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Journal of Kolkata Society for Asian Studies is a double blind peer reviewed publication. It is an International Journal dedicated to the development of all branches of Social Sciences with special reference to Asian Studies. The Journal accepts theoretical and empirical papers on interdisciplinary studies. The Journal occasionally publishes special issues which mediate on a single topic. It also publishes research notes, reports, book reviews, etc.

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Editorial

The first number of volume twelve of June 2026 contains eighteen papers and one report on the work done by an intern of the Kolkata Society for Asian Studies. There are two papers written in Bengali with abstracts in English language.

The first paper is written in Bengali by Monalisa Bhattacharjee, Assistant Professor in Political Science, Tribenidevi Bhalotia College, Raniganj, Paschim Bardhaman. The paper is titled as *Swami Vivekananda: Contribution of Swami Vivekananda to the development of Indian social consciousness and socialist ideas.* In the article the author has discussed Swami Vivekanda's Socialist thoughts. She has compared western socialism, such as, Marxist socialism and Swami Vivekanada's Socialist views.

The other one in Bengali is by Madhumita Roy, entitled in English as *Vows of Bengal: Psychological Tradition* and in Bengali as *Banglar Broto.* This in fact is the report of internship done in the year 2025 under the guidance of Dr. Debtusi Misra Chowdhury, Assistant Secretary of Kolkata Society for Asian Studies and Assistant Professor of Bengali in Sarojini Naidu College for Women. The author has discussed some penance, known in Bengali as *Broto* that are observed by women of Bengal to bring in safety and affluence to the family and in the country at large.

All the other papers are in English language. Paper written by Wrishav Roy and Sudarshan Ydadav from the Department of Mass Communication, Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi, is captioned as, *Adaptation of Charulata fromText to Screen: Narrative Analysis of the Cinematic Creation (Creative Form) of Director Satyajit Ray.* The authors have discussed Satyajit Ray's skill in creating short stories from text into cinematography without affecting the nuances of the original story. They have taken Ray's film *Charulata*, which is an adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's short story *Nastanirh.*

Apurba Ghosh, Research Scholar, Department of History, University of Kalyani, wrote the article*, Discourse on Masculinity and the Theatre: Experiences of Colonial Bengal in the Second-Half of Nineteenth-Century.* In the wake of the concept of masculinity by the British Colonials in Bengal, the nationalists tried to oppose the colonials' view that masculinity was possessed by the British colonials. A phenomenon, which made them fit to be rulers of India.

Where as they viewed the Bengalis as effeminate, therefore were not fit to be rulers. The author has put forward the efforts made by various nationalists, namely, Swami Vivekananda, Bankim Chandra and finally by the contemporary theatre personalities in Bengal in characterization of hegemonic masculinity in theatres.

The article, *Assessment of Emotional Intelligence of Primary School Teachers in West Bengal,* is written by Saheb Kazi and Jakir Hussain Laskar, both from Education department of Aliah University, Park Circus campus, Kolkata. They have emphasized that emotional Intelligence is necessary for primary school teaching. After conducting research among primary schools, the authors have come to the conclusion.

Arindam Chaturvedi, an undergraduate student of the department of Ancient Indian History of Lucknow University has written the paper, *Durga through the Ages: A Mytho-Cultural Re-examination of her origins and Figuration.* The author has gone through various stages of evolution of the deity from the mother Goddess stages to the emergence *Sakta* mode of worship.

Debarati Ganguly, Coordinator, Postgraduate Department of History, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, wrote the paper titled as *Exploring an Untold Chapter: Ramesh Chandra Majumdar's Contribution to the Journal of the Greater India Society.* The author had discussed on the famous historian's concept of the acculturation of South-East Asia through contacts from India. The paper is based on analysis of the articles written by Ramesh Chandra Majumdar on the subject of Indianization of South East Asia, published in the Journal of the Greater India Society, in the context of early India's cultural interaction with South-East Asia.

Puja Sarkar and Nafisa Begum from the Department of Education, Burdwan University has analyzed culturally responsive Pedagogy. The authors consider that in countries with people having diverse culture this kind of teaching is most relevant. The paper is entitled as *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in a Diverse Classroom Landscape: An Overview.*

Dipanjan Dey, Ph.D. Scholar, Dept. of History, University of Kalyani , wrote the paper entitled, *Modernisation, Globalisation: Continuity and Challenges of the Patua Community*. In this paper the author has discussed the craft of Patachitra. The *Potuas*, the artists, who made the *potochitras* and explained them with songs, have become redundant in the modern world due to globalization and advent of different sets of entertainment. Suggestion is made about revitalization of the art of the *Potuas*.

The paper, *Education is a Right, Not a Privilege: The Struggle for Inclusion among Street Children in Hastings, Kolkata (West Bengal)* is by Hiratan Dey, PhD Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Assam Don Bosco University and Marie Martinho Nympha,

PhD Supervisor, Department of Social Work, Assam Don Bosko University. The authors have carried out research among 36 pavement dwelling families in Hastings area of the city of Kolkata. They have found out the reasons behind the exclusion of street children of the area and have suggested some policy decisions for achievement of "inclusive and equitable quality education" for the pavement dwelling children..

The article, *Pandita Ramabai: A Radical Feminist Reformer in a Patriarchal Society* is written by Paromita Sarkar, Assistant Professor, Sovarani Memorial College, Jagatballavpur, Howrah. The paper is on the life and work of Pandita Ramabai. Born in an orthodox Brahmin family in Maharashtra, she had been educated by her father. She was the first woman to carry out reformist and feminist movement in Western India, as early as in the nineteenth century.

Gulnasin and Reshma Khatun, from the Department of Education, Aliah University, Kolkata, wrote the paper, *Role of Library in Promoting Quality Education in Higher Educational Institution.* The authors have taken data from 80 students of their own university and found that most of the students are satisfied with the library of the Institute and are of the opinion that libraries are important for promoting quality education, especially for higher education and research.

The Caste-Class Question: A Review of Intersections and Contradictions is the title of the paper authored by Prabudh Singh and Santosh K. Singh, School of Development Studies, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University, Delhi. Major focus of the discussion is on Brahaminical and Marxists paradigm for caste and class.

Bula Rani Howlader's paper is a critique of a novel. It is titled as *Thresholds of Pain and Passage: War and Immigration in Lisa See's shanghai girls.* The author is from Department of English, Dhruba Chand Halder College, Dakshin Barasat, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal. The author has analyzed Lisa See's story in the context of ravages of war and migration. Lisa See herself a Chinese American writer; put forward the traumatic experience of two Chinese sisters from war wrecked city of Sanghai and their migration to America.

The paper titled, *Mindfulness Training at Retreat: A Qualitative Study by Practising Vipassanā at Retreat*, is written by Mithu Lahiri, from the Department of Pali, University of Calcutta. This is done on the mindfulness meditation, which had emerged during Buddhist period. The meditation process has evolved through time. The author has discussed introduction of S. N. Goenka's retreat-based *vipassanā* meditation courses. The author explained that mindfulness is considered as safeguard for the mind and it prevents the mind from reacting with desire or with aversion. She has explained her experience of participation at the training centre of *Vipassana.*

Floor Art Motifs as Cultural Time-Capsules: Mythical Narratives and Identity in Floor line Traditions, is the paper written jointly by Varuna Semwal, Shreejit Guha and Debkumar Chakrabarti from Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh. The study is focused on the 'Broto Alpana', a tradition of Bengal. It is the intricate design drawn on the floor which depicts mythical tales and points out cultural identities. The floor designs are meant to ward off the evil. They have explained the theme with examples from various sources and with diagrams.

The paper titled as *Weaving Traditions with Resilience: The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Sustaining Community Health in the Indian Sundarbans,* is a product of joint research by the joint authors, Supriya Ghorui, Arun Maity, Sangita Patra, G. Uma, Amrita Dey, Bishwanath Das, Sanchayeeta Misra, Rupak Goswami, Nrisingha Dey, Bhubaneswar Pradhan and Anannya Dhar. Most of the authors are from Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute, Narendrapur, Kolkata. The paper is on Indigenous traditional knowledge, in short ITK. The research is carried out in Sundarban area, among traditional healers of Sandeshkhali Block II. It is a study on ethno-medicine with a multidisciplinary approach.

A Comparative Study on Home Management Abilities of Working and Non-working women of Kolkata, is the paper by Bithi Paul and Reshma Khatun. They are from Aliah University, Kolkata. The authors have made the study on equal number samples from both working and non working women with the use of available 'Home Management Scale' and found no difference in the ability of both the groups.

Paper written by Reshmi Chakrabarty, State Aided College Teacher (SACT – I) Department of Sociology, Kalyani Mahavidyalaya is titled as, *Marriage as an Institution: Gender Fluidity and Homosexuality.* The article discussed about the transgender people and the connected legality and other related problems of homosexuality prevalent recently in India. Main focus is on the emergence of 'LGBTQIAH' communities.

The articles published in this volume are from varied disciplines and are products of in-depth research. The editors thank them for their valuable contributions. At the same time the editors are much indebted to the reviewers of the articles. They not only have spent their valuable time for reviewing of the articles, suggesting revision, wherever needed and finally made the papers enriched with their expertise in particular subjects.

Ranjana Ray

Sarmistha De Basu.

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Swami Vivekananda: Contribution of Swami Vivekananda to the development of Indian social consciousness and socialist ideas

Monalisa Bhattacharjee

Abstract

In the nineteenth century, there was a tremendous development in the field of material science in the West. In this situation, it was necessary to present to the world community the spiritual wonders that had existed in India for thousands of years and to arouse appreciation and respect among Western scholars for Indian spiritual philosophy, while at the same time creating a respectful attitude towards India, the mother of spirituality. With English education, the spirit of material science spread so rapidly that it required extraordinary courage and extraordinary talent to stand against that phenomenon and change its direction. In the Indian context, Narendranath Dutta, who later became widely known as Swami Vivekananda, came forward to solve the problems in the social field. Many sociologists compare Vivekananda's thoughts in Hinduism, philosophy and social fields with the socialist philosophy of contemporary Europe. In the field of social thought, Vivekananda's philosophy is considered to have complemented the communist philosophy of the West. However, he did not imitate Western socialism. Rather, he tried to explain socialist thought in the Indian context in a religious and spiritual context, specifically according to the philosophy of Vedanta. The present research article will try to shed light on various aspects of Swami Vivekananda's socialist thought. Along with this, one of the objectives of the present research article is to compare the similarities and differences between Western socialism, especially Marxist socialism, and Vivekananda's socialist thought.

Keywords: *Vivekananda, Indian society, Indian philosophy, socialism, Marxist socialism*

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দঃ ভারতীয় সমাজ চেতনা ও সমাজতন্ত্র

সারাংশ

উনিশ শতকে পাশ্চাত্যে বস্তু বিজ্ঞানের ক্ষেত্রে অসাধারণ উন্নতি হয়েছিল। এই পরিস্থিতিতে, ভারতে হাজার হাজার বছর ধরে বিরাজমান আধ্যাত্মিক বিস্ময়কে বিশ্ব সমাজে উপস্থাপন করা এবং ভারতীয় আধ্যাত্মিক দর্শন সম্পর্কে পাশ্চাত্য পণ্ডিতদের মধ্যে প্রশংসা ও শ্রদ্ধা জাগানো, একই সাথে আধ্যাত্মিকতার জননী ভারতবর্ষের প্রতি

শ্রদ্ধাপূর্ণ মনোভাব তৈরি করার প্রয়োজনীয়তা দেখা দিয়েছিল। ইংরেজি শিক্ষার সাথে সাথে বস্তু বিজ্ঞানের চেতনা এত দ্রুত ছড়িয়ে পড়ে যে, সেই ঘটনার বিরুদ্ধে দাঁড়াতে এবং তার দিক পরিবর্তন করতে অসামান্য সাহসিকতা ও অসাধারণ প্রতিভার প্রয়োজন ছিল। ভারতীয় প্রেক্ষিতে সামাজিক ক্ষেত্রে সমস্যার সমাধানের লক্ষ্যে এগিয়ে এসেছিলেন নরেন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত যিনি পরবর্তীকালে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ রূপে সমধিক পরিচিতি লাভ করেছিলেন। হিন্দু ধর্ম, দার্শনিকতা ও সামাজিক ক্ষেত্রে বিবেকানন্দের চিন্তাভাবনাকে সমাজতাত্ত্বিকদের একাংশ সমকালীন ইউরোপের সমাজতান্ত্রিক দর্শনের সঙ্গে তুলনা করে থাকেন। সমাজতান্ত্রিক চিন্তার ক্ষেত্রে বিবেকানন্দের দর্শন পাশ্চাত্যের সাম্যবাদী দর্শনের পরিপূরক ছিল বলে মনে করা হয়। তবে পাশ্চাত্যের সমাজতন্ত্রকে তিনি অনুকরণ করেন নি। বরং ভারতীয় প্রেক্ষাপটে সমাজতান্ত্রিক চিন্তাভাবনাকে ধর্মীয় ও আধ্যাত্মিক প্রেক্ষাপটে, বিশেষভাবে বলতে গেলে বেদান্ত দর্শন অনুযায়ী অনুধাবন করার চেষ্টা করেছিলেন। বর্তমান গবেষণা নিবন্ধে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের সমাজতান্ত্রিক চিন্তাভাবনার বিভিন্ন দিক সম্পর্কে আলোকপাতের চেষ্টা করা হবে। সেই সঙ্গে পাশ্চাত্য সমাজতন্ত্র, বিশেষভাবে মার্কসীয় সমাজতন্ত্র এবং বিবেকানন্দের সমাজতান্ত্রিক চিন্তাভাবনার সাযুজ্য ও বিরোধিতার প্রতিতুলনা বর্তমান গবেষণা নিবন্ধের অন্যতম উদ্দেশ্য।

শব্দ সূচকঃ *বিবেকানন্দ, ভারতীয় সমাজ, ভারতীয় দর্শন, সমাজতন্ত্র, মার্কসীয় সমাজতন্ত্র*

ভূমিকা

উনিশ শতকীয় নবজাগরণ প্রসূত চিন্তাভাবনা সুদীর্ঘকালীন লোকাচার ও দেশাচারের পরিবর্তন করাতে সক্ষম হয় নি। এরূপ পরিস্থিতিতে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ উপলব্ধি করেছিলেন যে ধর্মীয় সংস্কার ব্যতীত সমাজ সংস্কার সম্ভব না; কারণ ধর্ম হল সমাজের দেহের একটি অঙ্গ। আর এই জন্যই তিনি প্রয়োজন অনুভব করেছিলেন ধর্ম সংস্কারের এবং মানুষের মধ্যে ধর্মীয় চেতনা জাগরণের। তিনি পাশ্চাত্যের দর্শনের উপর নির্ভর না করে অদ্বৈত অনুভূতিকে গ্রহণ করেছিলেন সমাজ সংস্কারের ভিত্তি হিসাবে। স্বাভাবিকভাবে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের সমাজতান্ত্রিক ধ্যানধারণা ভারতীয় রাষ্ট্রচিন্তার জগতে একটি নতুন মাত্রা এনেছিল। স্বামীজী উপলব্ধি করেছিলেন যে, জীবনের কঠিন সমস্যার সাথে লড়াই করা দুর্বলদের সামর্থ্যের মধ্যে নেই। আত্মবিকাশ এবং আভ্যন্তরীণ শক্তির প্রকাশ না হলে, সত্যিকারের অগ্রগতি কমই হয় বলে তিনি বিশ্বাস করতেন। এটি মাথায় রেখে, তিনি শিক্ষাকে নতুনভাবে সংজ্ঞায়িত করেছিলেন এবং তার ভিতরের সম্ভাবনাকে উন্মোচনের লক্ষ্যে ব্যবহার করেছিলেন। শিক্ষাকে অবশ্যই নৈতিক ও আধ্যাত্মিক বিকাশের সাথে সাথে চলতে হবে। কারণ জ্ঞান শুধুমাত্র রুটি এবং মাখন উপার্জন সম্পর্কে নয়; এটি অজ্ঞতা থেকে মুক্তি সম্পর্কেও। দুটির একটি নিখুঁত সংমিশ্রণ জীবনকে বেঁচে থাকার যোগ্য করে তোলে। স্বামীজী জাতিকে সেবার চেতনায় জাগিয়ে তুলতে চেয়েছিলেন, শিক্ষাকে তার কার্যকরী হাতিয়ার করে তুলেছিলেন। তিনি সম্ভবত আশা করেছিলেন যে জনগণ তার নিবেদিত সেবা এবং জনসাধারণের প্রতি ভালবাসার উদাহরণ অনুকরণ করবে।

তাত্ত্বিক বিচার বিবেচনার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে স্বামীজীকে পুরোপুরি সমাজবাদী বলা যায় কিনা তা নিয়ে চিন্তাভাবনার অবকাশ আছে। যেমন তাঁকে কোন অর্থেই তথাকথিত রাষ্ট্র-দার্শনিক বলা যায় না এবং তিনি রাষ্ট্রচিন্তার ক্ষেত্রে পৃথক কোন ধারার প্রবর্তনও করেননি। বিবেকানন্দের চিন্তা ও দর্শন সম্পৃক্ত ছিল দেশের মাটি ও মানুষের সঙ্গে। যদিও স্বামীজী স্বয়ং নিজেকে সমাজবাদী বলে ব্যক্ত করেছিলেন (স্বামীজীর পত্রাবলীর সূত্রে জানা যায়)। দীনদরিদ্র মানুষের দুঃসহ জীবন যাপনের দুঃখ-কষ্ট তাঁকে সামাজিক ও রাজনৈতিক দর্শনের উন্মেষ

ঘটিয়েছিল। তিনি অনুধাবন করতে পেরেছিলেন যে বুভুক্ষু নিরন্ন মানুষের মনের গতি সমাজতান্ত্রিক লক্ষ্যে নিবদ্ধ। অবহেলিত মানুষের শোষণ নিপীড়ন এবং নিপীড়িত জনগণের জীবনযন্ত্রণার পাশাপাশি শূদ্র জাগরণ প্রসঙ্গে তিনি সমাজতন্ত্রের কথা বলেছিলেন। স্বামীজীর এই দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিকে বৈদান্তিক সমাজবাদ রূপে অভিহিত করা যেতে পারে। সামাজিক অন্যায় অবিচার ও দেশের পরাধীনতা যে ভাবে মানুষকে অন্ধকারে আচ্ছন্ন করে রেখেছিল সেই অবস্থার অবসান, মানুষের আত্মসত্ত্বার উন্মেষ এবং রাজসিক সমাজকর্মের উপর গুরুত্ব দেওয়ার জন্যই স্বামীজী সমাজবাদী চেতনাকে সমর্থন করেছিলেন। বর্তমান গবেষণা নিবন্ধে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের সমাজতান্ত্রিক দর্শন ও পাশ্চাত্যের সমাজতান্ত্রিক দর্শনের সঙ্গে তাঁর চিন্তা-ভাবনার পার্থক্য সম্পর্কেও বিশেষভাবে আলোচনা করা হবে।

বিবেকানন্দের সমাজতান্ত্রিক দর্শন

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ সামাজিক ও রাজনৈতিক ক্ষেত্রে একজন সমাজ সংস্কারমূলক বিপ্লবীর ভূমিকা পালন করেছিলেন। যিনি ছিলেন একজন বৈদান্তিক সন্ন্যাসী, আধ্যাত্মিক নেতা আদর্শবাদী দার্শনিক, অতীন্দ্রিয় মনস্তত্ত্ববিদ এবং সর্বোপরি একজন যথার্থ দেশপ্রেমিক। সমাজ সংস্কারমূলক ভূমিকা পালনের পাশাপাশি তিনি বিভিন্ন সামাজিক পেশায় জাতিভেদ প্রথা, বর্ণপ্রশাসনচক্র, বেদান্তদর্শন প্রভৃতি বিভিন্ন বিষয় নিয়ে লেখালেখি ও আলোচনা করেছিলেন। তিনি বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রে 'সমাজবাদ' শব্দটি প্রয়োগ করেছিলেন। তাঁর বিভিন্ন দার্শনিক প্রত্যয় ও উক্তির মধ্যে সমাজতান্ত্রিক ধ্যান ধারণার পরিচয় পাওয়া যায়। বিবেকানন্দ মনে করতেন, "I am a socialist, not because it is perfect system but because I believe that half of a loaf is better than no bread". বিবেকানন্দের মতে শোষণ, পীড়ন, ও দুঃখ-দারিদ্র থেকে মানুষকে মুক্ত করাই হল ন্যায় বিচার এবং এই ন্যায়বিচারই হল সমাজতন্ত্র। তাঁর মতে ব্যক্তিগত স্বাধীনতাকে সমাজের প্রাধান্যের কাছে সমর্পণ করাই হল সমাজতন্ত্র। কুসংস্কার, জাতপাত, ঔপনিবেশিকতা এবং অলসতার বিরুদ্ধে তাঁর প্রচণ্ড সংগ্রাম এতটাই পরিচিত যে কোনও পুনরাবৃত্তির প্রয়োজন নেই। দরিদ্র ও নিপীড়িতদের প্রতি তার গভীর সহানুভূতি তাকে উদার গণতন্ত্রের সীমাবদ্ধতার বাইরে সমাজবাদের দিকে তাকাতে পরিচালিত করেছিল। Rao লিখেছেন, "Vivekananda's Vedantic socialism naturally covered the social system and the need for its reconstruction to enable the masses to play their rightful role in society. He was fully aware of the denigration of the masses that the Hindu social system had brought about over the centuries; but he was not prepared to go in for an unqualified condemnation of the past nor to seek for a wholesale destruction of all existing institutions and their replacement by a new order."

স্বামীজীর সমাজতান্ত্রিক মতাদর্শের উৎস হিসাবে পশ্চিমী রাষ্ট্র দর্শন, বিশেষভাব জার্মান ভাববাদ ও ভারতীয় বেদান্তদর্শনের উল্লেখ করা যায়। তবে পশ্চিমী সমাজতান্ত্রিক চিন্তাভাবনার দ্বারা অনুপ্রাণিত হয়ে তিনি সেই অনুযায়ী ভারতীয় রাষ্ট্রচিন্তায় সমাজতান্ত্রিক চিন্তা চেতনার সূত্রপাত ঘটিয়েছিলেন-এই কথা ঠিক নয়। প্লেটো, অ্যারিষ্টটলের সমষ্টিবাদী তত্ত্বকে ভাব, অনন্ত সত্তা প্রভৃতির মধ্য দিয়ে জার্মান দার্শনিকরা যে ভাববাদী দর্শনের সূচনা করেছিলেন বিবেকানন্দ সেই দর্শনের সঙ্গে যোগ করেন সনাতন ভারতীয় বৈদান্তিক চেতনা। বিবেকানন্দ বলেছিলেন, "And this is the real, practical side of Vedanta. It does not destroy the world, but it explains it; it does not destroy the person, but explains him; it does not destroy the individuality, but explains it by showing the real individuality. It does not show that this world is vain and does not exist, but it says, "Understand what this world is, so that it may not hurt you." যেখানে অনন্ত সত্তার ধারণা সুন্দরভাবে বলা রয়েছে। সংস্কারমূলক পথে বৈপ্লবিক উপায়ে কোন পদ্ধতিতে তিনি ভারতবর্ষে সমাজতন্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠা

করতে চেয়েছিলেন সে বিষয়ে সমাজতাত্ত্বিকদের মধ্যে মতানৈক্য রয়েছে। তবে সমাজতন্ত্রকে সফল করার জন্য তিনি অদ্বৈতবেদান্তকে বাদ দেওয়ার পক্ষপাতী ছিলেন না। কারণ অদ্বৈতবেদান্ত অনুযায়ী 'জীবই হল পরমাত্মা'। তাই স্বামীজি বহুরূপে মানুষের মধ্যে ঈশ্বরের সন্ধান পেয়েছিলেন। তাই শ্রেণি, ধর্ম, বর্ণ ভেদ না করে মানুষের সেবা করা আর ভগবানের সেবা করা একই বিষয়। তিনি সব সময় সত্যের প্রতিষ্ঠা এবং মানুষের অসীম সত্ত্বা ও সম্ভাবনার বিকাশ সাধনের পক্ষপাতী ছিলেন। তাঁর মতে অদ্বৈত বেদান্ত অনুযায়ী জীব ও ঈশ্বর অভিন্ন। মানুষের মধ্যেই ব্রহ্ম বিরাজমান; মানুষের ব্রহ্মশক্তিই আত্মবিশ্বাস সৃষ্টি করে। মানুষকে তার অসীম শক্তি ও সম্ভাবনা সম্পর্কে সচেতন করে তুলতে পারলেই পরম ব্রহ্মের অংশ হিসাবে সামাজিক অন্যায়, অবিচার ও অর্থনৈতিক অনগ্রসরতাকে অতিক্রম করা যাবে। অধ্যাপক বি.পি. ভার্মা তাঁর 'Modern Indian Political thought' শীর্ষক গ্রন্থে লিখেছেন, "The deep social realism of Vivekananda is also revealed in his statement that India's political slavery of a thousand years is rooted in the suppression of the masses. The social tyrants and aristocratic despots of this country exploited the millions of masses. They held the latter in disgust and contempt and humiliated them so much that they almost lost their humanity."

বিবেকানন্দের জীবনবোধের ধারণার মধ্যে খাদ্য, বস্ত্র, শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য ও বাসস্থানের নিশ্চয়তা সম্পর্কিত চেতনা বিদ্যমান ছিল। C.M. Bisha লিখেছেন, "Swamiji travelled the length and breadth of India and was deeply moved to see the appalling poverty and backwardness of the masses. Swamiji declared that the real cause of India's downfall was the 'neglect of the masses' by the people higher up. Owing to centuries of oppression, the downtrodden masses had lost faith in their capacity to improve their lot". স্বামীজীর মতে নিরন্ন মানুষকে ধর্মের নীতি কথা বলা নির্বুদ্ধিতা ছাড়া আর কিছু নয়। তাঁর মতে মানুষের আগে চাই খাদ্য, পরে ধর্মের কথা। যে ভগবান শুধু স্বর্গ সুখের কথা বলে খাদ্য দিতে পারে না তার প্রতি বিবেকানন্দের কোনও আস্থা ছিল না। জাতীয়তাবাদ ও রাজনৈতিক সচেতনাতার অভাব ভারতীয় সামাজিক সমস্যার প্রধান কারণ। তিনি মনে করতেন, "Educate our people, so that they may be able to solve their own problems. Until that is done all these ideal reforms will remain ideals only'. তিনি সমাজতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থা প্রতিষ্ঠার মাধ্যমে সমাজের সংখ্যা গরিষ্ঠ মানুষের বৈষয়িক বিকাশ, সামগ্রিক আত্মোন্নতি এবং ন্যায় বিচার প্রতিষ্ঠার পাশাপাশি অর্থনৈতিক বৈষম্য মুক্ত সমাজ স্থাপনে প্রয়াসী ছিলেন। "Social laws were created by economic conditions under the sanction of religion. The terrible mistake of religion was to interfere in social matters. But how hypocritically it says and thereby contradicts itself. Social reform is not the business of religion." True, what we want is, that religion should not be a social reformer, but we insist at the same time that religion has no right to become a social law-giver."

অন্য অর্থেও তিনি সমাজবাদী কারণ তিনি সকল ভারতবাসীর জন্য সমান সুযোগ সুবিধা প্রতিষ্ঠার কথা স্বীকার করেন। তিনি লিখেছিলেন, "just distribution of material values will be achieved, equality of the rights of all members of society to ownership of property established and caste differences obliterated." তাঁর মতে সামাজিক বৈষম্য দূর করার জন্য যদি কাউকে বিশেষ সুযোগ সুবিধা প্রদান করতেই হয় তাহলে সবলের থেকে দুর্বলকে অধিক সুযোগ প্রদান করা উচিত। তাঁর মতে শিক্ষার প্রয়োজনীয়তা ব্রাহ্মণের

থেকে চণ্ডালের বেশী। তাই কোন ব্রাহ্মণ সন্তানের যদি একজন শিক্ষকের প্রয়োজন হয়, তাহলে একজন চণ্ডালের দশজন শিক্ষক থাকা বাঞ্ছনীয়। তিনি বলেছেন, "...greater help must be given to him whom nature has not endowed with an acute intellect from birth. It is a madman who carries coals to Newcastle. The poor, the downtrodden, the ignorant let these be your god." বর্তমান ভারত প্রবন্ধে তিনি আশা প্রকাশ করেছেন যে, শূদ্র তার শূদ্রত্ব বজায় রেখেই সমাজে একাধিপত্য প্রতিষ্ঠা করবে। স্বামীজী বলেছেন, দেশ ও জাতির প্রাণকেন্দ্র গরিবের কুটির। অথচ তারাই নিম্নতর অবস্থায় রয়েছে। এই ব্যাবস্থাকে পরিবর্তন করতে হবে। তাঁর দৃষ্টিতে অদ্বৈত বেদান্ত অনুযায়ী এই দরিদ্র, বঞ্চিত বা নিগৃহীতরাও ঈশ্বরের প্রতিনিধি। তাই ঈশ্বর জ্ঞানে তাদের সেবা করতে হবে।

স্বামীজী বলেছিলেন, "The poor, the sinner in India has no friends, no help, they cannot rise, they however they may. They sink lower and lower every day, they feel the blows showed upon them by cruel society and they do not know from where the blow comes." তিনি জাতিগত বৈষম্যকে দূর করার জন্য সমাজের উচ্চতর শ্রেণীকে নিচে নামিয়ে না এনেও নিম্নবর্ণকে উচ্চস্তরে পৌঁছে দেওয়ার পক্ষপাতী ছিলেন। বলা যায় যে সাম্যের ধারণার প্রবক্তা হিসাবে স্বামীজী নিজেকে সমাজবাদী হিসাবে তুলে ধরতে সফল হয়েছিলেন। বস্তুতপক্ষে, "The political philosophy of Vivekananda' that the Swami believed that the social evolution is not different from the evolution of the universe. The law of universe operates in society also. As the universe is not static but dynamic, no institution in society is sacred and eternal. The social evolution is based on the principle of rise and fall."

স্বামীজী মনে করতেন শুধু বেদান্তের তত্ত্ব দর্শনের উপর সমাজবাদ প্রতিষ্ঠা করা সম্ভব নয়। সমাজ বিপ্লবকে সার্থক করতে হলে দরিদ্র, অবহেলিত মানুষের সঙ্গে একাত্মতা অনুভব করতে হবে। শুধু যুক্তিবাদের দ্বারা সমাজকে এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়া সম্ভব নয়। তার জন্য চাই তীব্র অনুভব। অনাহার ক্লিষ্ট মানুষের কথা যতক্ষণ না নিজেকে অস্থির করে তুলছে, ঘুম কেড়ে নিচ্ছে, শিরায় শিরায় আলোড়ন তুলছে ততক্ষণ সমাজ ব্যাবস্থার পরিবর্তন করা যাবে না। পৃথিবীর সব সমাজেই চার বর্ণের আধিপত্য দেখা যায়। প্রথম পর্যায়ে পুরোহিত শ্রেণীর আধিপত্য, দ্বিতীয় পর্যায়ে ক্ষত্রিয় শ্রেণীর আধিপত্য এবং পরবর্তীতে বা আধুনিককালে বৈশ্য শ্রেণীর আবির্ভাব এবং সামাজিক বিকাশের শেষ পর্যায়ে আসবে শূদ্র বা শ্রমিক শ্রেণীর আধিপত্য। তিনি আশা প্রকাশ করতেন এমন এক সমাজ ব্যবস্থা জন্ম নেবে যেখানে পুরোহিতের জ্ঞান, ক্ষত্রিয়ের সংস্কৃতি, বৈশ্যের অর্থ এবং শূদ্রের শাসনের সমন্বয় ঘটবে।

বর্ণ বৈষম্য দূর করার জন্য বিবেকানন্দ জন্মগত বর্ণ ভেদের জায়গায় অদ্বৈত বেদান্ত অনুযায়ী গুণগত বর্ণ ভেদের কথা তুলে ধরেছিলেন। যা ব্যক্তি স্বাধীনতা ও ব্যক্তি স্বাতন্ত্রের বিকাশ ঘটাবে। বিবেকানন্দ সমষ্টি স্বার্থে ব্যক্তি স্বার্থকে বিসর্জন দেওয়ার কথা বলেছেন। এই জীবনবোধ থেকেই তিনি সাম্যবাদ ও সমাজতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থাকে সমর্থন করেছেন। কেননা, তাঁর দৃষ্টিতে মানুষের দুঃখের তিনটি কারণ হল- অজ্ঞতা, আকাঙ্ক্ষা ও অসাম্য। স্বামীজী যে সাম্যবাদী বা সমাজতান্ত্রিক আদর্শের কথা তুলে ধরার চেষ্টা করেন তার মূলত চারটি দিক আছে- আধ্যাত্মিক, সামাজিক, রাজনৈতিক এবং অর্থনৈতিক। তিনি মনে করতেন অদ্বৈতবাদের বাণী আসলে সাম্যের বাণী। যা ছোটো-বড়, জাতিভেদ এবং দেশের মধ্যে প্রভেদ মানে না। আসলে ব্যক্তি বিশেষের বা বিশেষ সমাজ গোষ্ঠীর বিশেষাধিকার ভেঙ্গে ফেলতে অদ্বৈতবেদান্ত হল শ্রেষ্ঠ উপায়। স্বাভাবিকভাবে স্বামীজীর সাম্যবাদী আন্দোলনের প্রধান ভিত্তিই হল অদ্বৈত বেদান্ত।

মার্কস ও বিবেকানন্দ

মার্কসবাদী ঐতিহাসিকরা মনে করতেন দ্বন্দ্বমূলক বস্তুবাদকে মেনে না নিলে সোশ্যালিজম গ্রহণযোগ্য হতে পারে না। যদিও মার্কস সোশ্যালিজমে উপনীত হয়েছিলেন 'Doctrine of self allianation' – এর মধ্য দিয়ে। যা হেগেলীয় ব্রহ্মবাদের পটভূমিতে প্রতিষ্ঠিত ছিল। ফয়েরবাখ মনে করতেন মানুষই ঈশ্বর। আর মার্কস যে দাবীটি প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে চাইছিলেন তা হল, 'মানুষকে ঈশ্বর বানাতে হবে'। সেই জন্য সমাজ রূপান্তরই একমাত্র উপায়। সেক্ষেত্রে মানুষের বন্ধনমুক্তি ঘটাতে হবে। সেই বন্ধন ধর্মাশ্রিতই হোক বা আইন, রাষ্ট্র, অর্থনীতি সব ক্ষেত্রেই হোক। মানুষের বন্ধন মুক্তির জন্য প্রয়োজন সমাজ বিপ্লব। অথচ স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ সমাজতান্ত্রিক আদর্শে পৌঁছেছেন হিন্দু বিজ্ঞানবাদকে ভিত্তি করে। যেখানে জীবই ব্রহ্ম। বিবেকানন্দ বুঝেছিলেন যে ভারতবর্ষের পিছিয়ে পড়া সমাজ, অর্থনীতি, জাতিপ্রথা জীবকে জীবত্বে আবদ্ধ রেখেছে। জীবের আত্ম আবিষ্কারের জন্য প্রয়োজন সমাজের নবজন্ম বা পুনর্বিন্যাস। বিবেকানন্দের দৃষ্টিতে মানবিকতাই সমাজবাদের কেন্দ্রীয় বিষয়বস্তু। ব্যবহারিক ও আধ্যাত্মিক শৃঙ্খলমুক্ত সামাজিক মানবতার আদর্শ তিনি উপস্থাপন করেছিলেন। আর এই মুক্তির জন্য দারিদ্র্য, অজ্ঞানতা, লোকাচার, কূপমণ্ডূকতা, শ্রেণী শোষণ প্রভৃতির বিরুদ্ধে নিরলস সংগ্রাম প্রয়োজন।

মার্কস পুঁজিবাদ থেকে সমাজতন্ত্রে রূপান্তরের ক্ষেত্রে একটি সংগঠিত সর্বহারা গোষ্ঠী বা দলের প্রয়োজনীয়তার উপর জোর দিয়েছিলেন। ঐতিহ্যগত বর্ণ-প্রবণ ভারতীয় সমাজের পরিবর্তনের জন্য বিবেকানন্দ সামাজিক জাগরণ এবং ব্যক্তি কেন্দ্রিক প্রশিক্ষণের পক্ষপাতী ছিলেন। বিবেকানন্দের বৈদান্তিক সমাজতন্ত্র এবং মার্কসের সমাজতন্ত্রের মধ্যে মৌলিক পার্থক্য এই যে, বিবেকানন্দ ভারতীয় সমাজের সংস্কারের উপর জোর দিয়েছিলেন মানব চেতনাকে ঐশ্বরিকভাবে উন্নীত করার মাধ্যমে। পক্ষান্তরে মার্কসের সমাজবাদ শিল্প বিপ্লবের দ্বারা সৃষ্ট শ্রমিক শ্রেণীর দূরাবস্থার থেকে পরিত্রাণের উপায় হিসাবে আবির্ভূত হয়েছিল। আসলে মার্কস এবং বিবেকানন্দ দুই ভিন্ন দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে সমাজতন্ত্রকে দেখেছিলেন। মার্কসবাদে ধর্মকে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হয় না। কারণ মার্কসবাদ অনুযায়ী ধর্ম হল আমজনতার কাছে আফিমের নেশার মত। কিন্তু বৈদান্তিক বিবেকানন্দ ধর্ম ও বেদান্তকে বাদ দিয়ে সমাজতন্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠার কথা বলেন না। সমাজতন্ত্র ও সমাজবাদী সমাজ গঠনের স্বার্থে মার্ক্সবাদ রক্তক্ষয়ী শ্রেণীসংগ্রামকে স্বাগত জানিয়েছিলেন। মার্কসের দর্শনে দ্বান্দ্বিক পদ্ধতি ও বস্তুবাদী বিচার বিশ্লেষণের উপর গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হলেও বিবেকানন্দের সমাজতান্ত্রিক ভাবনা এবিষয়ে নীরব। স্বামীজি সমাজতান্ত্রিক চিন্তা চেতনার কথা বললেও মার্ক্সবাদের মত সমাজতান্ত্রিক সমাজ গঠনের ক্ষেত্রে নিরন্তর শ্রেণী সংগ্রাম, বিপ্লবী সংগঠন প্রভৃতির কথা বলেননি। যদিও শ্রমিক শ্রেণীর জাগরণের কথা তিনি স্বীকার করেছেন। বিপ্লববাদী কাযকলাপের প্রতিও তাঁর সহানুভুতি ছিল। তিনি বলেছিলেন, "The lower classes are gradually awakening to this fact and making a united front against this, determined to exact their legitimate dues. The masses of Europe and America have been the first to awaken and have already begun the fight. Signs of this awakening have shown themselves in India, too, as is evident from the number of strikes among the lower classes nowadays".

বিবেকানন্দের বৈদান্তিক সমাজবাদ এবং মার্কসীয় সমাজতন্ত্রের মধ্যে মৌলিক পার্থক্য হল যে, স্বামীজী ভারতীয় সমাজের সংস্কারের ক্ষেত্রে মানবিক চেতনাকে ঐশ্বরিকভাবে উন্নীত করার উপর বেশি গুরুত্ব দিয়েছিলেন। পক্ষান্তরে মার্ক্স একজন মহান বাস্তববাদী এবং একজন দ্বান্দ্বিক বস্তুবাদী ছিলেন যিনি সহিংস সামাজিকতাও অছ্যুত করে রাখেন নি। বিপ্লব সম্পর্কে মার্ক্সের মতবাদে ঘৃণা, অবজ্ঞা এবং হিংসা দ্বারা প্রভাবিত একটি দর্শনের চরিত্র বহন করে। স্বাভাবতইমার্কসবাদ মূলত একটি গভীর দার্শনিক মতবাদ নয়, যে অর্থে বেদান্তবাদ, বৌদ্ধ

দর্শন, প্লেটোনিজম, বা হেগেলিয়নিজম দার্শনিক ব্যবস্থা। সমাজের কল্যাণ না ঘটলে ব্যক্তির কল্যাণ ঘটতে পারে না। ব্যক্তি সদা সর্বদা সমাজের প্রতি দায়বদ্ধ থাকবে। সমাজ কল্যাণের প্রতি নিঃশর্ত আনুগত্য না থাকলে ব্যক্তিত্যের সঠিক প্রকাশ ঘটতে পারে না। বিবেকানন্দ বিশ্বাস করতেন যে ব্যক্তির স্বাধীন সত্ত্বার বিকাশ না হলে সামাজিক বিকাশ সঠিকভাবে গড়ে ওঠে না।

তিনি বলেন, "I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system half a loaf is better than no bread." এ-দিক থেকে বিচার করলে তাঁকে সমাজবাদী দার্শনিক হিসাবে চিহ্নিত করা যায়। তাঁর বাণী ও রচনায় সামাজিক সাম্যের প্রতি সমর্থন পাওয়া যায়। হিন্দু সমাজে বর্ণ ব্যবস্থার জায়গায় পরবর্তীকালে গড়ে ওঠা রক্ষণশীল জাতিভেদ ব্যবস্থার সামাজিক স্তর বিন্যাসের বিরুদ্ধে বিদ্রোহ ঘোষণা করেছিলেন - যেটি তাঁর সমাজবাদী চিন্তা-চেতনার এক মৌলিক প্রকাশ। অধ্যাপক ভার্মা বলেছেন, "His gospel of equaliterianism is fundamentally socialistic." সুতরাং সমাজে সামাজিক সাম্য প্রতিষ্ঠার প্রবক্তা হিসাবে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ হলেন সমাজবাদী। সিস্টার নিবেদিতা লিখেছেন, "Vivekananda's passion of pity, however, did not concern itself with the Indian people only. True to his Oriental birth, he would always defend the small farmer or the small distributor, against those theorists who seem to consider that aggregations of business are justified in proportion to their size. "He held that the age of humanity now dawning would occupy itself mainly with the problems of the working-folk, or as he expressed it, with the problems of the Sudra.

