a fairly comprehensive picture of the political structure, agrarian economy, and fiscal administration of the era. In instance, Kautilya's "Arthshastra" addresses these techniques in a very insightful and thorough way. It seems that a section of the royal demense was leased to farmers, who kept different amounts of the land's produce for themselves. When it comes to privately owned land, the revenue assessment is typically one-sixth of the gross yield, though this might vary depending on the kind of soil and crop being farmed. In times of war and other exigencies, the king's portion was increased to one-fourth. Private lands were

subject to several levies, such as the “Hiranya” and the “Udakbhaga” (water-rate), in addition to land revenue proper. The “Arthasastra” describes in great detail the current land measurement and classification system, tenancy records, revenue officials and their responsibilities, and other issues related to fiscal administration.⁶

The “Sadbhaga,” or one-sixth of the total agricultural produce, was the king’s portion during the Gupta era (B. C. 320-650 A. D.). A series of land taxes, including “Udranga” (a tax on occupancy ryots) and “Uparika” (a tax on temporary tenants), are mentioned in Inscription No. 38 in Gupta inscriptions, dated A.D. 571.⁷ Similar to the north, the same rules applied to inland taxation in South India, where rural taxation applied to all forms of profit and revenue received within the village from trade, handicrafts, agriculture, orchards, trees, and professions.⁸

The land revenue system underwent several modifications as a result of Muslim administration. The land taxation system was severe throughout the pre-Mughal Muslim era, particularly under the rule of Ala din Khilji. The king’s share is equal to half the land’s gross yield plus the amount of grazing that is owed.⁹ The latter on Tughluq and Timur was a methodical effort to enhance the uniform-rate land taxation system.¹⁰ Therefore, as Moreland points out, Muslim rural leaders used essentially the same brutal strategies as Hindu kings to realise the arrears by selling the peasant’s wife and children.¹¹ During this time, “intermediaries” rather than government representatives handled the collecting. Leaders, or governing Hindu leaders; village headmen; revenue farmers; and assignees, or Jagirdars, were the titles of the intermediates.

For land taxes, the Mughal era is crucial. Shershah (1540–55), who divided land into good, medium, and inferior categories for assessment and realised one-third of the average production as revenue from each unit of area in kind, made an unsuccessful improvement before Akbar. However, Shershah was unable to stay long enough to implement his plan. However, Akbar (1556–1603) completed historical tasks with the help of his minister, Raja Todar Mal. He conducted a thorough and precise land survey. Based on the soil’s fertility, the area was meticulously measured and separated into four groups.¹² “Under this system,

all the land was measured by a uniform standard and the average produce of a 'bigha' of land was ascertained," noted the Taxation Enquiry Commission. The king's share was set at one-third of the average gross produce so produced for each specific piece of land, which was then converted into cash based on prices that had been in effect for the preceding nineteen years.¹³ The most notable aspect of Akbar's rule was the implementation of the cash-payment system for land taxes. The system was supposed to last for ten years, but it lasted much longer because there were no frequent updates. On the other hand, "Banjar" land was evaluated at moderate prices. Depending on what was more convenient or advantageous for them, the farmer might choose to pay the tax in kind or cash. According to Lanka Sundram, "Mahsul" was hefty during Akbar's reign (one-third of the produce), but he also eliminated twenty-nine taxes to compensate the peasants for the large portion of the produce that was required as income.¹⁴

Several tax collecting methods, including the "Gallabaksh," "Zabti," and "Nasaq" systems, were popular throughout Akbar's reign. The "Bebti" or regulating system was generally more authoritative and well-liked. It was intended to eliminate the uncertainties brought on by yield variance and the flaws associated with crop division. It was a fair, albeit inefficient, method of collecting taxes. It established a set rate of assessment based on the type of crop and the amount of assessment paid in prior years. It guaranteed a cultivator's state dues and offered them flexibility and room to grow.

According to Baden Powell, "The Moghul Revenue administration, in fact, merely reduced the customary and unwritten usages of the Hindu administration to a system." In essence, the Moghul revenue administration was just the earlier scheme in a new form. It fixed the official charges and gave them new names, introduced regular records and revenue accounts, and offered a comprehensive set of revenue terminology and phrases. However, one modification was made.¹⁵ This modification was associated with the implementation of a cash payment system.

However, the later Moghuls disregarded the customs set by a powerful and well-liked monarch like Akbar and muddled the land revenue system. According to Lanka Sundram, "the spirit of Akbar's land revenue policy was totally avoided under

the later Mughals.” Even though Akbar’s descendants introduced negative innovations, the system was somewhat maintained. However, after Aurangzeb’s death, the system completely collapsed, and it took 50 years for it to regain its recognition under the leadership of the first British Governors-General in India.¹⁶

As a result, in contrast to Akbar’s zabti system, the level of assessment was increased from one-third to half of the total produce during the post-Akbar era. Nasaq, or summary, became the norm, and the rental system gradually gained traction, particularly during the Aurangzeb era. Shah-Jahan increased demand from one-third to half, and during Aurangzeb’s reign, half became the going rate. In a similar vein, Akbar’s successors abandoned the ryotwari system because they preferred to rely on middlemen. As a result, the headman of the community became more significant than the individual farmer. Intermediaries emerged as a result of the widespread use of “Nasaq,” or summary assessment, generous assignment grants, and the practice of farming state revenues. The system of farming revenue became popular but it adversely affected the common cultivators.

The administrative apparatus grew less effective and more complicated as the Mughal Empire grew. The landowners were taken advantage of by the provincial officers. Examples of exploitation include the imposition of extra lavies as “abwabs” or cesses on the land. In a same vein, intermediaries serving as government agents took on greater authority and brutally exploited the impoverished peasants. These powerful individuals engaged in wrongdoing and embraced the hide-and-seek mentality.

Sher Shah was the first Muslim king to conduct a thorough land survey, and he established the fundamental guidelines that were adhered to during Akbar’s reign. Regulations were developed to collect the revenue, of which an account has previously been provided, and the state demand was set at one-third. However, Sher Shah’s rule was too brief to restore the system’s functionality. During the chaos that ensued after his death, a large portion of the excellent work he had completed was neglected, and the laws he had created were

abandoned. The empire was split into the Khalsa, or royal territory, and Jagir land upon Humayun's return to the throne. His nobles and amirs divided up a sizable chunk of the empire into jagirs and paid their patron and emperor a predetermined sum. Crop division appears to have been a long-standing tradition on the Khalsa land. Due to the empire's small size and straightforward issues, there was no trouble.

A new chapter in the history of administrative reform began with Akbar's ascension to the throne. The revenue department felt the master's touch just like everything else. When Khwaja Abdul Majid Khan took over as Diwan, the entire revenue was calculated using an estimate, and the assignments were made at the whim of the moment. An attempt was made to determine the cost of food items and to roughly set the revenue of the various sarkars, but no significant progress was made. When Muzaffar Turbati was appointed Diwan in the region's fifteenth year, more concrete measures were taken to settle the revenue. He attempted to organise the entire system with Todarmal's assistance. The ten Qanungos at the imperial headquarters revised and verified the estimations provided by the provincial Qanungos, which served as the foundation for the assessment. The Uzbeg uprising disrupted the entire plan, therefore these efforts had no significant effects. Todarmal was tasked with bringing about a peaceful settlement of Gujarat following its conquest in 1573. He conducted a routine land survey for the first time, and the evaluation was based on the land's area and quality. With the exception of Bengal and Bihar, the entire empire was placed under the exchequer in 1575, and the Jagirs were eliminated. Each of the 182 parganas that made up the entire empire at the time generated a crore in revenue annually. Crores were the officers assigned to oversee these parganas. They appear to have been avaricious and dishonest officers, and Todarmal punished them harshly for their misconduct. The Ain makes no reference of them, suggesting that their position was either abolished or held in abeyance after a while. Either because they were no longer in existence when Abul Fazl wrote his work, or because they were dishonest officers and therefore merited the disdainful omission, he stays quiet on them. However, they are

referenced once more during Jahangir's reign, indicating that they continued to work in the tax department.

When Todarmal was appointed to the position of Diwan-i-Ashraf in 1582, the income system was completely reorganised. Due to the empire's growing size, several reforms were unavoidable, including an annual evaluation based on output and pricing, which caused demand to fluctuate annually. The officers at the headquarters had to set the rates to be requested from the ryot before the collectors could begin their task. To obviate the difficulty and inconvenience caused by the yearly assessment, Todarmal laid down the following principles which Abdul Fazl describes in these words:

"When through the prudent management of the Sovereign the empire was enlarged in extent, it became difficult to ascertain each year the prices current and much inconvenience was caused by the delay. On the one hand, husbandmen complained of excessive exactions, and on the other hand, the holder of assigned lands was aggrieved on account of the revenue balancees."

"His Majesty devised a remedy for these evils and in the discernment of his world-adorning mind fixed a settlement for ten years; the people were thus made contented and their gratitude was abundantly manifested. From the beginning of the 15th year of the Divine Era (1570-71) to the 24th (1579-80), an aggregate of the rates of collection was formed and a tenth of the total was fixed as the annual assessment, but from the 20th (1575-76) to the 24th year the collections were accurately determined and the five former ones accepted on the authority of persons of probity. The best crops were taken into account in each year, and the year of the most abundant harvest accepted, as the table shows."¹⁷

To eliminate the challenges and annoyance brought on by the annual evaluation. According to Jarrett's translation (Ain II, p. 88), His Majesty authorised "the ten-year assessment, rather than the decennial settlement." Contrary to popular belief, there was no decennial settlement. Todarmal failed to correct the assessment by averaging the evaluations across a ten-year period, that is, from the fifteenth to the twenty-fourth year of the reign.

The entire area under agriculture was meticulously surveyed (Paimaish). In the past, hempen ropes were employed,

which were susceptible to touch or lengthening in moist or hot environments. Todarmal utilised a Jarib made of bamboos connected by iron rings. There were four classes of land:

- (1) Polaj which was annually cultivated for each crop in succession and was never allowed to be fallow. This was land under continuous cultivation and yielded revenue from year to year.
- (2) Parauti which was occasionally left fallow in order to recover its strength
- (3) Chachar which remained fallow for three or four years.
- (4) Banjar which remained uncultivated for five years or more.

Based on their yield, the first two land classes—the Polaj and Parauti—were classified into three grades: good, mediocre, and bad. The estimated produce, which served as the foundation for the evaluation, was to be the mean of the three. An example will make it evident.

Here is land class (1) producing wheat:

Good: 20 mds. Per bigha

Middling: 15 mds. Per bigha.

Bad: 10 mds. 24 srs. Per bigha

Total: 45 mds. 14 srs. One-third of this is 15 mds. 8 srs.

Which was the expected average produce (mahsul), and the state demand had to be set at one-third of this, or 5 mds. 2 2/3 srs.

Different treatment was given to the other two groups of land. Since their produce and quality were inferior to those of the first two groups, their revenue was to be raised gradually.

Once the average produce was determined, the state demand had to be fixed in cash, or more accurately, the cash rates had to be fixed. It will be recalled that the previous method was to translate the produce into cash-rates based on the prices that were in effect at the time. However, this was exceedingly problematic because the periodic determination of cash-rates required a great deal of needless expenditure and created significant delays in collections. Todarmal fixed cash rates based on the average of ten years' actuals as a solution to this problem. In the Ain, Abul Fazi explains how it was accomplished. He says:

“From the beginning of the 15th years of the Divine Era to the 24th an aggregate of collection was formed and a tenth of the

total was fixed as the annual assessment, but from the 20th to the 24th year the collections were actually determined and the five former ones were accepted on the authority of persons of probity.”¹⁸

The state's portion remained constant at one-third. It was no longer subject to annual fluctuations. The farmer had the choice of making a cash or in-kind payment. The state officers set the monetary rates, which varied depending on the crop. For instance, the prices for sugarcane and indigo differed from those for wheat and barley. The procedure can be summed up as follows: In order to make the crop statement, a crew of officers visited the villages as the season approached to determine the precise area of land under cultivation. After determining the acreage of each crop in each holding, the Bitikchi computed the amount of money owed to the grower by applying the specified rates.

This was referred to as the Zabti assessment system.¹⁹ In addition to some areas of Ajmer and Gujarat, it was dominant in the Subahs of Bihar, Allahabad, Multan Qudh, Agra, Malwa, Delhi, and Lahore. The main idea was that a fixed assessment in cash, based on the type of crop, was to be applied to every piece of land. In addition, the empire had several widely used evaluation methods. These were the Ghallabakhsha and Nasaq, along with a few others that are mentioned in records from the time. In Thatta and portions of the Subahs of Kabul and Kashmir, the ancient Indian method of crop division assessment was known as the Ghallabakhsha. Instead of being a Zamindari setup, the Nasaq was a of ryotwari. There was no middleman between the state and the ryot in this system. The Zabti system, which dominated the majority of the empire, was more intricately organised than any of these.

It was forbidden to farm. The farmers were immediately dealt with by the government. The Bitikchi, Potdar, Qanungo, Patwari, and Mugaddams, whose responsibilities have already been discussed, helped the Amil, or revenue collector. The emperor's concern for the welfare of the peasantry is evident in the instructinos given to these officers. A lot of what Abul Fazl says may be perfect, but it should be treated with kindness and compassion. During dry spells, improvements were made for

farmers and public works projects were built to help the underprivileged. Additionally, remittances were made; according to a Sikh tradition, Akbar once sent the Punjab's revenue at Guru Arjuna's request. The collector was instructed to "not extend the hand of demand out of season" and to collect that money in a friendly manner. The treasurer was not allowed to demand a single further coin, and the peasant may put his rent directly into the treasury. The Patwari was required to provide a comprehensive receipt that included the name of the village the cultivator belonged to, the amount of rent, and the area of land farmed.

Reviewing Akbar Vincent Smith's revenue management, he writes: "To put it briefly, the system was excellent. The officials' practical directions were ideal, and the ideas were sound. However, someone who has been in direct contact with the revenue administration from top to bottom, like the author, cannot help but feel a great deal of cynicism about how well practice and principle align."²⁰ Now, this is only a guess. Dr. Smith does not provide any specific examples to demonstrate that the revenue administration was detrimental to the ryot, and in his haste to demonstrate that Akbar's administration was neither superior nor more advantageous than the Anglo-Indian administration, of which he was such a brilliant member, he draws the frequently defeated governors in the provinces. Dr. Smith's natural and possibly justified conceit may be excused. However, the claim made by Anglo-Indian historians that Todarmal's system was designed to shield the state from fraud rather than to safeguard the interests of the ryot is unsupported. The *Ain*'s pages are filled with information about the specifics of the revenue system. ... it seems to have functioned effectively overall, taking enough care of the people's interests. A tonne of theory is worth an ounce of fact. The current writer, who was born and raised among the peasantry in the United Provinces, where Vincent Smith lived the majority of his life, can attest from personal experience that the state of the peasantry has significantly worsened over the past forty years. Even now, when the Taqavi loans are realized—one of the few occasions when government officials interact directly with the majority of the agricultural population—those who have any experience of

village life must have witnessed people being beaten and kicked by the revenue department's underlings. Even in just cases, redress becomes impossible due to the onerous legal process we must follow and the apathy of the highest officials, whose faith in the man on the spot is simply pitiful. The soil was far more productive back then than it is now. Social necessities were straightforward, there was no false dignity to sustain, and money that is now spent on maintaining social prestige and buying foreign fashion items was used to acquire items that contributed to a healthy and active lifestyle. Even the labourers were comfortable, and Mr. Moreland acknowledges that toward the end of the sixteenth century, a rupee could buy at least seven times as much food in the capital's vicinity as it did in Upper India between 1910 and 1912. Since Mr. Moreland wrote, the situation has gotten worse. Grazing areas were plentiful and inexpensive, and milk and ghee were readily available. Our people's weak bodies and complete incapacity to fend against illness are the results of this. The peasantry benefited greatly from Akbar's regime. Every peasant was aware of the predetermined state demand. To the extent that human competence and statemanship allowed, sufficient protections were put in place to stop state officials from engaging in fraud and corruption. The crown's top officials were trustworthy, and the Argus-eyed Todarmal meticulously observed every aspect of the administration. When discovered, extortions and exactions were punished harshly, and the perpetrators did not get away with it as they do now by using astute solicitors. There is no evidence to support the conclusion that the assessment burdened the peasantry and that the revenue officers routinely disregarded the directives given to them, even though the emperor's wishes may not have been fully carried out and there may have been abuse of power in the more remote provinces.

Aurangzeb gave his everything to improving the lot of the people and expanding agriculture. Shahjahan accused him of being careless and once even threatened to cut his allowance since he didn't understand how difficult the task was. However, the prince persisted in his endeavour, and Murshid Quli Khan, an officer with exceptional administrative talent, helped him.

For revenue management purposes, the Deccan province was split into two sections: Painghat, the entirety of Khandesh, and half of Berar; the remaining regions were included in the latter. Each division had its own Diwans who handled their finances and income collection. The Diwan of Balaghat, Murshid Quli Khan, was not only a financial prodigy but also a superb administrator with the best organisational skills and a strong desire for change.

Todarmal's income system was introduced in the Deccan by Murshid Quli Khan. The task of measuring the land, determining the area under cultivation, and separating the arable from waste areas fell to Amins and Amils. Muqaddams were appointed in the villages to assist with revenue collection and to protect the interests of the peasantry. Poor farmers were given loans to buy animals and seed, and they were allowed to pay them back in installments. The Diwan "often dragged the measuring chain with his own hands" because he was so desperate for justice that he did not endure the most cruel effort.

The state suffered significant losses as a result of the disorganised revenue systems that were popular. Everything was rearranged with the essential adjustments that were recommended by the local circumstances. Murshid Quli adopted a total of three systems. In some underdeveloped areas, the previous method of allocating the state's share per plough was kept in place, taking into account variations in the soil and its production. It was a rough-and-ready system that put the state and the peasant at danger. The Batai, which was identified in the following way, was the other system with reduced risk:

1. The crops in half of the state were totally dependent on rainfall.
2. The state collected one-third of the Kharif and Rabi harvests in areas where wells were used for irrigation. However, in the case of grapes, sugarcane, and other high-class crops, the state's contribution varied from one-ninth to one-fourth, taking into account irrigation facilities or challenges as well as the time it took for the crops to mature. The state's share was fixed in fields irrigated by canals, tanks, or river channels, sometimes at a greater rate and other times at a lower rate than in lands irrigated in other ways.

3. The assessment technique used in Northern India was the third. Jarib was the name of this. The state demand was set per bigha based on the type of crop planted after the land was surveyed.

Agriculture improved as a result of this well-planned system. The peasantry were no longer under the control of the revenue agency and led a joyful and contented existence. The Deccan provinces achieved a high degree of affluence, and a great deal of oppression and haughtiness ended.

Conclusion

The Mughal era's highly structured administrative framework for land tenure and revenue served as the foundation for the political and economic organization of the empire. The Mughal empire was able to sustain a steady supply of income and bolster central authority through methodical land measuring, evaluation of agricultural productivity, and effective revenue collection. Revenue management became more uniform and accountable as a result of the reforms implemented during Emperor Akbar's reign, especially under the direction of Raja Todar Mal.

But there were certain drawbacks to the system. Although it promoted agricultural growth and imperial prosperity, the high income requirements frequently put a great deal of strain on farmers, particularly in times of crop failure, famine, or unstable economic conditions. The state and the peasantry developed complicated connections as a result of the intermediary roles played by zamindars and jagirdars. The Mughal agrarian system was one of the most sophisticated tax systems of its era in spite of these difficulties. The Mughal land tenure and income arrangements had a long-lasting impact on the Indian agrarian system in the larger historical context. The British colonial authority later adopted and changed many of its administrative procedures and guiding ideas. Therefore, understanding the development of land relations, the rural economy, and the emergence of Indian states requires an understanding of the Mughal land revenue system.