সোশ্যালিজম ধারণাটি পাশ্চাত্য থেকে এসেছে এবং উনিশ শতকের শেষ পর্যায়ে পাশ্চাত্য বিভিন্ন ধরনের সোশ্যালিজমের আবির্ভাব ঘটেছিল। যার কোনটা ছিল ফিউডালিস্টিক সমাজবাদ, কোনটা ছিল পেটি বুর্জোয়া সোশ্যালিজম আবার কোনটা ছিল ইউটোপিয়ান সোশ্যালিজম। যদিও কার্ল মার্ক্স স্বকীয় সোশ্যালিজমকেই এক ও অদ্বিতীয় সোশ্যালিজম বলে চিহ্নিত করেছেন। মার্ক্সবাদী সোশ্যালিস্টদের মধ্যে এরকম ধারণা বরাবরই আছে যে, সোশ্যালিজমের ভাবাদর্শ মার্ক্সের একচেটিয়া সম্পদ। যদিও মার্ক্সবাদীদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি অনুযায়ী বিবেকানন্দ সোশ্যালিজমকে ব্যাখ্যা করেন নি। অথচ রাশিয়া ও চীনে ভবিষ্যতে যে জনগণের শাসন প্রতিষ্ঠিত হবে তার ভবিষ্যদ্বাণী তিনি করেছিলেন। আসলে বিবেকানন্দ যুক্তি, বিজ্ঞান ও অদ্বৈতবাদের উপর প্রতিষ্ঠিত মানবিকতায় অনুপ্রাণিত শোষণহীন সমাজের যে চিন্তা করেছিলেন সেখানে মানবমুক্তি ছিল প্রধান কথা এবং এই দিক দিয়ে বিবেকানন্দ অবশ্যই সোশ্যালিস্ট ছিলেন।

ভুপেন্দ্র নাথ দত্ত দ্বন্দ্বমূলক বস্তুবাদী দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি থেকে বিবেকানন্দের সমাজ, ধর্ম, সাহিত্য প্রভৃতির বিশ্লেষণ করে তাঁকে ভারতের প্রথম সমাজতান্ত্রিক ব্যক্তি হিসাবে অবিহিত করেছিলেন। স্বামীজী শুধু উপরতলার মানুষদের স্বাধীনতায় বিশ্বাসী ছিলেন না। তিনি চেয়েছিলেন শোষিত, দিন-দরিদ্র ভারতবাসীর সর্বাঙ্গীণ কল্যাণ। কারণ তারাই সামাজিক অগ্রগতির ধারক ও বাহক। বিবেকানন্দ প্রথা ও আধুনিকতাকে সংমিশ্রিত করেছিলেন বেদান্তের পথে। বিভিন্ন জাতিগোষ্ঠী ধর্ম ও বর্ণকে নিয়ে গড়ে ওঠা বৈচিত্র্যময় ভারতবর্ষে ইংরেজ শাসনে শাসন ঐক্যের সঙ্গে এসেছিল শোষণ।

বিবেকানন্দ সাম্যের বাণী প্রচার করেছেন ঠিকই, তবে তিনি মনে করতেন পৃথিবীতে পরিপূর্ণ সাম্য কখনই আসবে না কারণ, সৃষ্টি মানেই বহুত্ব, বৈচিত্র্য। পরিপূর্ণ সাম্যের অর্থই হল সৃষ্টির বিনাশ। কারণ সৃষ্টির মূল কথাই হল ঐক্যের মধ্যে বৈচিত্র্য। সেখানে বৈষম্য থাকবে, আবার সেই বৈষম্যকে দূর করার চেষ্টা চালিয়ে যেতে হবে। সেই জন্য কোন নির্দিষ্ট মতবাদ চাপিয়ে না দিয়ে প্রত্যেকের স্বাধীন সত্ত্বাকে মর্যাদা দিতে হবে। সমাজতন্ত্রের মধ্যে

অপূর্ণতা থাকলেও এখানে সুখ-দুঃখের বণ্টন হবে নতুন ভাবে। বৈদান্তিক চিন্তার আলোকে আত্মজ্ঞান লাভ করতে হবে। এবং পরম বোধিতে পৌঁছতে হবে। শুধু সামাজিক ও রাজনৈতিক পরিবর্তন জীবনের মৌলিক পরিবর্তন ঘটাতে পারবে না।

সমকালীন ভারতবর্ষে জন জীবন যে অধঃপতিত অবস্থায় ছিল তার জন্য উচ্চ বর্গকেই তিনি দায়ী করেছেন। এই জন্য একদিকে জনগণের চেতনার উন্মেষের ঐকান্তিক প্রচেষ্টা অন্যদিকে দেশীয়ও শিক্ষিত বিত্তবান উচ্চবর্গের মানুষের হৃদয় থেকে জন সমাজ সম্পর্কে ঘৃণা, অবজ্ঞা ও শোষণের প্রবৃত্তি দূর করে স্বামীজী একাত্মবোধ জাগ্রত করার কথা বলেছিলেন। বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র সাম্য ও সম অধিকারের কথা বললেও মার্কসের শ্রেণীহীন শোষণমুক্ত শ্রমিক রাজের প্রতিষ্ঠা সমকালীন ভারতীয় প্রেক্ষাপটে সম্ভব ছিল না। সেই জন্য বিবেকানন্দ শোষক ও উৎপীড়ক সমাজপতিদের প্রধান ত্রুটিগুলি দেখিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন। যদিও ভারতবর্ষে সমকালীন প্রেক্ষাপটে ব্রাহ্মণ ও ক্ষত্রিয় শ্রেণী তাদের ক্ষমতা হারিয়েছে এবং বৈশ্য বা পুঁজিপতি শ্রেণী ক্ষমতার শীর্ষে রয়েছে। তা সত্ত্বেও স্বামীজী অনুভব করেছিলেন এই শাসক সম্প্রদায় জনগণ থেকে বিছিন্ন হয়ে নিজেদের পতনকে ত্বরান্বিত করছে। 'বর্তমান ভারত' গ্রন্থে তিনি যে শূদ্র জাগরণের কথা বলেছিলেন তা আসলে সাধারণ মানুষের চেতনার আবির্ভাবকেই ইঙ্গিত করে থাকে। ভারতীয় জনগণকে সচেতন করার জন্য শিক্ষা বিস্তারের প্রয়োজনীয়তাও তিনি উপলব্ধি করেছিলেন। আর এই ব্যাপারে সুবিধাভোগী শ্রেণীকেই এগিয়ে আসতে হবে সেবাব্রতী কর্মী হিসাবে। কারণ তিনি মনে করতেন সমাজের উচ্চবর্গের লোকেরা কোটি কোটি দরিদ্র মানুষের প্রাণপাত পরিশ্রমে উৎপন্ন সম্পদ ও অর্থের বিনিময়ে বিত্তবান হচ্ছে। তাই এই দরিদ্র শ্রেণীর মানুষের প্রতি উচ্চবর্গের একটা কৃতজ্ঞতা থাকা উচিত। "যাহারা লক্ষ লক্ষ দরিদ্র ও নিষ্পেষিত নরনারীর বুকের রক্তদ্বারা অর্জিত অর্থে শিক্ষিত হইয়া এবং বিলাসিতায় নিমজ্জিত থাকিয়াও উহাদের কথা একটি বার চিন্তা করিবার অবসর পায় না – তাহাদিগকে আমি বিশ্বাসঘাতক বলিয়া অবিহিত করি"।

বিবেকানন্দ লিখেছিলেন, "আমাদের নিম্ন শ্রেণীর জন্য কর্তব্য এই যে, কেবল তাহাদিগকে শিক্ষা দেওয়া এবং তাদের বিনষ্টপ্রায় ব্যক্তিত্ববোধ জাগিয়ে তোলা'। Through education comes faith in one's own Self, and through faith in one's own Self the inherent Brahman is waking up in them, while the Brahman in us is gradually becoming dormant. তাহাদিগকে ভাল ভাল ভাব দিতে হইবে। অবশিষ্ট যাহা কিছু, তাহা উপহার স্বরূপ আপনিই আসিবে। "বিবেকানন্দের সমাজতান্ত্রিক চেতনার মুলে ছিল দরিদ্র্যের প্রতি সমবেদনা। তিনি ব্যক্তিজীবনে দারিদ্র্যের কঠোর রূপ প্রত্যক্ষ করেছিলেন। নিজেও তিনি যে বঞ্চিতদের একজন, এই বোধ আবার পাশ্চাত্যের সঙ্গে বৈষম্য এবং জগতের অসাম্য তাঁকে স্পর্শকাতর করে তুলেছিল।

বৈদান্তিক তত্ত্বজ্ঞান ও উপলব্ধি ভারতীয় গণসমাজ সম্পর্কে স্বামীজীকে উচ্চ ধারণা প্রদান করেছিল। ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতে যেহেতু শূদ্র যুগ আসবেই সেহেতু শূদ্রদের আর্থিক এবং বৌদ্ধিক বিকাশ জরুরি। ড. ভূপেন্দ্র নাথ দত্ত লিখেছিলেন, "স্বামীজী শূদ্র অভ্যুত্থানের আগমনী যখন গেয়েছেন তখন রাশিয়ায় লেনিন সর্বহারাদের দ্বারা পরিচালিত শ্রেণীহীন রাষ্ট্রের চিন্তাও করেন নি, চীনের মাও-সে-তুং এর তখন অভ্যুদয়ই ঘটেনি"। বর্তমান ভারত পুস্তিকায় শূদ্র রাজের যে কথা তিনি বলেছিলেন, "এমন সময় আসিবে যখন শূদ্রত্ব সহিত শূদ্রের প্রাধান্য হইবে, অর্থাৎ বৈশ্যত্ব, ক্ষত্রিয়ত্ব লাভ করিয়া শূদ্র জাতি যে প্রকার বীর্য প্রকাশ করিতেছে তাহা নহে। শূদ্র ধর্ম-কর্ম–সহিত সর্বদেশের শূদ্ররা একাধিপত্য লাভ করিবে"। শূদ্র সংস্কৃতি সম্পর্কে স্বামীজী বলেছিলেন, "If it is possible to form a state in which the knowledge of the priest period, the culture of the military, the distributive spirit of the commercial and the ideal of the equlity of the last can all be kept

intact, minus their evils it will be an ideal state." অর্থাৎ ব্রাহ্মণ যুগের জ্ঞান, ক্ষত্রিয়ের বাহুবল, বৈশ্যের সম্প্রসারণ শক্তি এবং শূদ্রের সাম্যের আদর্শ একত্রিত হয়ে যে জীবন দর্শন গড়ে উঠবে সেই আসন্নপ্রায় শূদ্রযুগ হবে পূর্নাঙ্গ সাংস্কৃতিক যুগ। যা হবে সামাজিক বিভেদহীন সমন্বিত সংস্কৃতির এক মৌলিক রূপ। ব্রাহ্মণকে শূদ্রে অবনমিত করে নয়, শূদ্রকে ব্রাহ্মণত্বে উন্নীত করেই এই সংস্কৃতি ভারতীয় বৈশিষ্ট্য লাভ করতে পারে। এই উদ্দেশ্য থেকেই প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছিল রামকৃষ্ণ মিশন। টি. এন. মদন লিখেছেন, "It is not Vivekananda's fiery rhetoric so much that survives today as his worldwide Ramakrishna mission centres for devoted public service in the field of education, medical relief and religious instruction. In India, there are over a hundred such centres, symbolising the reformulation of abstract Vedantic ideas into concrete moral practice. The transformation of an autological religion of personal salvation through world renunciation into a vehicle of altruistic service was Vivekananda's principal contribution to the social-cultural history of the India of his tomes".

দরিদ্র মানুষেরা উচ্চবিত্তদের দ্বারা পরিচালিত যন্ত্রের মতো এতদিন কাজ করেছে এবং বুদ্ধিমান শিক্ষিত উচ্চবিত্ত শ্রেণী তাদের শ্রমের ফল ভোগ করেছে। প্রতিটি দেশেই এমনটি হয়েছে। কিন্তু সময় বদলেছে। নিম্নশ্রেণিরা ধীরে ধীরে তাদের অধিকার সম্পর্কে জাগ্রত হচ্ছে এবং তাদের ন্যায্য পাওনা আদায়ে দৃঢ়প্রতিজ্ঞ হয়ে আন্দোলনে সামিল হচ্ছে। এই ব্যাপারে ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকার শ্রমজীবী মানুষ প্রথম জাগ্রত হয়েছে এবং ইতিমধ্যে তারা লড়াই শুরু করে দিয়েছে। এই জাগরণের লক্ষণ ভারতেও দেখা দিয়েছে, যেমনটা আজকাল নিম্নবর্গের মধ্যে ধর্মঘটের সংখ্যা থেকে স্পষ্ট হচ্ছে। উচ্চবিত্তরা আর নিম্নবিত্তকে দমন করতে পারবে না। নিম্নবর্গকে তাদের ন্যায্য অধিকার পেতে সাহায্য করার মধ্যেই এখন উচ্চ শ্রেণীর মঙ্গল নিহিত।

মার্কসীয় পরিভাষায় উচ্চতর বর্ণকে 'Declassed' করে সমস্যার সমাধান হবে না। বরং স্বামীজীর ভাষায় ব্রহ্মণত্বই হচ্ছে মনুষ্যত্বের চরম আদর্শ আর সত্যযুগ হচ্ছে বিভেদহীন আদর্শ, সাম্য ও সমাজের যুগ। আসলে স্বামীজীর দৃষ্টিতে সত্যযুগ বলতে শ্রেণী বৈষম্যহীন শোষণ মুক্ত সমন্বিত সমাজের কথাই বলা হয়েছে। এই শোষণ মুক্ত সমাজ প্রতিষ্ঠার ক্ষেত্রে স্বামীজী ভারতীয় কৃষকদের আর্থিক দূরবস্থা দূর করা, মানুষকে শিক্ষিত করে তোলা প্রভৃতির দায়িত্ব উপরতলার মানুষদেরকেই গ্রহণ করতে হবে বলে মনে করেছিলেন। তিনি বলেছিলেন, "মনে রাখিবে দরিদ্রের কুটিরেই আমাদের জাতীয় জীবন স্পন্দিত হইতেছে... জাতির ভবিষ্যৎ... নির্ভর করে – জনসাধারণের অবস্থার উপর। তাহাদিগকে উন্নত করিতে পারো? তাহাদের স্বাভাবিক আধ্যাত্মিক প্রকৃতি নষ্ট না করিয়া তাহাদিগকে আপনার পায়ে দাঁড়াইতে শিখাইতে পারো? তোমরা কি সাম্য, স্বাধীনতা, কাজ ও উৎসাহে ঘোর পাশ্চাত্য এবং ধর্মবিশ্বাস ও সাধনায় ঘোর হিন্দু হইতে পারো? ইহাই করিতে হইবে এবং আমরাই ইহা করিব"। শুধু দরিদ্রের শ্রমের মর্যাদা স্বীকার করাই নয়, বহু প্রাচীন সভ্যতা ও জাতি সমূহের আবির্ভাব এবং বিস্তারের নেপথ্য নায়ক এই সম্প্রদায় যারা আজ পদদলিত শ্রমজীবী। স্বামীজী শ্রমজীবী মানুষের কর্মক্ষমতা, সহনশক্তি, বুদ্ধি ও ধর্ম চেতনাকে সাধুবাদ জানিয়ে ভবিষ্যৎ গণঅভ্যুত্থানের ঐতিহাসিক অনিবার্যতাকে আহ্বান জানিয়াছিলেন।

উপসংহার

মার্কস এবং বিবেকানন্দ উভয়েই মানবতার কল্যাণের জন্য অবশ্যই উদ্বিগ্ন ছিলেন কিন্তু তাঁরা উভয়েই মানুষকে ভিন্ন দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিতে দেখেছেন। কিন্তু যখন বিবেকানন্দ লক্ষ লক্ষ ভারতীয় এবং মানবতার জন্য সামাজিক ন্যায়বিচার আনার ক্ষেত্রে অদ্বৈত বেদান্তকে বেছে নিয়েছিলেন, তখন মার্কস মানবজাতির অসুস্থতা দূর করার জন্য দ্বান্দ্বিক

বস্তুবাদ এবং সর্বহারা বিপ্লবের দিক নির্দেশ করেছিলেন। তবু এমন একটা সময় আসবে যখন শূদ্র শ্রেণী থেকে তাদের শূদ্রত্বের উত্থান ঘটবে: অর্থাৎ এখনকার মতো নয় যখন শূদ্ররা বৈশ্য বা ক্ষত্রিয়ের চারিত্রিক গুণাবলী অর্জন করে মহান হয়ে উঠছে, কিন্তু এমন একটা সময় আসবে যখন প্রতিটি দেশের শূদ্ররা তাদের জন্মগত শূদ্র স্বভাব ও অভ্যাস নিয়ে – প্রকৃতপক্ষে বৈশ্য বা ক্ষত্রিয় না হয়ে শূদ্র হিসেবেই থাকবে – প্রতিটি সমাজে নিরঙ্কুশ আধিপত্য অর্জন করবে। এই নতুন শক্তির ভোরের প্রথম আভা ইতিমধ্যেই পশ্চিমা বিশ্বের উপর ধীরে ধীরে পড়তে শুরু করেছে এবং চিন্তাশীলরা এই নতুন ঘটনার চূড়ান্ত ধারণার প্রতিফলন দেখতে পাচ্ছেন সমাজতন্ত্র, নৈরাজ্যবাদ, নিহিলিজম-এর মতো অন্যান্য মতবাদ অনুসরণ করা সামাজিক বিপ্লবের মধ্যে।

স্বামীজী সত্য, ত্যাগ এবং সেবার প্রতি অদম্য সততা এবং অঙ্গীকারবদ্ধ এক সন্ন্যাসী ছিলেন। তাঁর জীবনের প্রতিটি মুহূর্ত কেটেছে অন্যের ভালোর জন্য। ভারতীয় জনসাধারণকে শ্রেষ্ঠত্বে উন্নীত করার ধারণা তাঁর জীবদ্দশাতেই শিকড় গেড়েছিল। তাঁর অনুগামীরা 'দুর্ভিক্ষ, রোগ-শোকের মাঝে কাজ করছে - কলেরা-পীড়িত মানুষের শুশ্রূষা করছে এবং ক্ষুধার্ত চন্ডালকে খাওয়াচ্ছে' দেখে খুশি হয়েছিলেন। স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের মতো ব্যক্তিত্ব খুব কমই জন্মায়। যখন তাঁদের মতো ব্যক্তিত্ব জন্মগ্রহণ করেন তখন তাঁদের জীবনদর্শন পৃথিবীতে এক পৃথক চিহ্ন রেখে যায়, যা মানব সভ্যতার নিরলস পরিবর্তন সত্ত্বেও বিরাজ করে। যেমন এ. এল. বাশাম দেখতে পান যে 'আগামী শতাব্দীতে তিনি আধুনিক বিশ্বের অন্যতম প্রধান রূপকার হিসাবে স্মরণীয় হবেন।'

তথ্যসূত্রঃ

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2 চট্টোপাধ্যায় ভবতোষ। ১৯৫৯। স্বামী বিবেকানন্দঃ সময় ও ইতিহাস চেতনা । কলকাতাঃ প্যাপিরাস। পৃ ৫৩-৫৪।

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4 Verma, V.P. 1961. *Modern Indian Political Thought*. Agra: L.N.A. Educational Publishers. p.124.

5 Swami Vivekananda. 1956 (6th edn.). *Complete works of Vivekananda Vol. VI*. Calcutta : Advaita Ashram. p. 469

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9 Verma, V.P. *Modern Indian Political Thought*, p.125.

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14 Swami Vivekananda Letter to Rakhal (Swami Brahmananda). 1956. *The Compute Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol VI, Letter no. LXXII*. Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 6th Edn. p.321.

15 Swami Vivekananda. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*- Vol. *VI*, p.246.

16 Swami Vivekananda. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV,* pp. 468-469.

17 Reddy, A.V. R. *Political Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda*, p.32.

18 Swami Vivekananda. *The Compute Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol VI*, p.381.

19 চট্টোপাধ্যায় ভবতোষ, স্বামী বিবেকানন্দঃ সময় ও ইতিহাস চেতনা, পৃ.৮৫-৮৬।

20 চক্রবর্তী সতীন্দ্রনাথ। ১৯৭৭। 'স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও সোশ্যালিজম', স্বামী লোকেশ্বরানন্দ সম্পাদিত- চিন্তানায়ক বিবেকানন্দ । কলকাতাঃ রামকৃষ্ণ মিশন ইন্সিটিউট অফ কালচার। অষ্টম মুদ্রণ ২০০৪, পৃ ৩২৩।

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22 Swami Vivekananda. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol VI.* p 381.

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Report:

Vows of Bengal: Psychological Tradition.

Madhumita Roy

Abstract

The Bengali word 'Vrata' is derived from the root 'bri', which means rule or restraint; although different researchers have different opinions on this matter. On One point all the researchers have agreed that, vows are originated in ancient times. On ancient times, people used to observe vows to protect themselves from natural disasters and wild animals. Also, when the flows of creation was disrupted due to intense heat in summer, they used to observe the 'punnipukur vrata' *Vows of virtual pond'* in the hope of rain, in ancient times, I am saying that even in later times, they used to observe 'Ghentu Vrata' or *Vows of Ghentu god* to protect themselves from skin diseases causes by scabies. However, these vows are not just religious festivals, but invented due to various societal observations. As the Bengali society was developed from agreecultural background, farming and fishing was the main occupasions of the citizens. Therefore, women used to pray from Ghentu Thakur the storage capacity of food for hundreds of years. This echo can also be heard in the poetry of the medieval poet Bharatchandra – 'May my child live on milk and rice'. The women used to pray to the goddess for the minimum amount of milk and rice for the survival of their children. Latter period, the society and our needs have changed. Therefore, now women no longer pray to Ghentu Thakur for a ball of rice, rather, they pray for a golden ball. It is clear that in modern times, women are more attached to worldly wealth.

Present 21st century is basically the age of technology. But even then the vows and the images associated with them have not been completely wiped out. Even today, if any astronaut face trouble to return from the space, he/she reminds their gods and goddesses. Therefore, though the vows have lost their relevance in the present city life but the tradition is still intact among the general folk belief.

Key words: *Primitive society, Animal hunting, Agriculture based society, vows with offerings and sacrifice of natural objects*.

সংক্ষিপ্তসার: 'বৃ' ধাতু থেকে ব্রত শব্দটি উৎপন্ন। ব্রত হল নারীমনের কামনা-বাসনাপ্রসূত মনের প্রতিচ্ছবি। তবে নারীরাই কেবল এই ব্রত পালন করে না। পুরুষেরাও করে। যেমন-'শিব চতুর্দশীর ব্রত'। আদিমকালে পশুশিকারকে কেন্দ্র করে এই ব্রতের প্রচলন হলেও এখন মূলত সৃষ্টির ধারাটিকে অক্ষুন্ন রাখার জন্যই এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়।এছাড়াও আদিমকালে মানুষ বিভিন্ন প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগের হাত থেকে রক্ষা পাওয়ার জন্য ব্রত পালন করত। এমনকি এই একবিংশ শতকে বিজ্ঞানের যুগে দাঁড়িয়ে মানুষ যখন মহাকাশ থেকে ফিরতে পারে না তখনও তার ঘরের লোক ব্রত পালন করে। সুতরাং বলা যায় যে এই ব্রতগুলি আদিমকালে সৃষ্টি হলেও ধারাটি আজও বহমান।

মূল শব্দ: *সভ্যতার বিভিন্ন ধাপে ব্রতর উদ্ভব, ব্রত পালনের জন্য মাটির ঘট, আলপনা, তুলসি পাতা, মাটির প্রদীপ, ফুল ইত্যাদি প্রাকৃতিক অর্ঘ।*

বাংলার ব্রতঃ মনস্তাত্ত্বিক পরম্পরা

প্রথম অধ্যায়:- বাংলার ব্রত: সংজ্ঞা, স্বরূপ ও শ্রেণীবিভাগ

বাংলার ব্রত: সংজ্ঞা ও স্বরূপ:-

বৃ - ধাতু থেকে ব্রত শব্দ (বৃ + অত)(অতক্) = ব্রত) উৎপন্ন। ব্রত কথাটির সাধারণ অর্থ নিয়ম বা সংযম। সাধারণত কোনও কিছু কামনা করে দেবতার কাছে বিশেষ প্রার্থনা জানিয়ে কোনও বিশেষ আচার পালন বা অনুষ্ঠান করা কিংবা পার্থিব কল্যাণ কামনায় - দশে মিলে - যে সামাজিক নিয়ম বা অনুষ্ঠান পালন করা হয় তাকেই ব্রত বলা হয়।

ব্রত হল নারী মনের কামনা বাসনা প্রসূত মনের প্রতিচ্ছবি মাত্র। ব্রতের মধ্য দিয়ে নারীরা তাদের ইহলৌকিক - পারলৌকিক চাহিদা পূরণ করে। যদিও ব্রতে কেবল নারীদের একচ্ছত্র অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠিত নয়। এমন অনেক ব্রত আছে যেগুলি নারীদের সঙ্গে পুরুষরাও পালন করে থাকে। যেমন - শিবরাত্রি ব্রত। মূলত পশুশিকারকে কেন্দ্র করে এই ব্রতের সূত্রপাত হলেও পরবর্তীকালে শিবকে কৃষিকাজের দেবতারুপে অঙ্গীভূত করা হয়েছে। আর তাই প্রকৃতিকে শস্যশ্যামলায় ভরিয়ে তুলতে, সৃষ্টির অমোঘ ধারাটিকে অক্ষুণ্ণ রাখতে নারীর সাথে সাথে পুরুষরাও এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকে। এই ব্রতগুলির কবে থেকে সূত্রপাত হয়েছিল যে বিষয়ে সুনির্দিষ্ট প্রমাণ না পাওয়া গেলেও অনেক গবেষকই একথা স্বীকার করেছেন যে বেশিরভাগ নারী ব্রতই আদিমকালের সৃষ্টি। আদিম মানুষ ছিল মূলত প্রকৃতি নির্ভর। অধিকাংশ ক্ষেত্রেই প্রতিকূল পরিবেশের সঙ্গে সংগ্রাম করে, তাদের বেঁচে থাকতে হত। তাই প্রকৃতিকে তুষ্ট করতে তারা নানাবিধ ব্রত পালন করতে শুরু করে। যেমন- বটবৃক্ষসেবা, অশ্বত্থ ব্রত, ইত্যাদি। এছাড়াও এই বৃক্ষগুলি ছায়া প্রদানকারী বৃক্ষ, হিসাবেও স্বীকৃত গ্রীষ্মকালে প্রখর রৌদ্রের দিনে ক্লান্ত পথিক এই বৃক্ষের নীচে একটুখানি বিশ্রামও নিতে পারেন। ব্রতের আনুষঙ্গিক বিষয় হিসাবে যে জিনিসগুলো অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তা হল-

মাটির ঘট ও আলপনা। মাটির ঘট মূলত সন্তান সম্ভবা নারীর প্রতীক। নারী যেহেতু সন্তান উৎপাদন করে আর ক্ষেতেও ফসল উৎপাদিত হয় তাই নারীকে উর্বরাশক্তির প্রতীক মনে করা হয়। অতীতে অধিক ফসল উৎপাদনের আশায়, মাটির উর্বরাশক্তি বৃদ্ধির আশায় ক্ষেতে নারীকে বলি দেওয়া হত। সেই উর্বরাশক্তির ধারণা থেকেই বিভিন্ন ব্রত পালনের ক্ষেত্রে মাটির ঘট প্রতিস্থাপনের অনুষঙ্গটি এসেছে। এছাড়াও মাটির ঘটের মধ্যে আমের ডাল সহ পাতা, সুপারি, অনেকক্ষেত্রে ডাবের ব্যাবহার করা হয়। যার প্রত্যেকটিই উর্বরাশক্তির প্রতীক হিসাবে গণ্য।

ব্রতের আনুষঙ্গিক আরেকটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অঙ্গ হল আলপনা। আলপনা হল নারী মনের কামনা-বাসনার প্রতীকায়িত রূপ। আলপনার সৃষ্টি আদিমকাল থেকেই। আদিমকাল থেকেই নারী ব্রতের একটি অত্যাবশ্যকীয় উপাদান হিসাবে আলপনার ব্যবহার লক্ষ্য করা যায়। তবে তখন মানুষের জীবন যেহেতু ছিল শিকারকেন্দ্রিক, তাই আলপনার মধ্যেও পাখির পায়ের ছাপ, শিকারের বিভিন্ন অস্ত্র-শস্ত্রের ছবি লক্ষ্য করা যায়। এ প্রসঙ্গে একটি বিষয় লক্ষণীয় যে, এখন আলপনায় যেগুলি লক্ষ্মীর পা হিসাবে পরিগণিত অতীতে সেগুলি ছিল মূলত বিভিন্ন পশু-পাখির পায়ের প্রতীকায়িত রুপ। সেই পায়ের চিহ্নগুলোই পরবর্তীকালে কৃষি ভিত্তিক সভ্যতা গড়ে ওঠার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ব্রতের ক্ষেত্রেও কিছু পরিবর্তন সূচিত হল। যেমন - পৌষ পার্বণ ব্রত। যা একান্ত ভাবেই কৃষিকেন্দ্রিক। এই ব্রতে ধানের গোলা, ধানের ছড়া, কাস্তে, ধামা ইত্যাদির আলপনা আঁকা হয়। এগুলির প্রত্যেকটি জিনিসই কৃষিকাজের অত্যন্ত প্রয়োজনীয় ও

অত্যাবশ্যকীয় উপাদান হিসাবে পরিগণিত হয়। এখানে ধানের গোলা আঁকার মধ্য দিয়ে "আমার সন্তান যেন থাকে দুধে ভাতে"[১] বাসনাটি প্রচ্ছন্ন থাকে। এছাড়াও এই দিন ঘরে ঘরে পিঠে পুলি তৈরি করার একটা রেওয়াজ দেখা যায়। যা নিঃসন্দেহে ভোজনরসিক বাঙ্গালির ভোজনরসিকতাকে মূর্ত করে তোলে। আরও পরবর্তীকালে ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্যের প্রসার ঘটার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে শস্যভান্ডারের দেবী লক্ষ্মী, আদিম শিকারজীবি মানুষের দেবতা গণেশ প্রমুখরা কিছুটা পৌরাণিক রঙ চড়িয়ে ব্যাবসায়িক উন্নতিলাভের দেব-দেবী হিসাবে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়ে উঠল। তাদের আদিমতা ঘুচে গিয়ে তারা উচ্চতর সমাজে স্থায়ী আসন লাভ করল। অনুরূপভাবে আলপনার ক্ষেত্রেও একটি পরিবর্তন সূচিত হল। আগে লক্ষ্মী ব্রতের আলপনায় যেখানে মূখ্যত লক্ষ্মীর পা আঁকার রেওয়াজ ছিল। পরে সেখানে শুভাশুভের দ্যোতক হিসাবে লক্ষ্মীর পদচিহ্নের পাশাপাশি রত্নভান্ডার, পদ্মফুল, পেঁচার ছবিও শুরু হল। পেঁচা যেহেতু ইঁদুরকে ভক্ষণের মধ্য দিয়ে শস্য সম্পদ রক্ষা করে থাকে, তাই পেঁচাও কল্যাণকারী জীব হিসাবে লক্ষ্মীর পাশে তার আসনটা পাকা করে নিল।

শ্রেণী বিভাগ:-

অবনীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর তার 'বাংলার ব্রত'[২], গ্রন্থে ব্রতগুলিকে তিনটি শ্রেণীতে ভাগ করেছেন-

১. মেয়েলি ব্রত

২. কুমারী ব্রত

৩. শাস্ত্রীয় বা পৌরাণিক ব্রত

১. মেয়েলি ব্রত:-

মেয়েলি ব্রতগুলি একবারে আদিমকালে সৃষ্টি। আদিমকালে নারীরা নানাবিধ কামনা-বাসনা চরিতার্থতার জন্য এই ব্রত পালন করত। সুতরাং নারী ব্রতগুলি একান্তভাবেই নারীমনের সুপ্ত ভাবনার বহিপ্রকাশ। যেমন - ষষ্ঠী ব্রত - নারীমাত্রই সন্তানের মঙ্গল কামনায় ব্রতী। তাই সন্তান জন্মের পর সন্তান যাতে সর্ববিপদমুক্ত থাকে তাই তারা ষষ্ঠী ব্রত পালন করে থাকে। ষষ্ঠী ব্রতর উদ্ভব সম্পর্কে গল্প প্রচলিত আছে যে, ষষ্ঠী পূজার দিন শাশুড়ি ষষ্ঠী পূজার আয়োজন করেছেন, আর নানাবিধ ব্যাঞ্জন দেখে তার বউমা লোভ সংবরণ করতে না পেরে ব্যাঞ্জনাদি থেকে কিছু তুলে খেয়ে ফেলায়, তার বারবার মৃত সন্তান প্রসব হয়। পরবর্তীকালে যখন সে তার ভুল বুঝতে পেরে কায়মনোবাক্যে ভক্তি সহকারে ষষ্ঠী দেবীর পূজা করে তখন সে আবার একটি সুস্থ সন্তানের জন্ম দিতে সমর্থ হয়। যদিও ষষ্ঠীর অনেক ভাগ আছে - শীতল ষষ্ঠী - চাপড়া ষষ্ঠী, অশোক ষষ্ঠী, ইত্যাদি। সব ষষ্ঠীর মূলেই সন্তানের মঙ্গলকামনা ও সংসারের মঙ্গলকামনার বিষয়টি জড়িত আছে।

২. কুমারী ব্রত:-

কুমারী ব্রতগুলি মূখ্যত নারীর রজঃস্বলা হবার পূর্বের সময় পর্যন্ত পালন করে। যেমন - 'কুলকুলতির ব্রত' , 'দশপুতুল ব্রত' ইত্যাদি। 'কুলকুলতির ব্রতে' মূখ্যত কুমারী মেয়েরা কুলের মঙ্গল কামনা, পূর্ব পুরুষের পুজো, সর্বোপরি গৃহের মঙ্গলকামনার করে। দশপুতুল ব্রত মেয়েরা পাঁচ বছর বয়স থেকে পালন করতে শুরু করে। এর সঙ্গে নারী জীবনের একটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়, পতি পাবার কামনা জড়িয়ে থাকে - তাও আবার রামের মতো পতি, সীতার মতো সতী হবার বাসনা জড়িত থাকে। সর্বোপরি সেকালে সমাজে বাল্যবিবাহ প্রচলিত থাকায় খুব স্বাভাবিকভাবে ছোট থেকেই এই বাসনাগুলি কুমারী মেয়েদের মনকে অধিকার করে থাকত। আর তারা এইসব ব্রত পালনের মধ্য দিয়ে মনে মনে তা প্রার্থনা করত।

৩. শাস্ত্রীয় বা পৌরাণিক ব্রত:-

এই ব্রত গুলি মূলত আচারকেন্দ্রিক। যাগযজ্ঞ, বলিদান, গুরুদক্ষিণা ইত্যাদি নানাবিধ উপাদান সঞ্জাত। এই ব্রত গুলি মুখ্যত ব্রাহ্মণ্য ধর্ম, রাজনীতি, পরম্পরা তথা সংস্কৃতিকে এদেশে প্রতিষ্ঠা করেছিল। যেমন- সত্য নারায়ণ ব্রত - এটি মূলত পীর দরগার ব্রত হলেও এই একটি প্রধান উপাদান হল পূজা শেষে যজ্ঞ করা, ব্রাহ্মণকে দক্ষিণা প্রদান করা ইত্যাদি। এর সঙ্গেও মূলত সাংসারিক সুখ-শান্তি রক্ষার বিষয়টি জড়িত থাকে।

সুতরাং; বলা যায় যে, নারী ব্রত, কুমারী ব্রত, শাস্ত্রীয় বা পৌরাণিক ব্রত যাই থাক না কেন সব ব্রতগুলির মূলেই সংসারের মঙ্গল সাধনের ব্যাপারটিই জড়িত আছে।

দ্বিতীয় অধ্যায়:-

ব্রত ও সমাজমনস্তত্ত্ব:-

ব্রতগুলি কামনা-বাসনাপ্রসূত হলেও সমাজতাত্ত্বিকের দৃষ্টি দিয়ে অনুসন্ধান করলে এগুলির মধ্যেও তৎকালীন সমাজের অনেক প্রতিচ্ছবি পাওয়া যায়। যেমন - 'চন্ডীর ব্রত'। এখানে দেবী চন্ডী মুখ্যত ব্যাধ সমাজের উপাস্য দেবী হিসাবে পরিগণিত। আদিম অরণ্যাচারী মানুষ তাদের জীবিকা নির্বাহের তাগিদে কিংবা আরও বেশি পশু শিকারের লক্ষ্যে শিকারের দেবী চন্ডীকে তুষ্ট করতেন। কালকেতু-ফুলরার উপাখ্যান তারই দৃষ্টান্ত। যদিও এ প্রসঙ্গে ধনপতি সওদাগর ও খুল্লনার উপাখ্যানও প্রচলিত আছে। পরবর্তীকালে আবার দেবী চন্ডীকে দুর্গার সাথে একীভূত করা হয়েছে। তবে আদিমতার ধারাটি চিরতরে বিলীন হয়ে যায়নি। দেবীর বোধনের দিন ভোরবেলায় কলাগাছকে স্নান করানো, নবপত্রিকার অধিষ্ঠান, ঘট পূজা, নবমীর দিনে দেবীমা'র সামনে বলি প্রদান সবকিছুই আদিম সংস্কৃতির পরিচায়ক। যদিও যুগের পরিবর্তনের সঙ্গে দেবীর মূর্তি নির্মাণের ক্ষেত্রে কিছু বদল দেখা গেছে। আগে দেবী মূর্তিতে ছিল বনেদিয়ানার স্পর্শ। কালক্রমে যেখানে এসেছে থিমের ভাবনা। যা নিঃসন্দেহে একটা সমাজ পরিবর্তনের দিককে স্পষ্ট করে। এছাড়াও 'মনসা- ব্রত' এর মনসা দেবীও মুখ্যত অনার্য সংস্কৃতির ধারক বাহক। তবে এক্ষেত্রে মনসার দুটি রূপ আমাদের কাছে স্পষ্ট। একটা তার মূর্তিরূপ আর একটা তার প্রতীকায়িত রূপ। হাওড়া জেলার অন্তর্গত উলুবেড়িয়া থেকে খেয়া পেরোলে পড়ে হীরাপুর গ্রাম। সেখানে প্রতি রবিবার দেবী মূর্তিরূপে পূজিত হন এবং হাঁস বলি তার প্রধান অঙ্গ। আবার মনসার প্রতীকায়িত রূপ সিজ গাছকে পূজা করাকে কেন্দ্র করে হাওড়া জেলার অন্তর্গত দেউলটির জালপাই গ্রামে 'ঢ্যাড়াপালা' নামে একপ্রকার ব্রত পালন করা হয়। এছাড়াও ভাদ্র মাসে রান্না পূজা ও প্রতি গৃহস্থ বাড়িতে বাস্তুদেবতা হিসাবে সিজ গাছকে পূজা করার রীতি দেখা যায়। তবে সবক্ষেত্রেই সর্প ভীতির একটা ভবনা জড়িত থাকে ঠিকই। তার সঙ্গে যুগ যুগ ধরে ক্রমান্বয়ে লালিত-বাহিত উর্বরতা বৃদ্ধির ধারণাটিকেও একেবারে উপেক্ষা করা যায় না। তবে যুগ ও মানুষের পরিবর্তনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে মনোবিজ্ঞানের ধারণাটিও এর সঙ্গে যুক্ত হয়েছে। যে বিজ্ঞান বলে সাপ হল যৌনতার প্রতীক। বিশিষ্ট মনোবিজ্ঞানী সিগমুন্ড ফ্রয়েড বলেন - মানব মনের অতৃপ্ত কামনা-বাসনাই যেহেতু স্বপ্নের মধ্য দিয়ে প্রতিভাত হয়- সেহেতু স্বপ্ন যেন অবদমিত যৌন চাহিদাকেই মূর্ত করে তোলে। সর্বপরি একটু তলিয়ে দেখলে দেখা যায় এতকিছুর পরেও যৌনতার ফলস্বরূপ সন্তান উৎপাদন উর্বরতাকেন্দ্রীক ভাবধারাটিকেই সুস্পষ্ট করে।

ধর্মের ব্রতর মধ্যেও একটা আদিমতার ছাপ স্পষ্ট। ধর্ম ঠাকুর মূলত এক খন্ড শিলাকেই পুজা করা হয়। এর সঙ্গে বৌদ্ধ তন্ত্রের কোন কোন মিল পাওয়া যায় ঠিকই তথাপি এখনও অনেক জায়গায় চৈত্র মাসের ২৭, ২৮ তারিখে একজন নিষ্ঠাবান সন্ন্যাসীকে তিনদিন হবিষ্যান্ন খেয়ে, ফলমূল খেয়ে গলায় উত্তরীয় পরিধান করে কঠোর সংযম ও ক্লেশের মধ্য দিয়ে জীবন অতিবাহিত করে ধর্ম দেবতাকে সাক্ষী রেখে বাঁশের খুঁটির ওপর একটি চালা মতো নির্মাণ

করে মাটিতে রাখা খড়ের আঁটির মধ্যে দন্ডায়মান বঁটিতে ঝাঁপ দেওয়ার প্রচলন দেখা যায়। এই সময় সন্ন্যাসীদের ফল ছুঁড়তেও দেখা যায়। প্রচলিত বিশ্বাস ওই ফল ভক্ষণ করলে নাকি অনেক নিঃসন্তান মায়ের গর্ভে সন্তান আসে। হাওড়া জেলার অন্তর্গত বাউড়িয়ার বুড়িখালী গ্রামে এই ধরণের ধর্ম ঝাঁপ দেখা যায়। এছাড়াও চৈত্র সংক্রান্তিতে কোন কোন গ্রামে চড়ক গাছকে পূজা করার রীতি দেখা যায়। এর সঙ্গে বানফোঁড়ার রীতিটিও যুক্ত। মূল সন্ন্যাসী যারা সারা মাস নিরামিষ আহার করে, কঠোর সংযম পালন করে, গলায় উত্তরীয় পরিধান করে, অনেকাংশে ভিক্ষান্নে জীবন অতিবাহিত করে, নিজেকে মহাদেবের একনিষ্ঠ সাধক হিসাবে পরিগণিত করতে কখনও পিঠে ত্রিশুল ফুটিয়ে নৃত্য করে। আবার কোন কোন জায়গায় কাঁটার ওপর দিয়ে হাঁটেন, গড়ান, এমনকি জলে, আগুনে ঝাঁপ দিতেও দেখা যায়। এই ব্রতটির মূলে কৃচ্ছ সাধনের বিষয়টি জড়িত থাকলেও তা একেবারে আদিমতা মুক্ত নয়। অনার্য সংস্কৃতির ধারক-বাহক হিসাবে আমরা কালীপূজার দিন যে অলক্ষ্মী বিদায়ের রীতিটি দেখি তা মুখ্যত আধুনিক সভ্য সমাজ কর্তৃক তথাকথিত অসভ্য-বর্বর বলে স্বীকৃত মানুষজনের সংস্কৃতিকে বিতাড়িত করারই একটি দৃষ্টান্ত। অবনীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর তার 'বাংলার ব্রত' গ্রন্থে দেখিয়েছেন এই অলক্ষ্মীই হল মূলত আদি লক্ষ্মী বা কুল লক্ষ্মী। এ প্রসঙ্গে রাজার বাজার থেকে অলক্ষ্মী কিনে ঘরে নিয়ে যাওয়ার কাহিনীটিই এই ধারনাটিকে মূর্ত করে।

অনার্য সংস্কৃতির আরও এক দেবতা শনি দেবতা, কিছুটা হলেও অবহেলিত আমাদের সমাজে। শনি দেবতার গায়ের রঙ নীল, তার পূজার উপকরণ শিরনি, গৃহের বাইরে তার অধিষ্ঠানই সভ্য সমাজ কর্তৃক অনার্য সংস্কৃতিকে বহিষ্কারের দিকটিকে সূচিত করে। এমনকি আমাদের অত্যন্ত ঘৃণ্য মানসিকতার পরিচয় স্বরূপ এই দেবতার প্রসাদ পর্যন্ত মানুষ গৃহের ভিতর আনে না। আধুনিক সভ্যসমাজ শনি দেবতার কুনজর কাটানোর জন্য অনেক সময় কাককে ভোরবেলায় রুটি প্রদান করে, এমনকি অনেক বহু মূল্যবান রত্ন পর্যন্ত পরিধান করে। কোন কোন ক্ষেত্রে আবার নীল সুতার ব্যবহারও দেখা যায়। তবে এ সবকিছুর মূলে রয়েছে মূলত অনার্য সংস্কৃতিকে পরিহার করার একটা প্রয়াস।

আমাদের আদিম সংস্কৃতির পরিচায়ক আর এক দেবতা বাবা পঞ্চানন্দও মূলত সভ্যতার প্রাথমিক পর্বেরই দেবতা। তাই বট, অশ্বত্থ গাছের তলায় তার অধিষ্ঠান। আদিম মানুষের মতোই তাদের দেবতাও গাছতলায় বাবা হিসাবেই প্রতিষ্ঠিত। এমনকি তার বাহন ঘোড়াও পশুমূর্তিকে পূজা করার বিষয়টিকে সামনে এনেছে।

সুতরাং আদিমতাকে কাটিয়ে মানুষ যতই সভ্য হয়ে উঠুক তার ধর্ম, রীতিনীতি, ব্রতকথা সবকিছুর মধ্যে রয়ে গেছে আদিমতার স্পর্শ। এমনকি মানুষ কৃষিনির্ভর ও ক্রমে ব্যাবসা বাণিজ্যের স্তরে উন্নীত হলেও এখনও তার পালিত ব্রতগুলির ক্ষেত্রে এই ধারাগুলি বহমান রেখেছে। কৃষিনির্ভর সমাজের একটি অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সম্পদ হল গরু। জমিতে লাঙল দেওয়ার জন্য কিংবা গৃহে খাদ্যের যোগানের জন্য যেকোন কারণেই হোক না কেন গরুকে ভগবতীর সঙ্গেও তুলনা করা হয়। এ প্রসঙ্গে বিশেষভাবে স্মরণীয় ঈশ্বরী পাটনীর সেই বিনীত উক্তি - 'প্রণমিয়া পাটনি কহিছে জোড় হাতে / আমার সন্তান যেন থাকে দুধে ভাতে' র মতো বাসনাটিও আমাদের কৃষিপ্রধান সমাজে সন্তানের খেয়ে পরে বেঁচে থাকার ভাবমূর্তিটিকেই মূর্ত করে তোলে। তাই নারীরা গরুকে আরও একটু ভাল রাখার জন্য 'গোপালব্রত', ' তুষতুষলাব্রত', ইত্যাদি পালন করে থাকেন।

আর ব্যাবসা বাণিজ্যের অধিষ্ঠাত্রী দেব ও দেবী রূপে লক্ষ্মী-গণেশ তো তাদের স্থান একেবারে পাকা করেই নিয়েছে। এ প্রসঙ্গে বাণিজ্য নগরী হিসাবে প্রসিদ্ধ মুম্বাই (মহারাষ্ট্র) শহরের নাম উল্লেখ্য। অথচ এই লক্ষ্মী গণেশও আদিমতম সমাজ থেকে উদ্ভূত। বর্তমানে আর এক দেবতা কার্তিকও নিজেকে আধুনিক সমাজে প্রতিষ্ঠিত করতে পেরেছে। বহু নারী এখন রূপবান দেবতা কার্তিকের মতো সন্তান লাভের আশায় কার্তিক ব্রত পালন করে থাকে। অথচ কার্তিক সম্পর্কে প্রচলিত অধিকাংশ কাহিনীই তাকে ঘৃণ্য দেবতা হিসাবে পরিগণিত করে। এ প্রসঙ্গে একবার কার্তিকের মাতৃগামী হবার কাহিনীটি তাকে নারী সমাজে অত্যন্ত ঘৃণ্য করে তোলে।

সুতরাং বলা যায়, শিকারনির্ভর সভ্যতা থেকে শুরু করে ক্রমে পশুপালন, কৃষিকাজের মধ্য দিয়ে ব্যাবসা-বাণিজ্যের প্রসার পর্যন্ত সমাজের এই পরিকাঠামোগত পরিবর্তনগুলিকে জানার জন্য এই ব্রতগুলি উলেখযোগ্যতার দাবি রাখে।

তৃতীয় অধ্যায়:

ব্রতবিশেষণ:- ব্রত মানেই কেবল মাত্র নারী মনের কামনা-বাসনা প্রসূত মনের প্রতিচ্ছবিমাত্র নয়। তথ্যসন্ধানীর দৃষ্টি দিয়ে লক্ষ্য করলে এর মধ্যে বহু তথ্যের সন্ধানও পাওয়া যাবে। বাংলার ব্রতগুলিকে বিশেষণ করলে দুটি দিক মুলত স্পষ্ট হয়ে ওঠে- ১. সমাজতাত্ত্বিক দিক ২. ধর্মীয় দিক

১. সমাজতাত্ত্বিক দিক:- যেকোন ব্রতের মধ্য দিয়েই সমাজের ছবি উঠে আসে। এখন সেই সমাজ যদি হয় শিকারজীবী আদিম মানুষের সমাজ তাহলে ব্রতের মধ্য দিয়ে আদিম সমাজের ছবি ফুটে ওঠে। কিংবা সেই সমাজ যদি হয় কৃষিভিত্তিক সমাজ তাহলে ব্রতের মধ্য দিয়ে কৃষিভিত্তিক সমাজের ছবি ফুটে ওঠে। সুতরাং, বলা যায় ব্রত মাত্রই সমাজের প্রতিফলন। হয়তো যুগের দাবিকে সামনে রেখে তার মধ্যে অনেক পরিবর্তন সুচীত হয়, তথাপি ধারাটি বহমান।

২. ধর্মীয় দিক:- ব্রত মানেই একটা ধর্মীয় বাতাবরণ থাকবে। সে নারী ব্রত বা পৌরাণিক ব্রত যাই হোক না কেন। পৌরাণিক ব্রতগুলি প্রত্যক্ষ ভাবে দান-ধ্যান, যাগযজ্ঞ নির্ভর। কিন্তু নারী ব্রতগুলি সে অর্থে ধর্মনির্ভর না হলেও কোন এক অলৌকিক শক্তিকে সর্বময় ক্ষমতার অধিকারী মনে করে তাকে মেনে চলার ব্যাপারটি কিন্তু থেকেই যায়।

যেমন- যেসব নারী ব্রতগুলি আদিমকালে জন্ম নিয়েছিল যেগুলির মূলে ছিল শিকার পাবার বাসনা কিংবা ঝড় ঝঞ্ঝা প্রভৃতি প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগের হাত থেকে রক্ষা পাবার জন্য বৃক্ষপূজার রীতি। এইসব অলৌকিক দেব-দেবীদের হয়তো কোন বাস্তব অস্তিত্ব নেই, সবটাই আদিম মানুষের মনের কল্পনাপ্রসূত। তাই বলা যায় মানব মনই দেবতার জন্মের আঁতুড়ঘর।

নিম্নে কতগুলি ব্রতের উল্লেখ ও বিশ্লেষণ করা হল-

১. কুলকুলতির ব্রত

২. ঘেঁটুর ব্রত

৩. পুণ্যিপুকুর ব্রত

৪. ইতু পূজা বা আলদূর্গার ব্রত

৫. কুলি মঙ্গলবারের ব্রত

৬. অশ্বত্থ ব্রত

৭. কুললক্ষ্মী ব্রত

৮. পৌষ পার্বন ব্রত

৯. ঢ্যারাপালা ব্রত

১০. গোকাল ব্রত

১. কুলকুলতির ব্রতঃ

ব্রতের নাম: কুলকুলতির ব্রত

ব্রতের সময়কালঃ আশ্বিন মাসের সংক্রান্তি থেকে কার্ত্তিক মাসের সংক্রান্তি পর্যন্ত সন্ধ্যার সময় এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়।

ব্রতের পালনকারীঃ সাধারণত কুমারী মেয়েরা এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকে।

ব্রতের উপকরণঃ কিছু পরিমাণ মাটি, একটি তুলসী গাছ, তিনটি কুলপাতা, তিনটি মাটির প্রদীপ, ফুল, বেলপাতা।

ব্রত পদ্ধতিঃ সাধারণত কুমারী মেয়েরা সন্ধ্যার সময় যেখানে কুলকুলতির ব্রতের স্থান করা হয়েছে সেখানে তিনটি কুলপাতার ওপর তিনটি মাটির প্রদীপ জ্বালিয়ে মন্ত্র বলে পূজা করে।

ব্রতের আলপনাঃ কুলকুলতি ব্রতের আলপনার দুটি দিক আছে-

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ কুলকুলতির ব্রতের আলপনায় ব্রতিনী একটি গোল এঁকে তার চারপাশে তুলসিপাতার চিহ্ন আঁকেন। যা আলপনার সৌন্দর্য বৃদ্ধি করতে সাহায্য করে। পাশাপাশি গোলটির মাঝখানে দুটি প্রদীপ আঁকেন। যেটিও অন্ধকার স্থানের সৌন্দর্য বৃদ্ধি করে।

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ কুলকুলতি ব্রতের আলপনায় যে প্রদীপ আঁকা হয় তা নিছক একটি মাটির প্রদীপ মাত্র নয়, আমাদের জীবনদ্বীপও বটে। তুলসিতলায় এই প্রদীপ আঁকার মধ্য দিয়ে যেন এই ভাবনা উঠে আসে যে প্রদীপের আলো শুধুমাত্র তুলসীতলাকে আলোকিত করে না, আমাদের জীবনের যত জরা, জীর্ণতা, অন্ধকারকেও আলোকিত করে।



কুলকুলতির ব্রত

ব্রতের মন্ত্রঃ

১. কুলকুলতি কুলে বাতি
তোমার তলায় দিলাম বাতি
আজ জন্মে স্বর্গে বাতি
সন্ধ্যে নাও মা সরস্বতী
(পূজার সময়)

২. তুলসি তুলসি নারায়ণ
তুমি তুলসি বৃন্দাবন
তোমার শিরে ঢালি জল
অন্তঃকালে দিও বর,
(জল ঢালার সময়)

৩. কেষ্ট কেষ্ট মাধবীলতা
তুমি কেষ্ট কও না কথা
কেষ্ট কথা শুনলাম কানে
গড় করি হরির চরণে।
(প্রণাম করার সময়)

ব্রতের মন্ত্রের ব্যাখাঃ-

১. কুলকুলতি পূজার সময় যে মন্ত্রটা বলা হয় তার সঙ্গে সাধারণত কুল বা বংশের একটি ধারা জড়িয়ে থাকে। কুলকুলতি তলায় বাতি দিয়ে ব্রতিনী যেন একদিকে বংশরক্ষা অর্থাৎ ইহকালের অন্যদিকে পরকালের পথ প্রশস্ত করে রাখতে চেয়েছেন।

২. জল ঢালার মন্ত্রের মধ্য দিয়ে ব্রতিনী যেন তুলসিতলাকেই তার জীবনের গয়া, বৃন্দাবন সার করেছেন। অন্যদিকে অন্তিমকালে অর্থাৎ মৃত্যুর সময় জলপ্রাপ্তির বাসনাটিকেও তুলে ধরেছেন।

৩. মাধবী শব্দের অর্থ হল একদিকে চিরহরিৎ লতা বিশেষ, অন্যদিকে মাধবী আবার মাধবের পত্নী। দুটি অর্থই এখানে তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। কারণ একদিকে কেষ্ট মানে তুলসিকে মাধবীলতার সঙ্গে অভিন্ন কল্পনা করে উভয় লতার মধ্যে সাযুজ্য কল্পনা করা হয়েছে। অন্যদিকে মাধবী আবার মাধবের পত্নী। মানে তুলসিতলাকেই যেন একরকম রাধা কৃষ্ণের আশ্রয়স্থল কল্পনা করে তার কাছে ব্রতিনী প্রণাম নিবেদন করেছেন।

ব্রতের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ-

তুলসি গাছ সংযমের প্রতীক, সুখ-শান্তির প্রতীক। ব্রতিনী যেন সংযম, স্থিরতার লক্ষ্যে এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকে। এছাড়াও সংসারে সুখ-শান্তি স্থাপনের জন্যও এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়। কথিত আছে তুলসি পাতার মধ্যে নাকি রাধারাণী বিরাজ করেন। তাই বৃহস্পতিবার ও রবিবার নাকি তুলসি পাতা ছিঁড়তে নেই। অনুরুপভাবে তুলসি গাছের একটি ভেষজ দিকও আছে। তৎকালীন সময়ে ভেষজ ঔষুধ তৈরীতে তুলসির জুড়ি মেলা ভার। তুলসির রুপচর্চার

দিকটিও বহুল চর্চিত। রূপটানের ক্ষেত্রে তুলসি অ্যান্টি অক্সিডেন্ট হিসাবে কাজ করে। সবশেষে আসি পরজন্মের দিকটি নিয়ে। এই ব্রতে তুলসি গাছ পরজন্মের পরিত্রাতা রুপেও ব্যাবহৃত হয়েছে। ছোট ছোট মেয়েরা ছোট বয়স থেকেই ঠাকুমা- ঠাকুরদাদের কাছ থেকে শুনে আসে ইহজন্মের কথা, পরজন্মের কথা, স্বর্গলাভ প্রাপ্তির কথা। সেই থেকে তাদের মনে এগুলি গেঁথে যায়। আর তাই মৃতুর পর স্বর্গলাভের আশায় কিংবা মৃত্যুর সময় একটু জল পানের আশায় ছোট ছোট মেয়েরা এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকে।

২. ঘেঁটুর ব্রতঃ

ব্রতের নামঃ ঘেঁটুর ব্রত

ব্রতের সময়কালঃ ফাল্গুন মাসের সংক্রান্তির দিনে এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়। ঘেঁটু পূজা সাধারণত সকালবেলা। ছোট ছেলেরা সন্ধ্যার সময় সেই পূজিত ঘেঁটু ঠাকুরকে নিয়ে বেরিয়ে বাড়ি বাড়ি চাল-পয়সা আনে।

ব্রত পালনকারীঃ সাধারণত বিধবা মহিলারা ঘেঁটু পূজা করে থাকে।

ব্রতের উপকরণঃ একটা কালো হাঁড়ি, কিছুটা গোবর, পাঁচটা কড়ি, ঘেঁটু ফুল।

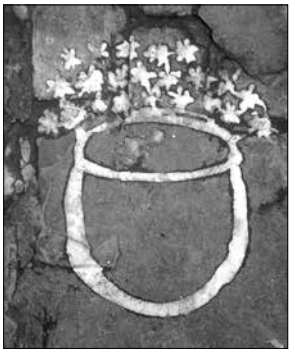
ব্রত পদ্ধতিঃ সকালবেলা একটা কালো হাঁড়িতে গোবর দিয়ে, গোবরের ওপর পাঁচটা কড়ি দিয়ে, ঘেঁটু ফুল দিয়ে যেকোন বিধবা ভদ্রমহিলা পূজা করবে। আবার বাচ্চারা কেউ কেউ বদমায়েশি করে ওটাতে ইঁট মারে। একটু করে গোবর, একটা করে কড়ি যে যার ঘরের দোরগোরায় রেখে দেবে। সন্ধ্যার পর বাচ্চা ছেলেরা একটা হাঁড়ি কিনে তাতে দুটো করে ঘেঁটু ফুল সাজিয়ে হাতে করে নিয়ে বাড়ি বাড়ি গিয়ে চাল পয়সা আনবে।

নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক

মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক

নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ একটি হাঁড়ির সরাটিকে ঘেঁটু ফুল দিয়ে গোল করে সাজানোর মধ্য দিয়ে ব্রতিনীর মনের সৌন্দর্য চেতনার দিকটি স্পষ্ট হয়ে উঠেছে।

মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ হাঁড়ি মানে শস্য সম্পদের প্রতীক। অতীতে হাঁড়িতে করে গৃহস্থেরা শস্য সম্পদ মজুত করে রাখতেন। যদিও এখন হাঁড়ি মূলত ভাত রান্নার কাজেই ব্যবহৃত হয়ে থাকে। তথাপি ঘেঁটুর ব্রতে হাঁড়ির আলপনার মধ্য দিয়ে একরকম শস্য সম্পদ মজুত রাখার বাসনাটিই ফুটে উঠেছে।



ঘেঁটুর ব্রত

ব্রতের গানঃ-

১. ঘেঁটু গাই, ঘেঁটু গাই
গেরস্থের বাড়ি চাল-ডাল মূলোর হাঁড়ি
২. আয়রে ঘেঁটু চড়ে
ষষ্ঠী দাদুর মোড়ে
ওই ষষ্ঠী কী করলি
হাত তালি দিয়ে চুল করলি
যে দেবে এক পলা তেল
তার হবে সোনার বালা
যে দেবে এক পলা তেল
তার হবে সোনার দেল
যে দেবে হাঁড়ি হাড়িঁ
তার হবে বড় গাড়ি
যে দেবে পুত
তার মটকায় ভূত।
৩. চল চল চল
চলরে দিদি জল সইতে যাই
জল সইতে গিয়ে মোরা ঘেঁটুরে সাজাই
ঘেঁটু বড় উপকারী
তাই এসেছি তোমাদের বাড়ি
চাল-পয়সা দাও গো মা
বিদায় হয়ে যাই।

ব্রতের গানের ব্যাখাঃ- ঘেঁটু পূজার গানে সাধারণত ইহলৌকিক কামনা-বাসনা গুলোকেই মূর্ত করে তোলা হয়েছে। (যেমন - সোনার দেল, বড় গাড়ি ইত্যাদি) এছাড়াও, ব্রত মানেই সংসারের মঙ্গলকামনার একটা বাসনা তো থেকেই থাকে।

ব্রতের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- সাধারণত ঘেঁটু ঠাকুরের পূজা করলে খোশ-পাঁচড়া সব নাকি ভাল হয়ে যায়। কিন্তু এখন শুধু আর খোশ-পাঁচড়া ভাল হওয়ার জন্য ঘেঁটু ঠাকুরের পূজা কেউ করেন না। এর সঙ্গে ইহজাগতিক কিছু বাসনাও জুড়ে গেছে। আগে ঘেঁটু ঠাকুরের গানে বলা হত - 'যে দেবে থালা থালা তার হবে ধানের গোলা'। - আমাদের কৃষিপ্রধান দেশ। তাই ধানের গোলার বাসনা জাগাটা স্বাভাবিক। তাই ব্রতীরা ঘেঁটু ঠাকুরের কাছে ধানের গোলা প্রার্থনা

করত। যেখানে শত বৎসরের খাবার মজুত থাকবে। এবং সন্তান-সন্ততিরা খেয়ে বাঁচবে। কিন্তু এখন সমাজ পরিবর্তন এসেছে। এখনকার মেয়েদের সোনার অলংকারের ওপর ঝোঁক বেশি। তাই তারা ঘেঁটু ঠাকুরের কাছে প্রার্থনা করেন -

'যে দেবে থালা থালা
তার হবে সোনার বালা'।

৩. পুণ্যিপুকুর ব্রতঃ

ব্রতের নামঃ- পুণ্যিপুকুর ব্রত

ব্রতের সময়কালঃ- বৈশাখ মাসে এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়।

ব্রত পালনকারীঃ- সাধারণত নারীরা এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকেন।

ব্রতের উপকরণ ঃ- বাড়ির কিছুটা উঠোন, একটা তুলসি গাছ, ফুল, ফল ও সন্দেশ।

ব্রত পদ্ধতিঃ- পুকুরের মধ্যে মাটি খুঁড়ে তুলসি গাছ পুঁততে হয়। পাড়ের মধ্যে ফুল, সন্দেশ দিয়ে পূজা করতে হয়।

ব্রতের আলপনাঃ- পুণ্যিপুকুর ব্রতের আলপনার দুটি দিক আছে- ১. নন্দন তাত্ত্বিক দিক

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক

নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- পুণ্যিপুকুর ব্রতে ব্রতনী যে আলপনা আঁকেন যেখানে একটি পুকুর খনন করে তার মধ্যে একটি তুলসি গাছের চিত্র অঙ্কন করেই ব্রতনী খান্ত হননি। পুকুরের মধ্যে কারুকার্য করেছেন। সাথে একটি শঙ্খের ছবিও এঁকেছেন। হিন্দু নারীদের কাছে শঙ্খ একটি শুভ চিহ্নের প্রতীক। আলপনাও তার ব্যতিক্রম নয়। সুতরাং এর মধ্য দিয়ে নারী মনের সৌন্দর্য্য চেতনার প্রকাশ লক্ষ্য করা যায়।

মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- হিন্দু ধর্মের তুলসি বাস্তুদেবতা হিসাবে পরিচিত। প্রতিটি বাড়িতে আগে বাস্তুদেবতার পূজা করে তারপর অন্যান্য দেব-দেবীর পূজা করা হয়। তাই পুণ্যিপুকুর ব্রতের জন্য ব্রতিনীর তুলসি গাছকেই বেছে নিয়েছেন। মনের বিশ্বাস একটি পুকুরের মধ্যে তুলসিগাছের চিহ্ন আঁকলে তুলসিদেবতার কৃপায় বৃষ্টি নেমে আসবে।



পুণ্যিপুকুর ব্রত

ব্রতের মন্ত্রঃ-

পুণ্যিপুকুর পুষ্পমালা
কে পূজোরে সকালবেলা
আমি সতী লীলাবতী
সাত ভায়ের বোন ভাগ্যবতী
করিয়া শঙ্খধ্বনি করে রে
গীতা রানী

ব্রতের মন্ত্রের ব্যাখ্যাঃ- পুণ্যিপুকুর ব্রতের মন্ত্রের মধ্যে তেমন কোন গূঢ় তত্ত্বকথা নেই। বরং আমাদের প্রাত্যহিক জীবনের সেসব সাধারণ চাহিদা সাত ভাইয়ের কোলে একমাত্র বোন হয়ে জন্মানোর বাসনাই মূর্ত হয়ে উঠেছে।

ব্রতের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ বৈশাখ মাস মানে তীব্র দাবদাহের সময়। এই সময় পুকুর ফুটি-ফাটা সব শুকিয়ে যায়। তাই ফুটি-ফাটা, পুকুর - ঘাট জলে পূর্ণ করতে নারীরা এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকেন। নারীরা বিশ্বাস করেন এই ব্রত পালন করলে প্রকৃতিতে বৃষ্টি নামবে। প্রকৃতি আবার শস্য-শ্যামলা হয়ে উঠবে। বর্তমানে বিশ্ব-উষ্ণায়নের যুগে প্রকৃতিতে বৃষ্টির পরিমাণ যেভাবে কমে যাচ্ছে, তাতে করে এই সময়কালে দাঁড়িয়ে ব্রতটির উপযোগিতা লক্ষ্য করার মতো। এই ব্রতের সঙ্গে বৃষ্টির সরাসরি কোন যোগ নাও থাকতে পারে। কিন্তু যুগ যুগ ধরে নারী মনের বিশ্বাস এই ব্রত পালন করলে প্রকৃতিতে বৃষ্টি হবে।

ইতু পূজা বা আলদূর্গার ব্রতঃ-

ব্রতের নামঃ- ইতু পূজা বা আলদূর্গার ব্রত

ব্রতের সময়কালঃ- কার্তিক মাসের সংক্রান্তি থেকে অগ্রহায়ণ মাসের সংক্রান্তি পর্যন্ত সপ্তাহে প্রতি বৃহস্পতি ও রবিবার সকালে এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়। অগ্রহায়ণ মাসের সংক্রান্তিতে পিঠে খেয়ে ইতু ঠাকুরকে বিসর্জন দেওয়া হয়।

ব্রত পালনকারীঃ- সাধারণত গৃহিনীরা এই ব্রত পালন করেন।

ব্রতের উপকরণঃ- দুটি মাটির গোল পাত্র, দুটি মাটির ঘট, মটর, ছোলা, পাঁচ কড়াই, হিঞ্চে গাছ, ধান, কলমি, শুশনি, পাতি, কালো কচু ইত্যাদি। এছাড়াও ঘটে দেওয়ার জন্য আমেশ্বর, সুপারি, বিসর্জনের দিন মুড়কি, সন্দেশ ও তিলেখাজার প্রয়োজন হয়।

ব্রত পদ্ধতিঃ- দুটি মাটির গোল পাত্রে মাটি দিয়ে মটর, ছোলা, পাঁচ কড়াই, হিঞ্চে গাছ, ধান, কলমি, শুশনি, পাতি, কালো কচু পুঁতে দেওয়া হয়। পাত্রের মাঝখানে একটি ঘট বসিয়ে তাতে আমেশ্বর, সুপারি দিয়ে প্রতি বৃহস্পতি ও রবিবার পূজা করা হয়। বিসর্জনের দিন নতুন গুড়ের মুড়কি, সন্দেশ, তিলেখাজা সহযোগে পূজা দেওয়া হয়।

ব্রতের আলপনাঃ- ইঁতু পূজা বা আলদূর্গার ব্রতের আলপনার দুটি দিক আছে-

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- এই ব্রতের আলপনায় ব্রতীনি কলমি লতার ছবি আঁকেন। তার মধ্যেকার কারুকার্য থেকে ব্রতিনীর মনের সৌন্দর্য্য চেতনার পরিচয় পাওয়া যায়।

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- কলমি গাছ সতেজতার প্রতীক। পৃথিবীতে গ্রাম প্রবাহের ধারাটিকে অক্ষুণ্ণ রাখার জন্য কলমি গাছের ছবি আঁকা হয়। এছাড়াও কলমি গাছ উর্বরতার প্রতীক। তাই কলমি গাছের ছবি আঁকার মধ্য দিয়ে একধরনের জাদু বিশ্বাসও যেন ব্রতিনীর মনে কাজ করে।

ব্রতের মন্ত্রঃ- হিঞ্চে, কলমি, শুশনি লকলক করে

রাজার বেটা পফ মারে

মারলাম কফ, রুপোর খিল

সোনার কৌটো,রুপোর খিল

এসো গো শুশনি বসো গো ডালে

গোখানি খেতে দেব সোনার থালে

সোনার থালা এয়ো থালা

আমরা বড় এয়োরানী

এয়োরানী নভেম্বর

ধনে পুত্রে বাড়ম্বর।

ব্রতের মন্ত্রের ব্যাখাঃ-

এই ব্রতটির মূলে ডাল ফসল উৎপাদনের ভাবনা কেন্দ্রীভূত থাকলেও ব্রতের মন্ত্রটির মধ্য দিয়ে মূলত ইহোলৌকিক বাসনাগুলো মূর্ত হয়ে উঠেছে। পাশাপাশি যে দিকটা লক্ষ্যনীয় তা হল এখানে রুপকথার রাজ্যের রাজার অনুষঙ্গ, সোনার কৌটো, রুপোর খিল, সোনার থালা, এয়োরানীর মতো প্রসঙ্গ এসেছে। যা সহজেই নারীমনের উচ্চাকাঙ্খার দিকগুলিকে তুলে ধরে।

ব্রতের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ-

আমাদের কৃষিপ্রধান দেশে বছরের অধিকাংশ সময়ই চাষ হয়। তাই অধকাংশ ব্রতের মূলে থাকে ভাল ফসল উৎপাদন। ইতু পূজাও তার ব্যাতিক্রম নয়। এই পূজার যেসব উপকরণ তার সবটাই কৃষিভিত্তিক। তাই বলা যায় ভালো ফসল উৎপাদনের আকাঙ্খায় নারীরা এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকে। এছাড়াও ধনে-পুত্রে লক্ষ্মী লাভের বাসনাতো যেকোন নারীর মনেই থাকে।

৪. কুলি মঙ্গলবারের ব্রতঃ-

ব্রতের নামঃ- কুলি মঙ্গলবারের ব্রত

ব্রতের সময়কালঃ- অগ্রহায়ণ মাসের মঙ্গলবারে দুপুরবেলা এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়।

ব্রত পালনকারীঃ- সাধারণত গৃহিনীরাই এই ব্রত পালন করে।

ব্রত পদ্ধতিঃ- কুলি মঙ্গলবারে কুলোয় করে জোড়া কুল, কুলপাতা দিয়ে পূজা দিতে হয়। আর হরির তলায় বসে ডালসিদ্ধ দিয়ে একগাল মুড়ি খেতে হয়।

ব্রতের আলপনাঃ- কুলি মঙ্গলবারের ব্রতের আলপনায় দুটি দিক আছে-

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- আলপনা হল ব্রতীর মনের কামনা - বাসনার প্রতিকায়িত রুপ। ব্রতিনী তার ব্রতের মধ্য দিয়ে যা কামনা করেন তাই আলপনায় তুলে ধরেন। কুলি মঙ্গলবারের ব্রতে ব্রতিনী কুলোর ছবি আঁকেন। যা তার সৌন্দর্য্য ভাবনার পাশাপাশি, কামনা-বাসনা প্রসূত মনের ছবিকে স্পষ্ট করে।

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- কুলি মঙ্গলবারের ব্রত সাধারণত বাড়ির উঠানে কুলো পেতে, ঘট পেতে করা হয়। এক্ষেত্রে ব্রতিনী যে কুলোর ছবি আঁকেন তার মধ্যে যেমন মিশে থাকে শস্য - সম্পদের প্রাচুর্য, তেমনি মিশে থাকে গৃহস্থের কল্যাণের কামনা। পাশাপাশি ঘটের যে চিত্র তা মাত্রই উর্বরতা প্রতীক।



কুলি মঙ্গলবারের ব্রত

ব্রতের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ-

কুলো হল কৃষকের ঘরের একটি অত্যাবশ্যকীয় উপাদান। ধান, গম, যব ঝাড়াই করতে কুলোর ব্যাবহার করা হয়। তাই কুলি মঙ্গলবারের ব্রত করার সময় নারীরা কুলোকেই একটি পবিত্র উপকরণ হিসাবে বেছে নিয়েছেন। সাধারণত সংসারের মঙ্গলার্থে ও ঐশ্বর্য্যের কামনায় নারীরা এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকেন।

৫. অশ্বত্থ ব্রতঃ

ব্রতের নামঃ- অশ্বত্থ ব্রত

ব্রতের সময়কালঃ- চৈত্র সংক্রান্তি থেকে বৈশাখ সংক্রান্তি পর্যন্ত এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়।

ব্রত পালনকারীঃ- সাধারনত গৃহিনীরাই এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকেন।

ব্রতের উপকরণঃ- কাঁচা পাকা অশ্বত্থ পাতা নিয়ে এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়।

ব্রত পদ্ধতিঃ- কাঁচা-পাকা অশ্বত্থ পাতা নিয়ে, জলে দাঁড়িয়ে এই ব্রত পালন করতে হয়।

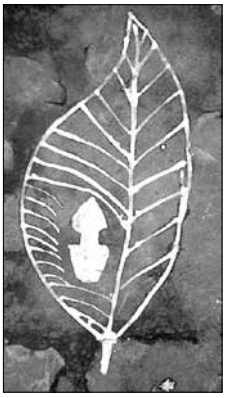
ব্রতের আলপনাঃ- অশ্বত্থ ব্রতের আলপনারও দুটি দিক আছে-

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- অশ্বত্থ ব্রতের আলপনায় ব্রতিনী একটি অশ্বত্থ পাতার ওপর সিঁদুর কৌটার চিহ্ন আঁকেন। যা নিঃসন্দেহে তার সৌন্দর্য্য চেতনার দিকটিকে ফুটিয়ে তোলে।

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- আলপনাটির মধ্যে যেন ব্রতিনীর মনের এই প্রচ্ছন্ন ভাবটি লুকায়িত থাকে যে অশ্বত্থ গাছের মত দীর্ঘায়ুলাভ ও সিঁথির সিঁদুর অক্ষয় থাকার বাসনা।



অশ্বত্থ ব্রত

ব্রতের মন্ত্রঃ-

এই বছরে এই ব্রত
আর বছরে আবার ব্রত
পাকা পাতাটি মাথায় দিলে
পাকা চুলে সিঁদুর পরে
কাঁচা পাতাটি মাথায় দিলে কাঞ্চন মূর্তি হয়
এই বছরে এই শিব
আর বছরে পারি তোমার পূজো।

ব্রতের মন্ত্রের ব্যাখ্যাঃ- অশ্বত্থ ব্রতের মন্ত্রের মধ্যে নারীমনের চিরন্তন একটি বাসনা এয়োস্ত্রী হয়ে থাকা বা সিঁথির সিঁদুর মাথায় নিয়ে মৃত্যুলাভ করার বাসনাটাই মূর্ত হয়ে উঠেছে। পাশাপাশি শিব পূজার মধ্য দিয়ে শিবের মতো স্বামীলাভ করার বাসনাটাও যেন উঠে এসেছে।

ব্রতের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- বৃক্ষ সাধারণত আমাদের একটি অতি প্রাচীন পূজা। অতি প্রাচীনকালে যখন মূর্তি পূজার প্রচলন হয়নি, তখন ঝড়-ঝঞ্জা প্রভৃতি প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগের হাত থেকে রক্ষা পাওয়ার জন্য মানুষ বৃক্ষপূজা করতেন। সেই ধারণা থেকেই নারীরা অশ্বত্থ ব্রত পালন করতে শুরু করেন। যদিও তার মূলে থাকে সাংসারিক মনোকামনা পূরণ। পাকা পাতা সাধারণত পৌঢ়ত্বের প্রতীক। এখানে ব্রতীনি যাতে বৃদ্ধাবস্থা পর্যন্ত তার সিঁথির সিঁদুর অক্ষয় থাকে সেইজন্য বলেন - পাকা পাতাটি মাথায় দিলে/পাকা চুলে সিঁদুর পরে। সেই সঙ্গে কাঁচা পাতা যেহেতু সজীবতার প্রতীক, প্রাণের প্রতীক তাই কাঁচা পাতা মাথায় দিয়ে কাঞ্চন মূর্তি অর্থাৎ, সোনার মূর্তি কামনা করে।

৬. কুললক্ষ্মী ব্রতঃ

ব্রতের নামঃ- কুললক্ষ্মী ব্রত

ব্রতের সময়কালঃ- ভাদ্র, কার্তিক চৈত্র মাসে গৃহলক্ষ্মী বা কুললক্ষ্মীর পূজা করা হয়।

ব্রতের উপকরণঃ- একটি মাটির হাঁড়ি, তার মধ্যে ধান, কড়ি, শঙ্খ থাকে, এবং একটি ঘট ও তার মধ্যে সুপারি, পাঁচ বা সাত পাতার আমের ডাল থাকে। এছাড়াও ফুল, ফল, বেলপাতা ইত্যাদি লাগে।

ব্রত পদ্ধতিঃ- ব্রতিনী সকাল থেকে পূজা না হওয়ার আগে পর্যন্ত উপবাসী থেকে এই ব্রত পালন করেন।

ব্রতের আলপনাঃ- লক্ষ্মীর ব্রতের আলপনারও দুটি দিক আছে-

১.নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- কুললক্ষ্মীর ব্রতে ব্রতিনী যে আলপনা আঁকেন তার তিনটি স্তর। প্রথম স্তরে চক্রের অবস্থান, দ্বিতীয় স্তরে ফুলের পাপড়ির অবস্থান ও শেষ স্তরে শঙ্খের অবস্থান। তিনটি স্তরের মধ্য দিয়েই ব্রতিনীর সৌন্দর্যয় চেতনার প্রকাশ লক্ষ্য করা যায়।

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- আলপনাটির মধ্য দিয়ে একদিকে শঙ্খরূপী লক্ষ্মীর অবস্থান অন্যদিকে চক্ররূপী নারায়ণের অবস্থান। অর্থাৎ ব্রতিনী যেন একই সাথে লক্ষ্মী নারায়ণ উভয়কে কল্পনা করে থাকেন ব্রতের আলপনার মধ্য দিয়ে। যার মূলে থাকে মূলত সংসারের সুখ - সমৃদ্ধির আকাঙ্খা। আর লক্ষ্মীর পদচিহ্ন গুলি অতীতে ছিল পশু - পাখির পদচিহ্ন। যা মূলত ছিল শিকারের সংকেত। যেগুলি এখন লক্ষ্মীর পদচিহ্নরুপে শুভাশুভের ইঙ্গিতবাহী হয়ে উঠেছে



কুললক্ষ্মীর ব্রত

ব্রতের গানঃ-

এসো মা লক্ষ্মী বসো মা লক্ষ্মী
দু হাতে বিতরি করুণা সিদ্ধি
থাকো মা গৃহেতে হইয়া অচলা
তোমার কৃপায় লভিব সকলি
এসো মা, কমলা হয়ো না নিদয়া
পাই যেন তব অপার করুণা
তোমার ও দুটি চরণ স্পর্শে ।

ব্রতের গানের ব্যাখ্যা:- কুললক্ষ্মীর ব্রতের প্রথমেই দেবীকে আবাহন করা হয়। দেবীকে এই বলে আহবান জানানো হয় যে তিনি গৃহে যেন অচলা হন। সর্বপরি গৃহ যেন শস্য সম্পদে, ধনে-ঐশ্বর্য্যে ভরে থাকে। সেই সঙ্গে এও জানানো হয় দেবী যেন তার অপার করুণা নিয়ে গৃহিনীর প্রতি সদয় হন, এবং সংসারে সুখ-শান্তি যেন বজায় থাকে।

ব্রতের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিকঃ- লক্ষ্মীকে সাধারণত ধন-ঐশ্বর্য্যের দেবী রূপেই কল্পনা করা হয়। কিন্তু কুললক্ষ্মী যেহেতু, কুল বা বংশের সুখ-সমৃদ্ধি বা কল্যাণের বাসনাটাও এর সঙ্গে যুক্ত থাকে। শোনা যায় কুললক্ষ্মী নাকি সংসার থেকে বিদায় নিলে সংসার জ্বলে - পুড়ে শেষ হয়ে যায়। বংশ ধ্বংস হয়ে যায়। তাই সংসারের সুখ-সমৃদ্ধি বজায় রাখতে, পরিবারের কল্যাণার্থে নারীরা এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকেন।

৭. পৌষ পার্বণ ব্রতঃ

ব্রতের নাম: পৌষ পার্বণ ব্রত

ব্রতের সময়কাল: পৌষ মাসের সংক্রান্তি তিথিতে এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়।

ব্রত পালনকারী: কুমারী মেয়েরা এবং গৃহিনীরা উভয়ই এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকেন।

ব্রতের উপকরণ: ধানের গোছা, আমের ডাল, সিঁদুর, সর্ষে, ফুল, ইত্যাদি বাউনি বাঁধার কাজে ব্যবহৃত হয়। এবং পূজার স্থান ন্যাতা দেওয়ার বা পরিষ্কার করার জন্য কাঁকড়া মাটি, ইঁদুর মাটির প্রয়োজন হয়।