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बिहार में असहयोग आंदोलन का एक विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन

रागिनी कुमारी

इतिहास विभाग, श्री अरविंद महिला कॉलेज, पटना

सारांश:

असहयोग आंदोलन (1920-1922) भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम का एक महत्वपूर्ण चरण था, जिसने राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन को जन-आंदोलन का स्वरूप प्रदान किया। बिहार में इस आंदोलन का व्यापक प्रभाव पड़ा और यह प्रदेश राष्ट्रीय चेतना के प्रमुख केंद्रों में से एक बन गया। महात्मा गांधी के नेतृत्व में प्रारंभ हुए इस आंदोलन का उद्देश्य ब्रिटिश शासन के प्रति असहयोग प्रकट कर स्वराज की प्राप्ति करना था।

बिहार में डॉ. राजेंद्र प्रसाद, ब्रजकिशोर प्रसाद, मजहरूल हक तथा अन्य राष्ट्रीय नेताओं ने आंदोलन को जन-जन तक पहुँचाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। विद्यार्थियों ने सरकारी शिक्षण संस्थानों का बहिष्कार किया, वकीलों ने अदालतों में कार्य करना छोड़ दिया तथा विदेशी वस्त्रों और सामानों के बहिष्कार को व्यापक समर्थन मिला। बिहार के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में किसानों और आम जनता की सक्रिय भागीदारी ने आंदोलन को विशेष बल प्रदान किया।

विश्लेषणात्मक दृष्टि से देखा जाए तो असहयोग आंदोलन ने बिहार में राजनीतिक जागरूकता, राष्ट्रीय एकता और जनसहभागिता को अभूतपूर्व रूप से बढ़ाया। इस आंदोलन ने सामाजिक एवं आर्थिक स्तर पर भी प्रभाव डाला तथा लोगों में स्वदेशी, आत्मनिर्भरता और राष्ट्रीय गौरव की भावना को सुदृढ़ किया। यद्यपि चोरी-चौरा घटना के बाद आंदोलन को स्थगित कर दिया गया, फिर भी बिहार में इसके दूरगामी परिणाम दिखाई दिए। इसने भविष्य के स्वतंत्रता आंदोलनों के लिए मजबूत आधार तैयार किया और प्रदेश में राष्ट्रीय नेतृत्व के विकास को प्रोत्साहित किया। अतः बिहार में असहयोग आंदोलन केवल राजनीतिक विरोध का माध्यम नहीं था, बल्कि यह जन-जागरण, राष्ट्रीय चेतना और स्वतंत्रता की भावना को सशक्त करने वाला एक ऐतिहासिक अभियान सिद्ध हुआ।

मुख्य शब्द: असहयोग आंदोलन, महात्मा गांधी, राजेंद्र प्रसाद, स्वदेशी आंदोलन, राष्ट्रीय चेतना, स्वतंत्रता संग्राम।

प्रस्तावना:

महात्मा गांधी के नेतृत्व में चलाये गये असहयोग आंदोलन (1920-22) भारतीय स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन के इतिहास में एक परिवर्तन बिन्दु था। इसने राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन के स्वरूप में एक झटके में परिवर्तन करते हुए समाज के सभी वर्गों को आंदोलन से जोड़ कर इसे व्यापकता प्रदान की।

बीसवीं सदी के आरंभ में भारतीय जनमानस में निराशा का महौल व्याप्त था। प्रथम विश्वयुद्ध के दौरान महात्मा गांधी ने इस आशा में ब्रिटिश सरकार का समर्थन किया कि युद्ध की

समाप्ति के बाद भारतीयों के हितों से संबद्ध कुछ निर्णय लेगा। किन्तु युद्ध की समाप्ति के बाद रॉलेट एक्ट, जलियाँवाला बाग हत्याकांड तथा पंजाब में मार्शल लॉ की घटना ने उनकी सारी उम्मीदों को ध्वस्त कर दिया। अब जनता समझ चुकी थी कि अंग्रेजी शासन सिवाय दमन के उन्हें कुछ नहीं दे सकता है।¹

वहीं मांटैग्यू चेम्सफोर्ड सुधार में निहित दोहरी शासन प्रणाली, हंटर कमीशन की रिपोर्ट में पूरे मामले की लीपा-पोती का प्रयास तथा विश्वयुद्ध जनित आर्थिक कठिनाइयों ने जनता के असंतोष को और उग्र कर दिया, साथ ही ब्रिटिश सरकार द्वारा तुर्की के खलीफा के प्रति किए गए दुर्व्यवहार ने भारतीय मुसलमानों को भी छुब्ध कर दिया।

इन सभी परिस्थितियों के कारण भारतीय जनमानस का ब्रिटिश सरकार से मोहभंग हो गया, जिसके फलस्वरूप सितम्बर, 1920 में कलकत्ता में कांग्रेस के विशेष अधिवेशन बुलाया गया जहाँ गांधीजी द्वारा असहयोग संबंध प्रस्ताव पेश किया गया। यद्यपि इस प्रस्ताव का चित्तरंजन दास तथा मदन मोहन मालवीय ने विरोध किया, किन्तु मोतीलाल नेहरू एवं अली बंधुओं के समर्थन से यह प्रस्ताव पास करा लिया गया।²

फलतः 1920 के नागपुर अधिवेशन में कांग्रेस ने असहयोग आंदोलन के प्रस्ताव को स्वीकार कर आंदोलन की विधिवत शुरुआत की।

असहयोग आंदोलन के कार्यक्रम:

- उपाधियों और प्रशस्ति पत्रों को लौटाना
- सरकारी स्कूल, कॉलेजों का बहिष्कार
- अदालतों का बहिष्कार
- विदेशी कपड़ों का बहिष्कार

इस आंदोलन के दौरान राष्ट्रीय विद्यालयों की स्थापना तथा स्थानीय विवादों के निपटारे के लिए पंचायतों के गठन का भी प्रस्ताव पारित किया गया। साथ ही साथ कताई-बुनाई को प्रोत्साहन देने व हिन्दू-मुस्लिम एकता को बढ़ावा देने पर विशेष जोर देने की भी बात की गई थी।

इन कार्यक्रमों पर अमल करने हेतु कांग्रेस के संगठनात्मक ढाँचे में कई परिवर्तन किए गए। कांग्रेस के दैनिक कार्यों के देख-रेख करने के लिए 15 सदस्यीय कार्यकारिणी का गठन किया गया तथा स्थानीय स्तर पर भी कांग्रेस के संगठन को मजबूत बनाने के प्रयास तेज हो गए। इस तरह कांग्रेस के संगठन का दायरा बढ़ने के साथ ही उसका विकेन्द्रीकरण भी किया गया।³

इन सभी कार्यों का राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन पर व्यापक प्रभाव पड़ा। बिहार भी इन प्रभावों से अछूता नहीं रहा। राजेन्द्र प्रसाद की अगुवाई में बिहार प्रांतीय सम्मेलन का आयोजन भागलपुर में हुआ, जिसमें गांधीजी के असहयोग संबंधी प्रस्ताव को अनुमोदित कर दिया गया।⁴

ब्रजकिशोर प्रसाद के सुझाव पर स्वराज के मुद्दे को भी इस आंदोलन का हिस्सा बना दिया गया, जबकि राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर यह असहयोग आंदोलन का हिस्सा नहीं था।

इस आंदोलन के दौरान मजहूरल हक, राजेन्द्र प्रसाद, ब्रजकिशोर प्रसाद तथा मोहम्मद शफी सहित अनेक नेताओं ने विधायिका के चुनाव से अपनी उम्मीदवारी वापस ले ली।

अधिकारियों ने अपने पदों से त्यागपत्र दे दिया तथा वकीलों ने अदालतों का बहिष्कार किया। इस्तीफा देने वाले वकीलों में मथुरा प्रसाद, अनुग्रह नारायण सिंह तथा ब्रजकिशोर प्रसाद, श्रीकृष्ण सिंह तथा दीपनारायण सिंह प्रमुख थे।

छात्रों ने स्कूलों तथा कॉलेजों से अपना नाम वापस ले लिया। इनमें पटना लॉ कॉलेज के मुहम्मद शेर तथा बी०एन० कॉलेज के अब्दुल बारी तथा मोहम्मद शफी प्रमुख थे।

इन छात्रों को शिक्षा का वैकल्पिक साधन उपलब्ध कराने के उद्देश्य से पटना में मोहम्मद फजलुल रहमान तथा राजेन्द्र प्रसाद ने बिहार राष्ट्रीय विद्यालय की स्थापना की। राजेन्द्र प्रसाद को इस विद्यालय का प्राचार्य बनाया गया।

वहीं बिहार इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज के 15 छात्र पढ़ाई छोड़कर मजहूरल हक के मार्गदर्शन में कार्य करने लगे। मजहूरल हक ने दीधा में रहने वाले अपने मित्र खैरू मियाँ की जमीन पर 'सदाकत आश्रम' का निर्माण किया, जहाँ पर इन छात्रों की पढ़ाई की व्यवस्था की गई। धीरे-धीरे यह आश्रम बिहार में राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन का मुख्य केन्द्र बन गया तथा आगे चलकर बिहार कांग्रेस समिति का कार्यालय बना।⁵

गाँधीजी द्वारा देश में राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा केन्द्र की अपील पर 6 फरवरी 1921 को 'बिहार विद्यापीठ' की स्थापना की गई। मजहूरल हक को इसका कुलाधिपति तथा ब्रजकिशोर सिंह को कुलपति नियुक्त किया गया। पूरे राज्य में इस विद्यापीठ से संबद्ध राष्ट्रीय पाठशालाओं की स्थाना की गई जिनमें प्राथमिक से माध्यमिक स्तर तक की शिक्षा की व्यवस्था थी।

राज्य में असहयोग आंदोलन से संबंधित कार्यक्रमों के प्रचार-प्रसार तथा राष्ट्रीय भावना को उभारने के उद्देश्य से मजहूरल हक द्वारा 30 सितंबर 1921 को सदाकत आश्रम से 'द मदरलैंड' नामक अखबार का प्रकाशन प्रारंभ किया।

इसी बीच नवंबर, 1921 में ब्रिटेन के युवराज के भारत आगमन के विरोध में बिहार प्रांतीय सम्मेलन द्वारा बहिष्कार करने का निर्णय लिया गया।

27 नवंबर, 1921 को बिहार प्रांतीय कांग्रेस समिति द्वारा 'बिहार कौमी सेवक दल' की स्थापना की गई। इस समिति में खिलाफत कार्यकर्ता तथा कांग्रेस के कार्यकर्ताओं की भर्ती की गई। इस दल की स्थापना का उद्देश्य प्रांत में शांति-व्यवस्था को बनाए रखना था।

इस आंदोलन के दौरान बिहार के शाहाबाद जिले के डुमरांव में नशाबंदी आंदोलन चलाया गया तथा नशाखोरी छोड़ने की अपील की गई।⁶

असहयोग आंदोलन के दौरान फरवरी, 1922 में भागलपुर में झंडा कांड हुआ। इसमें भागलपुर में औद्योगिक प्रदर्शनी के दौरान यहाँ के ठेकेदारों ने राष्ट्रीय झंडों का प्रयोग किया जिस पर ब्रिटिश अधिकारियों ने आपत्ति की। हालाँकि इस मामले को अहिंसक तरीके से सुलझा लिया गया।⁷

इसी बीच लगभग दो सालों तक चले इन आंदोलन में जनता का धैर्य टूटने लगा तथा आंदोलन हिंसक होने लगा। 5 फरवरी 1922 को उत्तरप्रदेश के चौरा-चौरी रोड के पश्चात् गांधीजी ने अचानक इस आंदोलन को वापस ले लिया। इसी दौरान बिहार में मजहूरल हक को गिरफ्तार कर लिया गया। इस तरह असहयोग आंदोलन समाप्त हो गया।

महत्व:

हालाँकि स्वराज के लक्ष्य को लेकर चला यह आंदोलन अपने लक्ष्य प्राप्ति से पूर्व ही समाप्त घोषित कर दिया गया, किन्तु इसकी उपलब्धियाँ काफी महत्वपूर्ण रही।

- इस आंदोलन ने पहली बार देश के हर क्षेत्र तथा हर वर्ग से संबंधित लोगों को आंदोलन से जोड़ा। अब कांग्रेस पर इस बात का आक्षेप नहीं लगाया जा सकता था कि यह मुट्ठी भर लोगो का प्रतिनिधित्व करती है।
- इस आंदोलन ने जनता से आत्मविश्वास तथा आत्माभिमान जागृत किया जिसके दम पर लोग ब्रिटिश कानूनों की खुली अवज्ञा करने की हिम्मत जुटा पाए।⁸
- इस आंदोलन ने जनता को आधुनिक राजनीति से परिचित करवाया तथा आजादी की भूख जगाई, जो आगामी संघर्ष की पृष्ठभूमि तैयार करने में सहायक हुआ।
- इस आंदोलन में पहली बार बड़े पैमाने पर मुसलमानों की भागीदारी तथा सांप्रदायिक एकता देखने को मिलती है।⁹
- कठे और चरखे के प्रयोग होने से भारतीय कुटीर उद्योगों का पुनः विकास संभव हुआ।
- कांग्रेस के अंतर्गत 'स्वराज पार्टी' का जन्म।
- कांग्रेस का विकेंद्रीकरण फलतः ग्रामीण स्तर तक उसका आधार मजबूत हो गया।
- राष्ट्रीय आंदोलनों में महिलाओं ने सक्रिय भूमिका निभानी शुरू कर दी।¹⁰

स्वरूप:

- इस आंदोलन को मध्यम वर्ग के अफसरों, वकीलों, छात्रों तथा शिक्षकों आदि तक सीमित रखा गया।
- इस आंदोलन के फलस्वरूप अनेक लोगों ने सरकारी खिताब लौटा दिए। जगह-जगह विद्यापीठों की स्थापना की गई। राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा के लिए जगह-जगह
- मुसलमानों की बड़े पैमाने पर भागीदारी
- विदेशी वस्त्रों की बहिष्कार और शराब की दुकानों पर धरना।
- मूलतः यह अहिंसक असहयोग आंदोलन धीरे-धीरे मध्यम वर्ग की सीमाओं को लांघ रहा था। आंध्र प्रदेश के गुंटूर जिले में इजाजत के बिना ही लगान बंदी आरंभ कर दी गई। इसी क्रम में चौरा-चौरी कांड हुआ।
- इस आंदोलन ने कांग्रेस को एक देशव्यापी राजनीतिक दल बना दिया।

विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन:

बिहार में असहयोग आंदोलन (1920-1922) भारतीय राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन के इतिहास में एक महत्वपूर्ण अध्याय है। यह केवल ब्रिटिश शासन के विरुद्ध राजनीतिक विरोध का आंदोलन नहीं था, बल्कि सामाजिक, आर्थिक और शैक्षिक परिवर्तन का भी माध्यम बना। चंपारण सत्याग्रह की सफलता के बाद बिहार की जनता महात्मा गांधी के नेतृत्व से प्रभावित थी, जिसके कारण असहयोग आंदोलन को प्रदेश में व्यापक जनसमर्थन प्राप्त हुआ।

विश्लेषणात्मक दृष्टि से देखा जाए तो इस आंदोलन ने बिहार में राष्ट्रीय चेतना को जन-जन तक पहुंचाने का कार्य किया। पहले जहाँ राजनीतिक गतिविधियाँ मुख्यतः शिक्षित एवं उच्च वर्ग तक सीमित थीं, वहीं असहयोग आंदोलन ने किसानों, मजदूरों, छात्रों, व्यापारियों और महिलाओं को भी

स्वतंत्रता संग्राम से जोड़ दिया। सरकारी विद्यालयों, न्यायालयों तथा विदेशी वस्तुओं के बहिष्कार ने ब्रिटिश शासन की वैधता को चुनौती दी और स्वदेशी तथा आत्मनिर्भरता की भावना को सुदृढ़ किया।

बिहार के प्रमुख नेताओं डॉ. राजेंद्र प्रसाद, ब्रजकिशोर प्रसाद, मजहरूल हक तथा अनुग्रह नारायण सिंह ने आंदोलन को संगठित और प्रभावशाली बनाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। इनके नेतृत्व में बिहार राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन का एक सशक्त केंद्र बनकर उभरा। बिहार विद्यापीठ जैसी राष्ट्रीय शिक्षण संस्थाओं की स्थापना ने शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में भी वैकल्पिक व्यवस्था को बढ़ावा दिया।

हालांकि आंदोलन की कुछ सीमाएँ भी थीं। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में संगठनात्मक कमजोरियाँ थीं और आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर वर्गों की भागीदारी कई स्थानों पर सीमित रही। 1922 की चौरी-चौरा घटना के बाद आंदोलन की समाप्ति से जनता में निराशा उत्पन्न हुई, जिससे इसकी गति अचानक रुक गई।

फिर भी, असहयोग आंदोलन का सबसे बड़ा योगदान यह था कि इसने बिहार में राजनीतिक जागरूकता, राष्ट्रीय एकता और जनसहभागिता की मजबूत नींव रखी। इस आंदोलन ने भविष्य के स्वतंत्रता संघर्षों के लिए जनाधार तैयार किया और स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति की दिशा में बिहार की भूमिका को अधिक सशक्त एवं प्रभावशाली बनाया।

निष्कर्ष:

इस प्रकार हम देखते हैं कि असहयोग आंदोलन का प्रथम व्यापक जनभागीदारी वाला आंदोलन साबित हुआ। इस आंदोलन ने औपनिवेशिक शासन को यह बता दिया कि स्वतंत्रता का प्रश्न अब महज कुछ लोगों के लिए नहीं बल्कि अब समस्त भारतीय स्वतंत्रता को अपना ध्येय मानने लगे हैं। अतः इस आंदोलन का एक विशेष महत्व है। इसी क्रम में असहयोग आंदोलन का बिहार के क्षेत्र में भी व्यापक प्रसार देखने को मिलता है। बिहार ने न केवल असहयोग आंदोलन बल्कि स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के लिए आगे होने वाले सभी आंदोलन में अपना महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया।

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Imperial Encounters and the Fragility of Power : Mexicas, Incas, and the European Invasion

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Abstract

The article critically examines the rise, organisation, and legacy of the Mexica (Aztec) and Inca civilisations, two imperial powers of the Americas that developed independently yet reveal striking parallels. Both empires constructed legitimising myths, advanced agricultural systems, and complex socio-political structures that reinforced religious and political authority. Their confrontations with Spain exposed the vulnerabilities of centralised rule, while colonial rule reconfigured but did not erase indigenous traditions. By comparing ecological adaptations, statecraft, religion, and cultural memory, the study highlights universal patterns of empire, resilience, and the enduring significance of Mexica and Inca heritage in shaping modern national identities.

Keywords: *Mexica civilisation, Inca Empire, State formation, Religion and power, Spanish conquest, Indigenous heritage.*

This article aims to study the formation and development of two American civilisations that had their own grandeur. Indeed, both the Mexicas and the Incas were the protagonists of a series of events that culminated in the European triumph over the indigenous armies, who were the epigones of their ancestors who had settled in those lands millennia before. The **Mexicas** and **Incas** both crafted legitimising myths around their divine origins, but these narratives served different political functions. The Mexicas used migration and prophecy to justify their late arrival and dominance in the Valley of Mexico, while the Incas relied on solar descent and ties to Lake Titicaca to claim native status and superiority as rulers of the Andes. Both manipulated myth to consolidate political authority, illustrating how cosmology was

instrumentalised in imperial formation. The different ecological environments in which both civilisations developed were varied; however, Mesoamerican and Andean peoples knew how to apply their knowledge to adapt to their environments and achieve significant advances for the benefit of their communities over thousands of years. **Critically**, this intertwining of mythology and political legitimacy reveals the role of **ideological construction** in state-building — a common theme in imperial histories worldwide.

Original Civilizations

What does the concept of "original civilisations" mean? Well, it is known that there were six regions worldwide in ancient times that, although very different from each other, shared a set of characteristics that made them unique and, most importantly, developed without outside influences. Both empires had **rigid, hierarchical systems**, but while the Mexicas relied more on military conquest and tribute extraction, the Incas constructed a centralised bureaucratic state built on kinship networks (ayllu) and labour obligations (**mit'a**). The Mexica model was more exploitative and centrifugal; the Inca system, though equally coercive, sought integration through infrastructure and redistribution.

These were ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, the Indus Valley, and, on the American continent, Mesoamerica and the Andes. In these six regions, societies developed that reached the rank of civilisations, that is, they managed to transform into cities with certain complex characteristics, such as:

a) Concentration of population in cities, which vary in different ways. In the first four regions outside of America, this phenomenon occurred almost 4,000 years ago, when the earliest evidence of human settlements was found, establishing the way for cities. In Mesoamerica and the Andes, this occurred later, but certain similarities could be seen in their components.

Apparently, we can reach a conclusion about why these types of societies emerge. This was the subject of attention for several scholars, and it was around the 1960s that it was recognised that a possible cause was hydraulics; that is, since they were eminently agricultural peoples, irrigation was a preponderant factor. However, the cases of Mesoamerica and the

Andes cast doubt on this assertion. There were no major waterways used for agriculture, as was the case in Egypt with the Nile and its annual flooding, which so benefited agricultural production. The Mesopotamian region also benefited from the Tigris and Euphrates, and China was not far behind with its large rivers. The same happened with the Indus Valley. For America, other factors had to be considered.

b) The economy of these societies is fundamentally based on agriculture, war, and trade. In some of these regions, livestock farming was also important, although Mesoamerica, where there were no draft and pack animals, had been consolidated. The countryside-city binomial occurs, and the concept of territory is basic. The Inca system has been romanticised as “socialist,” but critical evaluation shows that both empires practised forms of imperial dominance, exploitation, and control. Neither was egalitarian — both were deeply stratified societies where elite privileges were safeguarded.

At a given moment, the limits of these States are exceeded to carry out the conquest of other regions. This was the moment when they became expansionist or imperialist States, as they went beyond their borders to invade neighbouring States through war. On many occasions, this was carried out for economic and social control purposes.

It is imperative to specify how the land was controlled for agricultural purposes. In the Andes, terraces with controlled irrigation were seen, and among the Mexica, the Chinampa technique was used, which employed springs and humid areas to cultivate various crops. Regarding war, it had an evident economic character as different regions were controlled through military imposition. Commerce, for its part, collected various products and distributed them both domestically and over long distances. Regarding animal husbandry, the Incas used different species of camelids, whereas in Mesoamerica, wherein there were no larger animals except for deer, which were used in relation to certain associated symbolism.

c) Social organisation showed a marked stratification between social groups. Whether they are called classes, estates, or anything else, the obvious fact is that it was a strong Mexican society. The difference between those who held power and

directed the destinies of the empire, and a working majority that was the essential basis of all society. Among the former, the mention would be the top leaders and members of the nobility, as well as high-ranking religious and military officials, along with a bureaucracy controlled by this social group. The majority of the population consisted of the specialists mentioned above, among whom peasants played a determining role, as they practiced one of the basic economic activities: i.e., agriculture. The State emerged as the controller and organiser of society, with all that this entails.

d) The presence of full-time product based specialization was a constant in this type of original society. In general terms, there is broad specialization in certain branches of production, such as potters, weavers, goldsmiths, painters, sculptors, architects, masons, carpenters, and doctors; and on many occasions, there was a concentration of those most prominent in these fields within the palace. The division of labour was manifested in the people who played a fundamental role in these various branches of production. There was a sense of community among the members of the different specialities and classes.

e) Religion was, of course, of essential importance. Religious life in both civilisations was deeply entwined with the state. The Mexicas' theology of sacrifice had often drawn moral critique, but from within their worldview, it was a cosmic necessity. The Incas emphasised ancestor worship and solar rituals, with more symbolic offerings. While modern sensibilities recoiled at the Mexica's human sacrifices, it was simplistic to reduce their religion to violence.

It established the calendar and concentrated knowledge within an elite group: the priests were the intermediaries between men and the gods, which gave them both earthly and divine power. One of the most notable manifestations of all original societies was the erection of great monuments dedicated to the gods. The main ruler assumed the role of a god and holds both civil and religious power. Some celestial bodies, such as the sun, the moon, the stars, and Venus, acquired a special character, as do phenomena such as rain and drought; and other elements, such as the earth, caves, mountains, and lakes, were all present in religious thought and were reflected in different myths. A **critical**

reading must resist ethnocentric judgments and instead focus on how religious systems functioned to reinforce state authority and cosmic order — both used spectacle, ritual, and temple architecture to legitimise power.

f) A phenomenon that was generally part of the components of these societies was the advancement of science, which made its application possible in different activities, such as measurements, water control, astronomy, etc. In the case of the Tahuantinsuyu or Inca Empire, the use of quipus stands out. These were knotted ropes used to exercise administrative control over production and even the occupation of specialists, in addition to serving as a means of keeping accounts. Colours played an important role within this system. In Mesoamerica, particularly among the Mexicas, the codices were true books in which historical, religious, and chronological data, among other things, were recorded.

g) The presence of artistic manifestations with strong symbolic content produced true works of art, which were generally related to gods, power, and myths. Both civilisations produced extraordinary art and architecture, yet they reflect different worldviews. Mexica art was often symbolic, narrative, and blood-bound to the gods; Inca architecture and textiles emphasised harmony, durability, and abstract order. The Mexicas recorded ideas in pictographic codices, while the Incas used **quipus**, showing divergent approaches to memory and knowledge. However, as Luis Millones concisely states regarding the Incas and the city of Cuzco in particular, "buildings transmit power before beauty." The **absence of a written script** in the Andes had biased historical interpretation in favour of Mesoamerican cultures, whose codices were more legible to European eyes. A critical lens must value **alternative literacies**, such as quipus, oral history, and ritual performance.

All of the above distinguished a city from other human groups, although it had its own components depending on the different regions where it was built. This, which Gordon Childe called the "urban revolution," was an unprecedented advance in the regions where it first appeared, as already mentioned. Let's now look at some other characteristics of the two American societies seen so far:

Origin, life, and death in both peoples

People across the Earth, from the simplest organisations to complex societies like those we see today, had their own ideas about the origins and how their ancestors were formed. Both civilisations had cyclical understandings of time and a strong connection between life, death, and cosmic order. The Mexicas viewed death in battle or sacrifice as glorious, while the Incas emphasised living in harmony with nature and the ancestors. These views shaped not only religious rituals but also everyday life and governance. Many mythologies tell us three possible origins of the Incas, among which stands out the one pointing to the area of Tiwanaku (Tiahuanaco) or Lake Titicaca, while among the Mexicas, we find the mythical population called Aztlán. This contrast challenges modern binaries of “civilised vs. savage.” The Mexicas’ embrace of death and sacrifice was no more “barbaric” than European wars of religion; it simply reflected a different **ontology of life and cosmos**.