ব্রত পদ্ধতি:- যেদিন বাউনি বাঁধা হয় সেদিন কাঁকড়া মাটি, ইঁদুর মাটি একসঙ্গে মিশিয়ে ঠাকুরের জায়গা, গোয়াল ঘর, রান্নার ঘর, ধানের গোলায় প্রলেপ দেওয়া হয়। সংক্রান্তিতে বিভিন্ন দেব দেবীর পূজা দেওয়া হয়। বিকেলবেলা সূর্য ডুবে গেলে চারিদিকে ন্যাতা দেওয়া হয়। তারপর ন্যাতা দেওয়া জায়গায় লাঙল, লক্ষ্মীর পা, কাস্তে, ধামা, কুলো, লক্ষ্মীর পেঁচা, গোলাঘর, মই ইত্যাদি আলপনা দেওয়া হয়। তাছাড়াও, পৌষ মাসে ধান কাটার পর চাষের জমিতে একটা করে ধানের গোছা রেখে আসা হয়। তারপর ডাব, দুধ, আলো/ আতপ চাল, তিলেখাজা দিয়ে মকর তৈরী করে কাঁসর ঘণ্টা বাজিয়ে ধানের গোছাটাকে মকর করে আনা হয় বাড়িতে। তারপর রাসধান পেতে লক্ষ্মী পূজা করা হয়।

ব্রতের আলপনাঃ পৌষ পার্বণ ব্রতের আলপনার দুটি দিক আছে-

নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক

মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক

নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক: পৌষ পার্বণের ব্রতের ব্রতিনী যে আলপনা আঁকেন তাতে কুলো, পদ্ম, মই, ধানের গোলার চিহ্ন আঁকেন। এগুলি ব্রতীর কামনা বাসনা প্রসূত মনের পরিচয় বহন করে। পাশাপাশি শুশনি লতার ছবিগুলি একান্তভাবেই নারী মনের সৌন্দর্য্য চেতনার পরিচয় বহন করে।

মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক: ভারতবর্ষ কৃষি প্রধান দেশ। কৃষির ওপরেই এখানকার অধিকাংশ মানুষের জীবিকা নির্বাহ হয়। আর পৌষ পার্বন-তো মূলত কৃষির ঘরের উৎসব। তাই কৃষিকাজের সঙ্গে এই ব্রতের অঙ্গাঅঙ্গি সম্পর্ক। সেই জন্য ব্রতিনী এই ব্রতে কুলো, মই, ধানের গোলার চিহ্ন আঁকেন। আলপনার এই চিহ্নগুলির মধ্য দিয়ে ব্রতিনী যেন কামনা করেন তার গৃহে শস্য সম্পদেও প্রাচুর্য অক্ষুণ্ণ রাখার। সাথে ঐশ্বর্য্যের দেবী লক্ষ্মীকে গৃহে বেঁধে রাখার একটা প্রয়াসও বটে।



পৌষ পার্বণ ব্রত

ব্রতের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক:- পৌষ পার্বণ যেহেতু কৃষির ঘরের উৎসব তাই এখানে সারা বছরের মজুত করে রাখার বাসনাটি ক্রিয়াশীল। পাশাপাশি - আমার সন্তান যেন থাকে দুধে ভাতে-র মতো ভাবনাটি ও যেন এই ব্রতের সঙ্গে যুক্ত। বাঙালির প্রধান খাদ্য ভাত, তাই সারাবছর সেই ভাতের যোগানকে অক্ষুণ্ণ রাখতে নারীরা এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকেন। অনুরূপভাবে পৌষ পার্বণের কয়দিন বাঙালির ঘরে পিঠে পুলি করার যে রেওয়াজ প্রচলিত আছে তার মধ্য দিয়ে বাঙালির ভোজন রসিক মানসিকতারও পরিচয় ফুটে উঠেছে।

৮. ঢ্যারাপালা ব্রতঃ

ব্রতের নাম:- ঢ্যারাপালা ব্রত

ব্রতের সময়কাল:- শ্রাবণ মাসে সাধারণত এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়।

ব্রত পালনকারী:- কুমারী মেয়ে ও গৃহবধু উভয়ই এই ব্রত পালন করে থাকেন।

ব্রতের উপকরণ:- সাধারণত পূজার জন্য খই, নাড়ুর প্রয়োজন হয়। এছাড়াও অন্নভোগের জন্য ভাত, শাক ভাজা, নারকেল ভাজা, মাছ, খেঁসার ডাল ইত্যাদির প্রয়োজন হয়।

ব্রত পদ্ধতি:- মনসা পূজার আগের দিন রাত্রিতে ভাত, শাক ভাজা, নারকেল ভাজা রান্না করে রাখা হয়। ভাতে জল ঢেলে রাখা হয়। পরের দিন সন্ধ্যাবেলা মাছ, খেঁসারির ডাল সিদ্ধ করে ঠাকুরের কাছে সেগুলি উৎসর্গ করা হয়। তারপর বাড়ির লোকেরা সেগুলি খায়।

ব্রতের আলপনা:-

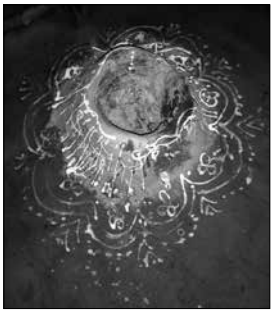
ঢ্যারাপালা/ঢ্যারাপালা ব্রতের আলপনারও দুটি দিক আছে-

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক: এই ব্রতের আলপনার একটি বিশেষ দিক হল এটি সাধারণত উনুনের গায়ে দেওয়া হয়। তাছাড়াও এই ব্রতের আলপনার ব্রতিনী যে লতার ছবি আঁকেন তা নিঃসন্দেহে তার সৌন্দর্য্য চেতনার পরিচায়ক।

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক:- ঢ্যারাপালা ব্রত যেহেতু মনসা পূজাকেন্দ্রিক ব্রত তাই হয়তো এখানে ব্রতিনী পদ্ম লতার ছবি আঁকেন। এছাড়াও পদ্মবনেই যেহেতু মনসার অধিষ্ঠান, যে জন্য তার আর এক পদ্মাবতীও বটে। পদ্মলতার ছবি আঁকার মধ্যে এই ভবনাটিও প্রচ্ছন্ন থাকতে পারে বলে মনে করা হয়।



ঢ্যারাপালা / ঢ্যারাপালা ব্রত

ব্রতের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক:- মনসা যেহেতু সর্পের দেবী বলে বহুল প্রচলিত, আর আমাদের গ্রাম-বাংলার সর্পের উপদ্রব খুব বেশি তাই মনসা দেবীকে প্রসন্ন রাখতে এই ঢ্যারাপালা ব্রত পালন করা হয়। এছাড়াও সর্প যেহেতু অধিক সংখ্যক ডিম প্রদান করে তাই এই দেবীকে পূজা করার মধ্য দিয়ে একটা উর্বরতা কেন্দ্রীক ভাবধারাও ক্রিয়াশীল থাকতে পারে বলে মনে করা হয়। সর্বপরি মনসা আবার বাস্তুদেবী হিসাবেও প্রচলিত। তাই তাকে পূজা করার মধ্য দিয়ে বাস্তু বা গৃহে সুখ - সমৃদ্ধি বজায় রাখার ভাবনাটিও ক্রিয়াশীল থাকে।

২০. গোকাল ব্রত:-

ব্রতের নাম:- গোকাল ব্রত

ব্রতের সময়কাল:- চৈত্র সংক্রান্তি থেকে বৈশাখ সংক্রান্তি পর্যন্ত এই ব্রত পালন করা হয়।

ব্রত পালনকারী:- সাধারণত গৃহিনীরাই এই ব্রত পালন করেন।

ব্রতের উপকরণ:- তিন আঁটি দুর্বাঘাস, এক ঘটি জল, একটি সিঁদুর কৌটো, কিছু পরিমাণ তেল, হলুদ, হাতপাখা, একটি গরু।

ব্রত পদ্ধতি:- গরুর কপালে তেল, হলুদ, সিঁদুর দিতে হবে। পায়ে জল দিতে হবে। তারপর গরুর মুখে আঁটি ঘাস দিতে হবে।

ব্রতের আলপনা:- গোকাল / গোকুল ব্রতের আলপনারও দুটি দিক আছে-

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক

১. নন্দনতাত্ত্বিক দিক:- যেহেতু এটি একটি গোমাতা কেন্দ্রিক ব্রত তাই এখানে নন্দনতত্ত্বের দিকটা একটুখানি উপেক্ষিত। তথাপি নারীমন যেহেতু সৌন্দর্য্য বোধের পরিচায়ক তাই এই ব্রতে গরুকে সাজানো হয়ে থাকে। যা নিঃসন্দেহে নান্দনিকতার জায়গাটিকে স্পষ্ট করে।

২. মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক:- যেহেতু ভারতবর্ষ কৃষিপ্রধান দেশ তাই গরুর যেখানে একটি বিশেষ অবদান। গরুমাত্রই বিভিন্নরকম দুগ্ধজাত খাদ্য প্রদান করে আমাদের অর্থনীতিকে সবল রাখে। তাই ব্রতের আলপনাগুলির ক্ষেত্রেও দেখা যায় গৃহিনীরা অনেকসময়ই গরুর ছবি এঁকে তার পায়ের কাছে বসে থাকেন। এমন একটা ভাব পরিবেশন করেন যে গরু ভগবতী। যখন আমরা জানি যিনি ভরণপোষণের ভার নেন তিনিই ভগবান। সুতরাং আলপনার মধ্যেও এই ভাবনাটি যেন প্রচ্ছন্ন থাকে।

ব্রতের মন্ত্র:-

১. গোকুল গোকাল বাস

গাভী মুখে দিয়ে ঘাস

পরজন্মে স্বর্গে বাস।

২. চার খুরে দিয়ে পানি

আমি যেন হই রাজার রানী।

১ ব্রতের মন্ত্রের ব্যাখা:- ১. গোকাল ব্রতের প্রথম মন্ত্রটির মধ্যে মৃত্যুর পর অর্থাৎ পরকালে স্বর্গলাভের একটা আকাঙ্খা থেকে যায়।

২ দ্বিতীয় মন্ত্রটির মধ্য দিয়ে 'রাজার রানী' - অর্থাৎ পার্থিব চাহিদার দিকটি উঠে এসেছে। যেহেতু ভারতবর্ষ দরিদ্রপ্রধান দেশ, তথাপি নারী মাত্রই কামনা করেন সুখ-সমৃদ্ধি তথা বিষয়লাভ। তাই ব্রতের মন্ত্রের মধ্য দিয়েও সেই ভাবনাই ক্রিয়াশীল হয়।

ব্রতের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক:-

যেহেতু আমাদের দেশ মূলত কৃষিপ্রধান দেশ তাই আমাদের ব্রত তথা লৌকিক ধর্মানুষ্ঠানগুলি অনেকাংশেই কৃষি কেন্দ্রীক। আর যেখানে গরু একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে। তাই নারীরা তাদের গোকাল ব্রত পালনের ক্ষেত্রে গোরুকেই বেছে নিয়েছেন। তাকে কেন্দ্র করে একদিকে নারীমনের স্বর্গলাভের বাসনা যেমন উঠে এসেছে। তেমনি অন্যদিকে অভাবী সংসারের মেয়েদের রাজরানী হয়ে থাকার বাসনাটিও উঠে এসেছে। যা তার পার্থিব চাহিদার পরিচায়ক।

চতুর্থ অধ্যায়:-

একবিংশ শতকে ব্রতাচার ও ব্রতপালন:-

একবিংশ শতক মূলত প্রযুক্তির যুগ - মন্ত্রনির্ভরতার যুগ। এই যুগে দাঁড়িয়ে মানুষ যেভাবে যন্ত্রনির্ভর হয়ে পড়েছেন, ব্রতগুলিতেও তার ছায়া পড়তে শুরু করেছে। ভাদু - টুসু যে ব্রতগুলি পালনের ক্ষেত্রে একসময় দেখা যেত ব্রতিনীরা সারারাত জেগে সেগুলি পালন করতেন। আর সেই গানগুলির মধ্যে তাদের নিত্যদিনের পাওয়া না পাওয়া, আশা - আকাঙ্খা, সামাজিক নানা অনটন, পারিবারিক নানা অশান্তি উঠে আসে। পাশাপাশি ভাদু-টুসু যেন হয়ে ওঠে আমাদের ঘরের মেয়ে। সুতরাং ঘরের মেয়েকে মেয়েরা তাদের প্রাপ্তি-অপ্রাপ্তি, দুঃখ-বঞ্চনার কথা শোনাতে থাকেন মুখে মুখে তৈরী এই গানের মধ্য দিয়ে। কিন্তু যন্ত্র সভ্যতার উন্নতির কারণে দেখা যাচ্ছে মেয়েরা আর সেই সৃষ্টি ধর্মিতার জায়গায় যাচ্ছেন না। তারা বরং সহজলভ্য বাজারচলতি কিছু রেক্রুরড, ডিজে চালিয়ে দিচ্ছে। আর শুধু মেয়েরা কেন নারী - পুরুষ নির্বিশেষে রাত জাগছেন এবং ডি. জে চালিয়ে দিয়ে একটা উদ্দাম উল্লাসের মধ্য দিয়ে এই ভাদু টুসুর রাত্রি জাগরণ পালন করছেন। এটা যে শুধুমাত্র বাঙ্গালিদের মধ্যেই ক্রিয়াশীল তা কিন্তু না, বিহারিদের অন্যতম উৎসব ছট পুজা-র ক্ষেত্রেও দেখা যায় আগে নদী বা বড় পুষ্করিনীর ধারে - ছট পূজা পালনের সময় নারীরা ছটি মাইয়ার গান করতেন। কিন্তু সেই জায়গায় দেখা যাচ্ছে মাইকে ছটি মাইয়ার গান বাজছে এবং ব্রত পালিত হচ্ছে। ফলে তাদের যে আন্তরিকতা ও মুখে মুখে উচ্চারণের যে আবেগ তা যেন কোথাও হারিয়ে যাচ্ছে। তাই এই ব্রতগুলিকে সংরক্ষণের একটা জায়গা থেকেই যায়।

আমরা কোনভাবেই এই ব্রতাচারগুলিকে উপেক্ষা করতে পারি না। কারণ একবিংশ শতকে দাঁড়িয়ে আমরা দেখি আদিত্য, চন্দ্রযানের মতো যান সফল উৎক্ষেপণ হচ্ছে, বিজ্ঞানের জয়দীপ জ্বলছে আকাশে- দিকে দিকে ভারতের জয়জয়কার। কিন্তু তারপরেও আমরা দেখি মানুষের বিশ্বাস - সংস্কার কোথায় যেন এই যন্ত্রনির্ভরতার ওপরও কাজ করে যায়। যান্ত্রিক গোলযোগের কারণে মানুষ যখন মহাকাশ থেকে ফিরতে পারেন না তখনই মানুষ দৈবশক্তি নির্ভর হয়ে পড়েন। তার চিন্তার ক্ষেত্র শিথিল হয়ে পড়ে। আর ব্রতগুলি তো মূলত এই কারণেই গড়ে উঠেছে। ফলত ব্রতগুলি রক্ষার একটা জায়গা কিন্তু থেকেই যায়।

অনুরূপভাবে আলপনাগুলির ক্ষেত্রেও দেখা যায় আলপনার ক্ষেত্রে সেই প্রতীক ধর্মিতা আজ আর নেই, আগে যেখানে শিকারলাভের আশায় বিভিন্ন পদচিহ্ন আঁকা হত। সেগুলি এখন লক্ষ্মীর পদচিহ্ন বা শুভচিহ্নের দ্যোতক হিসাবে পরিগণিত হয়েছে। এমনকি আলপনা নির্মাণের ক্ষেত্রে অনেক সময় সেই অতীত ঐতিহ্য রক্ষার ধারাবাহিকতা আজ নেই। অত্যন্ত লঘুচালে আলপনাগুলি দেওয়া হয়। কিন্তু তারপরেও ব্রতের আলপনাগুলি একেবারে নিশ্চিহ্ন হয়ে যায়না। আর এই ভাবনাগুলি শুধূ বাঙ্গালিদের মধ্যে নয়, বিহারি - হিন্দুস্থানিদের মধ্যেও ক্রিয়াশীল থেকেছে। এ প্রসঙ্গে স্মরণীয়, মুম্বাইয়ে (মহারাষ্ট্র) আজও উৎসবে রঙ্গোলি দেওয়ার একটা প্রবণতা দেখা যায়। হয়তো যুগের দাবিকে মাথায় রেখে যেখানে অতীত ঐতিহ্যের সঙ্গে আধুনিকতার ছোঁয়া লেগেছে। তথাপি ধারাটি আজও বহমান।



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উলেখপঞ্জী:-

ভারতচন্দ্র, অন্নদামঙ্গলের কবি ও কাব্য, সম্পাঃ আশীষ ঘোষ প্রজ্ঞা বিকাশ ২০১৬ (প্রথম প্রকাশ ২০০৪) পৃঃ- ২

অবনীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর, বাংলার ব্রত, ১৩৫০ বঙ্গাব্দ, বিশ্বভারতী প্রকাশন পৃঃ ২

3. ভারতচন্দ্র, অন্নদামঙ্গলের কবি ও কাব্য, সম্পাঃ আশীষ ঘোষ প্রজ্ঞা বিকাশ ২০১৬ (প্রথম প্রকাশ ২০০৪) পৃঃ- ৫

Credits:-

1. Robin Manna, age 70 years, Flok Singer, Jalpa, Naupal, Howrah, 27th June.

   Mrs. Nomita, age 74, homemaker, khatora – haldarpara – Howrah, 30th May.

Alpana drawing:-

1. Sarothi Manna, age 50, homemaker, Jalpai, Naupala – Howrah,

   Chandan Haldar, age 80, homemaker, Maiti Para – Domjur – Howrah

   Tina Ray, Age 32, Homemaker, Burikhali – Bauria – Howrah.

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Adaptation of *Charulata* from Text to Screen: Narrative Analysis of the Cinematic Creation (Creative Form) of Director Satyajit Ray

Wrishav Roy[1] & Sudarshan Yadav[2]

Abstract

Many great filmmakers of the world like Robert Bresson, Andrei Tarkovsky, Alfred Hitchcock, Jean-Luc Godard and Lucino Visconti have adapted from literature (Raj, 2021), to make cinematic masterpieces. Both ordinary and classic literary text has been reliable source for film all over the world. Recognising the significance of adaptation, the Academy awards have a special category for 'Best Adapted Screenplay'. This underlines the significance of films adapted from literary text and reflects the significant differences present in a literary text and its cinematic adaptation. Satyajit Ray can be considered as a Renaissance Man, having many talents in one, is the most prominent name who has consistently adapted short stories, novellas, and novels to the screen. Ray's versatility led him to direct movies adapted from literature of Rabindranath Tagore and Munshi Premchand to play by Henrik Ibsen. In fact, Ray prominently adapted the work of other literati including his grandfather, Upendra Kishor Raichowdhury's literary work, Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne (1969). He has directed 36 films consisting of 26 feature films, five documentaries and two short films. Among those 26 feature films, 24 films of Ray are adapted from different literary sources. Ray's Charulata (1964) is one of the most acclaimed films of the director (Bhattacharjee, 2016). In fact, Ray considered this film to be his perfect creation where if given the chance to redirect, he would not make any change in it (Ray, 1992). Charulata (1964) was adapted from Rabindranath Tagore's novella Nastanirh (1901). In Charulata (1964), set in colonial Calcutta, the director explores the life of modern women from an upper-class family. The original literary text was published during colonial rule and reflects the urban society of that period. This paper addresses the following questions: How does the narrative structure of Nastanirh differ from its cinematic adaptation Charulata? What changes in characterisation does Ray make in adapting the novella into film form? and How does Ray's adaptation reflect his style of cinematic storytelling? This paper employs a qualitative methodology based on comparative narrative analysis and adaptation theory. This paper seeks to analyse how Ray, while retaining the emotional foundation of Tagore's

text, reconstructs its narrative and enriches it cinematically through symbolic imagery. This study can also reflect how Ray treats a literary text while adapting it into a film. The film can represent the style of adaptation by Satyajit Ray.

Keywords: *Adaptation, Literary Text, Narrative Style, Bengali Cinema, Satyajit Ray***.**

1. Introduction

Adaptation has been part of filmmaking since its inception. Processing and translating a literary work into a film poses unique challenge as well as opportunity for every filmmaker. Though transferring a dramatic or literary narrative to cinematic form may seem a 'derivative' or a secondary form of art, adaptation gives the opportunity to showcase an original artistic venture (Cartmell, 2012). If one carefully notices earliest films, adaptation of folktales, stage plays and literary works were used by filmmakers to attract audiences. In the silent era, films like *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) and *Les Miserables* (1909) are the earliest examples of adaptation. During this silent era, adaptations of plays, classic novels and stage productions of Shakespeare were very common. D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) is an example of one of the earliest notable adaptations in cinema. Later during the Golden Age of Hollywood or popularly known as Studio era some classic films like *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *Casablanca* (1942) were adapted from literature. Master directors like Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles brought their unique vision to reshape the narrative through literary adaptation. In Europe, the rise of New Wave cinema paved the way for Auteurs and in America independent filmmakers experimented with narrative structures and narrative innovations. French director Francois Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) and American director Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) are the examples of the experiment where they challenged the conventional way of adaptation. The auteur theory helped to establish directors' control over adaptation process and creative vision. In recent years, one can easily notice the amount of adapted content in popular culture. From Nolan's *Batman Trilogy*, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, *Harry Potter* series, to movies based on Marvel and DC comics shows the essential relationship between literary text and cinematic adaptation.

1.1 Early Adaptations in Bengali Cinema

Bengal has a rich tradition of literature and storytelling. This literary tradition has helped the region to enrich its cultural heritage and intellectual depth. In cultural heritage, one has to keep in mind about Bengali cinema. Like world cinema, Bengali cinema is also heavily indebted to literature. In Bengali cinema's silent era, Madan Theatre Company

was pioneer in filmmaking based on mythology, folk tale, theatre and literature. Under the banner of Madan theatre, directors like Rustomji Dhotiwala, Priyanath Gangopadhyay, Jyotishchandra Bandyopadhyay, Shishir Kumar Bhaduri, B. S. Rajhans, Madhu Basu, Nareshchandra Mitra and Chittaranjan Goswami made films (Mukhopadhyay, 1959). *Bilwamangal* (1919), the first Bengali film directed by Rustomji Dhotiwala was based on a story by Champshi Udeshi. Later *Shivaratri*, *Maa Durga*, *Jaydev*, *Krishnakanter Will*, *Kapalkundala*, *Durgeshnandini*, *Noukadubi* and other movies were made on different adaptation (Mukhopadhyay, 1959). Then came the high point for adaptation in the mid-20th century and afterwards. This period is often referred to as the Golden age of Bengali cinema where directors like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen used literary texts to make some greatest films of world cinema. Satyajit Ray's *Apu Trilogy*, Ritwik Ghatak's *Meghe Dhaka Tara* and Mrinal Sen's *Ek Din Pratidin* are few examples of adaptation which set the bar high for Bengali cinema. Later in modern era roughly starting from 1980s Rituparno Ghosh's *Chokher Bali* (2003), Anjan Dutta's *Byomkesh Bakshi* series, Kaushik Ganguly's *Bisorjon* (2017) and Aparna Sen's *Sati* (1989) carried the trend of adaptation and paved the way for present day directors like Srijit Mukherji's *Kakababu* Series, Arindam Sil's *Shabor* Series, Suman Ghosh's *Kabuliwala* (2023), Birsa Dasgupta's *Byomkesh O Durgo Rahasya* (2023) and others.

1.2 **Adaptation and Satyajit Ray**

Renowned filmmakers such as Robert Bresson, Andrei Tarkovsky, Alfred Hitchcock, Jean-Luc Godard, and Luchino Visconti have drawn extensively from literature to craft cinematic masterpieces (Raj, 2021). Across the globe, both canonical and popular literary works have served as enduring sources for film adaptations. Acknowledging the importance of this creative intersection, the Academy Awards includes a dedicated category for 'Best Adapted Screenplay' (Raj, 2021), highlighting not only the value of adaptations but also the fundamental differences that exist between literary narratives and their cinematic counterparts. In the Indian context, Satyajit Ray stands out as a true polymath- a Renaissance figure, who consistently brought short stories, novellas, and novels to life on screen with remarkable artistic vision. Satyajit Ray is known for his distinctive approach to adaptation. His deep respect for original literary text while maintaining the directorial vision is one of the notable approaches in Indian Cinema. Ray's first feature film *Pather Panchali* adapted from Bibuthibhushan Bandopadhyay's novel is a testament to that vision. To put it in Ray's words, 'I wanted to translate the text onto the screen without losing the essence'(Ray & Ray, 2011). Ray directed 29 feature films (36 including shorts and documentaries), only six of these feature-length films were based on completely original screenplays and 23 films were adapted from different literary sources

(*Filmography, Satyajit Ray Org*). His unique narrative style is based upon realist approach where he portrays everyday life to build narrative. Detailing in composition and use of natural settings makes his visual storytelling interesting. Commenting on Ray's visual style famous British actress and film critic Marie Seton has said "Ray's adaptations are marked by a harmony between the visual and the narrative, creating a seamless translation of literature into film"(Ganguly, 2010). Another very important aspects in his adaptation style are character development and psychological depth. In *Ghare Baire* (1984) adapted from Tagore's novel with same title, Ray used conflicting emotions and ideological struggles to reflect upon India's freedom movement. His deep empathy for character development has added a new dimension to the process of adaptation. Ray is also known for choosing thematic diversity and innovation in his films. *Apu Trilogy* (*Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito* and *Apur Sansar*; 1955-1959) adapted from Pather Panchali by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay shows indomitable human spirit where sense of hope prevails as the lead character, Apu grows up. *Jalsaghar* (1958), *Devi* (1960), and *Sadgati* (1981) talks about conflict between traditional versus modernity. *Ganashatru* (1989) focuses upon corruption in political system. *Aranyer Din Ratri* (1969) comments on Calcutta's hectic life and peculiar culture while comparing it with a distant tribal village of Jharkhand. *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980) is a political allegory where oppression of the working class in totalitarian system becomes the main theme.

2. Review of Literature

Adaptation is a process that transforms a literary text into a cinematic form. The transformation is not merely about translating words into visuals rather its more interactive in nature where a director puts fresh perspective in the cinematic text while preserving the essence of original literary text. In order to understand the depth of adaptation, literature review can help to explore various scholarly works which are based on different theoretical underpinnings and critical discourse surrounding them.

2.1 Adaptation Theory

Scholarly debates on adaptation often revolve around fidelity, creativity, and cultural significance. Bluestone (1957) first argued that adaptation inevitably transforms a text due to differences between verbal and visual media. Andrew (1984) described adaptation as a cultural and interpretative act, while Stam (2000) rejected fidelity as the main criterion, advocating for a pluralist perspective that accounts for filmmaker's vision and socio-political context. Hutcheon (2006) expanded the discourse by highlighting the role of audiences in generating meaning across time and cultures. Later, Cartmell and Whelehan (2007) provided a comprehensive overview, tracing adaptation's historical evolution and

cultural functions.

2.2 Narrative Analysis

Narrative theory provides tools for examining how texts and films construct meaning. Eisenstein (1949) emphasized formal stylistic analysis, while Propp (1968) and Strauss (1963) investigated structures and recurring motifs. Barthes (1977), Genette, and Todorov explored semiotics and narrative discourse, whereas Bakhtin (1981) foregrounded the multiplicity of voices. Bordwell (1985) distinguished between fabula (story) and syuzhet (plot), offering a framework for analyzing narrative organization. Together, these approaches demonstrate how adaptation reshapes storytelling strategies through both structure and style.

2.3 Tagore and Adaptation

Tagore's works have been widely adapted in South Asian cinema, reflecting their thematic depth and dramatic potential. Scholars such as Ahmed (2022) and Rahman (2013) highlight Tagore's engagement with cinema and the challenges of adaptation while preserving literary mood. Renganathan and Bhattacharya (2020) situate Tagore within Indian theatre traditions, and Mandal (2015) interrogates the feminist possibilities and contradictions in his portrayals of women. Kundu (1998) examines Ray's *Ghare Baire* in relation to nationalist discourse, while Sengoopta (2012) underscores Ray's ambivalence toward Tagore, evident in *Agantuk*. Chaudhuri (2020), analyzing *Tasher Desh*, demonstrates postmodern experimentation in Tagore's adaptations.

2.4 Earlier Work on *Charulata*

Mishra (2023) frames the film *Charulata* (1964) as a "transcreation" rather than translation, while Bhattacharjee (2020) views Charu's character as embodying women's self-actualization against societal norms. Feminist readings diverge: Sanyal (2020) applies Mulvey's "male gaze" theory, whereas Bannerjee (2017) critiques the ambiguous ending as reinforcing "new patriarchy." Sadhu and Sengupta (2021) highlighted Ray's nuanced use of verbal and non-verbal cues. In contrast, Sil (1999) criticizes Ray for distorting Tagore's original narrative. Collectively, these studies underscore the richness and contested nature of *Charulata* as a site of adaptation discourse.

3. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to conduct a comparative narrative analysis of Ray's film *Charulata* (1964) and Tagore's novella *Nastanirh*. An author writes a story for a reader but a director directs a film for viewers or audience, so, from the nature of the text one

can easily understand that the cinematic text tends to be different from the literary text. To understand the difference between those two texts, narrative analysis can be useful. This paper also compares the characterisation in order to understand how the director puts a different perspective while adapting a literary text. This paper also identifies differences or changes made a by Ray during the process of adaptation which presents his work as unique.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Find out the narrative structure/style of the literary text (Nastanirh) and the cinematic adaptation in Charulata;
- Compare the characterisation in the literary text (Nastanirh) and cinematic adaptation (Charulata); and
- Identify differences/changes in the cinematic adaptation with reference to its original literary text.

4. Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative research methodology grounded in adaptation theory and narrative analysis. It seeks to critically examine the transformation of Rabindranath Tagore's novella *Nastanirh* (1901) into the cinematic work *Charulata* (1964), directed by Satyajit Ray. The research design involves a comparative textual and visual analysis aimed at identifying the similarities, divergences, and interpretative shifts between the source text and its cinematic adaptation. The paper uses narrative theory particularly the distinction between *fabula* (story) and *syuzhet* (plot) to investigate how the cinematic form restructures and reinterprets the original narrative. The analytical framework of the paper incorporates narrative analysis, visual semiotics, and adaptation theory. It draws upon the works of Linda Hutcheon, Robert Stam, and Deborah Cartmell to understand the concepts of fidelity, transformation, and authorial interpretation. Narrative elements such as point of view, character development, temporal structure, and narration are studied in relation to their representation in both the literary and cinematic forms. In the case of the film, visual elements such as mise-en-scène, camera movement, sound design, and symbolism are also analysed as tools of narrative construction. The primary sources for the paper include Tagore's *Nastanirh* (1901) and Satyajit Ray's film *Charulata* (1964). Both the literary and cinematic texts are examined in their original Bengali versions, with English translations referred to where necessary to retain linguistic and cultural fidelity. It aims to demonstrate how Satyajit Ray, as a filmmaker, constructs a distinct visual narrative that

remains emotionally faithful to the original text, while simultaneously reimagining its form and aesthetics for the screen.

5. Findings and Discussion

This section deals with the findings of the study based on the objectives formulated.

5.1. Tagore's Novella (Nastanirh, 1901)

Nastanirh or The Broken Nest (1901) is a story about relationship in a family, their emotions and the societal norms they encounter in the early 20th century Bengal. The novella opens with Bhupati, a newspaper editor who is always busy with the newspaper business and day to day politics. Due to this his, wife Charulata, an intelligent and well-read woman feels isolated and neglected in her marriage. Bhupati invited Amal, his cousin to alleviate Charulata's loneliness. Inviting Amal to their house worked, it helped to break Charulata's monotonous life and beathed fresh air. With companionship of Amal, they started to discuss literature, poetry and music which gradually lead their relationship to a romantic one. Sensing the complexity of the situation Amal became cautious. On the other side, Bhupati had no idea what was going on as he barely gave time in family affairs. After marriage, Amal went abroad for study, Charulata again became lonely and heartbroken. Initially Bhupati was unaware about the emotional turmoil of Charulata but later he realised that due to his workaholic nature she felt neglected. He also realised that the emotional gap between them has increased so much that despite his trying it is not going to fill. This novella ends with a melancholic note when Bhupati's newspaper business failed and both husband and wife confronted brokenness of their relationship. *Nastanirh* thus metaphorically reflects the collapse of the relationship and unfulfilled emotional desires.

5.2. Ray's Film (Charulata, 1964)

The film *Charulata* opens with Charu, a young and intelligent wife who lives in boredom and loneliness. Her husband Bhupati is an editor and owner of "*The Sentinel*", a political newspaper, often engrossed in his work that he barely spends time with family. To alleviate her boredom Bhupati invites Amal, his cousin to stay with them. Amal is a graduate and aspires to become a writer. As Charulata has interest in literature, his companionship with Amal became infused with literature, poetry and music. They start to spend time and discuss writings of Amal. Charulata gradually developed some feelings for Amal. Amal decided to get married and travel abroad for study. Charulata felt devastated in such situation. When Amal suddenly left for his study, Charulata became even lonelier and had no clue why Amal left in such a hurry. As the crisis was unfolding, Bhupati's newspaper business collapsed due to money constraint created by his own relative. Now the household was

going through tremendous emotional undercurrents. Bhupati had realised the emotional detachment of Charulata and her bond with Amal. In such a situation, Bhupati and Charulata both tried to reconcile. But their outstretched hands never meet, reflecting the fragile state of relationship and emotional distance between them, keeping an open-ended conclusion in the film.

5.2.1. Narrative Structure/Style of the Literary Text and the Cinematic Adaptation

Under the mentioned objectives both the texts, Tagore's novella *Nastanirh* and Ray's film *Charulata* (1964) are being analysed based on narrative structure and style. How the story is narrated in film and how the story is narrated in the original literary text is being compared.

The narrative structures and styles of Rabindranath Tagore's novella *Nastanirh* and Satyajit Ray's film adaptation *Charulata* (1964) offer both similarities and differences, reflecting the unique qualities of each medium while retaining the essence of the story. Both the novella and the film place Charu at the centre of the narrative, exploring her loneliness and relationship with Amal. The original literary text uses third person omniscient narrator to give insights about inner thoughts and emotions of the characters while the film shows the camera's perspective (sometimes almost aligning with Charulata) through visual storytelling to convey emotional and psychological intricacies of the characters. Here the cinematography plays a crucial role through the use of light and shadow to mirror Charulata's inner world and evolving emotional nuances. Then Charu's fondness for reading and her intellectual connection with Amal is present in both the texts, emphasizing their bond over literature. However, *Nastanirh* emphasizes the subtleties of the mental states and interrelationships between all the characters, giving more narrative weight to each individual's psychological depth. On the other hand, *Charulata* (1964), presents close view on Charu's perspective, making her loneliness and emotional isolation the film's focal point. The other characters are seen primarily in relation to her. The adaptation of *Nastanirh* into *Charulata* (1964) retains the core narrative of emotional complexity and interpersonal tensions but the film emphasizes Charulata's personal narrative through visual storytelling and a more focused narrative arc. To sum it up while the novella relies on prose and internal monologues to convey emotions, the film uses visual and auditory elements, such as mise-en-scène, cinematography, and music to present a somewhat different narrative while keeping the essence of the story.

5.2.2. Compare the Characterisation in the Literary Text and Cinematic Adaptation

Under this objective comparison of characterisation in the literary text *Nastanirh* (1901)

by Rabindranath Tagore and its cinematic adaptation *Charulata* (1964) by Satyajit Ray can be examined based on five key parameters: Physical Description, Action/Attitude/ Behaviour, Inner Thought, Reactions, and Speech.

The characterisation in Tagore's *Nastanirh* and Ray's *Charulata* (1964) is a rich study in adaptation. In both the texts the characters are central to the story and deeply nuanced in nature. Three main characters in Novella as well as film are Charulata, Bhupati, and Amal. Secondary characters but important in terms of their role in narrative are Umapada and Mandakini (Manda). While Braja is only present in the film. Charulata being the central to both the texts, her character has been portrayed with utmost care in order to drive the narrative. Tagore's prose delves deeply into Charulata's inner world through the description of thoughts and feelings reflecting upon her yearning for companionship and creative fulfilment. On the other hand, Ray uses visual cues, such as facial expressions, body language and interactions with her surroundings to convey Charulata's emotions. The iconic scene where Charulata peeping through the windows of the house using a binocular symbolizes her confined existence. In the text, Bhupati is preoccupied husband who is always engrossed in his political newspaper and intellectual pursuits while in the film he is physically and emotionally detached from Charulata. Although his actions are well-meaning but often clueless in nature. Amal is young, energetic and playful in both literary text as well as in film, however, Tagore has portrayed him as somewhat ambiguous figure while Ray used his body language and expression to convey an internal conflict. In both the cases, Amal is catalyst to Charu's happiness as well as reason of her loneliness. Umapada is Charulata's brother who is portrayed in both the text as opportunistic and deceitful. But in the literary text, he gave Bhupati the idea to open a newspaper. But in in the film there is no such reference. That's why in literary text his betrayal is more emphasised than in the film. The character of Manda has been used as the contrast to Charulata in both the texts. Manda represents the traditional, socially accepted role of women, which contrasts with Charu's desire for intellectual and emotional fulfilment. Tagore's literary portrayal emphasizes the inner lives of his characters through introspection, while Ray's cinematic adaptation conveys emotions through mise-en-scène, cinematography, and music, achieving the same emotional resonance through different means. Both media complement each other, offering different lenses through which to understand the emotional and psychological complexity of the characters, particularly Charulata, whose silent longing and intellectual isolation remain central to both interpretations.

5.2.3. Identify Differences/Changes in the Cinematic Adaptation with Reference to their Original Literary Text

This objective highlights the differences between the literary text *Nastanirh* (*The Broken Nest*) by Rabindranath Tagore and its cinematic adaptation *Charulata* (1964) by Satyajit Ray in terms of setting, plot, conflict, characters, point of view, and theme.

An in-depth comparison of the cinematic adaptation of *Charulata* (1964), directed by Satyajit Ray, with the original literary text, *Nastanirh* (1901) by Rabindranath Tagore, reveals significant differences and changes. Tagore's *Nastanirh* is set in 19th-century colonial Bengal, predominantly in a large, traditional, upper-middle-class Bengali household. He published this novella in 1901, though its translator Mary M. Lago attributes the story to be in 1879 when Bengal renaissance was almost at its peak. Ray relocated the story almost 100 years after Tagore's version of the story. In the literary text, Tagore has given rich description of Charulata's isolation and claustrophobic nature of her surroundings while in the film Ray portrayed the home as a character in itself with meticulous art direction, set design and grand architecture where the space emphasizes Charulata's confinement and longing for freedom. Use of light, shadow and compositional elements are used to create a melancholic atmosphere to enhance the emotional tone of the story. Without relying on dialogue, Ray crafts a scene rich in symbolism. Perhaps the most iconic symbol, the binoculars frame Charu's desire to see beyond domestic confinement. The act of gazing outward reflects her intellectual curiosity and yearning for participation in the larger world. At the same time, the binoculars underscore her distance from that world, positioning her as a spectator of freedoms she cannot access. Tagore in the literary text has used linear narrative where plot unfolds gradually depicting Charulata's emotional journey and psychological depth. On the other hand, in the film the plot is slightly different from the literary text where the director has changed certain aspects to suit the medium of visual storytelling. Ray expands the temporal and emotional landscape of the story, offering extended sequences such as The garden swing externalises Charu's fluctuating emotions. The gentle oscillation symbolises her wavering between security and desire, tradition and aspiration. The sequence also visualises the rhythm of longing and repression, capturing a moment of fleeting liberation that remains circumscribed by domestic boundaries. Ray's cinematography in *Charulata* traces Charu's inner world. The sunlit moments in the garden contrast with the dim interiors of the mansion, reflecting oscillations between hope and isolation. Shadows falling across Charu's face often signal her psychological entrapment, while shafts of light suggest unfulfilled possibilities. Windows, corridors, and doorways function as visual metaphors of confinement. Charu is frequently shown framed by grills or doorways, underscoring her position as both enclosed and gazing outward. The house itself becomes a character, embodying the splendour of the bhadralok world and the restrictions imposed on women within it. Ray repeatedly deploys

silence as a narrative device. The unspoken between characters—particularly Charu and Amal—creates a space of emotional intensity more powerful than dialogue. The pauses, lingering gazes, and restrained gestures foreground repressed desire, demonstrating Ray's mastery of cinematic subtlety. Literature serves as both connection and constraint. Books represent Charu's intellectual affinity with Amal, while also highlighting the gap between her aspirations and societal limitations. The act of writing becomes symbolic of self-expression, which remains largely inaccessible to Charu as a woman of her time. Together, these symbols transform *Charulata* from a narrative of domestic isolation into a cinematic meditation on desire, confinement, and identity. Ray's adaptation thus operates not only at the level of plot but also at the level of form, where visual symbolism replaces Tagore's prose descriptions to articulate Charu's inner world. Also, ambiguity is present in the original literary text and in the film. However, at the end of the novella Bhupati leaves Charulata and in the film this situation is unresolved and the director has tried to keep open interpretation as per audience. The character of Charulata is static in both novella as well as in the film as her attitude of affection towards Amal remains consistent throughout the story. But Bhupati and Amal depict dynamic characteristics as the story progresses, they both change their thoughts about Charulata. Largely based upon Charulata's loneliness both the novella and film depict Charulata's struggle for emotional as well as intellectual fulfilment within the constraints of her marriage and societal norms. Tagore through writing and Ray through visual and auditory elements has gauged the themes of loneliness, desire and reconciliation.

6. Conclusions and Recommendation

The cinematic adaptation of *Charulata* (1964) by Satyajit Ray, based on Rabindranath Tagore's novella, *Nastanirh*, is widely regarded as one of the finest examples of literary adaptation in Indian cinema. While both *Nastanirh* and *Charulata* (1964) share the same core story and themes, they differ significantly in their treatment of narrative building. The novella relies on third-person omniscient narrator but the film uses visual storytelling, with emphasis on cinematic techniques. In novella, the plot is secondary and the narrative is built upon the interrelationship between the characters with linear progression. On the other hand, Ray has made some small changes in the plot of the film like fishy character of Umapada, inclusion of Braja and an open-ended conclusion. The characterization in *Nastanirh* and its cinematic adaptation *Charulata* (1964) reveals the subtle differences in how both the media handle emotional and intellectual complexity of the characters. Tagore's novella provides a deep psychological insight into Charulata, Amal, and Bhupati through narrative exposition, while Ray's adaptation relies on visual storytelling, using cinematic techniques to convey the characters' emotions and relationships. Both versions explore the

themes of loneliness, unfulfilled desire, and the constraints of societal expectations, but Ray's adaptation highlights the unspoken emotional undercurrents with more immediacy and intensity. While *Nastanirh* remains an intimate exploration of inner lives through prose, *Charulata* uses the visual power of cinema to externalize the same emotional landscapes, making the characters more accessible to the audience through their gestures, expressions, and silences. The characters in both works remain timeless, resonating with audiences through their universal themes of love, loneliness, and ambiguity. Ray's adaptation is not merely a translation of the text; it is a creative reinterpretation that introduces new elements and perspectives. Ray adds scenes that have no direct counterpart in the novella but enhance the narrative. For instance, the use of binocular shows Charulata's loneliness and yearning for freedom and the symbolic use of swing sequence shows her emotional highs and lows. In conclusion, *Charulata* (1964) stands as a testament to the power of adaptation, showcasing how a director's creative vision can breathe new life into a literary text while honouring its essence. Ray's ability to translate Tagore's nuanced exploration of human emotions and relationships into a visual and auditory masterpiece ensures that *Charulata* (1964) remains a timeless work of art, celebrated for its narrative complexity, emotional depth, and cinematic brilliance.

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Discourse on Masculinity and the Theatre: Experiences of Colonial Bengal in the Second Half of Nineteenth-Century

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Abstract

The British colonial rulers had introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity in this country, which was based on aggressive militarism, physical power and hyper-masculine culture. Bengali nationalists almost accepted that notion of masculinity endorsed by the imperialists. The reason of this acceptance was deeply rooted in their anti-colonial struggle. The British imperialists always tried to argue that they were superior as well as muscular, and colonial natives, especially the Bengali men, were effeminates and inferior, and the muscular race had right to rule over the effeminate races. It became, therefore, necessary for the nationalists to pretend and prove their masculinity as much as possible. This passion for masculinity had great impact on various sectors of the society. It even had a serious impact on Bengali theatre in the second half of 19th century. The present article has attempted to show how the development and discourse on hegemonic masculinity occurred in Bengal in the second half of 19th century through the nationalists and what major change had come in Bengali theatre under this discourse of masculinity.

Keywords: *Masculinity, Colonial Bengal, Theatre, Nationalists, Nineteenth Century, Female Impersonators.*

Introduction

Generally one can describe masculinity as a "set of images, values, interests, and activities held important to the successful achievement of male adulthood" (Jeffords 1989: xiii). In other words, masculinity is a set of qualities or attributes regarded as characteristics of men. The concept of masculinity is a social construction and this concept is very much evolving; with the changes of society changes come in the nature of so called 'ideal' masculinity. In other words, the nature of masculinity differs from society to society. But colonial authority used to judge Indian masculinity on the basis of the 'hegemonic masculinity' which emerged by the late 18th and 19th centuries in the West. This concept of hegemonic masculinity "refers to the cultural dynamics by which a group claims and sustains leading position in social life.

At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than other is culturally exalted…which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." (Connell 1995: 77) This hegemonic masculinity had been used by the colonial authority not to subordinate the Indian women, rather the Indian men who did not fit into the hegemonic idea of masculinity (Alam 2022: 124-127). It was certainly a political strategy of the imperialists to claim their domination over the Indian men. In British concept of hegemonic masculinity, militarism, aggression, violent resistance etc. became the integral parts of masculinity (Connell 1995: 213). Apart from it, not being aggressive and militaristic had been considered as feminine nature. Through this process of feminization, Indian men had been identified as effeminate for being weak and non-martial. In words of Sikata Banarjee, "the feminization of the Orient encompassed a disparagement of Arab and Indian men who were conquered because they were effeminate and seen as effeminate because they were conquered. Their conquered status constructed them as not muscular, not aggressive and not skilled in militarism, which were values associated with hegemonic femininity." (Banarjee 2003: 170). Imperialists gave emphasise on the 'Christian Manhood' that included physical strength, martial power and high level of morality as the components of 'ideal' manhood. Norman Vance in his book argues that, the "manliness (Christian Manhood) may relate to physical vigour and prowess...or to patriotic and military qualities, or to the traditions of moral chivalry, or to a variety of moral qualities ranging from…general benevolence to the most awe inspiring moral rigor…" (Vance, 1985: 10). As argued by Banarjee, "this multifaceted definition of manhood partly constructed the gendered lens the British used to look at India and its male inhabitants." (Banarjee 2003: 170). Colonial Masculinity made the notion of masculinity as a 'cult', and through this cult of masculinity colonial authority tried to rationalize imperial rule based on the aggressive, muscular, chivalric models of manliness (Krishnaswami 1998: 15).

This British claim of Indian effeminacy (or the Indian men as effeminate), however, posed a challenge to the Indian nationalists. By internalizing the colonial criticism, they accepted the British claim of the weakness and inabilities of Indian men to defend their motherland from the aliens (Carter 1997: 429-443). Therefore, they insisted on Indian / indigenous masculinity or manliness to be achieved by the Indian men. Even Indian nationalists emphasised on the masculinity which was based on the broader framework of colonial masculinity. Characteristics of colonial masculinity were taken as the ideal to be real man and muscular. Mrinalini Sinha, therefore, has rightly argued that the colonial masculinity placed masculinity at the centre of colonial and nationalist politics in the late 19thcentury India (Sinha 1995: 12). However, the marginalised masculinity, or the men whose masculinity did not fit into the new hegemonic masculinity, had been considered as deviants. Homosexuality and its related sexual acts now

started to be considered as the threat to the masculinity. The anxiety about homoeroticism had been promoted by the nationalists. In other words, the "anti-colonial nationalism replicates the attempt made by the colonisers in redeeming the nation through its purge of 'unnatural' and transgressive vices such as homosexuality." (Dasgupta 2011: 664). The homophobia engulfed nationalist leaders including Mahatma Gandhi. In a letter written to *Young India* in 1929 Gandhi referred to homosexuality as 'unnatural vice' (Vanita 2001: 255-256). It was believed that homosexuality made the men feminine, hence, it was a threat to masculinity (Ghosh 2021: 55).

Stereotype of 'Effeminate' Bengali and Response of the Bengalis

However, the most popular image of Indian effeminacy was Bengali *babus* or *bhadroloks*, meaning educated upper and upper-middle class Bengali men. Lord Macaulay once said about Bengali men,

"The physical organisation of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour-bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid. During many ages he has been trampled upon by men of bolder and more hardly breeds. Courage, independence, veracity are qualities to which...his situation are equally unfavourable. His mind bears a singular analogy to his body. It is weak even to helplessness for purposes of manly resistance" (Sen 2001: 25).

George MacMunn, another British administrator, wrote, "We do not speak of the martial races of Britain as distinct from the non-martial, nor of Germany, nor of France. But in India we speak of the martial races as a thing apart and because most of the people have neither aptitude nor physical courage…" (MacMunn 1933: 2; Banarjee 2003: 171). During the late 19th century a British journalist named G. W. Steevens narrated and ridiculed the physique of Bengali men. According to him Bengali men even could be identified by their feminine legs! He wrote, "By his legs you shall know Bengali…The Bengali's leg is skin and bones…or else it is very fat or globular, also turning at the knees, with round things like a woman's. The Bengali's leg is leg of slave" (Steevens 1899: 75).

Thus, the Bengali men had been considered by the ruling authorities as the subject of ridicule for their physical weakness and 'effeminateness'. Bengali thinkers and nationalists also acknowledged the weakness and effeteness of Bengalis. For example in an issue of *Chikitsa-Sammilanee* (Medical Assemblage), a Bengali health related periodical, it was written that, "the perception of foreigners as well as a number of indigenous intellectuals regarding the weakness and short lifespan of indigenous people is not wrong at all" (Anon. 1885: 39). In a periodical named *Chikitsak O Samalochak* (The Physician and the Critic) Shri Bankubihari

Roy, an indigenous medical practitioner, addressing the Bengalis' unmanliness wrote,

"Why the Bengali race is so hated, so degraded today? Why can't we hold back our tears when we look at Bengal today? Stand up for a moment, forget our Bengaliness for a moment, and look with the eyes of an impartial observer (to see) how degraded, ... trampled upon the Bengalis are today. It is as if millions of worms are walking on their chests in the dense of mud in a vast swamp filled with mud...The Bengalis lack courage, that's why they are in such a predicament" (Roy 1895: 313).

Rajnarayan Basu, a 19th century Bengali nationalist, in his memoir titled *Sekal Aar Ekal* (Then and Now) (1874) also discussed on the issue of gradual degradation of Bengali men's virility. He wrote, "Physical strength is deteriorating. Ask any person, and he will say that our fathers and grandfathers were very strong. Compared to those times, the people (men) of today are nothing" (Basu 1988: 31). Therefore, by the late 19th century a section of Hindu nationalists in Bengal felt the necessity to change the colonial stereotype of physical effeminacy of Bengali as 'race'. It became imperative for the Bengali elites to adopt an effective strategy to counter the colonial claim or representation of Bengali men as effeminate (Majumder 2000: 3069). Therefore, by that time the concept of *Jatiya Swastha* (national health) became popular, and the publications of various health magazines and periodicals, like *Chikitsa-Sammilanee, Anubikshhan, Swastha* etc. were started (Basu 1998: 13). By that time there was a growing awareness among the Bengali nationalists on the potentiality of Bengalis for making a national physical culture. Therefore, it can be argued that the self-image of Bengali *bhadroloks* as effeminate helped in creation or spreading of a new culture based on physical fitness and as a result the popularity of *akhras* (gymnasiums) became high by the late 19th century Bengal (Rosselli 1980: 121-148; Basu 2014: 113). Saayan Chattopadhyay has explained that the Bengali intelligentsia in 19th century responded to the colonial claim of 'Bengali Effeminacy' in many ways, and one of which was by creating an alternative / indigenous masculinity (Chattopadhyay 2011: 274). Therefore, there was a need to re-frame the Bengali masculinity or create the alternative indigenous masculinity.

Attempts of Swami Vivekananda to Counter the Colonial Hegemonic Masculinity

Among the Bengali nationalists, who took initiatives in reframing the Bengali masculinity, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), a spiritual leader, was one of the most important figures. Despite being a spiritual leader, through his teaching he wanted to make or inspire the Bengali men to be strong and fearless to encounter the colonial masculinity. He believed that weakness, effeminacy were the signs of slavery, and harmful for the progress of nation. Vivekananda said, "In spite of our greatness of the *Upanishads*…we are weak, very weak... That physical weakness is the cause of at least one third of our misery. We are lazy, we cannot work; we

cannot combine…This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it… Be Strong…you will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of *Gita*… You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles…" (Tathagatananda 2014: 12-13). He also said: "What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside which dwell a mind of the same material as that of which the thunderbolt is made. (We need) Strength, manhood, warrior breeds…We have wept long enough" (Jyotirmayananda 1992: 29).

What Vivekananda tried was that he often placed "India as being spiritually superior to west, creating a discursive space in which to challenge colonial rule and promote Hindu nationalism" (Roy and Hammers 2014: 547-548). He also argued that "while the west was certainly scientifically and materially advanced…it was lacking in spiritualism or moral groundings", which Vivekananda considered as the most important vigour for human civilization (Roy and Hammers 2014: 548). On the other hand, he used to say that though India was far behind the material and scientific progress in comparison to west, it was more superior in case of moral ground due to 'its strong tradition of spiritualism' (Roy & Hammers 2014: 548). In words of Amiya P. Sen, "At one level, no doubt, it was a political statement, wherein claims of superiority were synonymous with claims of overall superiority. At the same time, Vivekananda genuinely believed that no material civilization could be ultimately sustained without a spiritual base and...India was indeed the heaven of spirituality" (Sen 2000: 85). In Vivekananda's concept of spiritual masculinity, the Vedantic form of Hinduism became important, and he wanted to convert the Hindu religion into a 'man-making' religion. He said, "Do even evil like a man! Be wicked if you must, on a grand scale... No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be man. It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want" (Kakar 1978: 175). However, there was a contradiction in Vivekananda's rhetoric of masculinity. On the one hand, he insisted on the spiritual masculinity; on the other he tried to redefine the Hindu masculinity through the blending of western elements of masculinity such as physical strength, aggression etc. He believed that: "Hindus could not be masters of the spiritual domain unless they could overcome their effeminacy by creating physical strength and virile bodies…" (Roy and Hammers 2014: 552). It seems, therefore, that to some extent Vivekananda's ideas of manliness followed the Victorian ideal of manliness. Vivekananda accepted the Victorian concepts about what should be the 'ideal' features of a male body.

Contradictions in Bankimchandra's Idea of Masculinity

Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894), another early Bengali nationalist, also tried to redefine Bengali masculinity. He really wanted to break the colonial stereotype of 'Hindoo Effeminacy'. However, his concept of the Bengali masculinity was self-contradictory. Sometimes, he talked about pure indigenous masculinity based on intelligence. Sometimes,

he emphasised on physical fitness and manliness which were essential features of colonial masculinity. Bankim knew it very well that Bengalis were physically weak. For that, he tried to construct an alternative masculinity. The central themes of this new alternative masculinity were mental strength, strength of intellect (*buddhibal*) and strength of rhetoric (*bakyabal)* instead of physical power (*bahubal*). According to Bankim, 'bahubal' only led to the destruction of human civilization, but whatever has been achieved by the human civilization that has come through the 'bakyabal' and 'buddhibal' of the population. In his own worlds: "Bahubal is the strength of animal – bakyabal is the strength of human. But bakyabal does not mean merely to gibber – I am not referring to the 'strength of speaking' as bakyabal. I am referring to the strength of the things that are conveyed through speaking. An intellectual through his intellect engender the worldly principles – the speaker impart that through speaking. The incorporation of these two forces, I call bakyabal" (Chattopadhyay 1877: 256). Therefore, it is evident that he tried to project *bakyabal* and *buddhibal* as ideal characteristics for the alternative masculinity of the Bengalis, not the *bahubal* or physical strength. This idea of *buddhibal* as a pivotal part of Bengali masculinity continued in the 20th century. For example, in Satyajit Ray's Bengali detective novels we can find it (Noor 2024: 259-308).

However, Bankim himself knew that physical strength or the 'bahubal' is necessary for every nation. He wrote, "It would be wrong to say that physical strength is not beneficial for the society. For the defence physical strength is the best. Lack of physical strength is responsible for India's modern tragedy" (Chattopadhyay 1877: 256). He believed that effeminacy and lack of manliness were the features of the 19th century Bengali males; Bengalis were not eternally effeminates. For that in an article published in 1884 he wrote, "Everybody believes that the Bengali is forever weak, cowardly, effete, and runs away at the site of a fist…This may seem somewhat acceptable if one discusses the Bengali character in the 19th century, but one may say that there are enough reasons behind such pathetic condition of Bengali…If somebody says that he is eternally puny, eternally craven and effete, then may thunder strike him down! It is a lie!" (Chattopadhyay 2016: 288; Chattopadhyay 1884: 274) Thus one can notice a gradual shift in Bankim's perception of masculinity.

Bankim was aware about the colonial claim of 'Effeminate Hindoos'. He wrote that "Europeans often term Indians as 'Effeminate Hindoos'. This is a humiliation of India indee" (Chattopadhyay 1872: 9). Therefore, it was necessary for Bankim to counter the colonial claim by giving much focus on few ancient Indian heroic characters and keeping in mind this purpose, he wrote literary pieces like *Krishnacharitra* (1886). In these texts he tried to glorify the indigenous masculinity which was completely his political move. In the *Krishnacharitra* Bankim projected Lord Krishna as an ideal man, a brave, disciplined hero. He rejected the descriptions of Krishna given by the Vaishnava theologists and Puranas (Chattopadhyay

1886). In this regard Sudipta Kaviraj has argued, "Bankim's Krishna is the Almighty's latest hermeneutic form, quite different from this god's commonly known figure in Vidyapati, Chandidas, Chaitanya, Jayadeva or Puranas" (Kaviraj1995: 75). From the Vaishnava texts the character of Krishna can be identified as a lover and an erotic figure. But Bankim rejected that kind of figure of Krishna. Kaviraj has argued in this matter, "Eventually, Bankim's Krishna would be very different from Krishna figure available through the Vaishnava cults of Bengal in which this principle of sexuality predominates - a Krishna too familiar, too folkish for his liking, too obviously invested, though lovingly, with the frailties of a mundane eroticism, a tradition in which eroticism had lost its original metaphorical quality" (Kaviraj 1995: 77-78). Bankim ignored the *Radhatattva* (theory of Radha) of the *Goudiya Vaishnavism* and the love affair of Krishna with Radha. Kaviraj has shown that, "Bankim mistrusts still mere the tension and instability in the figure of Radha whose metaphorical quality can dissolve suddenly into an un-metaphorical and unmediated riot of sensuality" (Kaviraj 1995: 78). Bankim probably believed that in the Vaishnava texts the character of Krishna was not freed from the effeminacy, gender-sexual fluidity and sensuality. *Radhabhava*[1]of the Vaishnavism was considered as danger to masculinity. Even Swami Vivekananda was very critical and suspicious towards Vaishnavism. Once he told one of his friends that, "Through the preaching of that love broadcast, the nation has become effeminate - a race of women! The whole of Orissa (a neighbouring state of West Bengal) has been turned into a land of coward and Bengal….has almost lost all sense of manliness" due to the Vaishnavism (Sil 1997: 117). However, Bankim selected the character of Krishna from *Mahabharata* where Krishna has been portrayed as quite a muscular figure. Bankim did not want the lover-some, feminine figure of Krishna, rather wanted a brave, muscular Krishna. Bankim in *Anandamath* also endorsed masculinity and nationalistic spirits through the different characters of the novel (Chakraborty, 2006).

Ultimate Triumph of Hegemonic Masculinity

It can be seen that both Vivekananda and Bankim gave much emphasis on masculinity. Despite their efforts to create an indigenous mode of masculinity, they were unable to get rid of the influence or hangover of the colonial masculinity. In their so called indigenous model of masculinity to a visible influence of colonial masculinity can be noticed. By giving so much importance on the physical health, manliness and masculinity they somehow ignored the pre-existing elements of gender-sexual fluidity as the integral part of Indian culture. Here Ashis Nandy's remark is very important. He says that in the pre-colonial Indian (including Bengal) society fluid identities were prevalent where the features of bisexuality and androgyny could be found. But it was the modern concept of masculinity based on the Western discourse on sexuality (and gender too) which changed the perception of Indians (Nandy 1983: 163). Now

few features like masculinity, physical strength, manliness and certain codes of behaviour became the signs of 'ideal' man. This argument is very true as it can be seen that Bengal was never a land of hyper masculinity. In form of so called effeminate and androgenic features to be found in the prominent male figures of pre-colonial Bengal. For example, in Sri Chaitanyadeva a visible 'effeminacy' could be found. In the theology of the *Gaudiya Vaishnavism*, the indications towards androgyny can be found (Ghosh 2021: 116-123). But, after the so-called modernization through the British, Bengali middle-class intellectuals started to see these identities in a different way. Bengali intellectuals adopted a concept of hegemonic masculinity (based on the broader framework of colonial masculinity); and the people whose masculinity did not fit under this hegemonic masculinity had been labelled as outcast. Interestingly, certain normative and non-normative patterns of morality and behaviour of ideal man came into existence by that time. And from this point, the homophobia and transphobia were probably got intensified.

Penetration of Hegemonic Masculinity into the Colonial Bengali Theatre

A visible arena for the penetration of the western gender concepts (e.g., hegemonic masculinity), transphobia and homophobia was the Bengali stage or theatre world in the second half of the 19th century. However, before that time, situation was different. In the Bengali *jatra* or *jatrapala* (folk form of theatre in Bengal) and theatre, for a long time, male actors, as female impersonators played female characters with feminine attire and make-ups. Female impersonators had certainly great demands in *jatra* and theatre due to the shortage of female actors on stage at that time. It was until the second half of the 19th century, more specifically 1870s, the tradition of female impersonation was continued almost uninterruptedly on stage in Bengal (Bhattacharya 2003: 192; Singh 2012: 193). As the traditional Bengali culture did not have rigid gender norms before the mid-19th century, although there were male and female gender ideas, male 'actresses' in Bengali theatrical practices were respected as artists by the society. For example, one of the pioneer female impersonators of Bengali *jatra* tradition was Sri Chaitanyadeva himself, who played a female character in the *jatrapala* named *Rukmini Haran* (Abduction of Rukmini), staged at the house of his follower named, Chandrakeshar in Nabadwip (Mandal 1999: 5-6; Ghosh 1994: 165). It is important to mention that before the second or third decade of 19th century, there was no existence of theatre in modern sense in Bengal. Instead *jatra* was prevalent and popular as well. In the initial times of the 19th century *jatra* was very much consumed by the public (Bandyopadhyay 1934: 7).

However, by the second or third decades of 19th century *jatra* started to be labeled as *chotoloker sanskriti* (low culture or culture of lower class) by a section of *bhadraloks* of the then city of Calcutta. With the propagation of Western education and Western thought

they found obscenity in *jatra* or other traditional Bengali folk theatrical performances and practices (Banerjee 2008). They started to form theatre groups on European model. From the 1830s to 1860s many amateur theatre groups (*sakher theatre*) were formed in Calcutta with the patronage of Calcutta based *babus* or *bhadralok* class (Bandyopadhyay 1934). Similar to *jatras,* in theatre also female actors were unavailable and therefore female roles were played by the female impersonators or male 'actress' (Bhattacharya 2003: 192; Singh 2012: 193-195; Bandyopadhyay 2018).

Before 19th century, it was very common for both men and women to wear and act in opposite gender costumes or cross-dressing in the theatres of different major European cities also. Even in the performances of William Shakespeare's plays extensive usage of transvestism or cross-dressing was very usual thing (Garber 1992). However, later on, in the context of new gender norms and Victorian morality of the 19th century, the cross-dressing of men (drag queens) as well as the female impersonation and any kind of effeminacy of men became both extremely ridiculous and a matter of fear/anxiety in society (Reade 1970: 251). As a result, male transvestism and female impersonation became a punishable offence under legal discourse. A notable example of the use of western regulatory power on cross-dressing is the 1871 trial of Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park in England. The two were arrested for wearing female costumes in public, and the media coverage surrounding their trial further fueled the fear of losing masculinity, homophobia and transphobia that had developed in contemporary society. The case was covered extensively on the front pages of almost all the leading London based newspapers of the time, including *The Times*. Not only did Boulton and Park become notorious transvestites, but cross-dressing by males gave rise to a wider social fear and anxiety (Weeks 1981: 108-117), With the fear of cross-dressing homophobia and possibility of male prostitution were related, which were seen as major problem by the established standards of British morality (Upchurch 2000: 127-157).

The penetration of such Western mentality, thoughts and new social values into Bengal through colonization brought about a sudden blow to the female impersonators or *beneputuls* of the indigenous stage. Probably being influenced by the concept of western notion of drag queens, persons associated with the Bengali theatre during the first-half of 19th century endorsed the female impersonation. But, when in the West, the drag queens or female impersonators started to be hated by the society, the discouragement towards the female impersonation in Bengali theatre also started by the second half of 19th century. The exodus of female impersonators from both the *jatra* and theatre began in the 1860s and 1870s, but the extent of this exodus was more visible in theatre than in *jatra* since theatre was part of the *bhadralok*'s culture, not *jatra*, and it was that *bhadraloks* who were more influenced by all forms of western thoughts. In this context, about this influence of western thoughts Lata Singh argues "(f)emale

impersonation was gradually found be 'unreal'. Society, which had seen and appreciated males enacting the roles of females, noticed sharply the shortcomings of the male enactment when they were exposed to Western...thoughts." (Singh 2012: 194) During the period of changing socio-psychological attitudes in the second half of 19th century, various transformations took place in the world of theatre in Bengal. Under the influence of European Proscenium theatre, changes were made in all aspects of Bengali theatre, including stage construction, lighting, acting techniques etc. (Chatterjee 2007: 178). Female impersonators, who until the mid-19th century were admired by audience for their acting skills and excellence of the craft, suddenly became conspicuous and undesirable to a section of society. An example of this trend can be found in the writing of Bankimchandra. In his novel titled *Bishbriksha* (1873) Bankim satirizes the artificial femininity of a man named Debendra by writing, "Suddenly that thick tuft of hair fell from the head, it was just a wig. The breasts fell from the chest, which were made by clothes" (Chattopadhyay 1873: 39). During the first half of 19th century *Krishna-Jatra*[2] was very popular in Bengal where the young effeminate boys used to play the female roles. But by the second half of 19th century these female impersonators of *Krishna-Jatra* had been started to be criticized and ridiculed. In an article published in *Calcutta Review* in 1851 such kind of criticism regarding it can be found:

"In the representation of Krishna-jatras, boys arrayed in the habits of Sakhies and Gopinis (milk-maids) cut the principal figures on the stage. It would require the pencil of a master-painter to portray these fairies of the Bengali stage. Their sooty complexion, their coal black cheeks, their haggard eyes, their long extended arms, their gaping mouths and their puerile attire excite disgust. Their external deformity is rivalled by their discordant voices, for the screechings of the night-owls, the howlings of the jackals and the barking of the dogs that bay the moon are harmony itself compared with their horrid yells. Their dances are in strict accordance with the other accessories. In the evolutions of the hands and feet dignified with the name of dancing, they imitate all posture and gestures calculated to soil the mind and pollute the fancy" (Das Gupta, 1923: 136-137).

It is not very difficult to understand that this mocking laughter on female impersonators was a product of Western sensibility. Not only did the idea of a strict binary gender of male and female emerge through the 19th century western discourse, but the gender performing roles of men and women were also defined under the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. And all entities, behaviours and even representations outside of that entrenched framework and concept suddenly became the objects of criticism and laughter.

Therefore, the need of introduction of *abhinetree* (female actor) into the theatre was felt by a section of *bhadraloks* associated with theatre. In this respect, Michael Madhusudan Dutt

and Girish Ghosh played most crucial role in bringing female actors in theatre (Chatterjee 2007: 175-187). As the *bhadramahilas* or women from respectable families could not come to act in public theatre, initially women 'prostitutes' (sex workers) were employed as female actors (Bhattacharya 2003: 224-235; Singh 2012: 196-197). Few scholars like Radha Kumar claimed that introduction of 'fallen' women into theatre was associated with the social reforms, more specifically the reform agenda of *bhadraloks* to 'rehabilate' and enhance the social status of the prostitutes (Kumar 1993: 36). In reality, under the patriarchal structure, the position of these women always remained dependent on the whims or desires of upper-class men, and no proper measures were taken to raise the social status and self-esteem of these women. They remained to the level of 'fallen' or public women in the perception of society. As a result, even talented female actors like Binodini Dasi who came from the world of prostitution were simultaneously being crushed under the pressure of both the larger social system and men associated with the stage, which exposed the hypocrisy of the *bhadralok* class's ideal of humanitarian reform (Singh 2012: 205-213; Chatterjee 2007: 199-212).

Actual reason of bringing the 'fallen' women into stage by the *bhadraloks* was the colonial modernity which they internalized from their colonial masters. Internalizing the idea of hegemonic masculinity, Western strict gender norms, homophobia and transphobia in the name of modernity, members of *bhadralok* class like Michaeal Madhusudan suddenly felt that 'clean-shaved' men could not be played the role of the romantic heroines (Das Gupta 1938: 68-69). Behind the reasons of Madhusudan's this step, his idea of masculinity was significant. Actually "(t)he whole issue of masculinity and effeminacy also came into the nationalist discourse. Female impersonators appeared to threat the construction of masculinity; bringing it into the limelight seemed to reinvigorate stereotypes of weakness and inferiority among the male population, a bitter legacy of colonial domination" (Singh 2012: 195). In response to British contempt for Indian morality and society, as well as the consequent portrayal of Indian male as effeminate, Indian nationalist cum reformers by the second half of 19th century tried to redefine Indian femininity and womanhood in the framework of 'Vedic purity' and re-imagined a combative as well as confrontational masculinity of Indian men (Chakravarty 1989: 27-87). From this obsession with masculinity, Girish Ghosh once commented that the repeated imitation of effeminacy by the male actors in stage would result into the permanent effeminacy to them:

"When boys are hired to act (female roles), it not only results in poor performance but also permanently damages the boys which is beyond recovery. By repeated act of effeminacy as female impersonators from early ages they developed a type of effeminacy that lasts the remainder of their lives" (Dutta, 1996: 160).

In elsewhere Ghosh commented almost the same. In his words,

"For the rest of their lives, the boys who portray (female) characters must live as women in male bodies. We can clearly demonstrate this, but we prefer not to disclose people who have maintained their effeminateness in old age by playing female roles during childhoods. It is clear that the habits acquired in childhood are different to discontinue" (Ghosh, 1972: 823).

Ghosh's comment that repeated performances of female roles by male actors can be resulted into the permanent effeminacy to the male actors reminds us queer theorist Judith Butler's theoretical notion of performance of gender which emphasizes that gender could be performed and is fluid; through the repeated performances we create gender identities (Butler 1990: 191).

Being obsessed with colonial hegemonic masculinity, the *bhadraloks,* around 1860s, found anxiety and danger in any kind of cross-dressing by men. For example, when Shibnath Shastri took charge of a rural school at Harinavi, near to Calcutta, in 1870s, he saw that some of the school's teachers were participating in the local village *jatrapalas* dressed as women, and he strongly opposed it. Even he issued a circular to stop the teachers from performing as women in *jatras* (Shastri 1952: 121). Even from a writing of Bipinbihari Gupta (1916), it is known that Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar once expelled a student from school for taking part in an amateur theatre group as female impersonator (Gupta 1989: 254).

Same-sex representation or cross-dressing male's romance with other male actors in public stage generated homophobia also. This homophobia originated from the notion of hegemonic masculinity indeed. Therefore, homophobia was one of the reasons to bring the women actors and banishing the female impersonators from the theatre. Thus *bhadralok* class tried to pacify their anxiety regarding homophobia. In this context Sudipto Chatterjee wrote:

"Casting women in female roles served another important function: it nullified the homophobic anxiety of having boys pass for women, thereby heterosexualizing the stage and escaping the unspeakable horrors of homoerotic desire(s). The objection against male transvestism on the Bengali stage was thus pinioned on the heterosexual male's abject fear of male homosexuality" (Chatterjee 2007: 182).

Lata Singh also argued for the same. According to her, due to the fear of homoeroticism, employing prostitutes in female roles was considered as better option than the continuation of female impersonation (Singh 2012: 196).

Conclusion

Thus, it is evident how the idea of hegemonic masculinity was no longer limited to nationalism in colonial Bengal, rather transcended the boundaries of nationalism and began to influence

even the theatre. Since theatre is part of larger society, it was practically impossible for it to remain free from the inevitable influence of hegemonic masculinity which was badly engulfed the society. Hegemonic masculinity was internalised first by the nationalists and through them the idea had spread into different sphere of society. However, hegemonic masculinity not only created the image of 'ideal' masculine man, but also constructed the image of 'ideal' woman. The idea became entrenched that tenderness was a characteristic of women, and tenderness and softness could never be expressed in the character of men. The hegemonic masculinity was able to establish the belief in the society that feminine men were dangerous. Another contribution of hegemonic masculinity was the promotion of homophobia and transphobia, as it successfully attempted to link male femininity with the male homosexuality. For these phobias, therefore, even the cross-dressing of male actors or female impersonation in theatre had become the subject of panic and disgust.

Endnotes

1. Taking the tone of Radha by the devotees, irrespective of genders, during the devotion to God Krishna.
2. The theatrical acts in which the Lord Krishna's life and greatness were portrayed through performances.

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Assessment of Emotional Intelligence of Primary School Teachers in West Bengal

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Abstract

This study is to assess the emotional intelligence (EI) levels of the primary school teachers in West Bengal through quantitative approach using the standardized questionnaire tool. The learner at primary level being emotional in nature, emotional intelligence plays an important role in class room teaching-learning process for the primary school teachers. In this study, after re-standardisation on locale samples, Teachers' Emotional Intelligence Inventory (TEII) by Dr. (Mrs.) Shubra Mangal (2004) is used to collect data from 500 primary school teachers, as a sample from the selected districts of West Bengal, India; using stratified random sampling technique. Both descriptive and inferential statistics are used to examine the EI due to gender, location, training and teaching experience variations. Results indicated that most of the teachers possess high degree of emotional intelligence and significant difference exists due to gender, location, training and teaching experience variations. This research suggests the need for EI training and development programs for primary school teachers in West Bengal, India, aimed at fostering a more supportive educational environment.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, TEII, Professional development, academic improvement.*

1. Introduction

1.0 Background of the study

Emotional Intelligence plays an important role in shaping how human beings manage social complexities, make selections, and modify conduct. In recent years EI has been broadly studied as a determinant of private and professional success of a person.

1.1 Importance of E.I. in Education

In educational contexts, emotional intelligence is particularly important for the teachers. In teaching profession, EI is increasingly being considered as plus in teacher's qualifications and basis for making rapport with young learners. Teachers with high level of EI are more capable of managing classroom dynamics, setting up positive relationships with

students and teachers, maintaining a peaceful environment conducive to teaching. EI also contributes to teachers' potential to handle pressure, resolve conflicts, and make empathetic and knowledgeable selections that enhance learner's academic improvement.

1.2 Relevance to Primary School Teachers

Primary school teachers play a foundational position in children's cognitive, emotional, and social improvement. Their emotional responses, class-room management strategies, and interpersonal interactions can substantially impact younger learners (Skura et al., 2021). As such, it is important to assess how properly-equipped they are in terms of emotional intelligence, in particular while the society is going through growing academic expectations, diverse class room behaviours, and parental involvement.

1.3 Context in West Bengal

Despite the identified significance of EI in teaching, empirical studies analyzing the emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in India specifically in West Bengal are limited (Sanchez et al*.,* 2021). West Bengal's academic portfolio is characterized by various socio-economic and cultural contexts, making it an essential region for studying emotional intelligence levels among primary school teachers.

1.4 Purpose of the study

This study aims to bridge the existing research gap by conducting an assessment of the emotional intelligence levels of the primary school teachers in West Bengal by employing a standardized questionnaire to the fields of educational psychology and teacher's professional development.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

The present study has been entitled as "Assessment of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in West Bengal"

1.6 Objectives

The objectives of the study are

$O_{1:}$ To find out the level of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in west Bengal.

$O_{2:}$ To find out the mean difference in emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to gender variation.

$O_{3:}$ To find out the mean difference in emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to location variation.

$O_{4:}$ To find out the mean difference in emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to training variation.

$O_{5:}$ To find out the mean difference in emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to teaching experience variation.

1.7 Hypotheses

Based on the objectives the following null hypothesis has been framed

H_{01}: The emotional intelligence scores of the primary school teachers in west Bengal are not normally distributed.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in levels of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to gender variation.

H_{03}: There is no significant difference in levels of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to location variation.

H_{04}: There is no significant difference in levels of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to training variation.

H_{05}: There is no significant difference in levels of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to teaching experience variation.

2.0 Literature Review

A number of studies highlighted the significance of emotional intelligence in teaching learning process and its impact on teachers' professional development and student's learning outcomes.

Tuli Bhattacharjee in 2023 explored the relationship between emotional intelligence, job performance, and teaching accuracy among pre-primary school teachers in Kolkata. The study highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in teaching practices.

Binay Krishna Halder (2023) conducted a study on the emotional intelligence of head teachers in government and private primary schools. The study found that female head teachers have higher emotional intelligence than male head teachers. Antara dey in (2023) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence, social intelligence, teaching style, and professional commitment among secondary school teachers. The findings of the study highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence and social intelligence in teaching learning process.

Shen (2022) found that teachers' emotional intelligence significantly affects their instructional design and teaching techniques. The study conducted by Dipankar Chakraborty and Subrata saha (2022) found a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job involvement among heads of higher secondary schools. The study revealed that emotional intelligence can predict 52.5% variance in job involvement. Fernandez et. al. (2022) discussed the interplay between emotional intelligence and academic motivation among primary school students, emphasizing the growing recognition of emotions as a key factor in educational achievement. The findings exhibit high correlation between emotional intelligence and motivation. Coskun et. al. (2021) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and value adoption among primary school children. They conclude that teaching values through formal curriculum does not appreciably decorate emotional intelligence in younger learners. The study challenges assumptions within instructional practices and encourages a more incorporated technique to fostering socio-emotional development. A study by Kamboj et al. (2021) discussed how the intrinsic personal qualities, emotional intelligence and the resilient personality trait significantly influence the rate of psychological well-being of school teachers. They observed that emotional intelligence contributes to mental properly-being, with girl teachers showing higher ranges of emotional intelligence and resilience compared to their male counterparts.

Research conducted by Mérida et al. (2021) explores the interconnectedness between aggression, pressure, and emotional responses. The study highlights the importance of emotional regulation and mental resilience among educators when navigating tough interactions inside school environments. Gómez et al. (2021) highlighted how emotional intelligence —especially self-awareness, self-management, and empathy—are frequently associated with a success leadership practices in educational contexts. The findings showed that teachers who possess excessive emotional intelligence are better geared up to foster trusting relationships, which in turn beautify instructor satisfaction, engagement, and typical school performance. Skura et al. (2021) discussed the critical role of emotional intelligence and social competences in shaping teachers' experiences and effectiveness for teaching students with special educational needs. The study highlights the evolving demands of inclusive education, fostering emotional resilience and flexibility amongst teachers is critical for creating supportive environments.

Fu et al. (2021) found that teachers' emotional intelligence affects their work engagement and teaching creativity. Shanthini Kumar and Nishad Nawaz (2020) conducted a comparative study to assess emotional intelligence among primary school teachers. They found that primary school teachers have average emotional intelligence levels.

Study by Sharma (2019) emphasized that higher emotional and spiritual intelligence significantly enhance social and occupational adjustment, enabling teachers and working women to better adapt to their professional environments and interpersonal relationships.

Lavy and Eshet (2018) discovered that teachers' emotional intelligence influences their teaching effectiveness, burnout, and job satisfaction. Mehrotra (2017) further highlighted that emotional intelligence is an essential component of professional growth among NET-qualified teachers, fostering personal accountability and effective teaching practices. In the same vein, Ponmozhi and Ezhilbharathy (2017) reported that emotional intelligence levels among teachers were generally high, with gender emerging as a significant determinant.

Kar.et.al (2016) demonstrated that emotional intelligence strongly correlates with adjustment abilities among higher secondary students, suggesting its predictive role in life satisfaction and social adaptation. Charan kumar (2015) investigated the emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in the Warangal district. The study revealed that teachers' emotional intelligence is an essential aspect of their professional development.

Maheshwari and Balamulu (2015) conducted a study on the emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in the Warangal district. The study highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence for teachers' well-being and effectiveness.

2.1. Finding the research gap

Based on the conceptual and research based evidences related to this field, it is clear that the teachers themselves and also the educational administrators should have a clear understanding of the degree of possession of emotional intelligence. No such attempt has been made earlier to find out the level of emotional intelligence in educational field in west-Bengal with regard to primary school teachers. In this context, the investigator has conducted his study on "Assessment of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in west Bengal"

2.2 Rationale of the study

Teachers play a predominant role in the educational frame work of the society. Students of primary level are emotional in nature. To meet the growing needs of the society, the teachers at primary level should not only be academically vibrant, but also be emotionally intelligent. It is essential that the primary school teachers should be versatile in intra-personal and inter -personal relations. They should have awareness of self and others and also be professionally oriented to make the learning environment more joyful and conducive.

3. Methodology

3.0 Research Design

This study employed cross-sectional survey design to assess the emotional intelligence levels of the primary school teachers in the state of West Bengal.

3.1 Samples and Sampling technique

The population of this study are primary school teachers working in schools under West Bengal Government. From this population, 500 primary school teachers were selected from Birbhum and Murshidabad districts of west Bengal, India, as a sample. Stratified random sampling technique is used.

3.2 Tool used

The tool used in the study is Teachers' Emotional Intelligence Inventory - (TEII) by Dr. (Mrs.) Shubra Mangal (2004). The scale consisted of total 180 items (both positive and negative) and rated on a five-point Likert scale having four dimensions. The scale is re-standardised on 298 locale sample with test–retest method. The reliability of the Re-standardised Scale is assessed with the use of the Cron-bach Alpha method, which yielded a score of 0.76. The table below shows the dimension wise no. of items.

Table 3.2.1: Dimension wise no. of items of TEII

Dimensions of the scale	Awareness of Self and Others	Professional Orientation	Intra-personal Management	Inter-personal Management
No. of items	61	41	23	55

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaire technique of data collection was employed. Hard copies of the questionnaire had been distribued individually and collected. Prior to participation, all respondents were explained about the purpose of the test and their consent was taken. Anonymity of the respondent and the confidentiality of the data were ensured.

3.4 Statistical techniques

On completion of data collection, the responses were coded according to the norms of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 26, for analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics have been used for interpretation of the data.

4. Results

4.0. Introduction

It employs descriptive and inferential statistics to derive meaningful insights from collected data.

4.1. Analysis and Interpretation

H_{01}: The emotional intelligence scores of the primary school teachers in west Bengal are not normally distributed.