There are several theories that explain the life cycle and its origin. But it is in regard to death where interesting differences occur between one person and another. It's surprising to see how certain spiritual entities were believed to exist in the head and heart, although the Mexica also considered the liver, the *ihiyotl*, the place of the soul. The entity that transcended death and had to undertake a journey was the one located in the heart. For the Incas, this was accompanied by a dog to reach a hill with certain properties. For the Mexica, the reddish-brown dog was the companion who helped cross rivers to finally reach Mictlan, or the ninth place of the underworld, where the semi-fleshless couple of the lord and lady of the place resided. A reference to Western thought appears in Dante's *Divine Comedy*: in one of the underworlds, Cerberus, a ferocious dog that guards the place, is encountered. The presence of canids in these cultures is evident, and when studying the phenomenon, it may be found out that this may be due to in-depth research, although the animal has a strong attachment to man, and its nocturnal vision helps essences reach their place of descent.

The figures of the tlatoani and the Inca

The power that both figures wielded was, in effect, absolute control over their people and the other regions they

dominated. In this regard, it is important to note that, in a way, they were incarnations of the sun, and no small amount of palace intrigue arose to seize the power this represented. Surprisingly, it was believed that the Inca never died; when this happened, they were mummified and richly dressed to continue to influence decisions of various kinds, which they did through their "spokesmen" who transmitted their orders. Both the **tlatoani** and **Sapa Inca** embodied political theologies — they were not just rulers but incarnations of divine authority. The tlatoani was a war-priest king, while the Sapa Inca was the literal son of the sun. These figures served to embody the state, rendering resistance both a political and a religious offence. In the case of the Mexica tlatoani, this did not occur, since the ruler's corpse was cremated and the new ruler assumed complete power. It has already been mentioned that the very term by which he was known means "he who has the word," leaving the others silent. **Critically**, this fusion of religious and political power both facilitated stability and introduced vulnerability. The fall of Moctezuma and Atahualpa demonstrated how concentrated authority, once removed, could unravel entire empires.

Another interesting aspect is to see how these rulers governed the destinies of their empires from the centre of their respective universes. In effect, the conception of Tahuantinsuyu was that of the four parts of the world. The same occurred with the Mexica, since their universal conception held that their capital, Tenochtitlan, as well as their Great Temple, were centres of the universe, from which the four universal directions departed.

Confrontation with the Spanish

The Spanish conquest exposed the fragility and complexity of both empires. While disease and superior weapons played a role, the **internal divisions**, especially in both empires' treatment of subject peoples, enabled the conquests. The Mexicas ruled through fear and tribute, leading many to side with Cortés; the Incas were already fractured by civil war when Pizarro arrived. These people had absorbed much from their ancestors and, in a certain sense, consolidated that Mesoamerican and Inca tradition that the Spanish had to confront, first with the sword and then with the cross. This reveals that **empires collapse from**

within as much as from without. Spanish victory was not purely military but political — a product of exploiting local grievances. It also cautions against viewing indigenous peoples as passive victims.

The figures of Huáscar and his brother Atahualpa, and Moctezuma I and his nephew Cuauhtémoc have much in common and lead us to reflect on the roles they had to assume. They were responsible for facing the invaders, and both were overwhelmed by their opponents: Pizarro and Cortés. They were taken prisoner and, under those circumstances, forced to hand over large amounts of gold that were so important to the conquistadors, as happened with Atahualpa and Moctezuma. At the same time, they saw their empires decline, and their gods abandon them. Shortly after, they were assassinated at the hands of their captors.

Viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru

The fact that they were advanced societies with a social and economic organisation, in addition to possessing gold and silver riches of great interest to newcomers, led, among other things, to Spain establishing viceroyalties in the 16th century, given the economic importance of both regions. Thus, both New Spain and Peru achieved this status through the presence of the viceroy, who was the King of Spain's direct representative. Later, and for the convenience of the crown, other viceroyalties were established in the 18th century, when the American struggle for independence was already imminent. The viceroyalties of **New Spain** and **Peru** replaced indigenous empires with colonial ones, but they replicated many of those empires' structures. Tribute became **encomienda**, mita was adapted for mining, and religious control shifted to Catholicism. Indigenous elites often collaborated with Spanish authorities. The colonial project was not a clean break but a **palimpsest** — layering new institutions atop old ones. This reveals the adaptability of imperial logic and the **co-optation of native hierarchies** rather than their total destruction.

Something relevant is how some Cuzco noble families aimed to get on the good side of the conquistadors, just as there was no shortage of indigenous nobles in central Mexico who accepted positions and privileges from the Spanish. On the other

hand, and as a further point of comparison, plagues broke out in both regions, considerably reducing the indigenous population. The ravages of disease notoriously decimated the conquered; in other matters, both societies witnessed attempts at rebellion and resistance against the new peninsular order.

Conclusion

Although almost five centuries have passed since Spain conquered these territories, the two regions have retained many of their characteristics, including their languages. Today, both civilisations are central to national identities — the Mexicas in Mexico, the Incas in Peru. Yet both are also **selectively remembered**. Mexica brutality and sacrifice are emphasised more than their intellectual or agricultural achievements. Inca achievements are romanticised, often ignoring the state's coercion.

The Mexicas and Incas were not mere “pre-Columbian” foils to European modernity. They were **imperial civilisations** in their own right — complex, innovative, and flawed. Their rise and fall reflect universal themes: the interplay of religion and power, the tensions of imperial expansion, and the fragility of centralised authority. Their confrontations with Spain were not simple tales of defeat but of **resistance, adaptation, and survival**. In many cases, there was a syncretism—especially with religion—and today we are faced with presences that recall that past. Likewise, we have been able to recover vestiges that had remained buried for so long, including many of their manifestations in architecture, sculpture, ceramics, goldsmithing, and countless other expressions. These allow us today to approach them and, most importantly, those who made them a reality thanks to their creative power.

The comparative study of the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru underscores the fundamentally adaptive nature of Spanish colonialism. Rather than imposing an entirely foreign system upon the Americas, Spanish imperial governance relied heavily on the selective incorporation of pre-existing indigenous political, economic, and social structures. This strategy not only facilitated administrative efficiency and resource extraction but also ensured a degree of continuity that made colonial domination more sustainable. In this sense, colonial rule

functioned less as a total rupture and more as a reconfiguration of power, in which indigenous institutions were subordinated, transformed, and redeployed within an imperial framework.

Equally significant is the role played by indigenous elites in shaping colonial outcomes. The participation of Mexica and Inca nobility in colonial administration reveals the negotiated nature of empire. Collaboration was not merely a sign of submission but often a pragmatic strategy for survival and influence in a rapidly changing political order. These alliances complicate simplistic binaries of conqueror and conquered, highlighting instead a colonial society marked by hybridity, negotiation, and uneven power relations. At the same time, persistent resistance—ranging from open rebellions to subtle forms of cultural resilience—demonstrates that colonial authority was never absolute.

Demographic catastrophe caused by epidemic diseases remains one of the most decisive factors in the consolidation of Spanish power. The drastic decline of indigenous populations weakened social cohesion, disrupted economic systems, and facilitated colonial control in both regions. Yet demographic collapse did not result in cultural extinction. Languages, ritual practices, agricultural knowledge, and artistic traditions survived through processes of adaptation and syncretism, particularly within the religious sphere. Catholicism itself became a site of negotiation, absorbing indigenous symbols and cosmologies rather than erasing them entirely.

The long-term legacies of the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru extend well beyond the colonial period. Modern national identities in Mexico and Peru continue to draw selectively from their pre-Hispanic pasts, often reshaping Mexica and Inca histories to fit contemporary narratives of nationhood. These acts of remembrance are neither neutral nor comprehensive. They reflect modern political needs, cultural anxieties, and ideological projects that privilege certain aspects of the past while silencing others. As critical memory studies suggest, history is not merely inherited but actively constructed.

Ultimately, the Mexica and Inca civilisations must be understood as imperial formations in their own right—dynamic, hierarchical, and internally complex. Their encounters with Spain

reveal broader, universal patterns in world history: the vulnerability of empires, the malleability of power, and the capacity of societies to endure through transformation. By examining the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru as layered imperial systems rather than simple colonial replacements, we gain a deeper understanding of colonial Latin America as a space of continuity, conflict, and creativity. This perspective not only enriches historical interpretation but also restores agency to the indigenous actors whose lives and decisions shaped the colonial world.

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François I^{er} and the Crisis of Religious Authority in Renaissance France

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ABSTRACT: The reign of François I^{er} (1515-1547) marks a watershed moment in the history of French sovereignty, where the medieval ideal of a unified 'Christendom' began to yield to the early modern concept of the absolute state. This paper explores the profound crisis of religious authority that defined this era. By examining the centralization of ecclesiastical power through the Concord of Bologna, the intellectual ferment of the evangelical humanists, and the radicalisation of the state policy following the Affair of the Placards, this study demonstrates how religious uniformity became a primary tool for royal state-building. Using archival perspectives on legal repression and the 'juridical political culture' of the 16th century, the paper argues that the crisis was as much a constitutional struggle between the Crown and the Parlements as it was a theological rift. Ultimately, the pragmatism of *raison d'état* foreign policy evidenced by alliances with the Ottoman Empire and German Protestants further destabilized traditional authority, creating the institutional and social fractures that led directly to the French Wars of Religion.

Keywords: Ecclesiastical, parlement, Affair of the Placards, Concord of Bologna, inextricably, consecration, Edict of Fontainebleau, guerrilla warfare, schism, Eucharist

INTRODUCTION:

The Double Face of the Renaissance King

When the twenty year old François' Angoulême ascended to the throne on New Year's Day, 1515, he was seen as

the physical embodiment of the Renaissance. The humanist Guillaume Budé, a man who believed that “good letters” (*bonæ litteræ*) were the only true foundation for a healthy political body, hailed the young king as the “Father of Letters” (EHNE, 2024). This was more than mere flattery; it was a program for a new kind of kingship where the monarch was not just a warrior, but a cultivated patron who would nourish the kingdom’s mind. François appeared to embrace this, surrounding himself with artists like Leonardo da Vinci and founding what would become the Collège de France (Knecht, 2015).

Yet, this “Father of Letters” also wrote the title of *Le Roi Très-Chrétien* (The Most Christian King). In the early 16th century, this was not just a pious honorific; it was a heavy administrative and spiritual burden. The king’s authority was inextricably linked to the Catholic Church through the *sacre* (consecration), which imbued the monarchy with a quasi-miraculous and sacred character (Lange, 2014). As Martin Luther’s ideas began to seep into France as early as 1519, François found himself caught in an impossible dilemma (Lumen Learning, n.d.). He was intellectually drawn to the reformist impulses of the humanists, yet he was politically terrified of the social anarchy that religious dissent seemed to promise. The Reformation had been spreading roots behind the scenes for some time, and thanks to the work of Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples, an aged professor at the Sorbonne, students were led to look to the Scriptures for inspiration.

This paper examines the “The Crisis of Religious Authority” not as a single event, but as a three decade long erosion of the traditional structures that had held French society together.

We will look at how the king moved from the strategic protection of the scholars like Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples to the cold blooded implementation of the Edict of Fontainebleau, which redefined heresy as treason against the state (Armstrong, 1986). We will also explore the institutional “guerrilla warfare” between the Crown and the Parlement of Paris, a conflict that revealed a fundamental disagreement over who actually spoke for the “commonwealth” of France (Lange, 2014).

Historical Context : A Kingdom on the Edge of Reformation

On ascending the throne in 1515, François inherited a kingdom exposed to new currents of intellectual and religious thought. Luther's ideas, which began circulating in France in the 1520s, quickly captured the imagination of the scholars and educated elites, blending humanist critique with calls for reform of clerical abuses. These ideas emerged within a milieu that included evangelical humanism which sought renewal of the Church's spirituality without abandoning orthodoxy and outright Protestant interpretations challenging Catholic doctrine.

During this early period, François appeared cautiously open to intellectual inquiry. He maintained a court that included humanist scholars and even protected figures like Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, whose French translations of biblical texts made scripture more accessible without immediately endorsing schism. This initial openness reflected an attempt to balance intellectual reform with loyalty to Catholic tradition.

The Concord of Bologna : Legal Sovereignty and its Discontents

The crisis of authority arguably began not with a prayer or a sermon, but with a military victory. Following his triumph at the Battle of Marignano in 1515, François I^{er} met with Pope Leo X in Bologna to settle a century of disputes between the French monarchy and the Holy See (Aubenas, 1957). The resulting Concordat of Bologna was a revolution in the administrative life of the French Church. The Concordat confirmed the King of France's right to nominate appointments to benefice, that is, archbishops, bishops, abbots and priors, enabling the Crown, by controlling its personnel, to decide who was to lead the Gallican Church.

For decades, the "Gallican liberties" had been protected by the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (1438), which allowed local chapters of monks and canons to elect their own bishops and abbots (Knecht, 1984). While this system was theoretically democratic, in practice, it was a legal nightmare where local nobles and the King often fought over appointments in the Parlement of Paris (Aubenas, 1957; Lange, 2014). Historians

have observed that hardly anywhere were elections held in due form, for the king succeeded in foisting his own candidate upon the electors by every conceivable means, not excluding the most ruthless. The Concordat swept this way, granting the King the right to nominate candidates for nearly 600 of the highest ecclesiastical offices in the land (Knecht, 1984; Wagner, 2018).

This was the birth of “Royal Gallicanism.” By controlling the personnel of the Church, François could turn the episcopate into a vast patronage network to reward the nobility and integrate the Church into the burgeoning absolute state (Lange, 2014). However, this gain in power came at the cost of a deep constitutional rupture. The Parlement of Paris and the University of Paris (the Sorbonne) were outraged, viewing the Concordat as a betrayal of the ancient laws of the kingdom and a surrender to Papal fiscalism, particularly through the restoration of “annates” (Knecht, 1984).

The magistrates of the Parlement saw themselves as the “Senators” of a Gallican republic whose duty was to check the “arbitrary” will of the monarch (Lange, 2014). For over a decade, the king’s strategy of delay and defiance, refusing to register the Concordat until François personally appeared in a *lit de justice* in 1527 to crush their resistance (Holt, 1988). The king’s message was blunt : there was only one king in France, and the Parlement was not a Venetian senate (Lange, 2014). This struggle was the opening salvo in a crisis where the definition of authority was shifting from a shared “commonwealth” of laws to the “good pleasure” of the sovereign (New Advent, n.d.; Lange, 2014).

The Three Bridles : Claude de Seyssel and the Mixed Monarchy

At the very outset of the reign, the Savoyard jurist and diplomat Claude de Seyssel offered a theoretical model of the French state that stood as a stark alternative to the centralised absolutism that eventually emerged. In his 1519 work, *L'Institution de la monarchie de France*, written at the King’s own request, Seyssel had a high regard toward the French monarchy and constitution, believing the power wielded by the monarch was both controlled and balanced, being limited by religion, existing

laws and justice. Seyssel believed that a “Most Christian King” was restrained by his conscience and the fear of God, while the sovereign courts provided a necessary check on the King’s potential for tyranny.

This vision represented a “mixed constitution” where the nobility and the burgeoning middle class (the *peuple gras*) participated in a balanced social order that allowed for social mobility through Church and royal offices. However, as the “innocence” began to erode. The King’s increasing reliance on exceptional tribunals and his willingness to override the Parlement’s registration process effectively snapped the reins. By prioritising his “good pleasure” over the traditional mediating structures described by Seyssel, François I^{er} fundamentally altered the nature of French authority, transitioning the state from “monarchical commonwealth” towards an indivisible and autocratic sovereignty.

Humanism and the “Evangelical” shield : 1521-1529

While the King was fighting over administrative control, a deeper intellectual crisis was brewing. Influenced by his sister, Marguerite de Navarre, a woman of profound evangelical piety and literary talent, François initially acted as a shield for humanists who sought to reform the Church from within (Reid, 2009).

The most prominent of these was Jacques Lefèvre de Étaples, who moved to the diocese of Meaux under the protection of Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet (Oosterhoff, 2015). The “Circle of Meaux” applied humanist textual criticism to the Bible, arguing that the Word of God should be accessible to everyone in their own language. Lefèvre was passionate about bringing the Scriptures to everyone in their language and exhorted Christians to read and meditate on the Gospels. Lefèvre’s 1523 French translation of the New Testament was a bomb shell; it bypasses centuries of medieval scholastic glosses to return to the “source” (EHNE, 2024).

For the Sorbonne this was “Lutheranism” by another name (Lange, 2014). The Paris faculty of theology was concerned that Lefèvre’s incursions into theology and the reforms at Meaux smacked too much of Lutheranism, which the faculty had condemned in 1520. During the 1520s, François attempted a precarious “middle course,” protecting high-profile

humanists like Lefèvre, even making him the tutor of his own children while allowing the Parlement to harass lower-born heretics (Lumen Learning, n.d.; EHNE, 2024).

However, the limits of this royal protection were reached in the tragic case of Louis de Berquin, Berquin was anoble scholar wholed the audacity to translate Luther and Erasmus and openly mock the ignorance of the monks (Knechet,1 994). François intervened twice to save him from the take but in 1529, while the king was away from Paris, the parlement moved with extraordinary speed to try to execute him before the king could send another pardon. On the 16 of April, 1529, the French Parlement condemned him to watch as his books were burned, to have his tongue pierced, and then to be imprisoned without reading material for life. Berquin was burned alive at the stake on 17th April, 1529. His death signaled a critical failure of royal authority: the institutional machinery of the law and the Church was now more powerful than the king's personal patronage when it came to the defence of orthodoxy (Lange, 2014; Knecht, 1994).

The Affair of the Placards : The Death of Conciliation

The fragile balance of the 1520s was finally shattered on the night of October 18, 1534 (Cottret, 2003). The Affair of the Placards (French: Affaire des Placards) occurred on the night of October 17–18, 1534, and involved the public posting of anti-Catholic posters in Paris and four provincial cities : Blois, Rouen, Tours, and Orléans. These posters, written by the pastor Antoine de Marcourt, were not polite requests for reform. They were a frontal assault on the "horrible, great and unbearable abuses of the papal mass," branding the Eucharist as "witchcraft" and the clergy as "blasphemers" (Knecht, 1994).

What transformed this from a religious incident into a state crisis was the discovery of a placard on the door of the king's own bedchamber at the royal château of Amboise (Lange, 2014). For a monarch who believed his power was divinely ordained, this was more than an insult, it was abreach of security and anact of *lèse-majesté*, treasonagainst the sacred person of the king (Knecht, 1994). François was shaken and furious. This anti-papist affront to the ecclesiastical establishment and the

monarchy of divine right marked the end of his policy of conciliation towards Protestants. He believed a plot had been organised against him, identifying the reformers not as scholars, but as a “religion of rebels” (Lumen Learning, n.d.; EHNE, 2024).

The royal response was swift and theatrical. In January 1535, François led a massive expiatory procession through Paris, walking as a penitent among relics to cleanse the city of heresy. He famously told the citizens: "Astrue, Messieurs, as I am your king, if I knew one of my own limbs spotted or infected with this detestable rottenness, I would give it you to cut off". The era of hesitation was over. On January 13, 1535, the king issued a decree banning all printing in France, a move that seems particularly ironic for the “Father of Letters” (EHNE, 2024; Knecht, 1984). Though this was later moderated to a system of strict censorship, the message was clear: intellectual freedom was now a luxury the state could no longer afford.

The Juridical Machine and the Criminalisation of Faith

Just after the Placards, the Crown moved to codify religious uniformity into the very fabric of French Law. The Edict of Fontainebleau (1540) was the culmination of this process (Armstrong, 1986; Knecht, 1994). The Edict stated that the Protestant heresy was "high treason against God and mankind" and so deserved the appropriate punishments of torture, loss of property, public humiliation, and death.

This edict transferred the primary responsibility for heresy trials from the “gentle” episcopal courts to the royal parlements (Knecht, 1994). Secular courts were far more efficient at using torture, confiscating property, and imposing the death penalty. Through the use of the *appel comme d’abus*, any religious case could be brought before the king’s judges, ensuring that the Crown, not the bishops, controlled the definition of orthodoxy (Lange, 2014).

In reality, this legal repression was a desperate attempt to regain control over a society that was rapidly fragmenting. William Monter’s archival research shows that more people were actually put to death for heresy in the 1540s than in the 1550s (Monter, 2000). Yet, even within the parlements themselves,

heretical ideas were spreading among the clerical councilors, apophenomenon known as the *trahison des clercs* (betrayal of the clerics). The state was building a massive machine of repression, but the “infection” was already inside the engine (Lange, 2014).

The most brutal expression of this new policy was the Massacre of the Vaudois of Luberon in 1545 (EHNE, 2024). The Waldensians, a pre-protestant who had aligned with the reformed ideas of Geneva, were target of a military campaign ordered by the king in a fit of religious zeal. Over 20 villages were destroyed, thousands of villagers were killed, and hundreds more were sent to the galleys (Knecht, 2015). This was the first major massacre of the French religious crisis, and it solidified the image of the Valois monarchy as a persecuting power, driving the survivors into the radical arms of John Calvin (Lange, 2014).

The Paradox of Reason d'État : Ottoman Lilies and German thorns

While François was ruthlessly forcing Catholic uniformity at home, his foreign policy was a masterclass in religious contradiction. Engaged in a life-long struggle with the Habsburgs Emperor Charles V, who literally circled France with his territories, François prioritised the survival of his dynasty over the traditional unity of “Christendom” (Piccirillo, 2011).

The most controversial of these moves was the “sacrilegious union of the lily and the crescent”, the Franco-Ottoman alliance with Sultan Suleiman the magnificent (Piccirillo, 2011). This was the first non-ideological alliance between a Christian and a Muslim state, marking a definitive abandonment of the medieval crusade ideal (Burckhardt, 1947). François justified this to the French clergy by claiming it was a way to protect Eastern Christians, but the reality was purely geopolitical by using the Ottoman fleet to break Spanish hegemony in the Mediterranean sea (Knecht, 1994).

Similarly, François sent secret agents into Germany to fund the Protestant princes of the Schmalkaldic league against the Emperor. In 1535, he even issued the Edict of Coucy, offering amnesty to French protestants simply to avoid alienating his German allies during critical diplomatic negotiations (Knecht, 1984). The edict was introduced as part of Francis I's effort to

forge an alliance with the Schmalkaldic League, particularly since figures such as Philip of Hesse did not approve of the religious persecution. This dual policy of burning heretics in Paris while paying the min in Germany exposed the evolving reality of *raison d'état* (reason of state), where the interests of the crown superseded any broader religious or moral considerations (Piccirillo, 2011).