Table 4.1.1: Normality test results:

Variables	N	Mean	S.D.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Shapiro- Wilk Test	Result
Emotional Intelligence	500	240.48	4.487	-.228	-.107	0.234	Normal

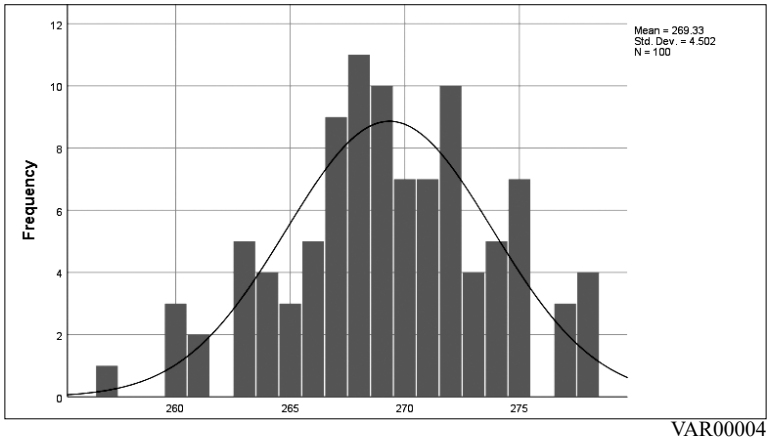


Figure 4.1.1: Showing the Normal Plot of Emotional Intelligence

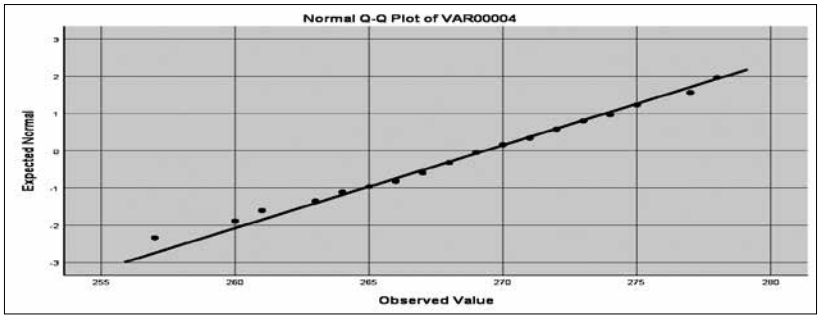


Figure 4.1.2: Showing the Q-Q plot of emotional intelligence

The Shapiro-Wilk test for Emotional Intelligence yielded a p-value of 0.234, which is significant at level of 0.05, suggested no significant deviation from normality in the distribution of emotional intelligence scores. The kurtosis value of -0.107 is close to zero, suggesting that the distribution is nearly normal, with no significant peak or flatness. Q-Q plot largely follow the 45-degree line suggested that the data is close to a normal distribution. Therefore, the data for Emotional Intelligence may be considered following a normal distribution. Thus, the data is suitable for further parametric statistical analyses. The normal mean score of emotional intelligence across all individuals became 240.48 with a general deviation of 4.487. This shows most of the teachers possess a high degree of emotional intelligence. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H_{o2}: There is no significant mean difference in the levels emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to gender variation.

Table 4.1.2 Descriptive statistics of emotional intelligence in respect of gender

Variables	Gender	Mean	Grand Mean	S.D.	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Emotional Intelligence	Male	282.194	376.935	10.107	5.153	272.077	292.310
	Female	471.676		15.750	5.065	461.731	481.621

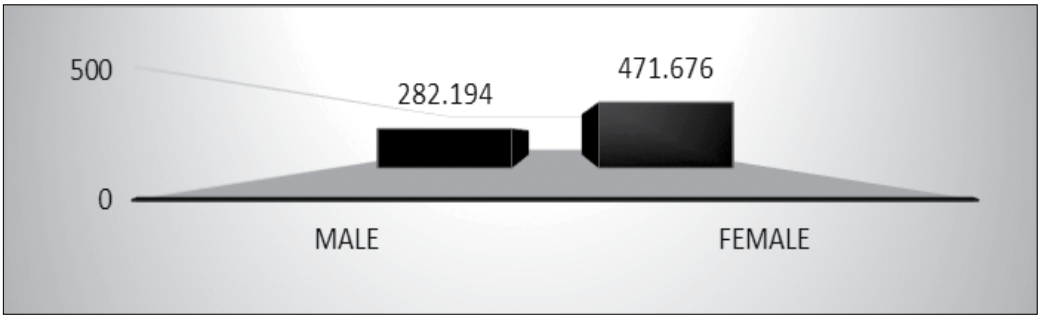


Figure 4.1.3: The graphical representation of emotional intelligence in respect to gender

The descriptive statistics of emotional intelligence among primary school teachers reveal a significant difference due in respect to genders. Male teachers had a mean emotional intelligence score of 282.194 with a standard deviation of 10.107, while female teachers scored substantially higher, with a mean of 471.676 and a standard deviation of 15.750. The standard errors for both groups are relatively low (5.153 for males and 5.065 for females), indicating that the sample means are reliable estimates of the population means, suggesting that female teachers exhibit significantly higher emotional intelligence than their male counterparts.

Table 4.1.3: The independent sample t test of emotional intelligence in respect of gender

Emotional Intelligence	Equality of Variances according to Levene Test			test for Identical of Average			
	Identical Variances Assumed	F-Value	Sig. Value	t-Value	df	Remark	Average Difference
		103.679	.000	-21.98	498	.000	−189.482

The independent sample t-test examining emotional intelligence among primary school teachers in relation to gender indicates a significant difference between male and female teachers. The Levene's test for equality of variances yielded an F-value of 103.679 with a significance value of .000, suggesting that the assumption of equal variances is violated. The t-test results, assuming unequal variances, show a t-value of -21.98 with 498 degrees of freedom and a significance level of .000, indicating a highly significant difference in emotional intelligence scores between genders. The average difference of −189.482 confirms that female teachers scored substantially higher than male teachers, demonstrating a pronounced gender-based variation in emotional intelligence within the sample. So, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H_{o3}: There is no significant mean difference in the levels of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to location variation.

Table 4.1.4: The descriptive statistics of emotional intelligence in respect of locale

Variables	Locale	Mean	Grand Mean	S.D.	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Emotional Intelligence	Urban	413.093	386.639	15.8	8.427	396.548	429.638
	Rural	360.186		16.7	6.189	348.035	372.336

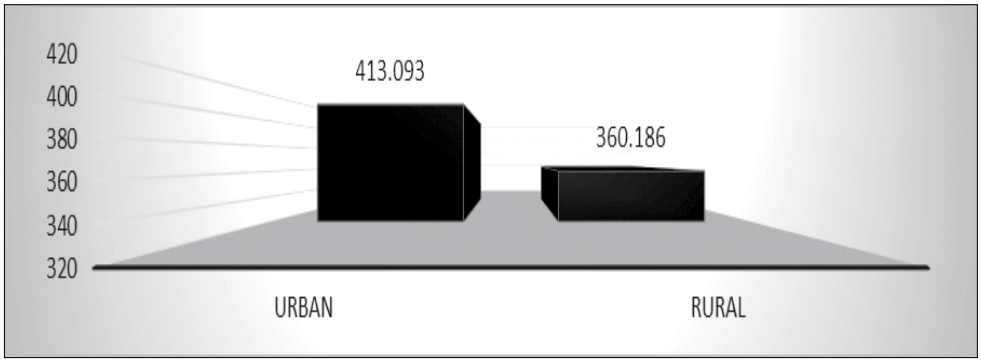


Figure 4.1.4: The graphical representation of emotional intelligence in respect of locale

The descriptive statistics of emotional intelligence among primary school teachers based on locale indicate that urban teachers scored higher than rural teachers. Urban teachers had a mean score of 413.093 with a standard deviation of 15.8, while rural teachers had a mean of 360.186 with a standard deviation of 16.7. The standard errors were 8.427 for urban teachers and 6.189 for rural teachers, suggesting reliable estimates of the population means, highlighting a clear difference in emotional intelligence, with urban teachers demonstrating higher levels than their rural counterparts.

Table 4.1.5: The independent sample t test of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in respect of locale

Emotional Intelligence	Equality of Variances according to Levene Test			t test for Identical of Average			
	Identical Variances Assumed	F-Value	Sig. Value	t-Value	df	Remark	Average Difference
		3.117	.078	95.2	498	.000	52.908

The independent sample t-test for emotional intelligence among primary school teachers in respect of locale shows a statistically significant difference between urban and rural teachers. The Levene's test for equality of variances yielded an F-value of 3.117 with a significance of .078, indicating that the assumption of equal variances is reasonably met. The t-test results reveal a t-value of 95.2 with 498 degrees of freedom and a significance level of .000, confirming a highly significant difference in emotional intelligence. The average difference of 52.908 indicates that urban teachers scored substantially higher than rural teachers, demonstrating that locale has a pronounced effect on emotional intelligence within this sample and the null hypothesis is rejected.

H_{o4}: There is no significant mean difference in the levels emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to training variation.

Table 4.1.6: The descriptive statistics of emotional intelligence in respect of training variations

Variables	Training	Mean	Grand Mean	S.D.	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Emotional Intelligence	Trained	250.958	226.663	10.86	5.654	239.857	262.059
	Untrained	202.368		7.99	10.785	181.194	223.542

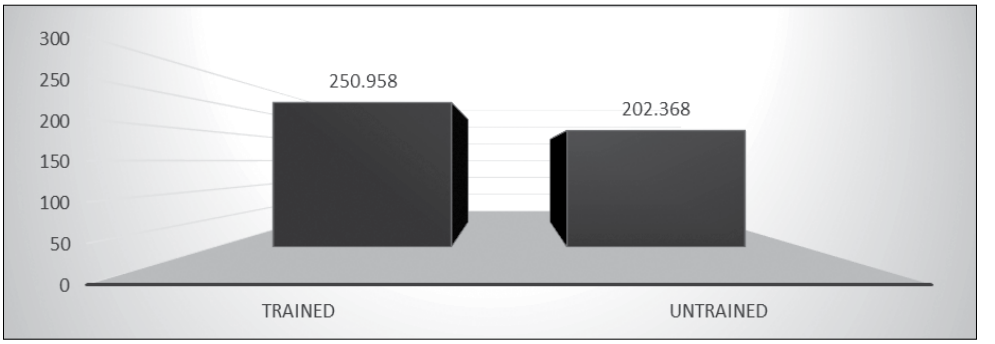


Figure 4.1.5: The graphical representation emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in respect of training variations

The descriptive statistics of emotional intelligence among primary school teachers based on training variations indicate that trained teachers scored higher than untrained teachers. Trained teachers had a mean score of 250.958 with a standard deviation of 10.86, while untrained teachers had a mean of 202.368 with a standard deviation of 7.99. The standard errors were 5.654 for trained teachers and 10.785 for untrained teachers, reflecting reasonably reliable estimates of the population means, suggesting that training has a substantial positive effect on the emotional intelligence of primary school teachers.

Table 4.1.7: The independent sample t test of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in respect of training variations

Emotional Intelligence	Equality of Variances according to Levene Test			t test for Identical of Average			
	Identical Variances Assumed	F-Value	Sig. Value	t-Value	df	Sig Value	Average Difference
		15.923	.000	3.99	498	.000	48.590

The independent sample t-test for emotional intelligence of primary school teachers with respect to training variations indicates a statistically significant difference between trained and untrained teachers. The Levene's test for equality of variances yielded an F-value of 15.923 with a significance of .000, indicating that the assumption of equal variances is reasonably met. The t-test results show a t-value of 3.99 with 498 degrees of freedom and a significance level of .000, confirming a highly significant difference. The average difference of 48.590 demonstrates that trained teachers scored substantially higher in emotional intelligence than untrained teachers, highlighting the positive impact of training on this attribute. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H_{05}: There is no significant mean difference in the levels of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers due to teaching experience variation.

Table 4.1.8: The descriptive statistics of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in respect of teaching experience variations

Variables	Experience	N	Mean	Grand Mean	S.D.	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Emotional Intelligence	0-10 Years	197	173.70	240.48	63.881	3.434	166.94	180.45
	10-20 Years	162	253.04		139.08	11.890	229.56	276.52
	Above 20 Years	141	347.46		151.341	9.909	327.91	367.00

The descriptive results show clear differences in emotional intelligence across experience groups among primary school teachers. Those with 0–10 years of experience reported the lowest average score (M = 173.70, SD =63.881) displayed moderate and consistent level emotional intelligence. Teachers with 10–20 years of experience (M = 253.04, SD = 139.08), indicating comparatively stronger emotional intelligence level. Teachers with more than 20 years of experience possess high degree of emotional intelligence with mean score 347.46 and SD value 151.341

Table 4.1.9 The ANOVA results of emotional intelligence of primary school teachers in respect of variations in teaching experience

Variables	Groups	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F Value	Sig. Value
Emotional Intelligence	Between Groups	3823192.232	2	1911596.116	151.006	.000
	Within Groups	8886651.797	498	12659.048		
	Total	12709844.028	500			

The resulting F value of 151.006 is highly significant (p = .000), indicating that experience has a strong and statistically meaningful impact on teachers' emotional intelligence, confirming that differences observed in the descriptive analysis are not due to chance and the null hypothesis is rejected.

5. Discussion

5.0. Introduction

This section synthesizes research findings, highlights educational implications, and validates methodology.

5.1. Summary of the major findings

The study shows that most of the teachers possess a high degree of emotional intelligence.

The results reveal significant differences in emotional intelligence between male and female teachers. The analysis of locale indicates significant distinctions between teachers employed in rural and urban schools. The findings on training variations reveal that teachers with professional training demonstrate higher levels of emotional intelligence. Variation in teaching experience emerges degree of possession of emotional intelligence level is highest with the most experienced group of teachers.

5.2. The educational implications of the study

The study implies integrating emotional intelligence (EI) training into teacher education programme, offer workshops using role-plays, and case studies to develop self-awareness, empathy, intra-personal and inter -personal skills.

5.3. Conclusion

The study conducted among primary school teachers in the state of west- Bengal, India, reveals that the influence of demographic factors such as gender, location, training and teaching experience underscoring the contextual nature of the emotional intelligence. The study advocates for professional development and supportive environments, offering valuable implications for policymakers, administrators, and future research.

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DURGĀ THROUGH THE AGES: A Mytho-cultural Re-examination of her Origins and Figuration

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Abstract:

Goddess Durgā is considered as one of the principle deities in Hinduism, especially in its Śākta sectarian-system. Her modes of reverence combine the eternal Mother-goddess concept with other typological variants, chiefly those related to war, blood and other minimal aspects of mainstream Hinduism. However, even with her principal position within Śāktism, her origination and processes of genesis lie in obscurity. Moreover, her nonpareil iconographical conventions also defy neat uni-cultural classification, and share traits with other multicultural deity-figures, especially Nanā. In this paper, an attempt shall be made to delve deeper into the origins of Durgā, and link it with her intriguing figuration. Through this, a detailed account of her worship, from earliest of times to Early Medieval Period, shall be given and illustrated through relevant sources. At last, the politico-cultural factors involved in her sectarian resurgence during the latest temporal limit shall also be thoroughly examined.

Keywords: *Durgā, Nanā, Ištar, Lion, Devī-māhātmyam, War Goddess, Sogdian, Gaṇeśa-janani.*

Introduction and Methodology:

Mythological narratives of Goddess in Hinduism provide immense diversity. Yokochi (2005: 19) typologically divided Goddess deity-figures in Hinduism into three broad categories, namely, *Consort Goddess*. whose primary function is to support, sustain and strengthen her husband's feats, in conformation to Śāstric norms; *Warrior Goddess* who provides strength and motivation to warriors, defies Śāstric injunctions; and *Supreme Goddess,* who is the Supreme Power, sustains all existence, mundane and sacred and subverts all conventions. Interestingly, the Śaivite Mother-goddess and her myriad manifestations fit into all moulds harmoniously, though their sujourn, from an all-potent independent cultic deity-form, during prehistoric stage to a structural component of the ever encompassing Śaivite world in the proto-historic and Historic phases of Indian History has been both tenacious and torting, and involve the subversion of Mother-goddess figure afore her more vigorous and popular Consort. However, exceptions in the form of normative subversions exist.

A mythological deity-figure that categorically defies this regularized mytho-cultural pattern and treads her own path is Goddess Durgā. From her appearance as a militant Goddess to her ferocious belligerent stance; from her associations with ritual liminality to her predominance in the socio-cultural milieu of Early Medieval Period; makes her an intriguing and interesting deity-figure. Durgā is often considered as a War Goddess, though her mythological narratives suggest atleast three further admixtures, such as, Blood-thirsty, Tribal and Protective Goddess (Bhattacharya 1964: 20*ff.*).

The chief obfuscation in charting her progressions across different epochs comes from her obscure and unorthodox origins, and her equally heterodox figurative aspects. While some streams of her genesis reflect autochthonous elements, her iconographical traits share definitive similarities with a Sogdian Goddess- Nanā.

In this paper, attempt will be made to induce analytical coherence in the bewildering variations observed in the sectarian structuration of Goddess Durgā, through the following steps-

1. *Firstly,* light shall be thrown on the various generative streams that together constitute, in one way or another, the formative context of emergence and mytho-cultic development of Durgā. Her relationship with tribal rituals, sanguine customs, feline creatures and with liminal aspects of Hinduism would also be given due consideration.
2. *Secondly,* attempt shall be made to sketch her iconographical and associated cultural developmental trajectory, wherein the role of Nanā in influencing figuration of Durgā, and further progressions during Gupta period would be explored in detail. Numismatics would act as the chief analytic instrument, with statuary as a close second.
3. *Thirdly,* the sectarian resurgence of Durgā as primary deity-figure within Śāktism would be elaborated, through relevant examples.
4. *Fourthly,* the final section would be discussion on the previous sections in order to provide a coherent comprehension of findings explicated in the conclusion of the paper.

Emergence of Durgā:

Examining myriad streams of her genesis

The prime endeavor of this paper is to examine the genesis of Durgā, and the emergence of multiple cults with Śākta supremacy under the beneficence of same Goddess, who is often proclaimed as the Goddess of Victory, and in some ways, can be held responsible for giving

new force to mythological narrative of the Goddess in Śaivite pantheon, and also for inverting expectant pattern of gendered-roles that gets commonly associated with Śaivite Mother-goddess. A new form of structural tension is apparent here. It not only elevated the mother-goddess in mythological significance, but also transformed the Śaivite worldview itself. First, some conventions regarding the origination of Durgā will be discussed, in order to better glean off her socio-historical and mythological characters. Then, comment shall be made upon the causal factors behind her rise in ritual importance; followed by a discussion on the context behind this inversion and influence of the same on gendered roles of the mother-goddess.

Out of all the manifestations of the Mother Goddess appearing in archaeological and historical evidences, the ferocious deity-form of Durgā finds significant patronage and pictographic rendition in Ancient Indian History, along with varied representation on coins belonging to Śakas, Guptas, Tribal-Republic coins etc. Interestingly, it is believed by many scholars that the iconographic demarcation of the meta-stature of the Goddess effected her artistic-sculptural depictions in sacred locations (Bhattacharya 1975: 235). Although a localized linkage can also be evinced in socio-historical annals, especially those pertaining to tribal origins of the figurative concept closely associated with the Goddess (Mazumdar 1906).

Vedic stream

The earliest literary reference of the Goddess, with surety of repose and without an iota of interpolation, lies in the Devī-māhātmyam, a part of Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa (Hazra 2025 [1940]: 90). While references to the Goddess with the name Durgā also finds somewhat slighting mentions in the Gāyatrī section of *Taittreya Āraṇyaka*, which is unanimously assigned to 10th Century CE (Kinsley 1988: 135), in the *Virāṭa Parvam* of the Mahābhāratam (ch. 25-38), where her description closely befits that of Vindhyavāsinī, albeit enmeshed with complex and confounding narratives (Mazumdar 1906: 358). After the poetically supreme and narratively furious description of Devī-māhātmyam, a standard template is structured for the deity-figure, which finds reiteration in later textual references (Kinsley 1988: 140). While we are in the dark to assert with absolute certainty the point and source of the deity's genesis, some thematic processes may be postulated and presented herein to commence a movement from unknown to less known, and reduce the theoretical veil surrounding the Goddess.

While the absolutist reigns of certainty in conceptual derivation of the concept of Durgā from strands of Vedic corpus remain muffled, scholars have long hinted for the necessity of presence of a deity-figure equivalent in stature, function and narrative to Durgā to facilitate gradual and chronologically later conflation of many structural-functionally equal deities into one singular form of popular worship (Pattanaik 2000: 40). While some posit content in

finding a Vedic precursor of Durgā in the mythological description of Idā (the river), whose mighty whirling waters spread destruction and decimated the evil (*RV*-X.59), and also on accord of her grouping in the idyllic triad of three supreme goddesses- Sarasvatī, Pārvatī and Lakṣmī (referred to as Bhāratī in RV), a figurative predecessor to the later Trinity of Goddesses of Purāṇic Hinduism (Srivastava 2019: 58), the contention becomes confabulated and confounding due to somewhat similar attestations to the river-Goddess Sarasvatī (Macdonell 2015 [1897]: 96). However, another possible presence of the Goddess-concept of Durgā can be found in the silver-art sculptures found in Bactria-Margiana-Archaeological-Complex, where recent excavations have unearthed some decorations with a female having one leg on a feline creature, possibly tiger (Potts 2001: 27). The archaeological-culture has been connected with pre-Vedic Āryan encampments in Eurasian region (Allen 2023: 256-258). Recently, it has been quite convincingly explicated by Rosati (2017: 137-55) that it is a failing venture to create explicit, rigid boundaries between Āryan and non-Āryan elements in Vedic mode of worship, for the absorptive machinations of Vedic ritualists often cornered tribal mores, and gleaned it from its proper context when it sufficiently matched the liturgical non-mainstream mythic culture-points in Rigvedic verses. The connection of Kāmākhyā worship in Brāhmaṇic socio-cultural order probably had its attractive ritual-culture propinquity in the Prajāpati- Uṣas incestual story, where all life sprung through a defiled, non-pious process of commencement (Rosati 2017: 154).

Dravidian Stream

The influence of Dravidian traditions and customs on Brāhmaṇical cults and sects is attested to by both Goyal (1986: 16) and Macdonell (2015 [1897], 20). The equivalence between Vedic and Tamil folk divinities, such as *Cheyoṉ* (Kṛṣṇa), Korravai (Durgā) is well-known and attested by several sources (Srinivasan 1971: 55). The explication of Korravi in Cilappatikāram as the "Goddess who is bloodthirsty, ravaging, stands on lions, has a frightening gaze, to whom in frenzy, devotees surrender their heads". Paripāṭal refers to her as goddess of *agriculture*, fertility, affection, care etc., but also highlight her worship by soldiers and warriors (Aganarru-IV.56). Her name is derived from Korram, meaning victory (Coburn 1991: 87). Legends connect her to buffalo-sacrifices, which were offered to quench the Goddess's thirst for blood (Shastri 1997: 322). Harle (1974: 37-240) traces her influence on the development of Durgā, through an ethnographical examination of head-offering practices (called partial head-cutting) prevalent in South Indian temple-tradition, an important picturesque sculptural sight of Cholas-period temples (Srinivasan 1971: 168) and a practice also popular among Vindhyan tribes of Śabaras and Pulindas, making this region and its people, among those who firstly offered the characteristic concept of Goddess Durgā (Kinsley 1988: 156-157). Her mythological position

as the mother of Murukaṉ enhances the possibility of her later conflation with Goddess Durgā. However, her influence on the process of genesis of Durgā stands on murkier propositions, and cannot be proved before 5th century CE (Clothey 1978: 138).

Tribal Stream

The study of Osna-Kumārī festival of indigenous people of Sambalpur led B.C. Mazumdar to derive derivative formulations from a core, un-orthodox tribal sacred concept (1906: .362), which he later contrasted with the much ambiguous and contorted narration of Virāṭa Parvam of Mahābhāratam; he essentially contended that the scribes and compilers of Mahābhāratam had garnered this sacred imagery from the tribal orbits of existence, adjunct to Āryandom, a fact also corroborated in later linguistic researches related to the Great War (Mehendale 2002). This section of the Epic described the Mother Goddess (also of victory) as- "*Ravishing with blood, brandishing swords of great destruction…. She lives in the Vindhyas, a being of four arms, dark as darkness manifest, covered by foliated leaves, decorated with blood, she roams hitherto upon her vicious lions with ferocity unseen….a daughter of Nanda and Yaśodā, she runs with the cowherds* (Mazumdar 1906: 364). While her linkage to Nanda and Yaśodā connects her quite potently with the Ābhīra-clan, regarded as foreigners in Ancient literature (Suryavanshi 1962: 21-26), the gradual intermingling of the recent arrivals, together with their conflation with native cowherds, and their second migration southwards (Suryavanshi 1962: 15) positions them well in the Vindhyan region, where the nearby Deogarh Daśāvatāra Temple, where the couple are shown in foreign, rather Scythian garbs (Agrawala 1965: 258). The configuration of Durgā in this section is generally attested to 5th-6th century CE, a period till when the Ābhīra-clan underwent poignant and piquant Indianization (Suryavanshi 1962: 34).

Village Stream

Rahman (1965: 66) initially postulated that goddess Durgā had emerged from the innumerable village deities Grāma Devatā worshipped through the length and breadth of India. The proximity and continuity of the deity's presence often and obviously multiplied the degree of intimacy between the revered and revering (Pattanaik 2000: 86). The sprinkling of vermillion of the aniconic stone representative of the deity was a mutated symbolic assertion of its textually verified and observationally sanctified precursor- blood. As Pattanaik (2016: 29) postulated, the figurative inclusions in the stone-figure of the deity, such as eyes, hands, and vermillion made its presence, preferably and generally on the demarcations of the village, impressive and lively.

The Lion of Durgā

The lion stands as the most characteristic representative of the eponymous Goddess (Nain 2023: 14). Besides, it is befittingly asserts the militant prowess and divine ferocity of the Durgā, while exhuming the singularity and ambiguity of her stance. The mythologically celebrated link, though found in Purāṇic literature, remains mysteriously elusive in Vedic and Later-Vedic literature as well (Mazumdar 1906: 359). However, scattered remnants maybe found hither-thither, but generally with the daunting lack of synchronous and simultaneous assortment of Goddess' Vāhana to its rider in Vedic legends. Diesel (2002: 81-94) establishes, albeit with some generalization, that the association of mighty feminine goddesses with feline creatures (lion, tiger, leopard etc.) symbolized their intelligence, cleverness, shape-shifting, non-dependence, thus reviving the analytical strands of Gimbutas (1974: 1991). Finkel (2021) posits that the lion in Assyrian relief carvings symbolized the 'Other', the Outer World, the ghastly realm, and thereby by showcasing the domination of the King/Priest over such calamity, it highlighted the submission of outer [un-civilized] realms under the magical-physical prowess of the King, and thence symbolized authority. Govindrajan (2017), in her ethnographical explorations in Kamauni Hills of Uttarakhand, described an example of inter-species kinship, where leopards act as intermediaries of the local Goddess. Mazumdar (1906: 360-61) narrates the connection of Vana-Durgā with lions, thereby also including Vindhyavāsinī into consideration. The Śrī-Sukta hymn of Rig-Veda (V.6.19) sings of the lion-seat of the King who praises and revers the Goddess of prosperity and royalty. The Sukanāsa of Hoysālā Temples show their legendary king Vīrabhadra combating a divine lion/tiger, after which he ascended the royal throne and brought the hinter regions and densely forested countryland under his sovereignty (Kanisetti 2023: 78). All such clearly proclaim the popularity and meaning of the lion-motif in Indian tradition.

The Figuration of Durgā:

Explicating the Sojourn from Kuṣāṇas to the Guptas

The gradual numismatic pronouncement and progression of Nanā as a Royal Goddess is observed in the much referred to Rabatak inscription, where the second paragraph reads as, "worthy of worship, who has obtained the kingship from Nana and from all the gods, who has inaugurated the year one." Here, Nanā is clearly regarded as of vital significance, since her mythical character has been employed to auspiciously inaugurate Year I of Kaṇiṣka Era (Falk 2015: 280). The flattering religious description finds footing in this tendency again in Lines 9-10- "*glorious Umma leads the *service here, (namely) the *lady nana and the…. Lady Umma, Aurmuzd, the gracious one, Sroshard, Narasa, (and) Mihr. [interlinear text: . .*

. *and he is called Maaseno, and he is called Bizago] And he likewise.*" The grammatical and syntactical structure of the description makes it permissible to believe that Nanā and Umā herein were considered as equivalents but not equals, since Kaṇiṣka espoused his cause on the basis of backing of Nanā, not Umā. Besides, Umā had been a Mother-Goddess in this region since long. Perhaps, Kaṇiṣka was trying to assimilate Sogdian Nanā in a manner that suited the palette of other subjects in his Empire. Umā (Ommo) had been a popular deity since the times of the Indo-Greeks. Moreover, barring martial-functions, characters of Nanā and Umā had much commonality with each other. The geo-cultural focus of Rabatak Inscription is vast, and includes Kuṣāṇa territorial holdings in both Northwestern India, and subcontinent proper. Equating Nanā with Umā perhaps allowed Kaṇiṣka to address his newly conquered Indian subjects, for whom Umā was a prominent Śākta goddess.

However, even with this multicultural perspective, Sogdian influence predominates in the image of Nanā sculpted in the vicinity of Rabatak Inscription, where the Goddess is seen sitting atop a lion in profile, an iconographical fact that has an important connotation for the reign of Huviṣka. During the reign of Huviṣka, Nanā was given, or rather shaped into a deity-form that has strongly influenced the iconographical convention of Durgā, as the former goddess is shown sitting atop an astride lion, in a manner strongly reminiscent of Sogdiana sculptures (Tanabe 1995: 45; Ghose 2006: 112, see Figure 01). This numismatic issue is significant, since this inspired the rendering of Nanā on later Kuṣāṇa coins, some of whom definitely inspired Gupta currency (Kumar 2024: 56; Altekar 1957: 12).

The figurative transformation of Nanā did not cease here. At Mat, we come across Nanā, firstly depicted in an Indian context. From Sikhri and Ambala, statuary has been discovered which exhibits *Indianization* of Nanā (see Figure 02), indicated by heavy anklets, use of traditional drapery (Chandra 1977: 45), infusion of mytho-cultural elements of Ambā (Mukherjee 1969: 25), and induction of Śālabhanjikā motif, which is strictly Indic in its socio-cultural milieu (Gupta 2002: 17). From Mathurā, it is possible that this iconographical innovation spread to other parts of India, as her statuary hails from Gandhāra to Chandraketugarh, Orissa (Ghose 2006: 191).

On the inaugural Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type gold-coins (see Figure 03), we come across a deity-figure seated atop a lion, who is considered as either Lakṣmī (Altekar 1957: 14; Srinivasan 2005: 132; Raven 1994: 35) or Durgā (Mukherjee 1993: 29; Ghose 2006: 23; Yokochi 2005: 336). However, this conundrum is easily solvable using a Terracotta seal discovered at Rajghat, which shows a Goddess atop a lion with the legend Durgāh (Mukherjee 1993: 21, see Figure 04). From this, one fact of significance becomes evident-Durgā was considered as a Royal Goddess, on par with Lakṣmī, and her numismatic figuration was clearly

derived from that of Nanā, her somewhat intercultural equivalent in Kuṣāṇa pantheon (Shrava 1985: 94). Her role, however, remains ambiguous, and can be variably connected with the Licchhavis, whose patron-deity was Durgā, or with the commencement of a new era (if Durgā was indeed a functional equivalent of Nanā).

Simhavāhinī Goddess also appears on Lion-slayer coins of Chandragupta II (see Figure 05), though some scholars hesitate in labelling her as Durgā (Srinivasan 2005: 160; Raven 1994: 58). However, some facts must be closely scrutinized- the scene on obverse depicts Chandragupta II slaying a lion, who is shown to be crouching dangerously, but the slight deflection of his posterior body shows its inversion against continuing the attack, possibly due to the heroic stance of Chandragupta II, lending him the legend Siṃhavikrama. This may show an interesting play of words, for Vikrama is etymologically derived from ✓vi=work, and krama=stride, translating into One who has the stride of a Lion, a praise most deserving for no God/Goddess other than Durgā. On relational grounds, it can be furthered that Vikramāditya was the Āditya biruda (epithet) of Chandragupta II, which was used in a series of combinations, based on the deity on reverse (Altekar 1957: 124), exemplified by Chakra-Vikrama (with Chakra-Puruṣa/ Viṣṇu). This may show conquest of Saurāṣtra in the realistic realm, and in the mythical realm, Chandragupta II receiving the ordination of Durgā, in a way the Chakra-Vikrama type shows his anointment as the Best Among Kings by none other than Viṣṇu, the sustainer of worlds, and an ideal of Kingship par excellence (Gonda 1954: 165).

Durgā in the Early Medieval Period:

Texts and Contexts

The concept of Durgā challenges previous Mythological narratives, where Śaivite Mother-Goddess was envisioned as a Consort Goddess, closely and intimately connected with the narratives and functions of her husband. But, Durgā inverts this narrational scheme in more than one way, such as the following.

1. She is shown adept in the practice and utilization of weapons and military tactics, which are often considered as in masculine domains.
2. She is not dependent on any God, and neither supports her male-half in any way. Rather, she draws energies from various gods, and creates innumerable horrendous forces of her own to combat Asura menace.
3. She challenges patriarchal thinking in her combative replies to the playful and dismissive offers of marriage; furthered to her time and again by her nemesis, chiefly Mahiṣāsura.

4. Her character challenges Śāstras, which contradicts that women, unprotected by men, are always helpless, and require masculine protection. Her stories depict that she does not bend to 'male gaze', and is fiercely independent.

The above description stands sufficient to underline the distinct nativity that Durgā enjoys with her 'vernacular/regional' divine manifestations, for her preliminary appearance in Durgā -Mahātmya is based on this very concept. Her sudden and abrupt appearance in a novel socio-mythology has enunciated plethora of suggestions, ranging from feminine empowerment (Kinsley 1988: 98) to mystical cultism (Mann 2012: 108). On a close reading of available evidence, however, this situational rise of a new martial feminine deity-figure could be considered as a consequence of four processes, which are as follows:

Rise of regional kingdoms

After the disintegration of Gupta Empire, political landscape witnessed rise of regional kingdoms, centered on a nuclear polity (Kulke 1993: 196). These emergent States expanded politico-economically through peasantization (subjecting earlier independent agrarian populace to control) and ritualization (inducing regularity in administrative practices and customs). In this expansionist process, they also attempted to incorporate cultic practices of conquered tribes, people into their own, while keeping native traditions at a slightly elevated level (Sharma 1983: 56). However, it is to be noticed that their own religious and cultural heritage were tribal, or rather peripheral to Brāhmaṇical ritual praxis. To gain political aggrandizement and legitimacy amongst Brāhmaṇa communities, collation of their (chiefly) native (Mother) Goddesses figures with highly standardized Brāhmaṇical pantheon became essential. This requirement met resolution through Purāṇic co-relation, a method that entailed either composition of a novel Purāṇa text, or addition of previously non-existing details in Mythological narrative of the Goddess, as evidences in the case of Kāmākhyā, a Mother-goddess deity-figure in Ancient Kāmarūpa, who was later adopted in mainstream Hinduism in two ways- a) conflation with Goddess Durgā, possibly to emphasize valorous traits of the Goddess and her sons, i.e. literally, the King, who officiated in many ceremonies in the capacity of Goddesses' son (Rosati 2017: 52), and b) independently as a unique and singular Mother Goddess, with sphere of influence particularly delimited to Kāmarūpa, as evidenced in the Kālikāpurāṇa (Hazra 1958: 262). Thus, as regional identity upsurged to gain a place of recognition in the discourse of politics, regional Goddesses too forayed forward with the patronage of her 'sons' and textual-mythological interpolations performed by colluding Brāhmaṇas.

Sublime expansionist consolidation

Another process that worked in tandem and in parallel with the first one was the imperial policy of deliberate settlement of Brāhmaṇas in hinterlands and deep forest areas where the Royal State had minimal presence, control and power. Absorption of traits of Goddess from herein was an earnest attempt to integrate these marginal tracts of land with central administration. As Stein (1985: 389) has highlighted, particularly in the case of Cholas, inscriptions and land-grants provide an interesting glimpse of the operational/practical aspects of the Tax-tribute-plunder spectrum, wherein some select Brāhmaṇa families and groups were made to migrate to sylvan sites, firstly in order to lay claim to still unclaimed lands, and ritual-culturally integrate tribal communities and forest-dwelling populace with 'imagined community' singularly commanded by the reigning Chola King. As Harle noted (1974: 205) some Durgā sculptures from Chola temples markedly exhibit tribal traditions, especially in case of head-hunting, blood-collection, etc.

Literary sources also tell an interesting tale. In Harṣacharita, Bāṇabhaṭṭa gives a vivifying description of Mother-goddess worshipped by tribes in the forests of Vindhya mentioning her terrifying traits, sanguine worship, dark complexion, distinctive nudity etc. While this goddess is not named, her typological traits led Bāṇabhaṭṭa to simply label her as a 'Goddess of the Vindhyas', an identification that gets further cemented in the Gauḍavāho, another text from Kannauj, which reverentially calls the goddess as Vindhyavāsinī, one of three goddess-figures whose legends contributed to the divine supremacy of Durgā.

The Warrior Goddess of Martial Kings

Durgā is often labelled in texts and traditions as a warrior goddess, closely allied with ritual paraphernalia of King's anointment. Yokochi (1999, 80) presented an intriguing parallel. During Abhiṣeka ceremony, a King was bestowed with the powers of Varuṇa, Mitra, Surya, Indra, Savitr, and other gods. In the Devī-māhātmyam section which details the genesis of Durgā, she is shown as born from the powers of Trimurti, and other Gods, who further their divine energies to get deliverance from Mahiṣāsura. Structural similarities between the two phenomena probably supported the adoption of Durgā in royal and military milieu. Moreover, for aspirational regional monarchs, linking their Mother Goddess with a Warrior/Supreme Goddess acted in two directions. It somewhat altered the mytho-cultural shape of their own goddess deity-figure, in order to incline her legendarium to a more martially poised narration. Alternatively, such acts of linking brought them close to mainstream ritual milieu, which further afforded them to claim legitimation of both horizontal, that is, amongst equals within a common geo-cultural context; and external, that is amongst equals from differing spatio-dynastic context and kinds.

Rise of heterodox rituals

With the advent of Early Medieval period, in order to expand both it's range and ritual landscape, Sanskritic tradition became more diversified, (Chattopadhyay 2011: 78). Inclusion and subsequent elevation of Durgā in Purāṇic discourse was considered essential, as this also brought two new features into attention. These are, 1) Liminality, a term that suggests practices, which find least iteration in standard mode of reverence, such as offering own flesh and blood to the goddess (*Devī-māhātmyam*, 5.18-3); head-cutting (5.06-10). 2) Inauspicious considerations, some of which got connected with Durgā due to the assimilation of multiple goddesses into her divine-complex. These include descriptions where Durgā is negatively connected with sleep (5.15), hunger (5.16), shadows (5.17) and thirst (5.19-1). These heterodox and offbeat features found complete efflorescence in Tantric practices (Kinsley 1988: 97). It was attempted to rectify, or rather re-orient this inauspiciousness via Vaiṣṇavite afflictions. This was done through re-interpretation of māyā (delusion), Śākti (power/consort) and prakṛti (earthiness). While all three are basal elements, they take up a relatively refined meaning, with more inclination towards philosophical precepts (Jaiswal 1967: 42).

The above considerations, at times quite lengthy, were necessary in order to account for the rapid disjunction between mythological narratives in the previous section and this one. They throw up an interesting challenge for studying the socio-mythological character of Durgā. In a meta-narrative context, it was the coalescence of a constellation of factors that produced the ultimate effect of transforming Durgā from a sidelight in the Śaivite worldview to a prominent cultic deity-figure herself.

Conclusion:

With the resurgence of reverence of Durgā, the suppressed cultic supremacy of Mother-goddess again experienced a return to form, with the establishment of Śākta sect, which received patronage by aspiring monarchs with regional visions and tribal affiliations. Her gender-role too shifted, from being a novice consort to a seasoned warrior, and her worshippers too asked for blessings in martial, but not in household or marital affairs. However, the period c. 9th to11th Century CE saw a revolutionary rise of Śaivism, which even began to encapsulate Durgā, by explaining her mythological form as a deviant of Pārvatī and Umā (Sircar 1974: 32). Her domestication process was initiated by making changes in her character, such as, being less belligerent and playful in marital status; removal of certain epithets, especially those highlighting her unfavorable stance to marriage; iconographical innovation with addition of drapery, household items in added arms and ostentation; and occasions of worship, autumnal, the harvest festivals. Her absolute absorption within Sanskritic tradition left space for newer local Mother-Goddesses to occupy her position. As Sircar (2004: 52) further notes,

"It speaks of the crafty ingenuity of the local episcopacy that, by the simple device of eliminating the great Hindu triad from later Durgā -stelas, they ensured not only that the goddess's hegemonic symbols were removed, but also that leaving her alone with just her two sons would gradually lead to the replacement of her war-like prowess with expected maternal 'softness'."

A direct impact of this theological development is seen on some coins of Bengal, which depict Durgā holding an infant Gaṇeśa in arms, a mythological motif colloquially called *Gaṇeśa-Janani Durgā* (see figure 6). While these actions brought about a certain change in her mode of reverence and patronage patterns (Majumdar 2021: 149), it definitely did not alter the primary mythological lair of power and piety in which Durgā was conceived, nor did it alter her sole supreme status in Śākta traditions; select Purāṇic discourses and especially in Tantra rituals (Urban 2009: 50), see Pala period statuary in figure 07. An interesting new discovery further confirms this. Singh (2021: 11) highlights a unique silver coin, bearing exact replication of Mahiṣāsuramardinī pose (Figure 08). Its provenance has been traced to Prakash, North Maharashtra, and a region with which it shares typological familiarity (Fishman 2013: RA7-8). Additionally, the legend on the issue reads- *Kanaḍasthalīya,* meaning*,* of the Kanaḍa people), who possibly resided in the region during Rāṣṭrakūṭa times (Altekar 1937: 44; Kanisetti 2023: 218). Singh (2021: 12) also points the possibility that this coin was a temple-issue, probably to commemorate the mother-goddess figure around which their world mytho-culturally functioned (Eck 2015: 29).

Durgā has had many projections of mythological roles, propositions of piety and power, positions of differing significance in the Śaivite world; but even with bewildering variety in her modes of reverence through the ages, the principal cosmic and cultural connection between her ritual-cultural personality and her ardent propitiators has retained its core, fundamental and intimate essence, from prehistoric past to the times present.

Notes:

i. The text of Devī-māhātmyam introduces the character of Durgā in mainstream Hindu Pantheon by highlighting her fierce, furious and ferocious fighting skills in front of the demonic forces (Asuras) even feared by the prominent Vedic Gods. Here, she is nowhere associated with Śiva. Secondly, she is transformed into a greater deity by the deliberate inflection of myriad deity-forms into a singular force to reckon with. She is then worshipped to not only grant riddance from enemies, but also to ensure victory against inveterate and indomitable antagonistic forces. Rahman (1965: 405) connects her numismatic depiction with swords, spears and shields with those of Athena-Pallas

ii. The ritual-complex of propitiation of many regional, and even some of the Vedic divinities demands animal sacrifices to infuse potency and mirth into ritual functions. The Kādambarī of Bāṇabhaṭṭa (c. 7th century CE) narrates the horrific animal and human sacrifices that were proffered by the Śabaras to their Chief Goddess, called therein as Vindhyavāsinī. Gait (1926: 36) describes the gory and riveting sacrificial tradition connected with Kāmākhyā. Goddess Kālī was also characteristically adored by animal sacrifices well up to the 19th Century CE. While the reason of such sacrifices remains elusive, it was a general belief among anthropologists that by offering blood and raw flesh, the (contended) would reward the community with bounteous and abundant harvest (Majumdar: 1957).

iii. Bishop Whitehead (1916, 1928) made a detailed ethnographical survey of tribal communities in his vicinity, and noted the major and primary features of the deity-figures propitiated- I] they were mostly females, II] their names, titles were legions, whose meaning either reflected their function or sacred geography, or was unknown by the worshippers, III] they were concerned with small but effective natural forces of survival, such as harvest, plague, smallpox etc., IV] their functions were not clearly marked, V] their mode and method of worship varied considerably among different tribal groups, VI] their shrines significantly lacked the sanction, participation and ritual-service by Brāhmaṇas, who did not officiate as priests at such shrines, a job not seldom performed by the local tribal priests, or even the washer-man, VII] their shrines lacked any sculptural image, or uniform convention about the form of venerated deity-forms, and VIII] there was no ostensible uniformity in calendrical, ecclesiastical character or ritual chants, sacred festivities associated with the deity. Kinsley (1988), Sircar (1948) posit that the Brāhmaṇic absorption mode, as rendered in the Devī-māhātmyam, worked efficaciously to bring such local but popularly revered into mainstream Epic-Purāṇic Hinduism.

iv. This form is specifically concerned with apotropaic function, and that too in special relation to children. The chief aim of such deities was to prevent the newborn infant from being engulfed by infections, congenital ailments, and other maladies. Sutta Nipata tells us of a demoness called Hariti, who consumed infants, but remodeled her diabolical behavior after meeting Gautam Buddha. The primary function of Ṣaṣṭhī was also to protect children against the malicious Mātṛkās of folklore, who were later transformed into benevolent

protective deities, with the inclusion of Kārttikeya in the Brāhmaṇic socio-cultural sphere.

v. Kaṇiṣka I framed his coin with many newly inaugurated or framed deity-figures, a consequence of the immense iconographical syncretion resulting from extensive territorial and geo-political conquests under the famed Kuṣāṇa King. Jongeward (2020) and Cribb (2008) describe the coin as- **Rev**: Nanaia/Nana/Nanashao stands in three-quarter profile to right, head surrounded by a halo, crescent on top; hair held by diadem with two ribbons to left, bun at back; wears a sleeved, ankle-length loosely fitting robe; holds a wand with lion protome in right hand, bowl in left; Tamgha to right; dotted border and Inscription to left NANAIA /NANA /NANAÞAO.

*Figures and illustrations, with their corresponding serial numbers and captions, have been sequentially arranged on the next four pages.



Figure 1: Gold coin of Huviṣka with Nana on lion (Courtesy- British Museum acc.no. 1888,1208.555, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum. Gold coin, in the style of Vāsudeva; After Mukherjee 1969).



Figure 2: Clockwise from Northwest- a] Enthroned goddess seated on a lion, c. second century CE, Gandhāra, Schist, 23.2x12cm, Sherrier Collection, UK. (Source: Ghose 2006: 111); b] Goddess standing on a lion, c. second/third century CE, Mathurā, red Sandstone, H: 27.5cm, Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin, Germany (MIK I 5894). (Photo courtesy: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin–Preußischer Kultur-Besitz, Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin) (Source: Ghose 2006: 112); c] Durgā with trident seated on a lion. Terracotta Roundel from Śrāvastī, now in the State Museum Lucknow B.592. Photograph J.E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw. (Source: Raven 2020: 267).



Figure 3: Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of coin, featuring (possibly) Goddess Durgā on reverse (Courtesy- The British Museum, 1894, 0506. 147).



Figure 4: Gupta-era terracotta high-relief seal-statuary with the legend Durgāh (Source- Wikimedia Commons).



Figure 5: Lion-slayer type coin of Chandragupta II (Courtesy- The British Museum, Reg. No. 1910, 0403.31).



Figure 6: Gaṇeśa-janani Durgā on coin of Deva-varmana of Bengal, Samataṭa Mint (Last copy available in public domain (Courtesy- The Indian Museum, Kolkata, Reg. No. 18098, Mukherjee 1993, p. III, fig.5).

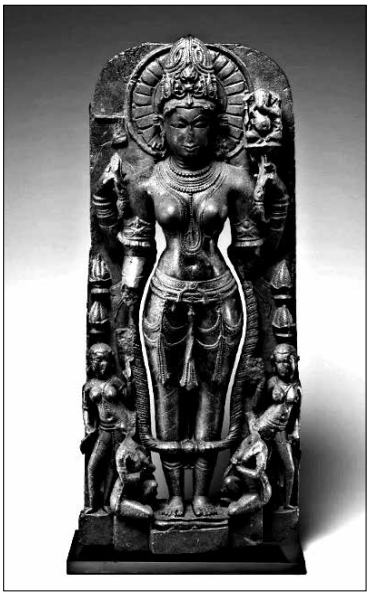


Figure 7: Godhikāvāhinī Durgā/Gaurī holding Gaṇeśa in Upper Left arm, Pala Period (Courtesy- The Metropolitan Museum, Reg. No. 2015, 519. Credit- The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Foundation Fund and Vijay K. Anand, M.D. Nanda Anand, Maya Anand, and Rohit Anand Gift, 2014).



Figure 8: Kanaḍasthalīya Silver Coin featuring Mahiṣāsuramardinī on the obverse (Courtesy- Karan Singh, ONS Newsletter, Vol. 241, 2021).

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Exploring an Untold Chapter: Ramesh Chandra Majumdar's Contribution to 'The Journal of the Greater India Society'

Debarati Ganguly

Abstract

This article tries to analyze the writings of Ramesh Chandra Majumdar published in the Journal of the Greater India Society regarding Early India's interaction with South-East Asia. These essays form a very intriguing aspect of India's historiography called 'Greater India'. This emerged as a significant part of India's cultural nationalism. Present historiography aimed to focus on India's cultural contribution to her neighboring countries. The articles written by Ramesh Chandra show how they successfully endorsed such concept of 'Indianization' where India's inclusive impact over the Southeast Asian countries, led them to form a part of 'Greater India' or extended India. I have tried to examine limitations and significance of these writings, such as, how far they showed biasness towards Indian impact yet acknowledged local characters. A comprehensive discussion has been attempted to understand the author's ability to interpret sources and rational analytical framework

Keywords: *Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, India, South-East Asia, cultural impact, Greater India, Indianization, cultural nationalism, indigenous character, contradictions.*

Ramesh Chandra Majumdar

Ramesh Chandra Majumdar or R.C. Majumdar as he is better known, is one of those versatile historians whose fascinating research and writings have left lasting impression over minds. What is intriguing, this erudite scholar has contributed to almost every aspect of Indian history and produced an enormous number of academic works, which has been subject to critical acclaim for a long time. While paying homage to the memory of such a doyen of Indian history, his student Himansu Bhushan Sarkar (1980) once wrote, "Among the most outstanding historians of the present century, the name of Acarya Ramesh Chandra Majumdar…can hardly be forgotten in years to come. Apart from his massive scholarly productions, for which he is justly famous, he is also the only historian in India who has, to his credit, voluminous scholarly works on both ancient Indian history and culture and equally precious works on South-East

Asian history and culture" (Sarkar 1980: 361-365). Sarkar's admiring words perhaps help us to indulge in the subject of present article focusing on the essays of R.C. Majumdar published in the Journal of the 'Greater India Society'. They were related with a historiographical paradigm named 'Greater India'. The study of 'Greater India' can be regarded as an interesting aspect of India's cultural exchanges with her Asian neighbours. However, the definition of 'Greater India' asserts us that this is more than a mere discussion of socio-cultural interactions between India and the Asian nations. This vision was simple and straight, sought for the blanket idea of an extensive and profound influence of Indian culture throughout Asia. Intertwined with the contemporary environment of nationalist consciousness of the twentieth century, this 'Greater India' theory was dedicated to challenge the orientalist critique of the British imperialists about the backwardness and non-changeable features of ancient India. The key feature of the 'Greater India' theory was the emphasis on peaceful extension of India's rich, vibrant cultural heritage to her Asian neighbours. Those nations became enriched by absorbing Indian culture in totality and were transformed into India's 'cultural colonies' or extended parts of India's cultural entity[i]. Thus, India was claimed to be the source or 'mother' of the Asian culture[ii]. The approach was seen to be just and appropriate for its friendly, human and non-violent character which was explained as the long-cherished tradition of India. This heritage, as the Greater India theorists claimed, gave Asia her cultural identity that differentiated her from the imperialistic and materialistic West. The 'Greater India' study has been subject to debate in the historiography of South-East Asia for decades. It faced severe criticisms for a selective interpretation of ancient Indian history and especially for ignoring indigenous characters of South-East Asia. But the scholars' intensive research, dedicated efforts to gather and analyze sources are commendable. This research was also linked to a broader context of trans-cultural studies. It underlined the significance of history about the shared past of a large community, however imagined it was. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar is an unparalleled figure in this genre of study. He mainly chose South-East Asian regions as his field of research. Profound impact of his works was evident as the writings continued to be published for a long time, even after independence. Among such writings, those published in the Journal of the Greater India Society remain unobserved and my article is an effort to reappraise their significance. Those essays were important both as part of the Greater India study as well as South-East Asian history and due attention should be paid to them.

The Ideological Background:

Ramesh Majumdar was associated with the Calcutta based Greater India Society. It was formed on 14th October, 1926 and known as the *Brihattara Bharat Parishad*[iii]. The society served as important platform for further research regarding India's strong cultural impact in

her neighboring areas. South-East Asia appeared to be one of the most discussed areas in this aspect apart from China and Central Asia. It should be noted that Calcutta in the twentieth century emerged as a hub of intellectuals who were politically conscious and engaged in cultivating nation's tradition and culture. Ideal of Asia's distinct cultural identity and India's prominent position among the Asian nations gained popularity in many Bengali intellectuals' writings. Rabindranath Tagore's emphasis over cross cultural interaction, universal peace and humanism appeared to be a huge inspiration for the Greater India scholars. Abanindranath Tagore and his disciples sought for rejuvenating India's artistic traditions and building nationalist consciousness through the concept of art leading to the famous Bengal School of Art. (Guha-Thakurta 1992) Many supporters of this art movement like O.C. Gangoly and A.K. Coomaraswamy was associated with the Greater India School. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal saw the growth of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad or Barendra Research Society which were part of the process of shaping regional identity and history (Basak 2011: 132-58) R. C Majumdar was himself associated with the Barendra Research Society and contributed to its research. It was not surprising that Calcutta provided a platform for the Greater India Society and relevant research[iv].

To fulfil the objective of Greater Indian research, the Greater India Society brought out a journal from 1934-59, with an interruption from 1947-54. The editors of the 'Journal of the Greater India Society were' U.N. Ghoshal, Kalidas Nag and Nalinaksha Dutt. Tagore contributed a Foreword to the inaugural issue of the Journal where his words reflected the idea of the society (Tagore, 1934:1)[v]. The journal published writings of eminent scholars among whom Ramesh Chandra Majumdar was a notable one. Undoubtedly, the writings were 'Indocentric' where emphasis was on the 'Indianization' of South-East Asia. It encouraged rich debate ranging from the question of Indian influence to later shift to the role of indigenous characters and internal dynamism of the South-East Asian society and culture[vi]. It is interesting to see how the Indian scholars, including Ramesh Chandra, imbibed the characteristics of these two contrary opinions.

The Greater India genre of writing used trans- disciplinary methods like anthropology, archaeology, philology, linguistics, cultural and environmental studies etc. (Manguin, 2004: xv). Major inspiration for came from archaeological excavations and academic research by the European scholars[vii]. The study was extremely benefitted by the works of C.C. Berg, N.J Krom or G. Coedes who voiced for the presence of strong Indian influence in those regions (Berg's *Kshatriya* thesis and Krom's *Vaishya* thesis highlighted roles played by Indian Rajput rulers and traders in spreading Indian influence.) Coedes emphasized more on the role of Brahmanas and merchants in 'expansion of Indian culture' (Coedes, 1964). He even used the word like

'Indianization' which closely resembles with the approach adopted by R.C. Majumdar and others (Coedes, 1964). Close impact of these works on Indian writers was evident from their emphasis on the role played by Indian 'traders, *Brahmanas* and *Kshatriyas'* in spreading Indian culture through settlements and intermarriages in South-East Asian regions. R.C Majumdar's fascinating research on such places in Cambodia like Su-Huynh, Samrong or Takua Pa showed stages of 'Indianization' following commercial, missionary and cultural interaction between Indians and indigenous South-East Asians.

However, a contrary approach was always present which emphasized on the 'active agency' of indigenous people in articulating South-East Asian cultural substratum. Such idea gained support from the works of Sylvain Levi, Paul Mus, J.C. Van Leur, F.D.K. Bosch and H.G.Q. Wales (Bayly, 2004: p. 722). Regional history and culture was given more importance during and after the Second World War when South-East Asia as a distinct region of study gradually received attention. Works of D.G.E. Hall published in 1955 significantly contributed to popularizing this new genre of study (Hall, 1955). Indian scholars could not ignore this alternative view. But question is whether they adopted an unbiased approach? Detailed reading shows that Indian writers were selective in using data to show the Indian impact. Indigenous characters were seen as passive receivers of Indian culture and were gradually transformed into 'Indianized' ones. Majumdar was certain that South-East Asian people received the fruit of progress and civilization only after their encounter with the 'superior' Indian or 'Hindu' culture. He used the term 'barbarous' to define the indigenous people and culture (Majumdar, 1940). However, these features were commonly associated with the 'Greater India' study. Interestingly, Bijan Raj Chatterjee who also voiced for the all-inclusive impact of India over South-East Asia, denied using the term 'colony' and provided an alternative definition- 'cultural influence without political influence' (Chatterjee, 1965: 15). Possibly he was preoccupied with the political connotation of the term related with forceful domination and was different from the idea of peaceful cultural penetration as claimed by the Greater India study.

The above context may be useful to understand Ramesh Chandra Majumdar's involvement with this scholarly discourse. His writings were vocal for the 'Indianization', the fundamental concept of Greater India School. Majumdar's works in this area include not less than nine books which are well read and discussed. What remains unobserved is his seven articles published in the Journal of the Greater India Society. Among them, five essays are political in nature- 'The Date of Accession of Jayavarman II, 'King Suryavarman I of Kambuja', 'The Rise of Sukhodaya', 'Decline and Fall of the Sailendra Empire' and 'The Struggle Between Sailendras and Cholas'. In these writings, he addressed varied subjects of political significance of Cambodia and Malaysia. Majumdar's skillful and critical use of diverse sources is beyond

doubt. Nevertheless, he was more interested to prove the 'Indianized' character of the South-East Asian polity and culture which reflects his faith in a certain perspective shared by a particular genre of scholars in twentieth century. Fortunately, the brilliant analytical approach, historical intelligence and maneuvering skill for which Majumdar is well known, are present in these writings. As a curious historian Majumdar often challenged old historical theories and offered new interpretations.

A visionary analyst- Reconstructing history through new reading of sources

Published in 1943, 'The Rise of Sukhodaya' traced the Thai kingdom's origin. Majumdar questions existing propositions about when and how Sukhodaya emerged. After corroborating inscriptional and literary sources he offered new explanation and analysis of the relevant events. Majumdar's analytical approach towards sources led him to deny earlier views expressed by P. Petithuguenin and Coedes. Following the Nagara Jum inscription, Petithuguenin emphasized that Sukhodaya began its journey in 1218 C.E. (Majumdar 1943: 47). But Ramesh Chandra found this conclusion to be based on a 'very weak basis and cannot be taken seriously'. (Majumdar 1943: 47). He thinks that 1256 C.E should be the year when Sukhodaya's journey started (Majumdar 1943: 47). His opinion was based on the inscription of Rama Khamheng, the third king of the dynasty. Also, Majumdar did a comparative analysis with the Pali chronicle Jinakalamalini and Chinese text by Chau Ta-Kaun. However, he also warned that we should not regard this as an 'established fact' (Majumdar 1943: 47). This shows the historian's proficiency in handling different types of sources and balanced approach especially when the sources are meagre.

Ramesh Chandra opposed Coedes' opinion about North Siam's liberation from Kambuja's control resulting in the rise of Sukho-daya. Coedes's 'generally accepted conclusion' was derived from an inscription of Sukhodaya and he was praised by Majumdar for showing its historical importance' (Majumdar 1943: 44). But Majumdar's further analysis offered a new perspective. He tried to explain the emergence of Sukhodaya 'as an independent kingdom' resulting out of 'the civil war' fought between the son and son-in law of Jayavarman VIII and Srindravarman (Majumdar 1943: 50). According to him, this fight might have taken place either in 1275 C.E. or later as Srindravarman was not very old during his accession in 1295-96 C.E (Majumdar 1943: 50). In support of his assumption, Majumdar referred to the famous Bantei Srei inscription where the young Srindravarman was revered for his endeavor for making the earth free 'from the thorns and brambles grown up during the reign of an old king' (king Jayavarman VIII) (Majumdar 1943: 50). He also observed that the Siamese kings' continuous use of the old Kambujan titles possibly indicated their persistent relation in later time. (Majumdar 1943: 46). Ramesh Chandra was certain that a terrible fight broke out between

Siam and Kambuja and the latter suffered. He corroborated Rama Khamheng's inscription with the writing of the Chinese traveller Cheu Ta Kuan who, along with the Chinese embassy, came to the court of king Srindavarman of Sukhodaya in 1296 C.E. (Majumdar 1943: 45). After analyzing different theories and sources, he proposed to connect this battle with the civil war of Kambuja. The discussion shows Ramesh Chandra's ability in accumulating information, analyzing it in a critical way and applying strong sense of logical reasoning. Sometimes his conclusions were nothing but mere hypothesis and he himself was aware of this. But perhaps such issues are normal when sources are meagre.

Ramesh Chandra's praiseworthy analytical approach continued in other articles. After thoroughly studying various sources, he posed new questions and tried to answer those considering recent discoveries. In 'The date of accession of Jayavarman II', he opposed Coedes' challenge to the generally accepted view that Jayavarman II commenced his reign in 724 saka or 802 C.E. (Majumdar 1943: 52). Instead, he emphasized, this should be regarded as the foundation year of Jayavarman II's capital on Mount *Mahendra* (Majumdar 1943: 52). Ramesh Chandra not only opposed this but also criticized those scholars who accepted Coedes's proposition without further argument and re-evaluation of sources (Majumdar 1943: 53). After analyzing all other evidence, he found it to be irrational and failed to find any definite source to connect the year with establishment of the capital on Mount Mahendra (Majumdar 1943: 53-54). Despite admiring Coedes, Ramesh Chandra did not follow him blindly, shows historical impartiality. Coedes later accepted that the king reigned from 802 C.E. to 854 C.E., which proved Majumdar's authenticity in this regard (Majumdar 1943: 54).

Ramesh Chandra's essay unveiled a significant limitation of Indian researchers- over dependence on French or Dutch research work. They of course consulted primary sources, but footnotes and bibliographies mostly refer to articles and books written by established European scholars. Majumdar understood that dearth of source might be a possible reason. But sometimes a proper analytical approach might be missing in such situation. A fine example of this was his criticism of Bijan Raj Chatterjee who voiced for Coedes' hypothesis even long after Coedes changed his view (Majumdar1943: 55).

Ramesh Chandra's next article from the Journal demonstrates his expertise in historical observation and criticism. In 'King Suryavarman I of Kambuja', he tried to answer questions about Suryavarman's accession and whether Suryavarman and Jayaviravarman were identical persons as claimed by Aymonier and Finot. This confusion arose after inscriptions of three different kings, namely, Suryavarman, Udayadityavarman and Jayaviravarman were discovered. The inscriptions belonged to the year 923 Saka, when king Jayavarman V died and of a later period. Ramesh Chandra showed that those inscriptions with kings' names

on them belonged to different years and different parts of Cambodia. Following Coedes's view Majumdar suggested that Suryavarman and Jayaviravarman were two different persons. He tried to reconstruct a possible narrative of the incidents that took place after the death of Jayavarman V through analyzing sources like Prah Khan Inscription, *Tuol Don Srei* inscription and ten inscriptions found over the Gopuram of Angkor Thom. He concluded that Udayadityavarman sat on the throne after king Jayavarman V's demise in 923 *saka* and it was contested by Suryavarman and Jayaviravarman. After Udayadityavarman died, the struggle continued between the two others. Later records of Suryavarman like *Tuol Don Srei* inscription and others showed his struggle and success against Jayaviravarman. Ramesh Chandra was skeptical about the historical authenticity of Camadevivamsa, the book consulted by Coedes. This strongly establishes Majumdar's knowledge of conscious historical enquiry.

If studied carefully, we can see that this essay follows an important aspect of the 'Greater India' genre of study- extensive spread of Indian socio-cultural and religious influences. The king was claimed to be proficient in Indian philosophy, literature and socio-religious norms. Inscriptional evidence was referred to show his competency in *bhasya, kavya, dharmasastras, atharva veda, yoga*, *panini*'s grammar etc. Majumdar even believed that the king wanted to impose Indian social features and using the *Prea Kev* inscription he discussed how Suryavarman I proposed regulations for the caste system. Ramesh Chandra assumed, being versed in the Hindu sastras Suryavarman I might have introduced orthodox social rules. However, he never tried to know whether such reforms retained indigenous character. It was not surprising as his main intention was to show how Suryavarman I performed king's *dharma* as prescribed in the Indian scriptures, different from ruler's *varna-dharma* of the *kshatriya* order as warrior and protector of people. Such approach revealed a narrow perspective unexpected from a historian of his stature.

Discourse on the Sailendras; fresh sources and perspectives-

Good historical narratives never fail to impress with their critical approach and ability to provide new information. Ramesh Chandra's essays about the Sailendra empire invariably fulfilled this primary objective. He contributed three essays on the Sailendras in the first and second volumes of the Journal. Beside posing new enquiries, these historically significant writings throw light on the origin and power of the Sailendra empire. The essays also discuss Shailendras' relation with the China and Chola Empire. They present the author's method of cross-examining sources thus highlighting the importance of early Chinee and Arabic records.

In the first volume of the Journal of the Greater India Society, Majumdar's lengthy essay discussed about the Sailendras up to the 10th century. His writing ranged from the theories regarding the original seat of the Sailendras (Majumdar 1934:15-17) to their rise as Malyasia's

dominant power (Majumdar 1934: 17). Here also, Majumdar profusely used Arabic records by Ibn Khordadzbeh, Abu- Zayd Hassan or Alberuni. They praised the wealth and power of the kingdom of *Zabaj* or *Zabag* which was none other than the mighty Sailendra empire. (Majumdar 1934: 17-25). The texts led Majumdar to conclude that the Sailendra empire flourished from the middle of 9th to at least 10th centuries. She retained the position of a political and economic power in the Pacific region throughout the tenth century despite the struggle and losing Cambodia and Java. (Majumdar 1934: 25). That the Sailendras or San-fo-tsi emerged as significant political and commercial power during 10th and 11th centuries and developed commercial interaction with China was attested by the Chinese ambassadors also. Recently, this aspect has been explored by Pierre- Yves Manguin through his excavation of Palembang, the important trade centre of Srivijaya from where the 9th century Guang-Dong ceramic has been unearthed. (Manguin 2012: 306).

Ramesh Chandra's second article in the series 'The struggle between Sailendras and Cholas' was published in the second issue of the journal in 1934. Like the previous article, here he made effective use of inscriptional records, Tamil literary works, Arabic and Chinese travelogues and memoirs. For example, he mentioned the Leiden Grants, written in both Tamil and Sanskrit, from Rajendra Cola's period to discuss the cordial relation between the Sailendra and Chola rulers (Majumdar 1934: 71-72). These records mention the erection of Culamanivarma-vihara at Nagapattinam by Culamanivarman, the ruler of Kadaram or Kedah in Malay peninsula (Chakravarti 2001: 86, Majumdar 1934). They also show the grant of a village by Sri Mara-vijayattungavarman who was born in the Sailendra family, ruled at Sri Visaya and established his authority over Kataha (Kadaram) (Chakravarti, 2001: 86). Later historians rightly assumed that such cultural interaction was an outcome of the commercial relation enjoyed by the two powers. Historian Ranabir Chakravarti noted that Srivijaya's intermediary role in the maritime trade network between South India and China was the determinant factor behind her cultural patronage showered at Nagapattinam (Chakravarti 2001: 86). It should be remembered that Nagapattinam emerged as the premier international port during the Chola period, a point which had not found mention in Majumdar's writing. This absence is surprising, no doubt, but what is interesting that Ramesh Chandra was aware of the thriving trade relation between South India and Kedaram. The ace historian referred to an old Tamil poem depicting ships filled with commercial goods coming from Kalagam (Kadaram/kataha) to Kaviripaddinam, the famous port situated at the mouth of river Kaveri (Majumdar 1934: 23). Most likely, he indicated to the famous Tamil epics Silappadikaram and Manimekalai. They skillfully projected flourishing state of Kaveripattinam during the Chola period. Interestingly, historians like B.C. Chhabra and Ranabir Chakravarti have also emphasized over the important role played by this Tamil coastal region in making contacts with South-East Asia and Sri Lanka (Chhabra 1965; Chakravarti

2001). Both Majumdar and Chakraborti referred to Rajendra Chola's records for significant evidence of this close alliance. These inscriptions mentioned gifting two Chinese golds by the Kadaram king's agent to a Nagapattinam temple (Chakravarti 2001: 86). Donation of jewel to Karonasvami temple of Nagapattinam by the Srivijaya ruler had also been discussed in these epigraphical records (Chakravarti 2001: 86). The idea was inherent in Majumdar's writing also who explained how such interest was related with the Chola's notion to obtain 'the mastery of the seas' and to pursue that, they followed 'an aggressive imperialistic policy' reflected in the maritime expeditions across the Bay of Bengal in the 11th century. (Majumdar 1934: 82) He pointed out that the geographical position enabled the Sailendra empire to control 'almost the whole volume of maritime trade between western and central Asia' and prospect of the 'future commercial supremacy' inspired Rajendra Chola to undertake the oversea expedition (Majumdar 1934: 82-83). Rajendra Chola's ventures, Majumdar added, procured significant resources from the conquest of Kalinga. The Eastern coast provided him with necessary access to the Kalinga and Bengal ports as well as the ships and sailors familiar with the maritime voyage (Majumdar 1934: 82).

Ramesh Chandra consulted Rajaraja and Kulottunga's inscriptions to reconstruct the history of a long struggle between the two powers. These sources mentioned the names of those places which were won or lost by the Cholas. A careful reading of Majumdar's narration shows his preference to create a glorious image of the Chola power against the Sailendras. He briefly discussed the places which the Chola rulers' especially Rajendra Chola's inscriptions claimed to have won. Interestingly, Majumdar tried to identify modern locations of those places. His detailed listing of the Chola inscriptions is commendable, but such over dependency on the Chola records is perhaps an important limitation of the discussion. Very few Sailendra inscriptions were addressed and that too which attested to the 'political supremacy of the Cholas.' (Majumdar 1934: 90) Nevertheless, Ramesh Chandra's work throws light on another significant aspect. He referred to an inscription found from Lobu Tua near Baros in Sumatra. Dated in 1088 C.E., it mentioned about an organization of fifteen hundred which, he believed, might function like other South Indian trade bodies e.g *Nanadesi, Valangai* etc. (Majumdar 1934: 90). Ramesh Chandra's research thus may remind us of the important work by R. Champakalakshmi on the activities of the merchant bodies like *nanadesis, manigramam* and 500 *svamis* of *Ayyavole* in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Sumatra.

While studying 11th and 12th centuries' Chinese records including Chola and Sri Vijayan embassies to China, Ramesh Chandra made significant alternative observations. For example, he mentioned the account of Ma Twan Lin recording an embassy from Pagan in 1106 C.E describing the Chola ruler as a vassal of San-fo-t'si (Majumdar1934: 84) Other narrations

were not so direct, but their descriptions of tributes, presents and representatives arriving from different regions once owned by Sri-Vijaya, clearly showed the rulers' autonomous status (Majumdar 1934: 85-86). He was rational to think that the Chola inscriptions' claim to the conquest of Kedaram by the successors of Rajendra Chola i.e Rajadhiraja, Vira Rajendra and Kulottunga, possibly indicated to the country's success in regaining independence (Majumdar 1934: 86). Such contradictory information present in the Chola and Chinese records forced Majumdar to assume that the Chola rulers 'tried to maintain their hold on the distant over-sea empire' despite continuous struggle with the Sailendra rulers of Srivijaya. (Majumdar 1934: 87) After the Cholas abandoned their effort of controlling Sumatra and Malay Peninsula, the Sailendras slowly recovered former position. (Majumdar 1934: 87)

Ramesh Chandra's next article 'Decline and Fall of the Sailendra Empire' talks about his curious search for the continuation of the Sailendra rulers till the 14th century. It was published in 1935 in the journal's second volume. Here Majumdar analyzed unexplored Chinese annals and chronicles like Chu-fan-chi by Chau-Ju-Kua and Arab records by Edrisi, Kazwini, Ibn Said etc. While previous scholars could not trace the empire's existence after 12th century due lack of information, Ramesh Chandra's account elucidates the importance of new sources and broadens the scope of research. Among such sources, Chu- fan- chi (Records of foreign nations) or the *Zhufanzhi* is a significant one as the writer Chau Ju- Kua or Zhao Rugua served as the inspector of foreign trade in Fukien. Composed in 1225/26 C.E., this account is an immensely significant record in the study of Chinese commercial activities in South and South-East Asia leading to the growth of a maritime trade network in the Eastern part of the Indian Ocean. Apart from the Sino-Indian commercial relation flourished between the mid-10th to the 15th centuries, the Srivijaya kingdom became an active part of this commercial network with its expansion to South-East Asia (Ghosh 2014: 41). Thus, Zhao Rugua's text *Zhufanzhi* can help us to know the trade connection between India, China and South-East Asia (Ghosh 2014). This vividly described the foreign countries and trade commodities involved in this commercial interaction. Suchandra Ghosh's valuable work on Chu- fan- chi or the *Zhufanzhi* shows Zhao Rugua's meticulous documentation of significant commercial centres, merchandise etc. Ghosh observed that 'the courtly culture and the manners, dress, etc., of the various countries did not escape his attention' (Ghosh 2014: 43). Inclusion of such a valuable text in reconstructing the history of Srivijaya is unquestionably a great contribution of Ramesh Chandra. Zhufanzhi, however, was not completely unknown to the historians. Scholars like Frederic Hirth and W.W. Rockhill had already published the book's edited and translated version in 1912 (Ghosh 2014: 42). Majumdar's discussion is itself based on this translated work, as his references show. Another prominent historian of the Greater India Society, Nilakanta Sastri also discussed some parts of Zhao Rugua's works focusing on Sri-tan or Ceylon and India. Nevertheless, Sastri's

discussion was not connected with the aspect of Greater India or Sino-India-Sri-Vijaya trade network which Majumdar did efficiently.

Ramesh Chandra discussed how the text portrayed San- fo- tsi as 'the master of the Straits of Malacca' and controller of 'the maritime trade between China and Western countries'. (Majumdar 1935: 14) Thus, in the words of Chau- Ju- Kua or Zhao Rugua, the Sailendra empire was a 'great centre of trade'. (Majumdar 1935: 14) Ramesh Chandra referred to a list provided by Zhao Rugua mentioning the fifteen states dependent on the Sri- Vijaya Empire (Majumdar 1935: 14-15). Among them, Sumatra, Java and Malay Peninsula were claimed as the parts of the Sailendra or San- fo- tsi empire in the 12th century C.E. (Majumdar 1935: 16). Surprisingly, Ramesh Chandra knew that one cannot identify such states with certainty, yet he did not hesitate to accept the information mentioned in the text without any comparative analysis of the source (Majumdar 1935: 16). However, Zhao Rugua's statement about the Sailendra's continuous existence was supported by other Chinese and Arab texts as well depicting the glory and power of Zabag or San- fo- tsi in the 13th and 14th centuries. Majumdar corroborated this literary data with the inscription of Caiya of 1230 C.E. It described Javaka king Candrabhanu's achievements and mentioned his two expeditions against Ceylon in the 13th century (Majumdar 1935: 18). Validation of this information had been traced in the Ceylonese chronicle Culavamsa which recorded the invasion and destruction of Ceylon by Candravanu during the reign of Parakramabahu II (Majumdar 1935: 18). In this way, Majumdar's suggestions helped to fill in a lacuna in the history of the Sailendra empire. It offered a new avenue in the discussion regarding her continuous existence and relation with other powers like Ceylon.

Majumdar on lingual and racial uniformity between India and South-East Asia-

As a versatile academician, Ramesh Chandra looked beyond political subject. A noteworthy example is his article 'The Malay' which highlighted the antiquity of India and South-East Asia relationship. Majumdar believed that this antiquity could be established by the migration of Indians from an ancient period. This paved the way to later spread of Indians and the consequent 'cultural colonization' (Majumdar 1936: 86). The original theory sought for the linguistic and ethnic unity between primitive Indian tribes like Munda, Khasi etc. and South-East Asian tribes like Mon-Khmer. Based on this, Schmidt, Levi; Pryzuluski and J. Bloch upheld the theory of a larger unity between the Austro-Asiatic and Austronesian groups and defined the family as Austric. According to them, India was the original home of these pre-historic people who gradually spread to East and South-East Asia (Majumdar 1936: 87). Pryzuluski tried to prove Austro-Asiatic influence over certain Indian myths. Levi pointed to maritime India's tradition of people's movement and interaction (Majumdar 1936: 88-89). He

believed that adventurers, traffickers and missionaries of the Christian era were benefited from the technological growth in navigation. They followed the 'way traced from times immemorial by the mariners of another race whom the Aryans or Aryanised India despised as savages' (Majumdar 1936: 89). To Ramesh Majumdar, this process was 'the first phase of Indian colonisation in the Far East' took place before 'the Aryan or Dravidian conquest of India' (Majumdar 1936: 89). To establish the prehistoric connection between Malaya and India, he referred to the vivid use of the name Malaya in Malaysia which was also a dominant race and language there. According to him, archaeological and literary evidence showed the presence of Malava-Malaya tribe in ancient India. The similarity of this name, according to the writer, indicated the long connection between these two regions. Not only that, different South-East Asian place names like Malay, Malacca, Malayu etc. which showed the popular use of Malaya as a geographical identity 'across the sea', was also a significant example of such relation (Majumdar 1936: 93).

Through his theory, Majumdar thus refuted the claim of Hutton and Hornell that India had been 'colonised' by Indonesians in primitive times and 'the later Aryan colonisation of the Far East was merely the reverse of that process' (Majumdar 1936: 89). Instead, Ramesh Chandra argued that Indian history was a witness of migration of people and ideas to the East and South-East Asia from an ancient time (Majumdar 1936: 90). This is a common concept which the 'Greater India' scholars generally emphasized over.

The issue of Austronesian dispersal remains an important subject of debate even today. Ramesh Chandra, for that matter, can be credited for bringing up this topic. It was astonishing that no other Greater India scholar paid attention to this. Yet, they all shared similar thoughts about the antiquity of India and South-East Asia connection. However, Majumdar himself did not show any interest to proceed with this subject later in 1940s, 50s or 60 s when the issue of Austronesian dispersal invited scholars' attention and various interpretations were offered. Moreover, Majumdar based his analysis over only one opinion through which he could establish India as the origin of the pre-historic people who migrated to South-East Asia. Other possibilities about the Austronesian homeland were not considered. For example, Majumdar did not mention about the research of the famous archaeologist Robert Heine-Geldern, which was published in 1932. Geldern proposed the movements of Austronesian speakers from South China. In 1960s and 70s, more linguistic and archaeological research came up emphasizing over South-China origin of the Austronesians. Apart from China, Melanesia also was considered as a possible place by the American linguist Isidore Dyen in 1960s and British diplomat A. Coates in 1974.. Perhaps such alternate propositions focusing on the Austronesian origin other than India failed to impress him. Or maybe, we can interpret this as the absence

of an unbiased approach. This can also explain why despite being an observant historian, Ramesh Chandra did not consider the indigenous South-East Asian origin of the Austronesians and saw their evolution as internal developments. His intention to show India as the source of civilization in South-East Asia, even in the pre-historic days, led him to deny the theory of Hutton and Hornell focusing the reverse movement of the prehistoric people from South-East Asia to India.

Conclusion

Detailed discussion about Ramesh Majumdar's articles published in the Journal of the Greater India Society show that they are not free from limitations and contradictory approach. There is an inherent biasness in his works which cannot be ignored. He was majorly preoccupied with the impact of the 'superior' Indian culture over the 'inferior' indigenous cultures of South-East Asia. But this was a 'dominant conception' prevalent among Indian historians even in post- independence days. Majumdar's works including lectures and essays on this subject, unhesitatingly projected this 'cultural conquest' of Indians over the 'barbarian' locals of South-East Asia and India's contribution in transforming them as civilized. Moreover, a structural biasness of the nationalist historiography to equate Indian culture with that of the 'Hindu' was very much present. His essays were not very vocal about indigenous social features and tried to figure out the Indian influence. He did not delve into economic activities of the concerned kingdoms either. For example, in the article 'King Suryavarman I of Kambuja' Majumdar primarily concentrated on the political issue. Socio-religious aspects of the kingdom were also not neglected, but the familiar approach of measuring the degree of Indian influence remained the same. Despite a detailed discussion about the reign and contribution of Suryavarman I of Kambuja, his connection with the Chola ruler Rajendrachola I has not been touched upon. Possibility of a commercial connection and related cultural relation between the Chola and Kambuja kingdoms was indicated by Geoff Wade (Wade, 2009: 244). He rightly turned our attention to the gifting of a chariot by Suryavarman I to Rajendrachola I and assumed that this 'relationship likely have had a trade dimension' (Wade, 2009: 244). This crucial inference had been borrowed from Coedes's famous book 'The Indianized States of South-East Asia' where he argued that Suryavarman I's objective behind sending this gift was to gain help from Rajendrachola (Coedes, 1968).. To identify the power which threatened the Kambujan ruler, Coedes took help from R.C. Majumdar's writing named 'The Overseas Expedition of King Rajendrachola' published in 1961, much later than his article on Suryavarman I. Following Majumdar, Coedes argued that this threat 'undoubtedly came from the king of Srivijaya, Maravijayottungavarman…' (Coedes, 1968). Perhaps paucity of sources could be a reason for which Majumdar was unable to incorporate this aspect in his article published in 1943. Even in the second article mentioned above, he drew our attention to this meagerness of sources.

Despite such drawbacks, competent and comprehensive analysis offered by Ramesh Majumdar in the essays under review, should be acknowledged. They represent the author's sense of historicity, method of critical analysis and prolific intellectual attitude to reconstruct historical narratives. Majumdar's Inquisitive nature inspired him to examine available sources, deconstruct established propositions and put forward new queries. His writings tried to solve few confusions posed by contemporary historians. This help readers to be aware of new approaches and information enabling them to develop own ideas. True that he could not always adopt unbiased approach towards the sources and emphasized over a structural reconstruction of India's past. But he was not alone in this endeavor. This was an inseparable part of the cultural nationalism in India, a tendency that grew with the nationalist upsurge. It undertook the task of creating an alternative cultural history of India's past. Thus, his essays along with other writings must be judged as products of time. Because a historian's work always reflects his time and environment. It is debatable whether true representation of past events is possible that Ranke hoped for, as changing environment and historians' own perspectives leave a deep impression over history writing. But a historian should never stop his search for truth. His aim should be collection of sources and after their scientific analysis, try to describe past events. Majumdar tried to deliver this scholarly duty very skillfully. His preference towards using authentic sources even led him to travel to the South-East Asian countries (Majumdar, 2018). Ramesh Chandra's inquisitive nature is evident from his effort to trace logical sequence of historical events. Through observation and critical analysis of facts, he put forward three major queries in his narrations- why, when and how. Undeniably, this aspect can help readers to have a thorough idea about the subject under discussion. Majumdar himself expressed his concern about the duty of historian to bring out truth from the darkness of past (Majumdar, 1968). In his Bengali work named 'Bharate Itihas Rachana Pranali', Ramesh Chandra discussed the process of unbiased historical analysis (Majumdar, 1979). Thus, while studying about early India's relation with South-East Asia, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar might not act as an impartial judge, but his prejudices reflected contradictions of the contemporary milieu where scholars were caught between their nationalist soul and mind of historian. Nevertheless, his writings published in the Journal of the Greater India Society and other works inspired fellow academicians and future scholars to study more into this subject. He not only fulfilled demands of the time by highlighting an important chapter of ancient India but also delivered the task of a historian by showing the path of critical research and creating new possibilities.