Conclusion : A Legacy of Contradiction and Conflict

By the time of his death in 1547, François I^{er} had laid the foundations for the absolute monarchy of the next two centuries, but he had also created the conditions for its near-destruction. Through the Concordat of Bologna and the Edict of Fontainebleau, he had successfully integrated the Church into the royal state transforming religious identity into a matter of political loyalty (Lange, 2014).

However, the “crisis of religious authority” was far from over. The failure of the king’s early “middle course” meant that by the late 1540s, the new religious ideas now codified by the systematic theology of John Calvin were too deeply rooted to be dislodged by the stake or the sword (EHNE, 2024). The monarchy’s policy of systematic persecution had created a radicalised minority that would eventually take up arms to defend its right to exist (Holt, 1995).

The legacy of François I^{er} is one of profound contradictions. He was the “Father of Letters” who founded the Collège de France, yet he also issued a decree banning the printing of books (EHNE, 2024). He was the “Most Christian King” who negotiated with the Pope, yet he allied with the Sultan and the German protestants to destabilise his Catholic rivals (Piccirillo, 2011). Ultimately, his reign demonstrates that the crisis of religious authority in Renaissance France was as much a crisis of the state as it was of the Church. By attempting to use religion as a tool of royal centralisation, François inadvertently created the very fragmentation he sought to prevent, setting the stage for the catastrophic Wars of Religion that would haunt France for the next fifty years (Holt, 1995).

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बौद्ध धर्म में पर्यावरण चेतना और पारिस्थितिकीय संतुलन

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सारांशिका

बौद्ध धर्म प्रकृति के प्रति करुणा, अहिंसा और सह-अस्तित्व का संदेश देता है। भगवान बुद्ध ने सभी जीवों के प्रति मैत्री और दया का उपदेश दिया, जो पर्यावरण संरक्षण की मूल भावना पर आधारित थी। बौद्ध दर्शन के प्रतीत्यसमुत्पाद सिद्धांत के अनुसार समस्त जीव-जगत और प्रकृति परस्पर एक-दूसरे पर निर्भर हैं। इसलिए पर्यावरण का संरक्षण मानव जीवन के संतुलन के लिए अति आवश्यक है। वर्तमान जलवायु संकट और जैव विविधता के क्षरण के संदर्भ में बौद्ध विचारधारा सतत विकास, संसाधनों के संयमित उपयोग तथा पारिस्थितिकीय संतुलन बनाए रखने के लिए एक प्रभावी नैतिक आधार प्रस्तुत करती है।

प्राचीन काल से ही पर्यावरण से सम्बन्धित अवधारणाएँ प्राचीन भारतीय ग्रंथों से प्राप्त होती हैं। प्राचीन भारतीय धर्मशास्त्र प्रणेताओं का पर्यावरणीय विचार एवं चिंतन समग्र रूप से विकसित प्रतीत होता है। मानव एवं पर्यावरण में परस्पर घनिष्ठ संबंध है। मानव के विकास की यात्रा को पर्यावरणीय धारणाओं के बिना अध्ययन नहीं किया जा सकता है। पर्यावरण दो शब्दों के योग से बना है परि + आवरण। जिसका अर्थ है चारों ओर का आवरण। पर्यावरण उन सभी से है जो एक प्राणी के जीवन को चारों ओर से घेरे हुए हैं। पर्यावरण एवं पारिस्थितिकी को सामान्यतः पर्यायवाची रूपों में प्रयोग किया जाता है किन्तु उनमें अंतर है। जीव एवं वातावरण के परस्पर संबंधों को पारिस्थितिकी कहते हैं। वर्तमान में इसे 'इकोलाजी' कहते हैं। अर्स्ट हैकल ने इस शब्द का सर्वप्रथम प्रयोग किया था। ओडम ने पारिस्थितिकी को मानव एवं पर्यावरण के संपूर्ण स्वरूप के अध्ययन का विज्ञान बताया है।¹

पर्यावरण के निर्माण में पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र का महत्वपूर्ण योगदान है। प्राचीन काल से ही पर्यावरण संबंधी अवधारणा के अनेक संदर्भ प्राप्त होते हैं। पारिस्थितिकी का ज्ञान उतना ही प्राचीन है जितना पुरातन मानव स्वयं है। वेदों, उपनिषदों, पुराणों, बौद्धों व जैन साहित्यों में पारिस्थितिकी का ज्ञान प्राप्त होता है। प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में बौद्ध साहित्य के परिप्रेक्ष्य में पर्यावरण चेतना को उल्लेखित किया गया है।

मनुष्य के जीवन की मूलभूत आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति प्रकृति से ही होती है। जन्म से मृत्यु तक मनुष्य प्रत्यक्ष एवं अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से प्रकृति के सानिध्य में रहता है। प्राचीन आचार्यों ने भी सदैव प्रकृति की उपासना कर

पारिस्थितिकी संतुलन को बनाने रखा। इसके अतिरिक्त राजकीय आदेशों द्वारा भी कल्याणकारी योजनाओं को संचालित किया जाता था। मनुष्य का शरीर पाँच तत्त्वों से निर्मित है— भूमि, वायु, अग्नि, जल और आकाश।² इनमें से किसी एक तत्त्व के अभाव में जीवन की कल्पना नहीं की जा सकती है। आकाश ने मानव को वृद्धि का अवसर दिया, वायु ने प्राण शक्ति, अग्नि ने चेतना दी, जल ने जीवन दिया एवं पृथ्वी ने अपने ऊपर धारण कर अन्न आदि दिया।³ इन सभी के प्रति कृतज्ञता ज्ञापित करने के लिए प्राचीन ग्रंथों में इनके महत्त्व को रेखांकित किया गया है।

बौद्ध धर्म में पर्यावरण संरक्षण से संबंधित अनेक वृत्तांतों का उल्लेख किया गया है। महात्मा बुद्ध की शिक्षाएँ न केवल मानव कल्याण, अपितु समस्त जीव-जगत और प्रकृति के सह-अस्तित्व पर आधारित हैं। महात्मा बुद्ध का जन्म और मृत्यु दोनों शाल वृक्ष के नीचे हुआ।⁴ जो जीवन के चक्र और प्रकृति की निरंतरता को दर्शाता है। यह वृक्ष आयुर्वेद व बौद्ध चिकित्सा पद्धति में वरदान माना गया है। यह वृक्ष समृद्ध जैव-विविधता को आश्रय देता है। बुद्ध को ज्ञान बोधि वृक्ष (पीपल) के नीचे निरंजना नदी के तट पर हुआ। यह वृक्ष 24 घंटे आक्सीजन देता है, जो मस्तिष्क की एकाग्रता और ध्यान हेतु आदर्श वातावरण का निर्माण करता है।⁵ पीपल के पत्तों का उपयोग अनेक उपचारों में होता है। बुद्ध ने अपना प्रथम उपदेश सारनाथ (मृगदाव) में बरगद व शालवन वृक्षों के नीचे प्रदान किया।⁶ बौद्ध विहारों एवं स्तूपों का निर्माण भी वनों एवं गुफाओं के आस-पास किया जाता था। बौद्ध साहित्य में भिक्षु संघ को दान में 42 वन एवं उद्यान प्राप्त हुए। जैसे— अमालिका वन, दण्डक वन, करण्ड वन, वेणुवन, पलाश वन, महावन उरुवेला, लुम्बिनी वन, पिप्पली वन, आमग्रपाली, वन, जेतवन, महावन, कपिलवस्तु, शाक वन आदि।⁷ साँची स्तूप, धमेख स्तूप, सतधारा स्तूप समूह, केसरिया स्तूप आदि अनेक स्तूप सघन वन एवं हिंसक पशुओं से घिरे हुए थे। इसी प्रकार हिमालय की तराई के वन खण्ड में पूर्व से पश्चिम तक स्तूपों व विहारों की स्थिति यही स्पष्ट करती है कि बौद्ध धर्म का प्रकृति से गहरा लगाव था। बौद्ध साहित्य में उल्लिखित है कि बुद्ध ने पेड़-पौधों को सजीव माना। महात्मा बुद्ध ने धान के खेतों से प्रेरणा लेकर उसी रंग के चीवर बनाये। इसी प्रकार स्तूपों के आकार की प्रेरणा वर्षा ऋतु में पानी के उठते बुलबुले व धान की राशि एवं बठिया से प्राप्त की। इसलिए कुछ स्तूप बुलबुलाकार (साँची), कुछ धान्याकार (धान्य कटक) एवं कुछ बठियाकार (धमेख स्तूप) हैं।⁸

सुत्त पिटक में सभी प्राणियों के प्रति असीम मैत्री का उपदेश दिया गया है। ग्रंथ में राजगृह, वैशाली, वाराणसी एवं मल्ल राज्यों में स्थिति अनेक आम्रवनों का उल्लेख किया गया है। महात्मा बुद्ध महाभिनिष्क्रमण के पश्चात् राजगृह जाते समय मल्लों के अनूपिया आम्रवन में सात दिन ठहरे थे। राजगृह के आम्रवन में निर्मित विहार में राजा अजातशत्रु ने बुद्ध का दर्शन किया था एवं सामन्तफलसुत्त का उपदेश सुना था। वैशाली के आम्रवन की स्वामिनी आम्रपाली नामक गणिका थी। महात्मा बुद्ध वैशाली से कुशीनारा तक की अपनी

यात्रा के दौरान आम्रवन में ही विश्राम किये थे।⁹ अंजवन में बुद्ध ने साकेतसुत्त तथा साकेतजातक का उपदेश दिया था। श्रावस्ती के अन्धवन में बुद्ध ने राहुल को उपदेश दिया था। श्रावस्ती स्थिति जेतवन को अनाथपिण्डक ने राजकुमार जेत से खरीदकर बुद्ध को दान में दिया था। यहाँ बुद्ध ने अनेक वर्षावास व्यतीत किये एवं सुत्तपिटक के अनेक सुत्तों का उपदेश दिया।

इच्छानंगल वन कोशल जनपद में स्थित था। यहाँ पर महात्मा बुद्ध ठहरे थे।¹⁰ जातियवन अंग जनपद में स्थित था। कपिलवस्तु में स्थित महावन, एक प्राकृतिक वन था, जो वैशाली से लेकर हिमालय पर्वत के समीप तक के बड़े भू-भाग में फैला हुआ था। लुम्बिनी वन में गौतम बुद्ध का जन्म हुआ था। कौशाम्बी के समीप पारिलेय्यक वन में बुद्ध ने अपना दसवाँ वर्षावास व्यतीत किया था। मल्ल राज्य में शालवन स्थित था। यही महात्मा बुद्ध का महापरिनिर्वाण हुआ था। कोशल जनपद में सिंसपावन स्थित था।¹¹ इन वनों का चिकित्सकीय महत्त्व था।

पर्यावरण संतुलन में जीव-जंतुओं का भी विशेष योगदान है। प्राचीन ग्रन्थों में प्रकृति एवं जीव-जंतुओं के साथ मानव का संबंध सम्मान एवं दयालुता का है। बौद्ध ग्रन्थों में मानव एवं पशु दोनों के कल्याण की कामना की गयी है। जीव-जंतुओं के धार्मिक महत्त्व को रेखांकित करते हुए पर्यावरण असंतुलन की गतिविधियों को कम करने का प्रयास किया गया। बौद्ध ग्रंथों में अनेक जीव-जंतुओं का उल्लेख किया गया है तथा इनको न मारने की हिदायत दी गयी है। अहिंसा की इस अवधारणा से कृषि व्यवस्था में तीव्रता आयी। इससे मनुष्यों की जीव-जंतुओं पर निर्भरता बढ़ी। इस संबंध को पाप-पुण्य से भी जोड़ा गया। जंगलों एवं आश्रमों में रहने वाले जीव-जंतुओं को मारने पर प्रतिबंध लगाकर उनको सुरक्षा प्रदान की गयी।

बौद्ध कालीन ग्रंथों में जीव-जंतुओं के प्रति चिंतन व सजगता प्रत्यक्ष एवं अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से देखने को मिलती है। बौद्ध ग्रंथों में सिंह को अत्यधिक महत्त्व प्रदान किया गया है। सारनाथ में अशोककालीन स्थापत्य कला में चौमुखे सिंह को भारत का राष्ट्रीय चिन्ह बनाया गया है। हाथियों से संबंधित अनेक वन होते थे। हाथी अपने अधिवास हेतु घने जंगल को पसंद करते थे जिससे स्पष्ट रूप से घने वन के होने की पुष्टि होती है। हाथियों के प्रकृति के साथ इस संबंध से बौद्ध भिक्षुओं को शिक्षा लेने की बात की गयी है।

वृषभ भी पालतु पशुओं में मुख्य था। कृषि, यातायात, आर्थिक गतिविधियों में इनका उपयोग होता था। अश्व शौर्य, साहस का प्रतीक माना जाता था। महात्मा बुद्ध के गृह त्याग की मूर्ति में उन्हें अश्व कंथन पर सवार होकर दर्शाया गया है।¹² इनके अतिरिक्त भी मृग, मोर, तोता एवं मगरमच्छ अनेक जीव-जंतुओं का चित्रण किया गया है। इस प्रकार राजकीय नीति एवं धार्मिक चिंतन में समाज में पशुओं के आर्थिक महत्त्व के साथ-साथ पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र के संतुलन को भी स्थापित किया। महात्मा बुद्ध के मन में पशु-पक्षियों के प्रति असीम करुणा थी जिससे हिंसक पशु भी उनकी सेवा करते थे। हाथी, मर्कट, विषैले नाग आदि अनेक हिंसक पशुओं को बुद्ध ने

करुणा और मैत्री की भावना से अभिभूत किया एवं उनको अपना मित्र बना लिया।

गौतम बुद्ध ने पानी की शुद्धता पर भी बल दिया। समुद्र के आठ गुण बताकर उन्होंने प्रकृति से अपनी गहरी आत्मीयता को स्पष्ट किया। उन्होंने समुद्र को गहरा और स्थिर धर्मवाला बताया और कहा कि वह कभी किनारे को नहीं छोड़ता। बौद्ध धर्म में नदियाँ आध्यात्मिक शुद्धि और जीवन की निरंतरता का प्रतीक मानी गयी है। अतः नदियाँ केवल जल का स्रोत नहीं अपितु वे पृथ्वी की धमनियाँ हैं। बुद्ध ने भवन निर्माण में भी पर्यावरणीय और पारिस्थितिकी शुद्धता को रेखांकित किया। भिक्षुओं के आवास गृह, स्तूप विहार, नदियों के किनारे बनाये जाते थे। भवन में हवा एवं प्रकाश की समुचित व्यवस्था होती थी।

अतः स्पष्ट है कि बुद्ध एवं बौद्ध भिक्षु शुद्ध पर्यावरण में रहते थे और गाँव-गाँव विचरण कर उपदेशों द्वारा लोगों को शुद्ध पर्यावरण के प्रति सचेत करते थे। वर्तमान में मानव समाज जिस पारिस्थितिकी असंतुलन पर चिंता व्यक्त कर रहे हैं। उस पर बुद्ध ने हजारों वर्ष पूर्व ही अपने विचार स्पष्ट किये और पारिस्थितिकी शुद्धता को रेखांकित किया था। अतः प्रकृति संसार के सभी प्राणियों का परिवार (वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्) है।

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कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता और रोजगार का समाजशास्त्र

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सारांश

वर्तमान समय में कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता (Artificial Intelligence – AI) ने मानव जीवन के लगभग प्रत्येक क्षेत्र को प्रभावित किया है। शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, बैंकिंग, उद्योग, परिवहन तथा प्रशासन जैसे क्षेत्रों में AI का प्रयोग तेजी से बढ़ रहा है। इसके परिणामस्वरूप रोजगार की प्रकृति, कार्य संस्कृति तथा श्रम संबंधों में महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन देखने को मिल रहे हैं। यह शोध-पत्र कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता और रोजगार के समाजशास्त्र का अध्ययन प्रस्तुत करता है। इसमें AI के कारण उत्पन्न रोजगार के अवसरों, बेरोजगारी, कौशल परिवर्तन, सामाजिक असमानता तथा श्रमिक वर्ग पर पड़ने वाले प्रभावों का समाजशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण किया गया है। अध्ययन में यह स्पष्ट होता है कि AI केवल तकनीकी परिवर्तन नहीं है, बल्कि यह सामाजिक संरचना, वर्ग संबंध तथा आर्थिक व्यवस्था को भी प्रभावित कर रहा है।

मुख्य शब्द: कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता, रोजगार, समाजशास्त्र, तकनीकी परिवर्तन, श्रम बाजार, सामाजिक असमानता

प्रस्तावना

मानव सभ्यता के विकास की प्रक्रिया में तकनीक ने सदैव एक महत्वपूर्ण और परिवर्तनकारी भूमिका निभाई है। आदिम युग में पत्थर के औजारों के निर्माण से लेकर आधुनिक युग की डिजिटल तकनीकों तक, प्रत्येक तकनीकी विकास ने समाज की संरचना, उत्पादन प्रणाली, सामाजिक संबंधों तथा मानव जीवन शैली को प्रभावित किया है। इतिहास में औद्योगिक क्रांति को एक महत्वपूर्ण मोड़ माना जाता है, जिसने उत्पादन प्रणाली को हस्तशिल्प से मशीन आधारित व्यवस्था में परिवर्तित कर दिया। इसके परिणामस्वरूप न केवल आर्थिक गतिविधियों का विस्तार हुआ, बल्कि सामाजिक संरचना, वर्ग संबंध तथा श्रम विभाजन में भी व्यापक परिवर्तन देखने को मिले। इसी प्रकार 20वीं शताब्दी के उत्तरार्ध में डिजिटल क्रांति ने संचार, शिक्षा, व्यापार तथा प्रशासन के स्वरूप को बदल दिया। वर्तमान समय में कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता (Artificial Intelligence – AI) इसी तकनीकी विकास की नवीनतम और अत्यंत प्रभावशाली कड़ी के रूप में उभर रही है। कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता ऐसी तकनीक है, जिसमें कंप्यूटर या मशीनों को इस प्रकार विकसित किया जाता है कि वे मानव बुद्धि की तरह सोचने, सीखने, निर्णय लेने तथा समस्याओं का समाधान करने में सक्षम हो सकें। AI का मूल उद्देश्य मशीनों को अधिक बुद्धिमान और स्वचालित बनाना है ताकि वे जटिल कार्यों को कम समय और अधिक दक्षता के साथ पूरा कर सकें। मशीन लर्निंग, रोबोटिक्स, प्राकृतिक भाषा प्रसंस्करण (Natural Language Processing), बिग डेटा तथा ऑटोमेशन

जैसी तकनीकों ने AI को और अधिक प्रभावी बना दिया है। आज AI केवल वैज्ञानिक प्रयोगशालाओं तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि यह आम जनजीवन का अभिन्न हिस्सा बन चुका है।

समकालीन समाज में AI का उपयोग विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में तीव्र गति से बढ़ रहा है। बैंकिंग क्षेत्र में चैटबॉट और डिजिटल भुगतान प्रणाली ग्राहकों को त्वरित सेवाएँ प्रदान कर रही हैं। उद्योगों में रोबोट उत्पादन प्रक्रिया को अधिक कुशल और कम खर्चीला बना रहे हैं। स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में AI आधारित निदान प्रणाली रोगों की पहचान और उपचार में सहायता कर रही है। शिक्षा क्षेत्र में स्मार्ट लर्निंग, ऑनलाइन शिक्षण प्लेटफॉर्म तथा व्यक्तिगत शिक्षण प्रणाली विकसित हो रही हैं। परिवहन क्षेत्र में स्वचालित वाहन तथा स्मार्ट ट्रैफिक प्रबंधन प्रणाली AI के बढ़ते प्रभाव को दर्शाते हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त कृषि, प्रशासन, मीडिया, रक्षा तथा मनोरंजन जैसे क्षेत्रों में भी AI का व्यापक प्रयोग हो रहा है। इन तकनीकी परिवर्तनों का सबसे अधिक प्रभाव रोजगार और श्रम संरचना पर दिखाई देता है। AI और ऑटोमेशन के कारण पारंपरिक रोजगार के स्वरूप में व्यापक परिवर्तन हो रहे हैं। कई ऐसे कार्य, जिन्हें पहले मनुष्य द्वारा किया जाता था, अब मशीनों और सॉफ्टवेयर द्वारा किए जा रहे हैं। उदाहरण के लिए बैंकिंग में डेटा एंट्री, ग्राहक सेवा, फैक्ट्री उत्पादन, परिवहन और गोदाम प्रबंधन जैसे कार्यों में मानव श्रम की आवश्यकता कम होती जा रही है। इससे एक ओर जहाँ अनेक पारंपरिक नौकरियाँ समाप्त होने का खतरा उत्पन्न हुआ है, वहीं दूसरी ओर AI विशेषज्ञ, डेटा विश्लेषक, साइबर सुरक्षा विशेषज्ञ तथा मशीन लर्निंग इंजीनियर जैसे नए रोजगार अवसर भी विकसित हुए हैं। इस प्रकार AI रोजगार के क्षेत्र में अवसर और चुनौतियाँ दोनों प्रस्तुत कर रहा है।

समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टिकोण से देखा जाए तो AI केवल तकनीकी परिवर्तन नहीं है, बल्कि यह सामाजिक परिवर्तन की भी एक महत्वपूर्ण प्रक्रिया है। तकनीकी विकास का प्रभाव केवल आर्थिक क्षेत्र तक सीमित नहीं रहता, बल्कि यह सामाजिक संबंधों, वर्ग संरचना, कार्य संस्कृति, जीवन शैली तथा सामाजिक असमानताओं को भी प्रभावित करता है। AI के कारण श्रम बाजार में कौशल आधारित प्रतिस्पर्धा बढ़ रही है। उच्च तकनीकी ज्ञान रखने वाले व्यक्तियों को अधिक अवसर प्राप्त हो रहे हैं, जबकि कम कौशल वाले श्रमिक बेरोजगारी और आर्थिक असुरक्षा का सामना कर रहे हैं। इससे समाज में आर्थिक और सामाजिक असमानता बढ़ने की संभावना उत्पन्न हो रही है। ग्रामीण और शहरी क्षेत्रों के बीच डिजिटल संसाधनों की असमान उपलब्धता भी डिजिटल विभाजन को जन्म दे रही है। AI के विस्तार ने कार्य संस्कृति में भी महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन किए हैं। Work From Home, ऑनलाइन मीटिंग्स, डिजिटल कार्य प्रणाली तथा फ्रीलांस कार्य संस्कृति आधुनिक रोजगार व्यवस्था का हिस्सा बनते जा रहे हैं। Gig Economy और प्लेटफॉर्म आधारित रोजगार व्यवस्था ने श्रम संबंधों को अधिक अस्थायी और अनिश्चित बना दिया है। इसके अतिरिक्त नौकरी खोने का भय, प्रतिस्पर्धा और निरंतर तकनीकी बदलाव कर्मचारियों में मानसिक तनाव और असुरक्षा की भावना को भी बढ़ा रहे हैं। इस प्रकार AI का प्रभाव केवल आर्थिक नहीं, बल्कि मनोवैज्ञानिक और सामाजिक स्तर पर भी देखा जा सकता है।

भारत जैसे विकासशील देश में AI का प्रभाव विशेष रूप से महत्वपूर्ण है। भारत विश्व का सबसे बड़ा युवा देश है और यहाँ तकनीकी विकास रोजगार के नए अवसर प्रदान कर सकता है। सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी, डिजिटल सेवाओं तथा स्टार्टअप संस्कृति के विस्तार ने युवाओं के लिए नई संभावनाएँ उत्पन्न की हैं। दूसरी ओर, कम शिक्षित और कम कौशल वाले श्रमिकों के लिए AI

आधारित अर्थव्यवस्था चुनौती भी बन सकती है। इसलिए AI के प्रभावों का समाजशास्त्रीय अध्ययन अत्यंत आवश्यक हो जाता है, ताकि तकनीकी विकास और सामाजिक न्याय के बीच संतुलन स्थापित किया जा सके।

अतः वर्तमान समय में कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता और रोजगार के संबंध का अध्ययन केवल आर्थिक दृष्टि से नहीं, बल्कि समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टि से भी अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है। यह अध्ययन हमें यह समझने में सहायता प्रदान करता है कि तकनीकी परिवर्तन किस प्रकार सामाजिक संरचना, श्रम संबंध, वर्ग विभाजन, कार्य संस्कृति तथा मानव जीवन को प्रभावित कर रहे हैं। साथ ही यह भी आवश्यक है कि AI के विकास के साथ मानव मूल्यों, सामाजिक समानता तथा रोजगार सुरक्षा को ध्यान में रखते हुए नीतियाँ तैयार की जाएँ, ताकि तकनीकी प्रगति का लाभ समाज के सभी वर्गों तक समान रूप से पहुँच सके।

अध्ययन के उद्देश्य

1. कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता की अवधारणा को समझना।
2. AI का रोजगार संरचना पर प्रभाव का अध्ययन करना।
3. श्रमिक वर्ग पर AI के सामाजिक प्रभावों का विश्लेषण करना।
4. AI के कारण उत्पन्न सामाजिक असमानताओं का अध्ययन करना।
5. भविष्य के रोजगार स्वरूप का समाजशास्त्रीय मूल्यांकन करना।

कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता की अवधारणा

कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता (Artificial Intelligence - AI) आधुनिक विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी की एक महत्वपूर्ण उपलब्धि है, जिसने मानव जीवन के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में व्यापक परिवर्तन उत्पन्न किए हैं। सामान्य अर्थों में कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता ऐसी तकनीक है, जिसके माध्यम से कंप्यूटर, मशीनें या सॉफ्टवेयर मानव बुद्धि की भाँति सोचने, सीखने, निर्णय लेने तथा समस्याओं का समाधान करने की क्षमता विकसित करते हैं। यह तकनीक मशीनों को इस प्रकार सक्षम बनाती है कि वे मानव हस्तक्षेप के बिना भी अनेक जटिल कार्यों को कुशलतापूर्वक संपन्न कर सकें।

कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता का मूल उद्देश्य ऐसी बुद्धिमान मशीनों का निर्माण करना है, जो मानव मस्तिष्क की कार्यप्रणाली का अनुकरण कर सकें। AI केवल सूचना संग्रहण तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि यह अनुभवों से सीखने, परिस्थितियों का विश्लेषण करने तथा तर्क के आधार पर निर्णय लेने की क्षमता भी प्रदान करती है। यही कारण है कि आज AI का उपयोग शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, बैंकिंग, उद्योग, परिवहन, कृषि, प्रशासन तथा संचार जैसे अनेक क्षेत्रों में तेजी से बढ़ रहा है। AI की कार्यप्रणाली कई आधुनिक तकनीकों पर आधारित होती है। इनमें मशीन लर्निंग (Machine Learning) प्रमुख है, जिसके माध्यम से कंप्यूटर डेटा का विश्लेषण करके स्वयं सीखने की क्षमता विकसित करते हैं। इसी प्रकार रोबोटिक्स (Robotics) तकनीक मशीनों को स्वचालित रूप से कार्य करने योग्य बनाती है। प्राकृतिक भाषा प्रसंस्करण (Natural Language Processing - NLP) के माध्यम से कंप्यूटर मानव भाषा को समझने और उसका उत्तर देने में सक्षम होते हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त डेटा विश्लेषण (Data Analysis), डीप लर्निंग तथा ऑटोमेशन जैसी तकनीकें AI को अधिक प्रभावी और उन्नत बनाती हैं।

वर्तमान समय में AI का उपयोग हमारे दैनिक जीवन का अभिन्न हिस्सा बन चुका है। मोबाइल फोन में वर्चुअल असिस्टेंट, ऑनलाइन शॉपिंग वेबसाइटों की सुझाव प्रणाली, सोशल मीडिया प्लेटफॉर्म, बैंकिंग सेवाओं में चैटबॉट तथा स्वचालित वाहन AI के सामान्य उदाहरण हैं। चिकित्सा क्षेत्र में AI रोगों की पहचान और उपचार में सहायता कर रही है, जबकि शिक्षा क्षेत्र में स्मार्ट लर्निंग और ऑनलाइन शिक्षण को अधिक प्रभावी बनाया जा रहा है।

समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टि से कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता केवल तकनीकी विकास नहीं है, बल्कि यह सामाजिक परिवर्तन का भी एक महत्वपूर्ण माध्यम है। AI मानव श्रम, कार्य संस्कृति, सामाजिक संबंध तथा आर्थिक संरचना को प्रभावित कर रही है। इसके कारण रोजगार की प्रकृति बदल रही है तथा समाज में नई प्रकार की चुनौतियाँ और अवसर उत्पन्न हो रहे हैं। इसलिए AI की अवधारणा को समझना वर्तमान समाज और तकनीकी परिवर्तन के अध्ययन के लिए अत्यंत आवश्यक है।

AI के प्रमुख प्रकार

1. **नैरो AI (Narrow AI)** - विशेष कार्य करने वाली AI
2. **जनरल AI (General AI)** - मानव जैसी सामान्य बुद्धि वाली AI
3. **सुपर AI (Super AI)** - मानव बुद्धि से अधिक विकसित AI

रोजगार का समाजशास्त्र

रोजगार का समाजशास्त्र (Sociology of Employment) समाजशास्त्र की एक महत्वपूर्ण शाखा है, जो कार्य, श्रम संबंध, श्रमिक वर्ग, कार्य संस्कृति, आर्थिक असमानता तथा उत्पादन प्रणाली का अध्ययन करती है। यह अध्ययन केवल रोजगार प्राप्त करने या आर्थिक आय तक सीमित नहीं होता, बल्कि यह समझने का प्रयास करता है कि कार्य और श्रम की व्यवस्था समाज की संरचना, सामाजिक संबंधों तथा मानव जीवन को किस प्रकार प्रभावित करती है। प्रत्येक समाज में कार्य और रोजगार सामाजिक संगठन का एक महत्वपूर्ण आधार होते हैं, क्योंकि इनके माध्यम से व्यक्ति अपनी आर्थिक आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति करने के साथ-साथ सामाजिक पहचान और प्रतिष्ठा भी प्राप्त करता है।

समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टिकोण के अनुसार रोजगार केवल आर्थिक गतिविधि नहीं है, बल्कि यह सामाजिक संबंधों, शक्ति संरचना तथा वर्ग विभाजन से भी जुड़ा हुआ है। कार्यस्थल पर श्रमिकों और नियोक्ताओं के बीच संबंध, श्रम विभाजन, कार्य परिस्थितियाँ तथा वेतन व्यवस्था समाज की व्यापक सामाजिक और आर्थिक संरचना को दर्शाते हैं। तकनीकी विकास, औद्योगिकीकरण तथा वैश्वीकरण ने रोजगार की प्रकृति में निरंतर परिवर्तन किए हैं। वर्तमान समय में कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता (AI) और ऑटोमेशन के विस्तार ने रोजगार के समाजशास्त्र को और अधिक महत्वपूर्ण बना दिया है, क्योंकि तकनीकी परिवर्तन श्रम बाजार तथा कार्य संस्कृति को व्यापक रूप से प्रभावित कर रहे हैं।

कार्ल मार्क्स ने श्रम और पूंजी के संबंधों को वर्ग संघर्ष के रूप में देखा। उनके अनुसार पूंजीवादी व्यवस्था में श्रमिक वर्ग का शोषण होता है, क्योंकि उत्पादन के साधनों पर पूंजीपति वर्ग का नियंत्रण होता है। मार्क्स का मानना था कि मशीनों और तकनीकी विकास का उपयोग पूंजीपति वर्ग अपने लाभ को बढ़ाने के लिए करता है, जिससे श्रमिकों की स्थिति कमजोर होती है। कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता और ऑटोमेशन के वर्तमान दौर में मार्क्स का यह दृष्टिकोण अत्यंत प्रासंगिक दिखाई देता

है, क्योंकि मशीनों के कारण मानव श्रम की आवश्यकता कम हो रही है तथा रोजगार असुरक्षा बढ़ रही है।

दूसरी ओर मैक्स वेबर ने आधुनिक समाज में नौकरशाही, तर्कसंगतता और दक्षता को महत्वपूर्ण माना। वेबर के अनुसार आधुनिक औद्योगिक समाज में कार्य व्यवस्था अधिक संगठित और नियमबद्ध होती जाती है। AI और डिजिटल तकनीकों ने कार्य प्रणाली को अधिक तर्कसंगत और कुशल बनाया है, जहाँ डेटा, एल्गोरिथ्म तथा स्वचालित प्रणालियाँ निर्णय लेने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रही हैं। इससे कार्य की गति और उत्पादकता में वृद्धि हुई है, लेकिन साथ ही मानव संबंधों में औपचारिकता और नियंत्रण भी बढ़ा है।

इस प्रकार रोजगार का समाजशास्त्र हमें यह समझने में सहायता प्रदान करता है कि तकनीकी परिवर्तन, विशेषकर कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता, समाज की श्रम संरचना, वर्ग संबंधों, कार्य संस्कृति तथा सामाजिक असमानताओं को किस प्रकार प्रभावित कर रहे हैं। AI के संदर्भ में मार्क्स और वेबर दोनों के विचार आधुनिक समाज की बदलती रोजगार व्यवस्था को समझने में अत्यंत उपयोगी सिद्ध होते हैं।

AI और रोजगार में परिवर्तन

पारंपरिक नौकरियों का समाप्त होना

कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता (AI) और ऑटोमेशन के विकास ने रोजगार की पारंपरिक संरचना में व्यापक परिवर्तन उत्पन्न किए हैं। आधुनिक उद्योगों, कार्यालयों तथा सेवा क्षेत्रों में मशीनों और स्वचालित प्रणालियों का प्रयोग तेजी से बढ़ रहा है, जिसके कारण अनेक पारंपरिक नौकरियाँ प्रभावित हो रही हैं। पहले जिन कार्यों को करने के लिए बड़ी संख्या में कर्मचारियों की आवश्यकता होती थी, अब वही कार्य कंप्यूटर, रोबोट तथा AI आधारित सॉफ्टवेयर द्वारा कम समय और अधिक दक्षता के साथ किए जा रहे हैं। इससे उत्पादन प्रक्रिया अधिक तेज और लागत कम हुई है, लेकिन मानव श्रम की आवश्यकता में कमी भी आई है। बैंकिंग क्षेत्र इसका प्रमुख उदाहरण है, जहाँ ऑनलाइन बैंकिंग, डिजिटल भुगतान प्रणाली, एटीएम, चैटबॉट तथा मोबाइल बैंकिंग सेवाओं ने कर्मचारियों की भूमिका को सीमित कर दिया है। ग्राहक अब अधिकांश बैंकिंग सेवाएँ ऑनलाइन माध्यम से प्राप्त कर रहे हैं, जिससे शाखाओं में कर्मचारियों की संख्या कम हो रही है। इसी प्रकार विनिर्माण उद्योगों में रोबोटिक मशीनें उत्पादन कार्य कर रही हैं, जिससे श्रमिकों की मांग में कमी आई है। ग्राहक सेवा क्षेत्र में AI आधारित चैटबॉट ग्राहकों की समस्याओं का समाधान कर रहे हैं। परिवहन क्षेत्र में स्वचालित वाहन तथा लॉजिस्टिक प्रबंधन प्रणाली विकसित हो रही हैं। डेटा एंट्री और रिकॉर्ड प्रबंधन जैसे कार्य भी अब स्वचालित सॉफ्टवेयर द्वारा किए जा रहे हैं। इन परिवर्तनों के कारण कम कौशल वाले श्रमिकों के सामने बेरोजगारी और आर्थिक असुरक्षा की समस्या उत्पन्न हो रही है।

नए रोजगार अवसरों का निर्माण

यद्यपि AI के कारण कई पारंपरिक नौकरियाँ समाप्त हो रही हैं, फिर भी इस तकनीक ने नए प्रकार के रोजगार अवसरों को भी जन्म दिया है। तकनीकी विकास के साथ श्रम बाजार की आवश्यकताएँ बदल रही हैं तथा नई विशेषज्ञताओं की मांग बढ़ रही है। AI आधारित अर्थव्यवस्था में डेटा प्रबंधन, सॉफ्टवेयर विकास तथा डिजिटल सुरक्षा से संबंधित क्षेत्रों में रोजगार

के नए अवसर उत्पन्न हुए हैं। आज डेटा साइंटिस्ट, AI इंजीनियर, मशीन लर्निंग विशेषज्ञ, साइबर सुरक्षा विशेषज्ञ तथा डिजिटल मार्केटिंग विश्लेषक जैसे पेशों की मांग तेजी से बढ़ रही है। कंपनियाँ अपने व्यवसाय को अधिक प्रभावी और प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक बनाने के लिए AI विशेषज्ञों की नियुक्ति कर रही हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त ई-कॉमर्स, ऑनलाइन शिक्षा, डिजिटल मीडिया तथा स्टार्टअप क्षेत्र में भी नए रोजगार विकसित हुए हैं। इस प्रकार AI केवल रोजगार समाप्त करने वाली तकनीक नहीं है, बल्कि यह रोजगार के स्वरूप को बदलने वाली प्रक्रिया भी है। इससे यह स्पष्ट होता है कि तकनीकी परिवर्तन के साथ समाज में नए अवसर और नई चुनौतियाँ दोनों उत्पन्न होते हैं।

कौशल आधारित समाज का विकास

AI और डिजिटल तकनीकों के विस्तार ने समाज को कौशल आधारित समाज (Skill-Based Society) की ओर अग्रसर किया है। वर्तमान समय में केवल पारंपरिक शिक्षा रोजगार प्राप्त करने के लिए पर्याप्त नहीं रह गई है। अब तकनीकी ज्ञान, डिजिटल साक्षरता, विश्लेषणात्मक क्षमता तथा समस्या समाधान कौशल की मांग लगातार बढ़ रही है। रोजगार बाजार में वही व्यक्ति अधिक सफल हो रहा है, जिसके पास आधुनिक तकनीकों के अनुरूप कौशल उपलब्ध हैं। आज कंप्यूटर ज्ञान, प्रोग्रामिंग, डेटा विश्लेषण, संचार कौशल तथा तार्किक सोच को अत्यधिक महत्व दिया जा रहा है। कंपनियाँ ऐसे कर्मचारियों की तलाश कर रही हैं, जो नई तकनीकों के साथ तेजी से कार्य कर सकें और बदलती परिस्थितियों के अनुसार स्वयं को ढाल सकें। इससे शिक्षा प्रणाली में भी परिवर्तन दिखाई दे रहा है, जहाँ तकनीकी और व्यावसायिक शिक्षा को अधिक महत्व दिया जा रहा है। कौशल आधारित समाज का विकास एक ओर रोजगार के नए अवसर प्रदान कर रहा है, वहीं दूसरी ओर कम शिक्षित और तकनीकी रूप से कमजोर वर्गों के लिए चुनौतियाँ भी उत्पन्न कर रहा है।

AI और सामाजिक असमानता

1. आर्थिक असमानता

AI आधारित अर्थव्यवस्था ने आर्थिक असमानता को बढ़ाने की संभावना उत्पन्न की है। उच्च तकनीकी कौशल और शिक्षा प्राप्त व्यक्तियों को AI आधारित रोजगार में अधिक अवसर और उच्च आय प्राप्त हो रही है, जबकि कम कौशल वाले श्रमिक बेरोजगारी और कम वेतन की समस्या का सामना कर रहे हैं। इससे समाज में आय और संसाधनों का असमान वितरण बढ़ता जा रहा है। बड़ी कंपनियाँ तकनीकी संसाधनों और पूंजी पर नियंत्रण रखती हैं, जिसके कारण आर्थिक लाभ सीमित वर्ग तक केंद्रित हो जाते हैं। परिणामस्वरूप समाज में आर्थिक विषमता और वर्ग अंतर अधिक गहरा होता जा रहा है।

2. डिजिटल विभाजन

AI और डिजिटल तकनीकों का लाभ समाज के सभी वर्गों तक समान रूप से नहीं पहुँच पा रहा है। ग्रामीण और शहरी क्षेत्रों के बीच तकनीकी संसाधनों, इंटरनेट सुविधाओं तथा डिजिटल शिक्षा की उपलब्धता में व्यापक अंतर है। शहरी क्षेत्रों के युवाओं को तकनीकी प्रशिक्षण और रोजगार के अधिक अवसर प्राप्त होते हैं, जबकि ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के युवा इन सुविधाओं से वंचित रह जाते हैं। इस स्थिति को डिजिटल विभाजन (Digital Divide) कहा जाता है। डिजिटल

विभाजन सामाजिक असमानता को और अधिक बढ़ाता है तथा समाज के कमजोर वर्गों को विकास की मुख्यधारा से दूर कर देता है।

3. वर्ग विभाजन

AI पूंजीवादी व्यवस्था को और अधिक मजबूत बनाने की क्षमता रखता है। बड़ी तकनीकी कंपनियाँ AI और डेटा पर नियंत्रण स्थापित कर रही हैं, जिससे आर्थिक और सामाजिक शक्ति कुछ सीमित वर्गों के हाथों में केंद्रित हो रही है। इससे श्रमिक वर्ग और पूंजीपति वर्ग के बीच अंतर बढ़ सकता है। समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टि से यह स्थिति वर्ग संघर्ष और सामाजिक असंतुलन को जन्म दे सकती है। मशीनों और स्वचालित प्रणालियों के कारण श्रमिकों की भूमिका कम होती जा रही है, जिससे श्रमिक वर्ग में असुरक्षा और असंतोष की भावना विकसित हो सकती है।

श्रमिक वर्ग पर प्रभाव

1. कार्य संस्कृति में परिवर्तन

AI और डिजिटल तकनीकों ने कार्य संस्कृति में महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन किए हैं। Work From Home, ऑनलाइन मीटिंग्स, डिजिटल कार्य प्रणाली तथा वर्चुअल कार्यालय आधुनिक रोजगार व्यवस्था का हिस्सा बन चुके हैं। कर्मचारियों को अब कार्यालय में उपस्थित हुए बिना भी कार्य करने की सुविधा मिल रही है। इससे कार्य प्रणाली अधिक लचीली और तकनीकी आधारित हो गई है। हालांकि, इसके कारण व्यक्तिगत और व्यावसायिक जीवन के बीच संतुलन बनाए रखना भी चुनौतीपूर्ण होता जा रहा है।

2. कार्य का अस्थायीकरण

AI आधारित अर्थव्यवस्था में Gig Economy और फ्रीलांस कार्य संस्कृति का तेजी से विस्तार हुआ है। कंपनियाँ स्थायी कर्मचारियों की बजाय अस्थायी और अनुबंध आधारित कर्मचारियों को प्राथमिकता देने लगी हैं। इससे रोजगार की स्थिरता कम हुई है और श्रमिकों में भविष्य को लेकर असुरक्षा बढ़ी है। फ्रीलांस और प्लेटफॉर्म आधारित कार्यों में कर्मचारियों को सामाजिक सुरक्षा, पेंशन तथा अन्य सुविधाएँ सीमित रूप में प्राप्त होती हैं।

3. मानसिक तनाव

AI आधारित प्रतिस्पर्धा और निरंतर तकनीकी परिवर्तन ने कर्मचारियों में मानसिक तनाव को बढ़ा दिया है। कर्मचारियों को यह भय सताता रहता है कि मशीनें और स्वचालित प्रणालियाँ उनकी नौकरियों का स्थान ले सकती हैं। लगातार नए कौशल सीखने का दबाव तथा कार्यस्थल की प्रतिस्पर्धा मानसिक असुरक्षा और तनाव को जन्म देती है। इसके अतिरिक्त डिजिटल कार्य प्रणाली के कारण कार्य का दबाव और समय की सीमाएँ भी बढ़ती जा रही हैं, जिसका प्रभाव कर्मचारियों के मानसिक स्वास्थ्य पर पड़ता है।

भारत में AI और रोजगार

भारत विश्व का सबसे बड़ा युवा देश है और यहाँ AI के विकास से रोजगार के क्षेत्र में व्यापक संभावनाएँ उत्पन्न हुई हैं। सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी, डिजिटल सेवाओं तथा स्टार्टअप संस्कृति के विस्तार ने युवाओं के लिए नए रोजगार अवसर उपलब्ध कराए हैं। डिजिटल अर्थव्यवस्था के विकास के कारण IT क्षेत्र का तेजी से विस्तार हुआ है। भारतीय कंपनियाँ वैश्विक स्तर पर AI आधारित सेवाएँ प्रदान कर रही हैं, जिससे तकनीकी क्षेत्र में रोजगार के अवसर बढ़े हैं। दूसरी ओर,

भारत में AI के कारण कई चुनौतियाँ भी सामने आ रही हैं। कम कौशल वाले श्रमिकों के लिए रोजगार की समस्या बढ़ सकती है, क्योंकि मशीनें अनेक कार्यों को प्रतिस्थापित कर रही हैं। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में तकनीकी संसाधनों और शिक्षा की कमी के कारण वहाँ के युवाओं को AI आधारित रोजगार में अपेक्षित अवसर नहीं मिल पा रहे हैं। शिक्षा और कौशल विकास में असमानता भी एक महत्वपूर्ण समस्या है। Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services तथा Wipro जैसी कंपनियाँ AI आधारित सेवाओं और डिजिटल तकनीकों का विस्तार कर रही हैं। ये कंपनियाँ AI, क्लाउड कंप्यूटिंग, डेटा विश्लेषण तथा मशीन लर्निंग के क्षेत्र में कार्य कर रही हैं, जिससे भारत में तकनीकी रोजगार के नए अवसर विकसित हो रहे हैं।

समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टिकोण

मार्क्सवादी दृष्टिकोण

मार्क्सवादी दृष्टिकोण के अनुसार तकनीक और उत्पादन प्रणाली का समाज की आर्थिक एवं सामाजिक संरचना पर गहरा प्रभाव पड़ता है। कार्ल मार्क्स ने समाज को मुख्यतः दो वर्गों- पूँजीपति वर्ग और श्रमिक वर्ग-में विभाजित माना तथा यह स्पष्ट किया कि पूँजीवादी व्यवस्था में उत्पादन के साधनों पर पूँजीपति वर्ग का नियंत्रण होता है। आधुनिक समय में कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता (AI) और ऑटोमेशन को मार्क्सवादी दृष्टिकोण से देखा जाए तो यह पूँजीवादी व्यवस्था को और अधिक मजबूत करने वाली शक्ति के रूप में दिखाई देती है। बड़ी कंपनियाँ और कॉर्पोरेट संस्थाएँ AI तकनीकों पर नियंत्रण स्थापित कर रही हैं, जिससे उत्पादन प्रक्रिया में मानव श्रम की आवश्यकता कम होती जा रही है। मशीनों और रोबोटों के उपयोग से उत्पादन क्षमता तो बढ़ती है, लेकिन श्रमिकों के रोजगार अवसर सीमित होते जा रहे हैं।

मार्क्सवादी विचारधारा के अनुसार AI के कारण श्रमिकों का शोषण बढ़ सकता है, क्योंकि पूँजीपति वर्ग तकनीक का उपयोग अधिक लाभ अर्जित करने के लिए करता है। मशीनों द्वारा उत्पादन कार्य किए जाने से कंपनियों की लागत कम होती है, लेकिन इसका प्रतिकूल प्रभाव श्रमिक वर्ग पर पड़ता है। कम कौशल वाले श्रमिक बेरोजगारी और आर्थिक असुरक्षा का सामना करते हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त AI आधारित निगरानी प्रणाली कार्यस्थलों पर कर्मचारियों की गतिविधियों पर अधिक नियंत्रण स्थापित कर रही है, जिससे श्रमिकों की स्वतंत्रता कम हो रही है। मार्क्सवादी दृष्टिकोण यह भी मानता है कि तकनीकी विकास से उत्पन्न आर्थिक लाभ समाज के सभी वर्गों तक समान रूप से नहीं पहुँचते, बल्कि वे मुख्यतः पूँजीपति वर्ग तक सीमित रहते हैं। इस प्रकार AI सामाजिक और आर्थिक असमानताओं को बढ़ा सकता है तथा वर्ग संघर्ष की स्थिति को और अधिक तीव्र बना सकता है।

कार्यात्मकतावादी दृष्टिकोण

कार्यात्मकतावादी दृष्टिकोण समाज को एक संगठित और संतुलित व्यवस्था के रूप में देखता है, जहाँ प्रत्येक संस्था और संरचना समाज के विकास तथा स्थिरता में योगदान देती है। इस दृष्टिकोण के अनुसार तकनीकी परिवर्तन समाज के विकास की स्वाभाविक प्रक्रिया है। AI और आधुनिक तकनीकें समाज की दक्षता, उत्पादकता तथा कार्य प्रणाली को अधिक प्रभावी बनाती हैं। कार्यात्मकतावादी विचारधारा यह मानती है कि नई तकनीकें समाज में नए कार्य विभाजन, नए पेशों तथा नई सामाजिक भूमिकाओं को जन्म देती हैं, जिससे समाज अधिक संगठित और उन्नत

बनता है। AI के संदर्भ में यह दृष्टिकोण बताता है कि मशीनों और स्वचालित प्रणालियों के कारण कार्यों को अधिक तेजी और सटीकता के साथ पूरा किया जा सकता है। शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, प्रशासन, परिवहन तथा उद्योगों में AI के उपयोग से सेवाओं की गुणवत्ता और कार्यक्षमता में वृद्धि हुई है। उदाहरण के लिए स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र में AI आधारित निदान प्रणाली रोगों की पहचान को अधिक सटीक बना रही है, जबकि शिक्षा क्षेत्र में डिजिटल शिक्षण प्रणाली विद्यार्थियों के लिए व्यक्तिगत शिक्षण अनुभव प्रदान कर रही है। कार्यात्मकतावादी दृष्टिकोण के अनुसार AI समाज के विकास में सहायक सिद्ध हो सकता है, क्योंकि यह नए रोजगार अवसरों और कौशल विकास को भी प्रोत्साहित करता है।

इसके अतिरिक्त यह दृष्टिकोण मानता है कि समाज समय के साथ नई परिस्थितियों के अनुसार स्वयं को अनुकूलित कर लेता है। जिस प्रकार औद्योगिक क्रांति के बाद समाज ने नई आर्थिक और सामाजिक संरचनाओं को अपनाया, उसी प्रकार AI आधारित समाज भी नई कार्य प्रणालियों और कौशलों के साथ संतुलन स्थापित कर सकता है। इसलिए कार्यात्मकतावादी दृष्टिकोण AI को सामाजिक प्रगति और आधुनिकीकरण का महत्वपूर्ण माध्यम मानता है।

उत्तर आधुनिक दृष्टिकोण

उत्तर आधुनिक दृष्टिकोण के अनुसार आधुनिक समाज में तकनीक मानव जीवन का केंद्रीय तत्व बन चुकी है। आज संचार, शिक्षा, रोजगार, मनोरंजन तथा सामाजिक संबंधों का बड़ा भाग डिजिटल माध्यमों और तकनीकी प्रणालियों पर आधारित हो गया है। AI ने इस परिवर्तन को और अधिक गहरा बना दिया है। उत्तर आधुनिक समाज में वास्तविक और आभासी (Virtual) जीवन के बीच का अंतर धीरे-धीरे कम होता जा रहा है। सोशल मीडिया, डिजिटल नेटवर्क, वर्चुअल कार्यस्थल तथा ऑनलाइन पहचान आधुनिक जीवन का अभिन्न हिस्सा बन चुके हैं। उत्तर आधुनिक दृष्टिकोण यह मानता है कि AI केवल कार्य प्रणाली को नहीं बदल रहा, बल्कि यह मानव की पहचान, सामाजिक संबंधों तथा सांस्कृतिक जीवन को भी पुनः परिभाषित कर रहा है। आज लोग डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म के माध्यम से संवाद स्थापित कर रहे हैं, ऑनलाइन कार्य कर रहे हैं तथा वर्चुअल समुदायों का हिस्सा बन रहे हैं। इससे पारंपरिक सामाजिक संबंधों और प्रत्यक्ष मानवीय संपर्क में कमी दिखाई दे रही है। AI आधारित एल्गोरिथ्म लोगों की पसंद, व्यवहार और निर्णयों को प्रभावित कर रहे हैं। उदाहरण के लिए सोशल मीडिया प्लेटफॉर्म लोगों को उनकी रुचियों के अनुसार सामग्री दिखाते हैं, जिससे उनकी सोच और सामाजिक दृष्टिकोण भी प्रभावित होते हैं। उत्तर आधुनिक दृष्टिकोण यह भी बताता है कि AI के कारण समाज में अनिश्चितता और अस्थिरता बढ़ रही है। तकनीकी परिवर्तन इतनी तेजी से हो रहे हैं कि व्यक्ति को लगातार स्वयं को नई परिस्थितियों के अनुसार ढालना पड़ता है। इससे पारंपरिक सामाजिक मूल्यों और स्थिरताओं में परिवर्तन आ रहा है। AI ने मानव और मशीन के संबंधों को भी नया स्वरूप दिया है, जहाँ मशीनें केवल उपकरण नहीं रह गई हैं, बल्कि वे निर्णय प्रक्रिया और सामाजिक जीवन का सक्रिय हिस्सा बनती जा रही हैं।

AI और भविष्य का समाज

भविष्य का समाज कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता और डिजिटल तकनीकों से अत्यधिक प्रभावित होगा। आने वाले समय में AI समाज के प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में और अधिक प्रभावी भूमिका निभाएगा।

शिक्षा, चिकित्सा, प्रशासन, कृषि, उद्योग, परिवहन तथा संचार जैसे क्षेत्रों में AI का उपयोग व्यापक रूप से बढ़ेगा। AI आधारित तकनीकें कार्यों को अधिक तेज, सटीक और कम खर्चीला बनाएंगी। शिक्षा क्षेत्र में व्यक्तिगत शिक्षण प्रणाली विकसित होगी, जहाँ विद्यार्थियों की आवश्यकताओं के अनुसार शिक्षण सामग्री तैयार की जाएगी। चिकित्सा क्षेत्र में AI रोगों की पहचान, उपचार और शोध कार्यों को अधिक उन्नत बनाएगा। कृषि क्षेत्र में स्मार्ट खेती, मौसम विश्लेषण तथा स्वचालित मशीनों के माध्यम से उत्पादन क्षमता बढ़ाई जाएगी। हालाँकि AI आधारित भविष्य समाज के सामने अनेक चुनौतियाँ भी प्रस्तुत करेगा। रोजगार की प्रकृति में निरंतर परिवर्तन होगा तथा पारंपरिक नौकरियों की संख्या कम हो सकती है। इसलिए समाज को नई परिस्थितियों के अनुसार कौशल विकास कार्यक्रमों और तकनीकी शिक्षा को बढ़ावा देना होगा। डिजिटल साक्षरता, कंप्यूटर ज्ञान और तकनीकी प्रशिक्षण भविष्य के रोजगार के लिए अत्यंत आवश्यक होंगे। सरकारों और शैक्षणिक संस्थाओं को ऐसी नीतियाँ बनानी होंगी, जो समाज के सभी वर्गों को तकनीकी विकास का लाभ प्रदान कर सकें।

भविष्य में AI के नैतिक और सामाजिक प्रभावों पर भी विशेष ध्यान देना आवश्यक होगा। डेटा सुरक्षा, गोपनीयता, मानव अधिकार तथा तकनीकी असमानता जैसी समस्याएँ महत्वपूर्ण चुनौती बन सकती हैं। इसलिए यह आवश्यक है कि AI का विकास मानव कल्याण और सामाजिक न्याय के सिद्धांतों के अनुरूप किया जाए। यदि AI का उपयोग संतुलित और उत्तरदायित्वपूर्ण ढंग से किया जाए, तो यह समाज के विकास, आर्थिक प्रगति तथा मानव जीवन की गुणवत्ता में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दे सकता है।

निष्कर्ष

कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता (Artificial Intelligence - AI) वर्तमान युग में एक महत्वपूर्ण तकनीकी और सामाजिक परिवर्तनकारी शक्ति के रूप में उभरकर सामने आई है। इसने मानव जीवन के लगभग प्रत्येक क्षेत्र को प्रभावित किया है तथा रोजगार, श्रम संबंध, कार्य संस्कृति और सामाजिक संरचना में व्यापक परिवर्तन उत्पन्न किए हैं। AI के विकास ने उत्पादन प्रणाली को अधिक तेज, संगठित और दक्ष बनाया है, जिससे उद्योगों, बैंकिंग, शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, प्रशासन तथा संचार जैसे क्षेत्रों में कार्य प्रणाली का स्वरूप बदल गया है। मशीनों और स्वचालित प्रणालियों के उपयोग से कार्यों को कम समय और अधिक सटीकता के साथ पूरा किया जा रहा है, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप आधुनिक समाज अधिक तकनीक आधारित होता जा रहा है। रोजगार के क्षेत्र में AI का प्रभाव अत्यंत व्यापक और बहुआयामी है। एक ओर AI ने डेटा साइंस, मशीन लर्निंग, साइबर सुरक्षा तथा डिजिटल सेवाओं जैसे क्षेत्रों में नए रोजगार अवसर उत्पन्न किए हैं, वहीं दूसरी ओर पारंपरिक रोजगार के कई स्वरूप प्रभावित हुए हैं। बैंकिंग, विनिर्माण उद्योग, ग्राहक सेवा तथा डेटा एंट्री जैसे क्षेत्रों में मशीनों और ऑटोमेशन के कारण मानव श्रम की आवश्यकता कम होती जा रही है। इससे विशेष रूप से कम कौशल वाले श्रमिकों के सामने बेरोजगारी और आर्थिक असुरक्षा की समस्या उत्पन्न हो रही है। AI आधारित अर्थव्यवस्था में तकनीकी और डिजिटल कौशल रखने वाले व्यक्तियों को अधिक अवसर प्राप्त हो रहे हैं, जबकि तकनीकी संसाधनों और शिक्षा से वंचित वर्ग पीछे छूटता जा रहा है।

समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टिकोण से देखा जाए तो AI केवल तकनीकी परिवर्तन नहीं है, बल्कि यह सामाजिक परिवर्तन की भी एक महत्वपूर्ण प्रक्रिया है। AI सामाजिक संबंधों, वर्ग संरचना, कार्य विभाजन तथा जीवन शैली को प्रभावित कर रहा है। इसके कारण समाज में आर्थिक असमानता, डिजिटल विभाजन तथा वर्ग अंतर बढ़ने की संभावना दिखाई देती है। ग्रामीण और शहरी क्षेत्रों के बीच तकनीकी संसाधनों की असमान उपलब्धता सामाजिक असंतुलन को और अधिक गहरा कर सकती है। इसके अतिरिक्त Gig Economy, फ्रीलांस कार्य तथा अस्थायी रोजगार व्यवस्था ने श्रमिकों की स्थिरता और सामाजिक सुरक्षा को भी प्रभावित किया है। AI के कारण कार्य संस्कृति में भी महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन आए हैं। Work From Home, डिजिटल कार्य प्रणाली और ऑनलाइन कार्यस्थलों ने रोजगार के पारंपरिक स्वरूप को बदल दिया है। हालांकि इन परिवर्तनों ने कार्य प्रणाली को अधिक लचीला बनाया है, लेकिन इसके साथ मानसिक तनाव, प्रतिस्पर्धा और नौकरी खोने का भय भी बढ़ा है। इस प्रकार AI का प्रभाव केवल आर्थिक नहीं, बल्कि सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक और मनोवैज्ञानिक स्तर पर भी देखा जा सकता है।

अतः यह स्पष्ट है कि कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता आधुनिक समाज के विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रही है, लेकिन इसके साथ अनेक सामाजिक चुनौतियाँ भी जुड़ी हुई हैं। इसलिए आवश्यक है कि तकनीकी विकास के साथ-साथ सामाजिक न्याय, समान अवसर, श्रमिक सुरक्षा तथा मानवीय मूल्यों को भी महत्व दिया जाए। सरकारों, शैक्षणिक संस्थाओं और समाज को मिलकर ऐसी नीतियाँ विकसित करनी होंगी, जो तकनीकी प्रगति और सामाजिक समानता के बीच संतुलन स्थापित कर सकें। यदि AI का उपयोग उत्तरदायित्वपूर्ण और मानवीय दृष्टिकोण के साथ किया जाए, तो यह भविष्य में समाज के समग्र विकास और मानव कल्याण का महत्वपूर्ण साधन बन सकता है।

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काशी की बौद्ध स्त्रियों की बहुआयामी भूमिका का मूल्यांकन

डॉ० सारिका गौतम

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शोध सार—

भारतीय चिंतन-धारा में श्रमण परम्परा में विशेषकर बौद्ध धर्म का अपना महत्वपूर्ण स्थान है। सामाजिक जटिलताओं के विरुद्ध उद्भूत बौद्ध धर्म तत्कालीन समाज की आवश्यकता का परिणाम था। निवृत्तिमार्गी बौद्ध संघ में गृह-त्याग करने वाले भिक्षु-भिक्षुणियों का विशिष्ट स्थान था, इसके साथ ही तथागत बुद्ध इस बात से भी भली-भांति परिचित थे कि गृह त्याग करना सभी के लिए संभव नहीं है। अतः बौद्ध धर्म में आस्था रखने के उपरांत भी गृह त्याग न कर पाने वाले स्त्री-पुरुषों को बौद्ध संघ में चतुष्पदीय के रूप में सम्मान प्राप्त था। वस्तुतः जहाँ भिक्षुणियाँ संघ की आध्यात्मिक आधारशिला के रूप में रहें, वहीं उपासिकायें बौद्ध संघ की आर्थिक एवं सर्व-क्षेत्रीय समृद्धि की प्रस्तोत्री।

यह शोध पत्र प्राचीन और पूर्वमध्यकालीन काशी (वाराणसी) के संदर्भ में बौद्ध स्त्रियों की बहुआयामी भूमिकाओं का एक समीक्षात्मक मूल्यांकन करता है। भगवान बुद्ध की प्रथम उपदेश स्थली सारनाथ (ऋषिपत्तन) के समीप होने के कारण काशी बौद्ध धर्म के उदय और विकास का एक मुख्य केंद्र रही है। ऐतिहासिक साक्ष्यों, बौद्ध साहित्य (जैसे 'थेरीगाथा' और 'जातक कथाएँ') तथा पुरातात्विक स्रोतों के विश्लेषण से यह स्पष्ट होता है कि काशी की स्त्रियों ने केवल एक उपासिका (गृहस्थ अनुयायी) के रूप में ही नहीं, बल्कि संघ के संचालन, धम्म के प्रचार-प्रसार, शिक्षा, कला और दर्शन में भी उल्लेखनीय योगदान दिया। इस शोध में भिक्षुणी संघ में काशी की स्त्रियों के प्रवेश, उनके द्वारा दिए गए दान (भूमि, विहार और स्तूप निर्माण हेतु), तथा तत्कालीन पुरुष-प्रधान समाज में उनकी धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता और सामाजिक स्वायत्तता की समीक्षा की गई है। प्राप्त निष्कर्षों से पता चलता है कि बौद्ध धर्म ने काशी की स्त्रियों को एक प्रगतिशील मंच प्रदान किया, जिसने पारंपरिक सामाजिक बंधनों को तोड़कर उनके व्यक्तित्व के बहुआयामी विकास का मार्ग प्रशस्त किया। यह अध्ययन क्षेत्रीय इतिहास में स्त्री विमर्श और बौद्ध संस्कृति के अंतर्संबंधों को समझने की एक नई दृष्टि प्रदान करता है।

मुख्य शब्द — काशी (वाराणसी), बौद्ध स्त्रियाँ, बहुआयामी भूमिका, थेरीगाथा, सारनाथ, भिक्षुणी संघ, सामाजिक स्वायत्तता, धम्म, दान परंपरा, स्त्री विमर्श।

छठी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व के प्रभाव प्राप्त श्रमण परम्परा में बौद्ध धर्म का अपना विशिष्ट स्थान दृष्टिगोचर होता है। तथागत बुद्ध समता प्रेम और अहिंसा पर आधारित कर्मनिष्ठ, नैतिक एवं वर्गहीन समाज के पक्षधर थे यहाँ उल्लेखनीय है कि बौद्ध धर्म का प्रारम्भिक काल धर्म की विसंगतियों का काल था।

काशी प्राचीन काल से ही धार्मिक, सांस्कृतिक एवं बौद्धिक गतिविधियों का केन्द्र रही है, जहाँ बौद्ध धर्म सहित अनेक धर्मों और परम्पराओं का विकास हुआ। तथागत बुद्ध ने ऋषिपत्तन (सारनाथ, वाराणसी) में पंचवर्गीय भिक्षुओं (महानाम, अश्वजित, वप्प, कौडिन्य, भद्रजित) को अपना प्रथम धम्मोपदेश दिया। बौद्ध साहित्य में इस घटना को धर्मचक्रप्रवर्तन की संज्ञा दी गयी है। यहीं पर बौद्ध संघ की स्थापना भी हुई, इसी कारण काशी बौद्ध इतिहास में विशेष महत्व रखती है। इसके अनन्तर सारनाथ में ही प्रथम गृहपति यश की प्रवज्या के उपरांत शास्ता एवं कल्याणकारी विचारों से प्रभावित होकर उसकी माता सुजाता एवं पिता के साथ उसकी पत्नी ने भी बौद्ध धर्म स्वीकार कर लिया, इस प्रकार यश के पिता को प्रथम त्रिवाचिक उपासक एवं माता सुजाता को प्रथम त्रिवाचिक (बुद्ध, धम्म, संघ) उपासिका होने का गौरवशाली पर प्राप्त है। गृहपति यश की भार्या को द्वितीय त्रिवाचिक उपासिका होने का सौभाग्य प्राप्त है।

ध्यातव्य है कि भिक्षु संघ बौद्ध धर्म का आधार स्तम्भ माने जाने वाले चतुष्पदीय (भिक्षु संघ, भिक्षुणी संघ, उपासक संघ, उपासिका संघ) में से तीन की स्थापना काशी में हुई।

बौद्ध धर्म ने काशी की स्त्रियों को आध्यात्मिक उन्नति का अवसर प्रदान किया, जिससे वे पारंपरिक सामाजिक बंधनों से मुक्त होकर अपने स्वतंत्र अस्तित्व एवं आध्यात्मिक उत्थान की ओर अग्रसर हुईं। काशी जैसे बौद्धिक नगर में यह परिवर्तन और अधिक स्पष्ट रूप से परिलक्षित होता है। बौद्ध संघ में भिक्षुणी उप उपासिका के रूप में प्रवेश के उपरांत यहाँ की स्त्रियों ने धम्मोपदेश, चरिया दान आदि के माध्यम से बौद्ध के विकास में सम्बन्धित कार्यों यथा— शिक्षणकार्य, विहारों के निर्माण एवं अभिलेखों, स्तूपों के संरक्षण में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका का निर्वहन किया।

इन स्त्रियों में भिक्षुणी अर्द्धकाशी, भिक्षुणी बुद्धमित्रा (त्रिपिटिकाचार्या), उपासिका सुजाता, उपासिका, सुप्रिया, उपासिका कुमारदेवी आदि प्रमुख हैं।

उपासिका सुजाता की प्रशंसा स्वयं तथागत बुद्ध ने अपने श्रीमुख से किया। शास्ता ने भिक्षुओं को सम्बोधित करते हुये कहा है कि— भिक्षुओं! सर्वप्रथम मेरी शरण में आयी उपासिकाओं में सुजाता श्रेष्ठ है। शास्ता के वचनों से स्वयं उपासिका सुजाता की सद्धर्म में निष्ठा परिलक्षित होती है।

इसी क्रम में उपासिका सुप्रिया की सद्धर्म में श्रद्धा को देखकर उसकी प्रशंसा करते हुये तथागत बुद्ध ने स्वयं कहा है कि भिक्षु रागियों की परिचर्या करने वाली मेरी सभी उपासिकाओं में सुप्रिया उपासिका श्रेष्ठ है।

बौद्ध धम्म के विकास में योगदान देने वाली प्रमुख बौद्ध धम्मानुयायी स्त्रियों में गहड़वालवंशीय रानी कुमारदेवी का महत्वपूर्ण स्थान है। उपासिका कुमारदेवी के हृदय में त्रिरत्न के प्रति अपार श्रद्धाभाव था। कुमारदेवी ने अपना सम्पूर्ण जीवन बौद्ध धम्म के प्रचार-प्रसार और उत्थान हेतु समर्पित कर दिया। सारनाथ और श्रावस्ती में उसके द्वारा निर्मित बौद्ध-विहारों के भग्नावशेषों को देखकर स्वतः ही कुमारदेवी के कार्यों की महत्ता का ज्ञान होता है।

कुमारदेवी के माता-पिता बौद्ध थे, इसलिए वह भी भगवान बुद्ध की परम भक्त थी। कुमारदेवी के माता-पिता ने उसका विवाह वाराणसी और कन्नौज के गहड़वाल शासक राजा मदनचन्द्र के पुत्र गोविन्द के साथ कर दिया। गोविन्दचन्द्र पिता के मृत्यु के उपरान्त सन् 1114 में वाराणसी और कन्नौज के सिंहासन पर बैठा परंतु वह अधिकांश समय वाराणसी में ही व्यतीत करता था। उसके साथ रानी कुमारदेवी भी स्थायी रूप से वाराणसी में ही निवास करती थी। वह नित्य प्रातः गंगा जल से स्नान कर भगवान बुद्ध के मन्दिर में पूजन हेतु जाती थी। वह नित्य भिक्षुओं व आश्रितों (भिखारियों) को भोजन दान करती थीं।

कुमारदेवी ने वाराणसी के अनेक विहारों की मरम्मत करवायी। कुमारदेवी ने नव खण्डों में विभाजित सारनाथ में 'धर्मचक्राजिन विहार' का निर्माण कराया, जो कि बहुत विस्तृत और सुन्दर था। यह विहार लम्बाई में पूर्व से पश्चिम 760 फुट का था। उसमें गर्भियों में भिक्षुओं के निवास हेतु सुरंग भी बनी हुई थी, जिसमें तथागत भगवान बुद्ध की भव्य प्रतिमा प्रतिष्ठापित की गयी थी। इस विहार की भित्तियाँ नाना प्रकार की स्थापत्य कलाओं से युक्त थी। विहार में मध्य भाग में स्नान-गृह और एक सुन्दर जल-कूप भी था। भिक्षुओं के पठन-पाठन की सुविधा हेतु विहार के विशाल प्रांगण में परिवेण बना हुआ था। कुमारदेवी ने विहार के मध्यभाग में एक मन्दिर की भी स्थापना की थी, जिसमें भगवान बुद्ध की एक विशाल मूर्ति प्रतिष्ठापित की गयी थी। यह मन्दिर सारनाथ में स्थित सभी मन्दिरों में श्रेष्ठ और दर्शनीय था। उपासिका कुमारदेवी ने विहार के खर्चे हेतु वाराणसी की सबसे अधिक आय वाली जम्बुकी नामक तहसील दान स्वरूप दिया था। सारनाथ से प्राप्त 26 श्लोकों के एक शिलालेख में उसके द्वारा किये गये कार्यों का समस्त वृत्तान्त अंकित है।

कुमारदेवी ने श्रावस्ती की गन्धकुटी की मरम्मत करा उसने बाड़ा, चतुरासीति, पत्तलीय, विहार, पत्तरण, उपलहड़ा, मेयी, सम्बद्ध घोसाड़ी पोठीवार और सम्बद्ध पायसी नामक ग्रामों को विहार के व्यय हेतु दान में दिया था।

कुमारदेवी ने नालन्दा और बोधगया (महाबोधिविहार) के लिये भी पर्याप्त धन दिया। उसने सहस्त्रों भिक्षुओं को आश्रय प्रदान किया और अनेक विहारों के दायकत्वभार को भी सँभाला। उपासिका कुमारदेवी ने अपना सम्पूर्ण जीवन बौद्ध धम्म के विकास हेतु समर्पित कर दिया।

बौद्ध धम्म से सम्बन्धित साहित्यिक एवं पुरातात्विक दोनों ही प्रकार के स्रोतों के अध्ययन व विवेचन से यह ज्ञात होता है कि काशी की प्रमुख

भिक्षुणियों एवं बौद्ध धम्मानुयायी स्त्रियों (उपासिकाओं) ने बौद्ध धम्म के विकास हेतु महत्वपूर्ण कार्य किये। जिसके फलस्वरूप बौद्ध धम्म न केवल भारतवर्ष में अपितु विदेशों में भी प्रचलित हो गया। बौद्ध धम्मानुयायी स्त्रियों ने बौद्ध धम्म के विकास हेतु अति महत्वपूर्ण कार्य किये जिसने प्रत्येक कालखण्ड में बौद्ध धम्म को पुष्ट करने का कार्य किया। साहित्यिक व पुरातात्विक दोनों ही प्रकार के साक्ष्यों के अवलोकन के आधार पर हम कह सकते हैं कि प्रमुख बौद्ध भिक्षुणियों एवं बौद्ध उपासिकाओं ने बौद्ध धम्म के विकास में अपना अति विशिष्ट व अतुलनीय योगदान दिया।

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असिस्टेंट प्रोफेसर, इतिहास विभाग, दीन दयाल उपाध्याय गोरखपुर विश्वविद्यालय, गोरखपुर

भारतीय स्वाधीनता आंदोलन में भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस के विभिन्न कार्यक्रम के माध्यम से महिलाएं राष्ट्र की मुख्यधारा में 1905 से ही जुड़ने लगी थी। आगे चलकर महात्मा गांधी के आह्वान की चमत्कारी प्रभाव पड़ा और महिला अपनी कुंठाओं तनाव और अंधविश्वासों को तोड़कर अहिंसा का मूल मंत्र स्वीकार कर कांग्रेस के कार्यक्रम से सक्रिय हो गई। इस नीति के समर्थक महिलाओं ने देश भर में सेविका संघ की स्थापना कर सत्याग्रह को समृद्ध बनाया। महात्मा गांधी के ऐतिहासिक नमक सत्याग्रह ने भारतीय राजनीति को नई दिशा प्रदान की। वास्तव में यह एक ऐसी चिंगारी थी जिसने स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन की लौ को प्रज्वलित किया तथा कांग्रेस के “सविनय अवज्ञा आन्दोलन” की जड़ों को संपूर्ण देश में व्यापक रूप से फैलाने में निर्णायक भूमिका अदा की। इसी पृष्ठभूमि में गांधी जी ने कांग्रेस के नेतृत्व में पहला कदम उठाते हुए ‘नमक सत्याग्रह’ का सूत्रपात किया जिसमें महिलाएं पीछे नहीं थी।

राष्ट्रवाद के उत्थान तथा भारतीय परंपरा एवं विरासत के प्रति गौरव की भावना से कांग्रेस में महिला संगठन की भागीदारी से आंदोलन समृद्ध होता गया। इस महान अभियान की शुरुआत साबरमती नदी के तट पर स्थित साबरमती आश्रम परिसर में 12 मार्च को सुबह 6:30 बजे हुई। गांधीजी एक लाठी के सहारे 61 वर्ष की आयु में 78 सत्याग्रहियों के साथ संपूर्ण भारत का नेतृत्व कर रहे थे, जिसमें आंध्र प्रदेश, बंगाल, बिहार, बम्बई, गुजरात, केरल, कच्छ, कर्नाटक, महाराष्ट्र, पंजाब, राजपुताना, सिंध, तमिलनाडु, उत्तर प्रदेश, उत्कल और यहाँ तक कि नेपाल के प्रतिनिधि भी शामिल थे। 16 मार्च 1930 को ‘नवजीवन’ के प्रस्थान शीर्षक से गांधी जी ने अपने लेख में लिखा अहमदाबाद के हजारों स्त्रियों व पुरुषों ने 11 मार्च की रात को जागरण किया, हजारों की भीड़ उमड़ पड़ी, लोगों को इतनी लंबी कतार लगी कि वह चंदोला झील तक पहुंच गई।²

मार्च 1930 में कांग्रेस महासमिति की बैठक साबरमती आश्रम में हुई, जिसमें जवाहर लाल नेहरू, मौलाना आजाद, अब्बास तैय्यबजी, आचार्य कृपलानी, एस.सी. कालेलकर के साथ-साथ सरोजिनी नायडू, कस्तूरबा गांधी, अनुसूयाबेन व श्रीमती अंबाला सहित अनेक लोगों ने हिस्सा लिया। इस बैठक में बड़े पैमाने पर सत्याग्रह शुरू करने पर विचार किया गया।³ साबरमती से 241 मील की दूरी 24 दिनों की यात्रा पूरी कर गांधीजी अपने अनुयायियों के साथ समुद्र के किनारे पर स्थित दांडी ग्राम पहुंचे, उनके स्वागत के लिए सरोजिनी नायडू पहले ही पहुंच गई थीं। उन्होंने कहा- ‘विधि भंजक’ तुम्हारा स्वागत है।⁴ 13 अप्रैल को दांडी में 500 से अधिक महिलाओं ने गांधीजी का स्वागत किया।⁵

गांधीजी ने पानी से तैयार किया हुआ नमक उठाया तथा देश की जनता को भी नमक कानून भंग करने का आदेश दिया। गांधीजी के द्वारा उठाए 25 ग्राम नमक को नीलाम किया गया। अहमदाबाद के मिल-मालिक ने उसे 525 रु. में खरीदा। इसके बाद तो जैसे पूरे देश में समुद्र के

पानी को उबालकर नमक बनाने की होड़ शुरू हो गई। उसी दिन सारे देश में 50 लाख लोगों ने 5,000 सभाओं में नमक कानून तोड़ा। उत्तर-पश्चिम सीमांत प्रांतों ने सत्याग्रह का सर्वोच्च नमूना पेश किया, जहां अहिंसक भीड़ मशीनगनों के सामने डट गई। आसाम से सत्याग्रहियों ने बंगाल की खाड़ी में नमक कानून तोड़ने के लिए कूच किया। इस क्रम में व्यापक हड़ताल, धरने व जुलूस निकाले गए। इस आंदोलन ने सारे देश को खड़ा कर दिया। 92 हजार लोग जेल गए, जिनमें 17 हजार महिलाएं थीं।⁶

पहाड़ी प्रदेशों तथा जंगलों में रहने वाले लोगों ने जंगल के कानून तोड़े, किसानों ने लगान नहीं दिया, नमक बनाने के स्थानों पर हमले होने लगे, विदेशी कपड़ों की होली जलाई गई। विदेशी कपड़ों की दुकानों पर स्त्रियों ने 'पिकेटिंग' की। शराब की दुकानों पर भी स्त्रियों ने पहरेदारी शुरू कर दी। इस आंदोलन में अमीर हों या गरीब, पढ़ी-लिखी हों या अनपढ़, पर्दानशीन, जवान, वृद्ध सभी वर्ग की स्त्रियों ने बढ़-चढ़कर हिस्सा लिया।⁷

नमक सत्याग्रह में महिलाओं की भागीदारी पूरे जोरों पर थी। इस आंदोलन में गांधीजी ने विरोध प्रदर्शित करने के लिए प्रतीक के रूप में नमक को चुना। कांग्रेस के बुद्धिजीवी नमक को प्रतीक के रूप में चुनाव के अद्भुत विचार से आश्चर्यचकित रह गए, जिसे देखकर अंग्रेजों ने काफी मजाक भी बनाया, परंतु गांधीजी ने आंदोलन के लिए नमक जैसी तुच्छ परंतु दैनिक जीवन के लिए आवश्यक पदार्थ को चुना, जो महिलाओं के कार्यक्षेत्र को पदोन्नति प्रदान करता था।⁸

कांग्रेसी केसरिया खादी साड़ियों में लिपटी महिलाओं ने विदेशी वस्तुओं की दुकानों पर धरना दिया, अगर कोई इन दुकानों में प्रवेश करने की कोशिश करता था तो महिलाएं हाथ जोड़कर उनसे निवेदन करती थीं कि अगर वे जाना ही चाहते हैं तो वे उनके शरीर को पैरों से रौंदकर जाएं। महिलाओं के इस प्रकार के निवेदन का सकारात्मक प्रभाव पड़ा और अधिकतर भारतीय दुकानदारों ने सहयोग किया व विदेशी वस्त्रों का व्यापार पूरी तरह बंद कर दिया।⁹ इस अभियान में सबसे महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका उन महिलाओं ने निभाई जो समाज के सभी वर्गों से आई थीं। यहां तक कि कस्तूरबा गांधी और श्रीमती मोतीलाल नहेरू ने अपनी उम्र के बावजूद धरने में हिस्सा लिया। धरने की सफलता के कारण सरकारी राजस्व में 70 प्रतिशत की कमी आई। केंद्रीय प्रांत में फारेस्ट कानून की अवज्ञा की गई, जिसके फलस्वरूप सरकार को 16 लाख रुपयों का घाटा उठाना पड़ा। संपूर्ण देश में बच्चे, बूढ़े तथा महिलाओं ने नमक बनाकर नमक कानून तोड़ा। नमक को तैयार कर बेच दिया जाता था और उक्त राशि को कांग्रेस के कोष में जमा कर दिया जाता था। लाइसेंस के बिना नमक बनाना और बेचना दोनों ही कानून के विरुद्ध था, यही सत्याग्रह का रूप था।¹⁰

4 मई को गांधीजी ने जब ऐलान किया कि वह पश्चिमी तट पर घरसाना साल्ट वर्क्स पर छापे की अगुवाई करेंगे तो 5 तारीख की रात को 1 बजकर 10 मिनट पर चुपके से उन्हें गिरफ्तार कर लिया गया।¹¹ गांधीजी की गिरफ्तारी के बाद अब्बास तैय्यबजी ने धरसाना सत्याग्रह का नेतृत्व किया।

12 मई, 1930 को कार्यकर्ताओं के साथ यात्रा का कार्यक्रम बनाया, लेकिन उसके पहले ही गिरफ्तार कर लिए गए। इसके पश्चात सारी जिम्मेदारी श्रीमती सरोजिनी नायडू पर आ गई। 21 मई को 2,000 से अधिक कार्यकर्ताओं ने श्रीमती नायडू व इमाम साहब के नेतृत्व में बंबई से 150 मील उत्तर में स्थित धरसाना नमक डिपो पर धावा बोल दिया। श्रीमती नायडू ने कार्यकर्ताओं

का नेतृत्व करते हुए कहा- "भले ही गांधीजी का शरीर जेल में है किंतु उनकी आत्मा आपके साथ है। तुम्हें किसी भी परिस्थिति में हिंसा का प्रयोग नहीं करना चाहिए। भारत की प्रतिष्ठा अब तुम्हारे हाथ में है।" सत्याग्रहियों ने पूरे जोश के साथ आगे बढ़ना शुरू किया किंतु पुलिस ने भीड़ पर स्टील लगी लाठियों से ताबड़तोड़ प्रहार शुरू कर दिया। सत्याग्रहियों में से किसी ने भी प्रतिरोध में अपना एक हाथ तक नहीं उठाया, जब इसकी रिपोर्ट यूनाइटेड प्रेस के तहत 1350 से अधिक विश्व भर के समाचार-पत्रों में प्रकाशित हुई तो पूरे विश्व में सनसनी फैल गई।¹²

कस्तूरबा गांधी ने सत्याग्रह प्रस्ताव के लिए 37 महिला स्वयंसेवकों का नेतृत्व करते हुए साबरमती आश्रम से यात्रा प्रारंभ की, जिसका मुख्य उद्देश्य नमक कर कानून का उन्मूलन करना था। 6 अप्रैल, 1930 को दांडी में नमक सत्याग्रह के बाद गांधीजी ने जो सभा की थी, उसमें लगभग चार-पांच हजार महिलाएं उपस्थित थीं। इस सभा में 'श्री स्वराज संघ' की स्थापना की गई। सूरत में विदेशी कपड़ों के बायकाट और शराबबंदी के लिए छावनियां डालने की एक योजना तैयार की गई। इस अभियान का नेतृत्व कस्तूरबा गांधी ने किया। उनके नाम में कुछ ऐसा खिंचाव था कि छावनी में सैकड़ों महिलाएं भर्ती हो गईं। सूरत शहर में पिछड़ी कहीं जाने वाली जातियों से भी, सैकड़ों महिलाएं पहली बार सार्वजनिक कार्य के लिए निकल पड़ीं। कस्तूरबा गांधी ने धरसाना और बोरसद की भी यात्रा की और सत्याग्रहियों का उत्साह बढ़ाया।¹³

कस्तूरबा गांधी ने धरनों-जुलूसों का नेतृत्व किया, लाठियां खाईं, जेल गईं और गांधीजी के उपवासों के समय उनका संबल बनीं। आश्रम में आने-जाने वाले कार्यकर्ताओं और अतिथियों की देखभाल की जिम्मेदारी लेकर तो वह एक तरह से पूरे स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन की रीढ़ ही बन गईं। कस्तूरबा गांधी के अतिरिक्त मिठूबेन पतित, शारदा-बेन मेहता, हंस मेहता, मृदुला साराभाई, अनसूइयाबेन, इंदूमती सेठ, मणीवेन पटेल और बहुत सी महिला नेता थीं।¹⁴

इसी क्रम को आगे बढ़ाते हुए कमला देवी ने 15 हजार सत्याग्रहियों के जुलूस का नेतृत्व करके वाडाला में नमक बनाने का कार्य किया। महिलाओं के संगठन ने नमक कानून तोड़ने में सक्रिय भूमिका निभाई। महिला स्वयंसेवकों ने चौपाटी के बीच से लोटे में जल लेकर घर में नमक बनाया तथा अनेकों ने तो नमक को गलियों में ले जाकर उचित दामों पर बेचा भी।¹⁵ कमला देवी ने जुलूसों, सभाओं, दुकानों पर धरना आदि में भी भाग लिया तथा जगह-जगह भाषण दिए। उन्होंने बंबई के कांग्रेस भवन में नमक बनाया तथा खुलेआम कम कीमत पर बेचा। यहां तक कि उन्होंने हाईकोर्ट में भी नमक बेचा। जब कमला देवी को गिरफ्तार कर मुकदमे के सिलसिले में न्यायालय में उपस्थित किया गया तो उन्होंने वहां पर भी खुलेआम नमक बेचना शुरू कर दिया। इस कार्य के लिए उन्हें 150 रु. जुर्माना तथा छः महीने की सजा सुनाई गई तथा नमक कानून भंग करने के अपराध में 20 रु. जुर्माना तथा 15 दिन की सजा दी गई।¹⁶

पंजाब की राजकुमारी अमृत कौर 1930 में 'अखिल भारतीय महिला सम्मेलन' की सचिव बनीं। 1931 से 1933 तक वे 'महिला संघ' की अध्यक्ष थीं। उन्होंने नमक सत्याग्रह में भाग लिया तथा बंबई में गिरफ्तार कर ली गईं। अमृत कौर ने कांग्रेस के प्रचार के लिए उत्तर पश्चिमी सीता प्रांत का दौरा किया था।¹⁷ राष्ट्रीय ख्याति प्राप्त पंजाब की ही पार्वती देवी ने 1930 में आगरा को अपनी गतिविधियों का केंद्र बनाया। उन्होंने कई दर्जन महिला कांग्रेस कार्यकर्त्रियों को साथ लेकर 'राष्ट्रीय महिला समिति' को सक्रिय बनाया, 'कुमारी सभा' की स्थापना की तथा महात्मा गांधी के

'नमक सत्याग्रह में कांग्रेसी महिलाओं की भूमिका बच्चों की 'वानर सेना' बनाई। शराब की दुकानों पर महिलाएं रोज धरना देने लगीं।

विदेशी कपड़ों की होली जलाई गई तथा महिलाओं की रैलियां निकाली गईं। पार्वती देवी इन कार्यों के लिए गिरफ्तार की गईं¹⁸ पंजाब की ही सुप्रसिद्ध महिला लाडो रानी जुत्शी ने 1930 के सत्याग्रह आंदोलन में अपनी गिरफ्तारी दी। अगस्त 1930 में वह पंजाब प्रांतीय कांग्रेस कमेटी की अध्यक्ष थीं। उनकी गतिविधियां असह्य हो जाने पर प्रासीक्यूटिंग मजिस्ट्रेट के नगर से बाहर होने पर भी उन्हें बिना वारंट आधी रात को गिरफ्तार किया गया।

1930 के आंदोलन में उनकी तीनों पुत्री जनक, मनमोहिनी और श्यामा ने भी सक्रिय भाग लिया। मनमोहिनी छात्र यूनिनयन की अध्यक्ष होने के नाते छात्रों की आंदोलनकारी गतिविधियों की नेतृत्वकर्ती थीं। सबसे छोटी श्यामा कालेज पिकेटिंग में गिरफ्तार हुई तो बड़ी बहन जनक, जो लाहौर वीमेंस कालेज में प्रवक्ता थीं, ने नौकरी से इस्तीफा दे दिया तथा आंदोलन में कूद पड़ीं।¹⁹ 1937 के निर्वाचन में यू.पी. की लेजिस्लेटिव असेंबली के लिए कांग्रेस पार्टी की उम्मीदवार श्रीमती शर्मदा त्यागी ने नमक सत्याग्रह का नेतृत्व किया और पुलिस की लाठियों का प्रहार सहा। 1 अगस्त, 1930 को श्रीमती हंसा मेहता के नेतृत्व में जो उस समय नगर कांग्रेस की डिक्टेटर थीं, एक जुलूस निकाला गया, जिसमें लगभग सौ महिलाओं को गिरफ्तार किया गया।²⁰

मध्य प्रदेश की नागपुर की अनुसूइयाबेन काले ने 1930 में नमक सत्याग्रह के दौरान महात्मा गांधी की गिरफ्तारी के विरोध में अपने पद से त्यागपत्र दे दिया तथा आंदोलन में सक्रिय रूप से भाग लिया। पूना की अवंतिकाबाई गोखले विख्यात समाज सुधाकर तथा श्री गोपालकृष्ण गोखले की पत्नी थीं। नमक सत्याग्रह में जहां सरोजिनी नायडू तथा कमला देवी चट्टोपाध्याय जैसी कर्मठ महिलाओं का नाम जुड़ा है, वहीं अवंतिकाबाई गोखले का सहयोग कम सराहनीय नहीं है। 6 अप्रैल, 1930 को कमला देवी चट्टोपाध्याय के साथ अवंतिकाबाई गोखले ने भी नमक कानून भंग किया। इनके साथ हजारों महिला स्वयंसेविकाएं भी थीं, जिनके नाम कोई नहीं जानता, परंतु उनका सहयोग किसी से कम न था।²¹

नमक सत्याग्रह में भाग लेने वाली श्रीमती कमला नेहरू का नाम भी प्रमुख है, कमलाजी उस समय सक्रिय रूप से इस सत्याग्रह में कार्य कर रही थीं। उन्होंने महिला स्वयंसेवकों, किसानों तथा छात्रों को संगठित किया। उन्होंने अपने सूबे में 'कर न देना' आंदोलन में प्रमुख भूमिका अदा की। उन्होंने उत्तर प्रदेश की 'राजनीतिक महिला सभा' की अध्यक्षता की और महिलाओं से खादी के प्रयोग और भविष्य में होने वाले सत्याग्रहों तथा आंदोलनों के लिए अपने आपको पूर्ण रूप से तैयार करने के लिए अपील की।

इलाहाबाद में कमला नेहरू ने एक समूह को संबोधित करते हुए कहा- "प्रयाग की महिलाओं को आंदोलन में अधिकाधिक संख्या में शामिल होना चाहिए। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि न तो वह घर में आराम से बैठेंगी न ही प्रयाग की किसी महिला को ऐसा करने देंगी।" सरकार ने जब कांग्रेस को अवैध संस्था घोषित कर दिया तब कांग्रेस ने कार्यकारिणी के सभी पुरुष सदस्यों के अभाव में कार्यकारिणी के लिए महिला सदस्यों का चुनाव शुरू किया, जिसमें कमला जी भी एक थीं। अपने पति व ससुर की अनुपस्थिति में उन्होंने प्रदेश में कांग्रेस के नेतृत्व की बागडोर संभाली और दृढ़ निश्चय के साथ अपने सभी कर्तव्यों को पूरा किया। कमलाजी इलाहाबाद जिला कांग्रेस

की अध्यक्ष चुनी गई²² इसके अलावा 1930 में नेहरू परिवार की सभी महिलाएं आंदोलन में कूद पड़ीं। विजय लक्ष्मी और कृष्णा नेहरू ही नहीं, वयोवृद्धा स्वरूपरानी तथा बालिका इंदिरा भी इस लड़ाई में शामिल हुईं²³

1930 के नमक सत्याग्रह आंदोलन में गुजरात की महिलाओं ने सराहनीय कार्य किया। दांडी में महिला सम्मेलन के पश्चात गुजराती महिलाओं ने वायसराय को एक पत्र लिखा कि- "हम नमक सत्याग्रह में भाग लेने वाली श्रीमती कमला नेहरू का नाम भी प्रमुख है, कमलाजी उस समय सक्रिय रूप से इस सत्याग्रह में कार्य कर रही थीं। उन्होंने महिला स्वयंसेवकों, किसानों तथा छात्रों को संगठित किया। उन्होंने अपने सूबे में 'कर न देना' आंदोलन में प्रमुख भूमिका अदा की। उन्होंने उत्तरप्रदेश की 'राजनीतिक महिला सभा' की अध्यक्षता की और महिलाओं से खादी के प्रयोग और भविष्य में होने वाले सत्याग्रहों तथा आंदोलनों के लिए अपने आपको पूर्ण रूप से तैयार करने के लिए अपील की। तथा शराब, विदेशी कपड़ों तथा नमक कर बंद करने का दबाव बनाया।

सरला देवी साराभाई ने अपनी अद्भुत संगठन शक्ति का परिचय दिया। वह गुजरात समिति की ओर से कांग्रेस डिकटेटर थीं। वह रचनात्मक कार्यों तथा गांधीजी के संदेश प्रसार में लगी रहीं। विदेशी कपड़ों की दुकानों को सीलबंद करवाने में महिला जत्थों का नेतृत्व किया। सरला देवी साराभाई की पुत्री मृदुलावेन साराभाई ने धरना टोलियों के संगठन व संचालन में प्रमुख भूमिका निभाई²⁴

प्रखर प्रतिभा एवं संगठनात्मक दक्षता से संपन्न अरुणा आसफ अली 1930 के नमक सत्याग्रह के समय राष्ट्रीय मुक्ति संग्राम की अग्रणी नेत्री के रूप में सामने आ गई थीं। जुलूसों का नेतृत्व करना, सभाओं में भाषण देना आदि शुरू कर दिया। उनकी गतिविधियां देखकर दिल्ली के मुख्य कमिश्नर ने उन्हें चेतावनी दी कि वे अपने आपको इन गतिविधियों से दूर रखें किंतु अरुणा आसफ अली ने इन गतिविधियों से दूर न होकर जेल जाना स्वीकार किया तथा एक वर्ष दिल्ली जेल में रहीं²⁵ मेरठ की कुशल महिला कार्यकर्त्री एवं स्वतंत्रता सेनानी उर्मिला देवी ने मेरठ के नौचंदी मेल में विदेशी कपड़ों के वहिष्कार के आंदोलन को चलाने तथा महिला टोली का नेतृत्व करने का कार्य किया। महिलाओं की उग्र महिला टोली ने विदेशी कपड़ों की 80 प्रतिशत दुकानें बंद करवा दी थीं। मेरठ में उनकी संगठन की क्षमता का अंदाजा इस बात से लगाया जा सकता है कि 6 घंटों के भीतर 2,200 व्यक्तियों से प्रतिज्ञा पत्र भरवाया गया और नगर में महिलाओं की 34 सभाएं की गईं। उर्मिला देवी ने 17 जुलाई को 10 हजार लोगों की भीड़ में भाषण दिया तथा अगले दिन गिरफ्तार कर ली गईं²⁶

नमक सत्याग्रह में अनेकों अन्य महिलाओं ने भी भाग लिया एवं गिरफ्तार हुईं, जिनमें शांताबेन पटेल, अन्नपूर्णा मोहराना, अम्मूस्वामीनाथन, इंदुमती गोयनका, खुशींदेबेन नौरोजी, छोटा देवी, ज्योत्स्नाबेन शुक्ल, एस. अंबुजमल्ल, रुक्मिणी लक्ष्मीपति, मुत्तुलक्ष्मी रेड्डी, वासंती देवी, सुनीति देवी, मणिवेन बल्लभभाई पटेल, नलिनी सेनगुप्त, मार्तिगिनी हजारा आदि प्रमुख हैं।

मंजर सेना की प्रमुख सदस्या उषा मेहता ने 1930 में मात्र 9 साल की उम्र में प्रभात फेरियों, मोर्चों, नुकड़ सभाओं में भाग लेना, सूत काटना, बच्चों को समाचार देना तथा समुद्री पानी से नमक बनाकर उन्हें छोटे-छोटे पैकटों में भरकर बेचने का कार्य किया।²⁷ इसी प्रकार दिल्ली की सत्यवती देवी तथा कलावती देवी 1930 में मोरी गेट स्थित भोलानाथ की शराब की दुकान पर

पिकेटिंग करते हुए गिरफ्तार हुई दिल्ली की ही कस्तूरी देवी, मूला देवी, कौशल्या देवी, चंद्रावती देवी, चंद्रवती कोहली ने भी नमक सत्याग्रह में भाग लिया²⁸ नमक सत्याग्रह में महिलाओं की भागीदारी उनकी जेल यात्रा और कठोर कष्ट सहने के बाद भी आंदोलन से विचलित न होना इस बात का प्रमाण है कि भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस के नमक सत्याग्रह में महिलाओं की भूमिका काफी महत्वपूर्ण थी। उन्होंने अपनी सक्रिय भागीदारी से यह सिद्ध कर दिया कि वे देश-सेवा एवं राजनीति में सार्थक भूमिका निभा सकती हैं। इसका प्रभाव आने वाले आंदोलनों पर पड़ा, जहां उनकी उत्तरोत्तर संख्या में वृद्धि होती गई और उनमें नेतृत्व की क्षमता विकसित हुई जो देशहित के लिए सार्थक रहा।

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बौद्ध महाविहारों में नारियों की स्थिति: एक आलोचनात्मक और ऐतिहासिक मूल्यांकन

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इतिहास विभाग, पाटलिपुत्र विश्वविद्यालय, पटना

शोध पत्र का सारांश

प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र आरंभिक बौद्ध महाविहारों में भिक्षुणी संघ की स्थापना, उनकी संस्थागत संरचना, दैनिक जीवनचर्या और बौद्ध धर्म के विकास में उनके अवदान का एक विस्तृत और विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन है। भगवान बुद्ध द्वारा आनंद के आग्रह पर स्त्रियों के लिए संघ के द्वार खोलना तत्कालीन पितृसत्तात्मक समाज का एक असाधारण और युगांतरकारी कदम था। सैद्धांतिक स्तर पर, महाविहारों में भिक्षुओं और भिक्षुणियों के उद्देश्य, अधिकार और कर्तव्य लगभग समान थे, किंतु व्यावहारिक यथार्थ में भिक्षुणी संघ को भिक्षु संघ के अधीन रखा गया था। अष्ट 'गरुधम्म' (आठ कठोर नियम) जैसी व्यवस्थाएं महिलाओं की द्वितीयक स्थिति को दर्शाती हैं। इसके बावजूद, अनेक सामाजिक और संस्थागत वर्जनाओं के होते हुए भी महिलाओं ने 'अर्हत्' पद और 'निर्वाण' की प्राप्ति कर अपनी आध्यात्मिक श्रेष्ठता सिद्ध की। यह आलेख इस बात का भी अन्वेषण करता है कि स्त्रियों पर थोपे गए ये कठोर नियम संभवतः बुद्ध के महापरिनिर्वाण के बाद के क्षेपक (Interpolations) हो सकते हैं।

बीज शब्द : बौद्ध महाविहार, भिक्षुणी संघ, गरुधम्म, उपस्सय, पाचित्तिय, समकच्छिका, थेरीगाथा, महाप्रजापति गौतमी, अर्हत्, स्त्री विमर्श।

बौद्ध संघ में स्त्रियों का प्रवेश पारंपरिक लैंगिक विकृतियों से परे जाकर मानवीय सद्गुणों और आध्यात्मिक संभावनाओं को पहचानने का एक अप्रतिम प्रयास था। बुद्ध और आनंद का यह स्पष्ट मानना था कि जाति की तरह लिंग भी किसी व्यक्ति द्वारा दुखों से छुटकारा पाने और बौद्ध लक्ष्य (निर्वाण) को प्राप्त करने में बाधा नहीं हो सकता। बुद्ध ने नारी को ज्ञानी, मातृत्वशील, सृजनात्मक, भद्र और सहिष्णु के रूप में स्वीकार किया। महाप्रजापति गौतमी और अन्य शाक्यवंशीय नारियों द्वारा प्रव्रज्या ग्रहण करने का मूल उद्देश्य बुद्ध की शरण में जाकर अपनी आध्यात्मिक और बौद्धिक उन्नति करना था। तात्त्विक दृष्टि से, पुरुषों और महिलाओं का संघ में आगमन का उद्देश्य एक ही था, अतः सैद्धांतिक रूप से दोनों के अधिकार और कर्तव्य भी एक समान थे।

यद्यपि सिद्धांततः महिलाओं के लिए विहार-जीवन आत्म-निर्णय और प्रतिष्ठा में पुरुषों के बराबर था, किंतु व्यावहारिक रूप से भिक्षुणियों की स्थिति भिक्षुओं की तुलना में निम्नतर और द्वितीयक थी। भिक्षुणियाँ बिना आज्ञा भिक्षुओं के सामने बैठ नहीं सकती थीं और न ही विनय, अभिधम्म या सुत्त पर भिक्षुओं के साथ वाद-विवाद कर सकती थीं।¹ भिक्षुणियों की इस अधीनस्थ स्थिति को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए उन पर आठ 'गरुधम्म' (कठोर नियम)² लागू किए गए थे, जो इस प्रकार हैं:

1. आयु या ज्ञान में कितनी भी वरिष्ठ भिक्षुणी हो, उसे एक नव-दीक्षित भिक्षु को भी आसन से उठकर सम्मान देना पड़ता था।³
2. भिक्षुणियाँ उस स्थान पर वर्षावास नहीं कर सकती थीं जहाँ भिक्षु न हों। उन्हें हर 15 दिन में भिक्षुओं से सलाह लेनी पड़ती थी।

3. वर्षावास के उपरांत भिक्षुणियों को भिक्षुओं से पूछना पड़ता था कि क्या उनके (भिक्षुणियों के) विरुद्ध कोई दोष देखा, सुना या जाना गया है।
4. भिक्षु-हीन आवास में भिक्षुणी को वर्षावास नहीं करना चाहिए।
5. प्रत्येक आधे माह पर भिक्षुणी को भिक्षु संघ से उपोसथ की विधि और उपदेश का समय पूछना चाहिए।
6. गंभीर दोष लगने पर भिक्षुणी को दोनों संघों (भिक्षु और भिक्षुणी) के समक्ष पक्ष रखना पड़ता था।
7. भिक्षुणियाँ किसी भी स्थिति में भिक्षुओं के प्रति अपशब्द या असभ्य भाषा का प्रयोग नहीं कर सकती थीं।
8. भिक्षुगण भिक्षुणियों को आदेश या सलाह दे सकते थे, परंतु भिक्षुणियों के लिए ऐसा करना पूर्णतः वर्जित था।⁴

इस प्रकार यह स्पष्ट है कि भिक्षुणियों की स्थिति व्यवहारिक रूप में भिक्षुओं से निम्न थी एवं वे उनके अधीनस्थता में ही कार्य संपादित करती थीं। उन्हें किसी को अपराध के लिए दंडित करने का अधिकार नहीं था।⁵ भिक्षुणियाँ एक ओर खड़ी रह कर भिक्षुओं के प्रति आदर प्रदर्शित करती थीं। सामूहिक भोजन के दौरान भी भिक्षुणियों को भिक्षुओं से कम से कम ढाई हाथ की दूरी पर बैठना अनिवार्य था, अन्यथा उन पर 'पाचित्तिय' का दोष लगता था।⁶ उन्हें किसी अपराध के लिए दंडित करने का अधिकार भी नहीं था।

बौद्ध महाविहारों में भिक्षुणियों पर थोपे गए आठ 'गरुधम्म' (कठोर नियमों) और उनकी अधीनस्थ स्थिति के बावजूद, उनके मानसिक और आध्यात्मिक विकास पर कोई नकारात्मक प्रभाव नहीं पड़ा, बल्कि उनकी आध्यात्मिक श्रेष्ठता में वृद्धि ही हुई। स्रोतों से प्राप्त जानकारी के अनुसार भिक्षुणियों की मानसिक स्थिति और विकास पर इसका प्रभाव निम्नलिखित रूपों में देखा जा सकता है:

मानसिक और आध्यात्मिक दृढ़ता: आठ गरुधम्म नियमों के कारण भिक्षुणियों की स्थिति भले ही भिक्षुओं से निम्न कर दी गई थी और उन्हें उनके अधीन कार्य करना पड़ता था, किंतु वे आध्यात्मिक मनन और चिंतन में कभी भी पीछे नहीं रहीं। अनेक वर्जनाओं के होते हुए भी, उनकी आध्यात्मिकता और श्रेष्ठता में कोई कमी नहीं आई।

मानसिक संघर्ष ('मार') पर विजय: भिक्षुणियों का प्रमुख काव्यात्मक ग्रंथ 'थेरीगाथा' और 'संयुक्त निकाय' उनकी मानसिक दृढ़ता का सबसे बड़ा प्रमाण है। इन ग्रंथों में भिक्षुणियों द्वारा 'मार' (मानसिक बाधाओं या कामदेव) के साथ किए गए कड़े संघर्ष और उस पर पूर्ण विजय प्राप्त करने का मार्मिक चित्रण मिलता है।⁷

मानसिक दुखों से मुक्ति ('अर्हत्' की प्राप्ति): इन कठोर नियमों के बावजूद कई महिलाएँ मानसिक एवं दैहिक दुखों (जो मानवीय अस्तित्व का यथार्थ हैं) से स्वयं को पूर्ण रूप से मुक्त करने में सफल रहीं और उन्होंने 'अर्हत्' का पद प्राप्त किया। अपने दैनिक जीवन के एक बड़े भाग में भिक्षुणियाँ नवीन भिक्षुणियाँ को निर्देश देती थी एवं धर्म एवं विनय का शिक्षण करती थीं। भिक्षुणियों की वरीयता उनके ज्ञान और उनकी पारलौकिक शक्तियों के आधार पर निर्धारित की जाती थी। प्रवज्या ग्रहण करने के दो वर्षों के उपरान्त उन्हें उपसम्पदा प्रदान की जाती थी।⁸

अंतिम लक्ष्य (निर्वाण) की प्राप्ति: महिलाओं पर गरुधम्म जैसे जो भी पारंपरिक प्रतिबंध थोपे गए, वे उन्हें बौद्ध धर्म के अंतिम लक्ष्य अर्थात् 'निर्वाण' प्राप्त करने से नहीं रोक सके।

नैतिक सर्वोच्चता का विकास: अनेक प्रतिकूल परिस्थितियों और उत्पीड़नों के होते हुए भी, विहारों में मिलने वाली शिक्षा और व्यक्तिगत नैतिक सर्वोच्चता की प्रबल भावना ने अनेक महिलाओं को संगठित जीवन की अज्ञात संभावनाओं की ओर प्रेरित किया।

संक्षेप में, यद्यपि इन आठ नियमों ने भिक्षुणियों को संस्थागत और व्यावहारिक रूप से भिक्षुओं के अधीन कर दिया था, किंतु ये नियम उनकी मानसिक उन्नति, बौद्धिक उत्थान और मोक्ष प्राप्ति के मार्ग में बाधा नहीं बन सके।

बौद्ध महाविहारों में महिलाओं के लिए पर्याप्त और पृथक् व्यवस्थाएँ थीं।

आवासीय व्यवस्था: चुल्लवग्ग के अनुसार, भिक्षुणियों के निवास को 'उपस्सय'⁹ कहा जाता था। इसे 'आवस्था'¹⁰ भी कहा गया है, जिसमें दरवाजे होते थे। इसके अतिरिक्त उनके लिए पृथक् शौचालय ('पस्सावादोनिका') और स्नानागार ('जंताघर') की व्यवस्था थी।¹¹ भिक्षुणियों के आराम (उद्यान) की जिम्मेदारी जिस भिक्षुणी पर होती थी, उसे 'आरामकिनी'¹² कहा जाता था। उन्हें अकेले या स्वतंत्र रूप से रहने की स्वीकृति नहीं थी,¹³ और उन्हें जंगलों में निवास करने की मनाही थी।

वेशभूषा और मर्यादा: भिक्षुणियों की वेशभूषा सादी और अनाकर्षक होती थी।¹⁴ भिक्षुणियाँ भली भाँति वस्त्र पहनकर समीपस्थ नगरों में परिचारिका वृत्ति के लिए जाती थीं।¹⁵ वे 'संघाटी' धारण नहीं करती थीं, बल्कि बिना चुन्ट का 'कायाबंधन'¹⁶ पहनती थीं। वे एक लंबा लबादा 'धारना-पावास' ओढ़ती थीं, जिसे दो भिक्षुणियाँ एक साथ भी ओढ़ सकती थीं। वक्षस्थल को ढंकने के लिए 'समकच्छिका' (कंचुकी)¹⁷ का प्रयोग अनिवार्य था; एक बार एक भिक्षुणी बिना इसके परिचारिका कर्म के लिए गई और तेज हवा से वस्त्र हटने पर उपहास का पात्र बनी, जिसके बाद इसे अनिवार्य कर दिया गया।¹⁸

दैनिक जीवन: वे अपना दोपहर के पूर्व का भोजन विहारों में सामूहिक रूप से करती थीं। भिक्षुणियाँ कभी-कभी दुकानों में भी जाती थीं। यह भी उल्लेख मिलता है कि कुछ भिक्षुणियाँ कुछ पैसे भी अपने गृही उपासकों के माध्यम से जमा करवाती थीं।¹⁹ एक भिक्षुणी सुनन्दा ने अपनी बीमारी के समय एक नवभिक्षुणी को तेल खरीदने के लिए दुकान पर भेजा था।²⁰ दोपहर के भोजन के पश्चात् भिक्षुणियाँ एकांत में ध्यान करती थीं। उनके लिए किसी उपासक के घर भोजन पकाना²¹, वस्त्र धोना, बैल की हड्डियों से शरीर रगड़ना या दूसरों से शरीर की मालिश करवाना सर्वथा वर्जित था।²² वे केवल अस्वस्थता की स्थिति में ही सवारी का प्रयोग कर सकती थीं।²³

ऐतिहासिक मूल्यांकन इन तमाम वर्जनाओं के बावजूद भिक्षुणियों ने ज्ञान और तपस्या में उच्च मुकाम हासिल किए। वरिष्ठता का निर्धारण आयु से नहीं, बल्कि ज्ञान और पारलौकिक शक्तियों के आधार पर होता था। प्रव्रज्या के दो वर्ष बाद उन्हें उपसम्पदा प्रदान की जाती थी। वरिष्ठ भिक्षुणियाँ नव-दीक्षित भिक्षुणियों को धर्म और विनय का शिक्षण देती थीं। 'थेरीगाथा' और 'संयुक्त निकाय' में भिक्षुणियों द्वारा कामदेव (मार) के साथ कड़े संघर्ष और उन पर विजय प्राप्त करने का मार्मिक वर्णन मिलता है, जो उनकी मानसिक दृढ़ता का प्रमाण है। महिलाओं को पुरुषों की तुलना में कम आर्थिक सहयोग, कम प्रतिष्ठा और धार्मिक अनुष्ठानों के कम अवसर मिले। फिर भी, कई महिलाएँ मानसिक और दैहिक दुखों से मुक्त होकर 'अर्हत्' बनीं।

निष्कर्ष (Conclusion) अध्ययन से यह स्पष्ट होता है कि बौद्ध महाविहारों में भिक्षुणियों को भिक्षुओं की अधीनता में कार्य करना पड़ता था। यद्यपि महिला संघ पुरुषों की मठीय व्यवस्था की अपेक्षा कम सफल रहा और भिक्षुणी संघ ज्यादा समय तक जीवित नहीं रह सका। किंतु, यह एक क्रांतिकारी ऐतिहासिक सत्य है कि बुद्ध ने महिलाओं के लिए मोक्ष और शिक्षा के नए क्षितिज खोले। विभिन्न स्रोतों और शोध से यह प्रबल संभावना बनती है कि महिलाओं से संबंधित आठ कठोर नियम (गरुधम्म) और अन्य कई प्रतिबंध बुद्ध की मृत्यु (महापरिनिर्वाण) के बाद जोड़े गए थे। निश्चित रूप से महिलाओं के लिए बौद्ध संघ के द्वार खोलना और उन्हें आध्यात्मिक व सामाजिक उन्नति का अवसर देना उस समय के समाज की दृष्टि से बहुत ही क्रांतिकारी और आगे का कदम था। इस प्रगतिशील कदम का तत्कालीन पुरुषों और विशेषकर मठीय भिक्षुओं ने अवश्य ही विरोध किया होगा। जब तक भगवान बुद्ध जीवित थे, तब तक उनके

प्रभावशाली और शक्तिशाली व्यक्तित्व के कारण भिक्षुओं की ये आपत्तियां और विरोध टिक नहीं सके। किंतु बुद्ध की मृत्यु के पश्चात्, भिक्षुणियों को अधीनस्थ और द्वितीयक स्थिति में रखने के लिए भिक्षुओं द्वारा महिलाओं पर ये आठ कठोर नियम और प्रतिबंध थोप दिए गए।

इस प्रकार यह प्रतीत होता है कि आरंभिक बौद्ध साहित्य में महिलाओं पर थोपे गए आठ 'गरुधम्म' नियम और अन्य कठोर प्रतिबंध वस्तुतः बुद्ध के समय के नहीं हैं, बल्कि ये बुद्ध की मृत्यु (महापरिनिर्वाण) के बाद के काल के क्षेपक (Interpolations) हैं। तत्कालीन पितृसत्तात्मक समाज और विशेषकर भिक्षुओं ने महिलाओं की आध्यात्मिक उन्नति पर आपत्ति की होगी, जिसे बुद्ध ने अपने प्रभावशाली व्यक्तित्व से दबा दिया होगा, परंतु उनके बाद ये नियम जोड़ दिए गए। तमाम प्रतिकूल परिस्थितियों और उत्पीड़न के बावजूद, महिलाओं ने महाविहारों में संगठित जीवन जिया, धर्म प्रचार किया और बौद्ध धर्म के विकास में एक प्रमुख स्तंभ के रूप में अपनी ऐतिहासिक व स्तुत्य भूमिका का निर्वहन किया।

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