Endnotes

i. This image of 'cultural colony' was the central part of the 'Greater India' idea and has been upheld by all the concerned writers.

ii. This idea was present not only in the writings of the Greater India scholars but was also buttressed by some prominent twentieth century Indian intellectuals like Keshab Chandra Sen and Aurobindo Ghosh. See, Hay 1970. For a more particular observation, see, Sen 1954, Ghosh 1965.

iii. *The Inaugural Report of the Greater India Society*, p. 3.

iv. That Calcutta in the 19th and 20th centuries became the hub of intellectual activities and thinking, has been marvellously explained by Frost, 2011, pp. 1-41. Tapati Guha-Thakurta has also discussed the artistic and intellectual nonseverance in Calcutta and referred to the works of the Greater India Society. See, Guha-Thakurta, 1992.

v. Foreword written by Tagore to the inaugural issue of *The Journal of the Greater India Society*, p. 1.

vi. Tarling, 1999

vii. Tarling, 1999.

viii. Upinder Singh has vividly discussed about the 'dharma' of kings and different social orders as described in Ramayana, Mahabharata, Arthasastra and Buddhist texts. See, Singh, 2021

ix. Suchandra Ghosh makes an exceptional analysis of the text as a source of maritime trade. See, Ghosh, 2014.

x. To analyse different theories regarding such migration, see Gaillard and Mallari, 2004. Also Yamagata and Matsumura, 2017

xi. Gaillard and Mallari, 2004. Yamagata and Matsumura, 2017

xii. Gaillard and Mallari, 2004. Yamagata and Matsumura, 2017

xiii. This approach is evident in almost all the works done by Ramesh Chandra like *Greater India, Hindu Colonies in the Far East* etc.

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Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in a Diverse Classroom Landscape: An Overview

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Abstract

To address and recognize an increasingly diverse classroom, educators are proactively embracing culturally responsive pedagogy as a means to better accommodate this diversity. To impart students meaningful learning experiences, culturally responsive pedagogy is truly evolved as an amalgamation of knowledge and practices. It recognizes and infuses the cultural beliefs, traditions, experiences and cultural references of students in all their learning. This study seeks to create a comprehensive understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) by defining its core concepts and characteristics. Additionally, it examines the correlation between CRP and multicultural education, and outlines the essential principles and policies necessary for the successful integration of CRP in educational settings. Furthermore, this article underpinned the diverse advantages of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), highlighting its positive impacts on students and teachers alike. It delves into the challenges often encountered in institutional settings and provides practical strategies for overcoming these obstacles when integrating CRP into classroom environments.

Keywords: *Culturally responsive pedagogy, cultural diversity, multicultural education, teachers' role.*

Background:

Culture is regarded as a diverse system of social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual features, value system, behavioural standards, tradition and beliefs, opinions, arts and literature, of a society or social groups that accumulated through ages. We consciously or unconsciously reflect our culture in every aspect of our lives. It determines how we behave and what we think, believe, portray ourselves to the world.

Education is a socio-cultural process. It is an integral part of different cultures. Culture and education are closely related to each other. In fact, they are interwoven and interdependent. As is the culture of a society, so is its education. Thus, we can say that culture is the heart and soul of education. Any educational pattern acquires its guidance from cultural patterns of society.

Culture reflects in our education system in the context of curriculum, instruction, contexts-curricular activities, administration, and assessment. It interacts and overlaps with different cultures and makes cultural diversity a spontaneous process. Also, culture and education are an equilateral process where cultural diversity works as a medium of educational acquisition and helps to express the thoughts, ideas, opinions, and views of a student whereas education helps to mould or recognize one's cultural identity. Culturally responsive pedagogy has emerged as a promising approach for educators to effectively address the diverse cultural backgrounds present in classrooms. It enables educators to gain insights into the unique needs and cultural contexts of students. With this understanding, educators can adapt their teaching strategies to better accommodate and support the diverse learning styles and experiences of their students. This proactive approach further helps learners in enhancing their engagement, learning outcomes, and overall well-being. In this study an attempt is made to give an overview on the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy in a diverse classroom environment by discussing its characteristics, principles, relationship with multicultural education, policies in this context of has been discussed, its advantages, challenges faced by the teachers to implement in the classroom, their roles and strategies to overcome the challenges.

Concept of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:

Culturally responsive pedagogy as a concept emerged from the pioneer works of Geneva Gay in the year 1997. She conceptualised culturally responsive teaching as ‘‘using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of culturally diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them’’ (Gay,2010b:31). Different researchers may use varied terminology to describe the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy. (Gloria Ladson-Billing 1995:469) called it as culturally relevant pedagogy and she reflected her thought in her article as “Culturally relevant pedagogy is a student-centered approach to teaching that includes cultural references and recognizes the importance of students' cultural backgrounds and experiences in all aspects of learning.” It means this approach emphasises on the significance of acknowledging as well as embracing cultural identities within educational settings. (Ford 2010) suggests that responsiveness entails a sense of responsibility and pressing an urgent need to address students' needs and thus ensuring success. Mehta (2024) highlights on Cultural Responsive Teaching form (CRT)) as a powerful approach to recognise the different cultural values, identities, perspectives and lived experiences of students. In other words, we can say that when teachers practice cultural responsiveness, they prioritise student-centered approaches gradually. By doing so, they remove obstacles to learning and achievement and thus they pave the way for students from different cultural origins to fulfil their potential. Culturally responsive educators take an active role in comprehending, honouring, and also meeting the needs of their students from

backgrounds that are different from their own.

Kotluk (2018) highlighted in his study that CRE is characterised by various terms in different research literature like “relevant education” (Aronson and Laughter, 2016), “responsive instruction” (Au, 2007), “responsive teaching” (Gay, 2018), “relevant pedagogy” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a), and “sustaining pedagogy” (Paris and Alim, 2017), he also quoted that the foundation of CRE lies in the theories of critical pedagogy including Freire (1991), Giroux (1984), and McLaren (1989), equity pedagogy (Banks and Banks, 1995), as well as research on multicultural education (Banks and Banks, 2010; Sleeter and Grant, 2008).

Saenger (2002) (as cited by Singh 2022) highlighted in his article that the term “culturally relevant pedagogy” can be used alternatively with terms like “culturally appropriate,” “responsible,” “congruent,” “compatible,” and “multicultural” to describe a range of effective teaching strategies in schools with varied cultural backgrounds. Being responsive explains acting correctly within the framework of teaching and learning. By incorporating cultural aspects of the students into their instruction, teachers can demonstrate their responsiveness to their students. Further he also added that a teacher who is culturally sensitive brings attention to the cultural issue and regards it as fundamental to their instruction. In this context Mehta (2024) emphasizes on inclusive education, empowerments and equity for students from diverse cultural background. In urban schools, where teachers resist a range of cultural norms through their teaching methods, this teaching posture is frequently more evident than in rural educational contexts.

The theory of culturally relevant pedagogy suggests three overarching goals proposed by Ladson- Billings (1995) are as follows:

- producing academically capable students,
- producing students who exhibit cultural competency, and
- producing students who are able to both comprehend and critique the social order as it currently exists.

She also emphasised that in order for pupils to achieve academically, culturally relevant education needs to offer them a means of upholding their cultural integrity.

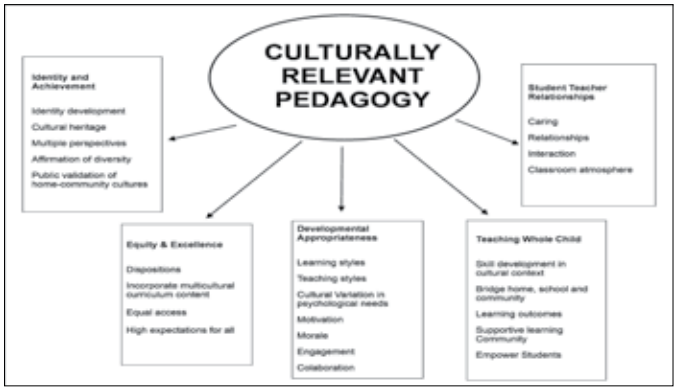
Further in another study he found that an explorative study with outstanding teachers working with African-American students, leading to the formulation of a grounded theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. These teachers were found as effectively supporting students in achieving academic success, developing cultural competence, and fostering socio-political awareness and he also observed variations in pedagogical approaches, with some teachers employing structured methods while others adopted more progressive strategies for this he

proposed minimising the dichotomy between these approaches to recognize the multifaceted nature of excellent teaching practices.

Singh (2022) opined that the active and caring approach that uses innovative techniques and upholds high standards to promote academic achievement among students from different language, cultural, and ethnic origin is embodied in culturally responsive teaching. He highlighted further that culturally responsive teaching is a social, moral, educational duty as well as a pedagogical strategy. To choose the best course of action for their students, instructors must make the most of their knowledge, discernment, and strategic planning. This method recognizes the connections that students have with each other, their communities, and society at large.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is confined with some principles. Various eminent researchers have given their valuable views on it. Brown-Jeffy and Copper (2011) developed Principles on Culturally responsive pedagogy by summarising the views of culturally relevant teaching of Gay (1994, 2000), Ladson-Billings (1994), and Nieto (1999). He summarised the principles of five broad categories incorporated with 35 sub themes. These principles are displayed below as a form of diagram.

To develop the conceptual framework of CRP teaching behaviours incorporated with five themes and 35 broad themes, Brown-Jelly & Cooper (2011) cited the principles of culturally relevant teaching of Gay (1994, 2000), Ladson-Billings 91994), and Nieto 91999) in his article. The five themes are followings:



Source: **'**Towards a conceptual Framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy' by (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper 2011).

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy with five themes and thirty-five sub themes.

Characteristic of culturally responsive pedagogy:

Some definite characteristics can be drawn from the concept and principles of culturally responsive pedagogy. Gay (2018) has mentioned the dimensions of the characteristics and the characteristics with descriptions are discussed as follows:

Table 1 Characteristic of culturally responsive pedagogy:

Characteristics	Description
Validation	He legitimacy of culturally diversified students and teaches to and through strength of them.
Comprehensive	Teaching should help to fully comprehend the significance among students that learning is a comprehensive, interdependent affair, communal and reciprocal.
Multidimensional	Culturally responsive multidimensional teaching consists of classroom environment, content, learning context, teaching method, instructional procedure, and assessment. It should be reflected in curriculum and instruction
Empowering	Culturally responsive teaching empowers students in terms of academic achievement, increasing self-confidence, courage by boosting the morale of the students, Providing resources and personal assistance by the teachers.
Transformative	The transformative attribute of culturally responsive pedagogy is double focused. one-part deals with overcoming and surpassing the cultural hegemony ingrained in the curriculum of traditional education classroom instruction. Other part deals with social, intellectual, political, and individual efficacy in pupils and this help the students to fight against racism, prejudice.

Relationship between multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy:

The concept of culturally responsive pedagogy is closely related with multicultural education. Very precisely it can be said that Multicultural education is a broad concept whereas CRP is confined in the concept of Multicultural Education and also CRP is an integral part of it. To explain the historical emergence of the multicultural education concept Bank (1993) found that the early ethnic studies movement, which was started by researchers like Williams (1882–1883) and carried on by people like Bond (1939), DuBois (1935), Woodson (1919–1968),

and Wesley (1935), is directly related to the multicultural education movement. The primary figures behind the movement of multicultural education were strongly impacted by ethnic studies pertaining to other backward classes in the United States as well as African-American academia. And the phases are as followings:

Table 2 Phases of Multicultural Education

Phase	Description
First phase	ethnic studies- history and culture of ethnic minorities. Incorporate theories, information and concepts about ethnic groups into schools and teacher education curriculum.
second phase	multiethnic education- structural and systematic change to increase educational equality
third phase	victimized groups of society and schools - women, disabled persons demand to incorporate their history, culture and voices into the curriculum, and system of all educational institutions.
fourth phase	research, theory and development of practices related to race, class and gender.

To interrelate the concept of CRP with Multicultural education, Gay (2010) explained that from its origin, a significant portion of education for and about cultural diversity is centred around the concepts that underpin culturally responsive teaching. Their continued existence is not surprising, given that the impetus for multicultural education stemmed from worries about the racial and ethnic disparities in learning opportunities and results that persisted into the early 1970s.

Further, another researcher (Mukherjee 2018) also mentioned in his article that one of the important goals of education must be to create future citizens who are sensitive to cultural differences. Only educators who are culturally responsive can meet the requirements of their pupils from different cultural backgrounds. Combining multiculturalism with the plurality practice in culture is extremely important. Educational institutions are cultural locations that are contested, offering diverse knowledge, traditions, and intersections that might be exclusive or inclusive. Teachers' culturally responsive teaching competences, awareness, knowledge, and attitude toward culturally sensitive pedagogy are the important factors in implementing cultural integration in school in a way that will optimise learning for a diverse student body.

NCF 2005 and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*:*

Various policies and commissions in Indian history talked about cultural diversity and inclusion in school curriculum and this framework emphasises the value of culturally responsive pedagogy as a means to address the diverse needs of students across the country. By integrating cultural responsiveness into teaching practices, educators can ensure that the curriculum is relevant and inclusive among students, despite their cultural backgrounds.

Culturally responsive pedagogy aligns with the goals of NCF 2005 by promoting a student-centred approach that respects and values the cultural identities of each learner. This approach encourages educators to adapt instructional strategies, materials, and assessments to represent a variety of cultures present in their classrooms. By doing so, educators can create a more inclusive learning environment where all learners feel esteemed and supported in their educational journey.

NEP 2020 and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:

The thought to implement culturally responsive practices in the educational system came into effect at the time of independent movement. NEP 1968,1986,1992 emphasises cultural diversity in the education system. The Indian government recently gave their eyes on cultural inclusion in the curriculum through NEP 2020.The focus of this concept was to include local knowledge and skill into educational practices. Different policies and commissions talked about cultural inclusion in educational settings. This Policy 2020 also tried to address cultural infusion in education. This policy emphasis on the following points:

- To recognize, identify, and foster the capabilities of students,
- To inform teachers and parents to promote holistic development of the students in terms of academic and non-academic spheres.
- To promote multiple language and its power in classroom situation;
- To respect the cultural diversity, attributes of community and infuse the local environment in all policy, curriculum, and pedagogy.
- To provide opportunities to the students so that they can raise their own voice to represent their culture.
- Rootedness and pride in India, and its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions.

It is crucial for the nation as well as the individual to promote Indian arts and culture. Among the key skills that are thought to be crucial for children to acquire are cultural awareness

and expression, as these will provide them a feeling of identity, a sense of belonging, and an understanding for the cultures and identities of others (NEP 2020).

Advantages of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:

Geneva Gay, Ladson-Billings and Sonia Nieto have made significant contributions, increasing our comprehension of and application of culturally responsive teaching methods. In our country more and more investments are being made to build Culturally responsive pedagogy in classroom teaching. Most teachers are using culturally responsive pedagogy to teach a diverse student population to utilise its advantages. Some advantages of culturally responsive pedagogy have been discussed below:

- Culturally responsive pedagogy enhances positive relationship between students and teachers.
- It also fosters cross-cultural relationships, understanding and inclusiveness between students and teachers.
- And opens up different worldviews to the students and the teachers.
- Further it can be said that CRP gears up a positive cross-cultural classroom environment.
- It develops trustworthiness among students.
- Students experience enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence when their cultural backgrounds, thoughts, perspectives identities are recognised by the teachers and integrated in teaching learning process. Subsequently most effective learning occurs (Mehta 2024).
- Students feel empowered, connected, valued and included.
- At the same time, it fosters a positive outlook towards others while preserving one's cultural identity cultural identity and integrity.
- Samuels (2018) also mentioned in his article that participants emphasised that involvement in discourse and constructivist and/or collaborative learning might help students acquire broader worldviews and greater open-mindedness, going beyond soft skills and social emotional learning. Participants talked at length about how culturally sensitive teachers act as facilitators rather than as "sages on the stage," which puts more responsibility on students and their part in the educational process.
- In another way it can also be said that pupils are allowed to portray their ideas and views about current socio-political events and situations. These lead the students to increase multiple perspective awareness and sensitivity to the surrounding environment.

- Culturally responsive teaching not only enhances pupils' development but also enhances teachers becoming more knowledgeable and accountable towards students and teaching. They become more aware about diverse cultures, their acceptance of the different cultures are where it has increased more.

Various researches have been done abroad on culturally responsive pedagogy. A substantial number of case studies have also been done in this area of culturally responsive pedagogy. Three such case studies have been cited here.

Case study 1: Howse, T.D (2003) observed the relationship between teacher's perception on culturally responsive teaching and student engagement in Florida. He found that the professional development aiding shift in teachers' practice which is impacted by classroom management and knowledge of teachers.

Case study 2: lynch & E. Rate (2018) conducted a case study in New Zealand in which he studied teachers' belief regarding culturally responsive educational policy ' Kia Eke Panuku' within the bicultural context of Māoris Non-Maori students. The teachers advocate that the Māori students' cultural identity depends on socio-cultural knowledge but they suggested that the Māori students should engage them with academic knowledge rather than socio-cultural knowledge to develop their epistemic identity.

Case study 3: Glenda, J.M (2022) also explored a case study in Georgia on the problem of limited data to inform best practices in facilitating high teacher self-efficacy with culturally responsive teaching practiced. In this study, researcher found that there is a cessation of understanding and importance of CRP and conceptualization of implementing CRP in classroom. He also suggested that a strong knowledge base cannot be established in self efficacy without a complete conception of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Very few researches are done in India. India is focusing on cultural diversity, teacher's responsiveness, diverse student learning engagement through policy making, commission development.

Roles of teachers*:*

Teachers are the foremost important person to implement culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom environment. Teachers have some certain role to portray and these are as follows:

- Teachers should understand the home environment of students so that they can relate to the school environment.
- They should have a good relationship with students

- They should be in touch with the parents
- They must have respect to his and other cultures then he can assimilate the values in the teaching learning process
- Teachers must encourage student's' academic achievement
- They must use culturally relevant teaching learning materials in the classroom
- Encourage collaborative learning, self-learning, problem solving, field study, cooperative learning strategies.

In this context, Diamond and Moore (1995) has delineated the role of teachers in three broad categories which are as follows:

Cultural organizer: Teachers must have to understand the cultural diversity of the classroom, ethnicity diversity of the students, and facilitate high academic achievement. Teachers have to provide opportunities to the students to express their view, opinions and also, they are free to express their personal and cultural thoughts.

Cultural mediator: Teachers have to help the students of different cultures to understand the critical dialogue and conflicts among cultures and also provide the opportunities to understand their own ethnicity and honour the other cultures too.They should help the students to avoid prejudices, racism and stereotypes about other cultures.

Orchestrator of social context: To make the teaching compatible teachers must understand the value of different cultures in the curriculum and in the different ethnic diverse students in the classroom.

In relation to that Ladson billings (1995)) reported that they help the students to implement their cultural values and competencies into classroom learning.

Gay (2010) also talked about the role of teachers and he confined it in the Power of caring which explained that the feelings are needed as a teacher but caring is the foremost characteristic in a culturally responsive teaching learning situation. Caring can be explained as an interpersonal interaction that supports pupils' indifference, empowerment, warmth, and validation.

Ladson billings (1995) stated in her study teachers should help to build confidence, courage, critical consciousness, and competency of the students and provide intellectually challenging and culturally relevant learning situations so that students can improve not only their educational achievements but also social competence, emotional development, and personal identity. Further she added in her study that through their instructional stances,

the educators exemplified this ethic of personal accountability. A number of the educators mentioned disobeying administrative orders to act in the best interests of the learners. Some provided instances of proactive steps they had taken to adopt pedagogical approaches that were more in line with their principles and beliefs.

Challenges of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:

Culturally responsive pedagogy holds considerable importance in the teaching-learning process but its application in the classroom presents teachers with various difficulties and challenges. Here are a few notable ones:

- When teachers have limited knowledge of a particular topic this topic may be avoided and minimised.
- The conflicts between students and teachers on a particular topic may create anxiety.
- Subjectivity and biases of teachers may lead to decrease the motivation towards culturally responsive pedagogy.
- The racial discrimination leads to decrease the interest towards culturally responsive pedagogy.
- Minimal understanding about the other cultures and access of students and the community they live in also affect the culturally teaching-learning process.
- Less interaction between marginalised students and teachers developed less valuable perception to the teachers. They might not understand the richness of the culture and attributes of the community and may overlook rather than embracing the inclusiveness.
- Limited time bound for a vast curriculum and large size class with limited pedagogical resources and knowledge of teachers' restraint to practice culturally responsive pedagogy.

Strategies to overcome challenges of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:

To overcome the challenges some strategies can be made also students must raise their voice to represent their culture and attributes of the community. In this context, Samuel (2018) also conveyed his views through his writing that students should be given the chance to talk on personal experiences, cultural influences, current affairs pertaining to social (in)justice, and the role that socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, and race have had in historical and contemporary injustices. Further, Samuel (2018) mentioned that "Strategies such as asking open-ended questions, accountable talk, modelling effective conversations, fishbowl, talking chips, encouraging multiple perspectives, and turn and talk were discussed".

- To this continuation it also be said that constructive learning, cooperative learning, collaboration learning reinforces culturally responsive learning.
- Teachers should provide opportunities to the pupils with different cultures to take a lead role in the classroom & present their ideas. Active learning, peer learning may increase positive relationships with teachers and among other students.
- Unkind talk or prejudicial conservation must be addressed immediately.
- Further it can be added that teachers should address differentiated instructional technique and diverse grouping so students can easily select differentiated content and present them in a different style.
- Lastly, teachers must be aware of students' interest, skill & prior knowledge so that the teacher can deliver the content in the classroom accordingly.

Conclusion:

The goal of culturally responsive pedagogical research is to figure out a way to accommodate the students irrespective of their race, ethnicity, cultural background, and communal attributes. This research area is a promising part to determine the cultural gap between the teachers and the students and among the students. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy plays a crucial role in examining how the educational system and school organisation impact students' learning outcomes. Teachers must be prepared to identify the cultural diversity of the classroom and well equipped with teaching learning resources and tools to facilitate cultural responsiveness in the classroom. Professional development programs are also being introduced for further engagement & learning. Though there is a continuous inconsistency between practice and strategies to implement culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom environment. However, the preparation of the framework of culturally responsive pedagogy also depends on the contemporary socio-political contexts. Villegas and Lucas (2002:31) stated that "Our framework is grounded in the beliefs that a salient role of schools is to promote a more equitable and just society and that diversity is worthy of affirmation". Ultimately, culturally responsive pedagogy cultivates a more inclusive and equitable educational system that prepares students to thrive in a multicultural society. This approach not only promotes academic success but also nurtures students' self-esteem, confidence, and sense of belonging.

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Modernisation, Globalisation: Continuity and Challenges of the *Patua* Community

Dipanjan Dey

Abstract

In the distant past, 'Pat' meant a piece of cloth. And the picture painted on the 'Pat' by Patua artists was known as 'Patachitra'. Although this special art style of the Patuas, an ancient group of artists of Bengal, is traditional, this artist community and their art have gone through many setbacks in the modern era. Especially since the second half of the 20th century, the connection between the Patua artists and their ancestral profession of Patashilpa began to decline. Patashilpa has been affected by various factors of modern-day life. Globalisation is one of them. One of the main focuses of this article is to trace the effects of modernisation and globalisation on Patashilpa. How modern-day culture and the discovery of the latest means of entertainment caused the degeneration of the art form gradually, is to be another point to probe into in this article.

Keywords: *Pat, Patua, Patachitra, Globalisation, Modernisation, Hinduism, Brahmanism, Chitrakar, Chakshu Dan Pat.*

Introduction: *Patua* community is one of the oldest artist community of Bengal. The traditional craft followed by this *Patua* community is *Patachitra*. In the distant past, *'Pat'* meant a piece of cloth. And the picture painted on the *'Pat'* by *Patua* artists was known as *'Patachitra'*. Although this special art style of the *Patuas*, an ancient group of artists of Bengal, is traditional, this artist community and their art has gone through many setbacks in the modern era. Especially since the second half of the 20th century, the connection between the *Patua* artists and their ancestral profession of *Patashilpa* began to decline. *Patashilpa* has been affected by various factors of modern day life. Globalisation is one of them. One of the main focuses of this article is to trace the effects of modernisation and globalisation on *Patashilpa*. How modern day culture and discovery of latest means of entertainment caused degeneration of the art form gradually, is to be another point to probe in to in this article.

Methodology: This article is based on experience gathered from extensive fieldwork, and this research work is simultaneously descriptive and analytical. Some primary resources as well as some secondary resources have been used to carry out this research article. Among the primary

resources are some *Patachitras* (Scroll paintings) of past and present times, some ingredients used for *Pat* painting, *Patua Geet* collected from the *Patuas*, interviews with the *Patuas* and field works, some written records collected from *Patuas* etc. are noteworthy. This article has been conducted following the principles of the historical research method. The study is based on both archival and non-archival and published and unpublished data. This research article is based on an extensive evaluation of primary sources. Along with primary data, some official letters, interviews of some important personalities etc. have played a significant role. Important personalities i.e. veteran *Patua* artists, award-winning *Patua* artists, representatives of the *Patua* community who are no longer associated with this art, those who have researched *Pat* and *Patua*, etc.

Historical Context: For ages Indian folk-artists have been engaged in the art of *Patachitra* making. It amounts to an innovation in the field of art without any technological sophistication. *Patachitra* art can be said to be like a story arranged in rhyming speech. Before the modern age, it was the means of entertainment for people. The paintings created by the *Patua* artists of Bengal are a fusion of movement with melodic narrative. Bengali *Patachitra* is a style combining motion and narrative. It is also clear that they adopted Hinduism during the advent of Brahmanism. At one stage of the progress of Buddhism, they adopted Buddhism, and at some stage during the Sultanate period and the invasion of Mughals, they adopted Islam.

Impact of Modernisation: The potential and power of traditional Indian folk art was recognized by Indian and British scholars some time ago. *'Patachitra'* and *'Kalighat Pat'* inspired Jamini Roy and Nandalal Bose, two famous painters of pre-independent India. Inspired by the paintings of these artists, other contemporary Indian artists have since tried to use elements of folk art in their art. In certain districts of West Bengal, traditional *Patua* artists who paint traditional paintings still exist. But modernity has greatly influenced the art of their forefathers. This folk art of the *Patua* community of West Bengal has gone through many evolutions. Muchiram Chitrakar, Basudeb Chitrakar, Banku Patua, Ajit Chitrakar, Dukhushyam Chitrakar, Bahadur Chitrakar, Abed Chitrakar are traditional folk artists or *Patua* painters from West Bengal where they are called *Patua* or *Chitrakar*.

A *Patua*, usually from Birbhum district, is also called a *'Jadu Patua'* because *'Jadu'* meaning magic is believed to be performed by him whilst using his painted scroll as a medium[1]. A *Jadu Patua* wanders from one village to another carrying the *Patachitras* depicting various themes. While travelling in tribal regions if he hears of any death in a Santhal village, he goes to the bereaved family members and after consoling them shows the scroll on which he has painted figures resembling the Santhals; complete in all details but with one important omission that of the eyes. He then shows his willingness to paint the missing eyes in return for an appropriate

price. He acquires payment in the form of money or an object of domestic use because the Santhals are convinced or rather made to believe that the painted figure in the scroll is an image of their own relative who has died. They also believe that the departed ones would certainly have a hard time in the afterworld. How can they go to heaven without being able to see! *Patachitras* of this type are known as *'Chakshu Dan Pat'*[2]. A *Patua* also caters to villagers who are not tribals. He goes to them with scrolls depicting mythological stories of Rama and Krishna and also some folk-lore about Manasa Devi, Behula, Satyapir and legendery figures.

Globalisation and Revival: Apart from religious stories, some of the scrolls that a *Patua* paints and shows depict themes of a secular nature including those based on the regional scandals that the villagers know of and love to gossip about. Each *Patua* is also a good singer and entertainer. He sometimes writes a new song, especially when he paints a scroll based on a theme which neither he nor his forefathers painted before. He also composes tunes for the song. This is how modernity and globalization have affected the *Patua* community. Many subjects of modern civilization, contemporary era have been the subjects of paintings by *Patua* artists. As they painted *Pats* and made songs about various government projects, contemporary socio-economic, political issues are also reflected in their *Patachitra* paintings and *Patua* songs. *Patua* artists have even been seen painting *Patachitras* and making *Patua* songs about the Corona epidemic that emerged in 2020 and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The *Patachitra* painted by *Patua* artists is not only stuck in the villages of Bengal, but has gone to other parts of the country and even outside the country. This trend was particularly noticeable in the 20th century. And in the 21st century, the liberal attitude in the global marketing system, the availability of products, multiplies this trend. During 1985 A.D., Ajit Chitrakar and Dukhushyam Chitrakar were invited to participate in one workshop at Baroda[3]. On the very first day of their arrival Dukhushyam composed a song 'Baroda Ajob Karkhana' in Bengali and also painted a scroll based on it. The title of his song means Baroda, a strange place.

The stylization of figures and delineation of the details in this *Patachitra* were similar to the other *Pats* Dukhushyam had painted earlier and brought with him. But the theme certainly was 'Ajob', to use the artist's own term. In the scroll he expressed his excitement at the long journey, perhaps his very first one, across the country:

"To my restless heart I said

Come, let's go to Baroda..."[4]

Dukhushyam also expressed his various surprises and 'strange' experiences that he had during his first day in Baroda:

"On reaching the railway station,

You will find auto rickshaws!

Wherever you want to go,

You will be able to reach,

What a strange place is Baroda!

(But) What a strange place is Baroda!

In D.N. Hall, we got shelter

In L.B.S. Hall, we ate.

But all we could get was vegetarian,

Yes! only vegetarian.

Meat and fish, (we) could not get, Just could not get,

What a strange place is Baroda!"[5]

(Jyoti Bhatt, *Reflections on Contemporary Events in the Pata Paintings of Ajit Chitrakar and Dukkhu Shyam,* Seminar on 'Art & Life in India since Independence', 4-8 June, 1988, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla-171005)

Another *Patachitra* made by Dukhushyam was 'America, ki Ajob Karkhana'[6]. In this *Patachitra* Dukhushyam had tried to interpret a theme which required abstract symbols of a conceptual nature that he had never used before. He perhaps did not even understand their scientific context fully. The *Patua Geet* was entitled 'America, ki Ajob Karkhana' (America, what a strange place it is!). Though the title sounds like 'Baroda Ajob Karkhana' the similarity ends here. The previous *Pat* was a kind of compliment. But this *Patachitra* and its song were, in fact, the folk artist's protest against the country an account of its nuclear arms and power. The artist's choice for the term 'Karkhana' (meaning a factory) for a place is quite intriguing. It was apparent from the song and the *Pat* that Dukhushyam had done a fair amount of homework before composing the song and painting the *Pat*. This can be considered a remarkable achievement for a villager with hardly any schooling!

National Award Winning *Patua* Artists of West Bengal: Some of the National Award winning *Patua* artists of West Bengal are-Rajani Chitrakar (Akubpur Village, Sutahata, Purba Medinipur), Gauri Chitrakar (Nirbhaypur Village, Daspur, Paschim Medinipur), Srish Chitrakar (Akubpur Village, Sutahata, Purba Medinipur), Gurupada Chitrakar (Naya Village,

Pingla, Paschim Medinipur), Anwar Chitrakar (Naya Village, Pingla, Paschim Medinipur) and Kalpana Chitrakar (Habichak Village, Chandipur, Purba Medinipur).

Rajni Chitrakar was a well-known *Patua* artist of undivided Bengal. He was the first artist from Medinipur district to win the National Award. Rajni Chitrakar was born around 1892 AD in Akubpur, Sutahat, Haldia. Rajini Chitrakar's father's name is Umacharan Chitrakar, from whom he learned *Pat* painting[7]. His mother's name is Tarangini Chitrakar. Rajni Chitrakar left the village and moved to Kalighat for livelihood. In Kalighat, he used to make clay dolls and *Pats*. Gradually, a fundamental trend was born in the *Pat* of Kalighat by his hands. Rajni Chitrakar was identified as *'The last Patua of Kalighat'* in the *'Statesman'* newspaper. Because in 1930, the style of *Kalighat Pat,* which had ended, was revived at the insistence of Rajni Chitrakar. The central government decided to give the National Award to 13 people including Rajni that year. On January 25, 1965, the President of India Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan presented the National Award to Rajani Chitrakar. Rajni Chitrakar once set up a school of mythological painting in his village Akubpur. In 1950 Rajni Chitrakar was elected as the President in the session of Chitrakar Sabha. But currently the art of painting is almost extinct in Akubpur, the village of Rajni Chitrakar. Only two of Rajini Chitrakar's lineage have maintained this streak in any way.

Gauri Chitrakar, one of the *Patua* artists of the *Patua* community of Medinipur district, won the National Award in 1985 from the then President of India Giani Zail Singh Gauri Chitrakar's real name is Gofuran Bibi. This veteran *Patua* artist of Nirbhaypur village of Paschim Medinipur district painted the *'Naramedha Yagya' Pat*[8]. She won the National Award for this *Patachitra*. That artful painting is still in the Delhi Museum. Gauri Chitrakar won the special award for the first time at the State Folk Culture Festival in 1982 for her painting *'Krishna Leela Pat'*. In 1984-85 she stood first in the State Craft Competition. Apart from West Bengal, she received honors in Rajasthan, Bengaluru, Hyderabad. The West Bengal government gave a grant of Rs 1 lakh to this *Patua* artist. Gauri Chitrakar passed away a few years ago.

Srishchandra Chitrakar was the son of Rajni Chitrakar, the last *Patua* artist of the Kalighat genre. On January 24, 1968, Srishchandra Chitrakar won the National Award for *'Banglar Ekchalar Mati Durga'*. The then Vice President of India V. V. Giri handed over this honor to him. It is a rare event for both father and son to receive such honor from Medinipur district. Srishchandra Chitrakar better known as Srish Pal. He was born in 1919 in *Patua Para* of Kalighat. Because previously his father Rajni Chitrakar left Akubpur and moved to *Patua Para* in Kalighat. Srishchandra Chitrakar started making clay dolls and painting *Pats* at Kalighat with his father Rajani Chitrakar and maternal uncle Fakir Chitrakar. *Patua* artist Srishchandra

Chitrakar changed into idol artist Shirish Pal. But he never turned away from *Pat* painting.

Gurupada Chitrakar was a well-known *Patua* artist of Naya village in Paschim Medinipur district. Gurupad Chitrakar won the National Award in 2000 for *Patachitra* painting.[9] His real name is Jumman Chitrakar. He made Naya, a village of *Patua* artist in Medinipur district, well known[10]. Another National Award winning *Patua* artist Gauri Chitrakar is Gurupada's sister-in-law. Gurupada's actual home is in Perua village under Sabang police station. Apart from traditional colors, Gurupada Chitrakar painted many *Pats* using natural colors. Special mention should be made of the support of 'Bangla Natak.com' in the prosperity of *Patua* artists of Naya village. Gurupada Chitrakar traveled to different parts of the country with his Scroll paintings. Besides, Gurupad Chitrakar has taken his *Patachitra* to countries like Spain, Italy, America, South Africa, California, London, New Mexico etc. Recently the West Bengal government awarded him an honorarium of Rs 1 lakh for his *Patua* art. Gurupada Chitrakar passed away recently.[11]

Anwar Chitrakar won the National Award for *Patachitra* painting in 2006. He painted *Patachitra* on *'Chandimangal'*. Anwar lives in Naya village of Paschim Medinipur district. His two sisters Swarna Chitrakar and Sushma Chitrakar are also famous *Patua* artists of this state. Anwar Chitrakar's *'Chandimangal' Patachitra* is housed in the 'Prince of Wales' Museum, Mumbai. Currently this museum is known as 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Sangrahashala'. Besides, many *Patachitras* of Anwar Chitrakar are collected in Delhi Metro Station, Mumbai Airport, Albert Museum in London. Anwar Chitrakar went to Germany in 2012 for the fame of his paintings and in 2013 he went to Japan to participate in the Indo-Japan Festival.[12]

Kalpana Chitrakar is a National Award winning *Patua* artist of Habichak village in Purba Medinipur district. Kalpana Chitrakar's husband Nuruddin Chitrakar is also a good *Patua* artist. All their family members are involved in the *Patashilpa* in one way or another. His two sons Bappa Chitrakar and Pintu Chitrakar also painted *Pats*. Kalpana Chitrakar painted a *Pat* with tribal life-stories on art paper about 9 feet long and 28 inches wide. It took her four months to paint this *Patachitra* Her *Pat* was sent for the National Award from district level to state level. This initiative was taken by the Office of Development Commissioner Handicrafts Ministry of Textiles. Accordingly in 2018 Kalpana Chitrakar of Medinipur District received the National Award for this *Patua* art. She received this award from the then Union Minister Smriti Irani.[13]

The influence of modernity and globalization can also be seen in the characteristic features of the professional associations that have developed in the *Patua* community. For example, the *Patua* artist community of Chandipur in Purba Medinipur district has formed 'Habichak

Nankarchak Loka Shiksha Shilpa Patua Samiti' (Nankarchak, P.O. Nandapur, P.S. Chandipur, Dist: Purba Medinipur) for the professional protection of their artist community[14]. The aims and objectives they have set for this 'Habichak Nankarchak Loka Shiksha Shilpa Patua Samiti' are particularly noteworthy in this respect. These are as follows:

1. To improve the moral and social character of the common people of the area on the basis of non-political and non-communal.
2. To provide full facilities necessary for physical, moral and intellectual development of people.
3. To provide assistance to any sick, needy and poor artists including common people in all possible ways.
4. To establish Patua schools for the promotion and development of education, arts and culture.
5. Support to artists associated with other handcraft industries of the area along with promotion of Patua art and drawing.
6. Arranging participation of artists in various fairs and government markets for marketing art materials.
7. Planning Patua songs with Patachitra stories drawn by Patua artists and conveying the quality of Patua art to common people through Patua songs.
8. To foster healthy competition among the people engaged in the industry and to create a larger market for the industry.
9. Setting up various types of handicraft industries for employment of unemployed youth.
10. Accepting money as loan or donation to any individual, NGO organization, State Government Rural Industries Institutions, Central Government Rural Industries Subsidiary Institutions, State Governments and the Central Government for the development of arts and artists[15].

Members of the *Patua* community belonging to the 'Habichak Nankarchak Loka Shiksha Shilpa Patua Samiti' have set these ten points as the objectives and goals of their association. They have specific management committee headed by *Patua* artists to manage this association. This information has been collected from Abed Chitrakar, secretary (2018-19 & 2020-21) of 'Habichak Nankarchak Loka Shiksha Shilpa Patua Samiti' regarding the management committee of their association[16]. This committee is valid for a specified period. When the period is over, the members of the *Patua* community form a new committee.

The research scholar have also got an opportunity to visit the online Exhibition entitled *'EI SAMAYER PAT: TALES OF OUR TIME'*— recent *Patachitra* paintings of Anwar Chitrakar organised by Emami Art, held on 5 July 2020—31 July 2020.[17] The paintings of Anwar Chitrakar in this online exhibition showcased his artistic talent to convey the pandemic times we were living in. Anwar Chitrakar was born in 1980 into a traditional Patua family in West Midnapore. He received training in *Patachitra* from his father, Amar Chitrakar.[18] Anwar paints *Pat* in the style of Kalighat painting. The artist has given a contemporary touch to traditional Patashilpa here. He has played the role of a fluent storyteller as an artist, and also delivered satirical portrayals like a witty comedian.

Anwar lives and works from Naya village, which is home to over two hundred families of folk painters or *Patuas* working as a close-knit community.[19] Unlike many of them, Anwar is contemporising traditional art forms, responding to the art world's renewed interest in making the tribal and folk art more mainstream.

Details of Anwar Chitrakar's recent *Patachitra* paintings in this online exhibition are recorded here—

Description of the first *Patachitra:*

Title: *Bhalobashar Chotto Jaega* (sold)

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

In this painting, the artist humorously depicts the new situation of young lovers that has emerged during the lockdown. With coffee houses and public parks closed due to the lockdown, their car has emerged as a romantic spot.[20]

Description of the second *Patachitra:*

Title: *Hot Hero*

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

In the context of the global lockdown, the painter has reinterpreted the old theme of heroes and heroines in a new light. Everyone has been forced to stay indoors. In this situation, the hero has become a smart kitchen cook instead of emerging as a mature romantic person. On the other hand, the heroines are spending their pleasant time by playing cards.[21]

Description of the third *Patachitra:*

Title: *Gari Ashche*

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

This is a satirical picture. Here, the artist shows that police officers are upset because there are no cars on the road during the lockdown and they are unable to collect bribes from drivers. Tired of waiting for a car, the policeman asks a village woman if a car is coming.[22]

Description of the fourth *Patachitra:*

Title: *Aar Hingsha Noi*

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

In this painting, the artist shows a fictional coexistence of birds, tigers, and deer, with a moral message behind it. The world is immersed in a deep crisis, where the ideals of non-violence and compassion are now particularly needed for survival. This image depicts that ideal situation.[23]

Description of the fifth *Patachitra:*

Title: *Kemon Achen Bondhu*

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in bengali

During the global lockdown, people are forced to stay indoors. On the other hand, animals and birds that were disappearing from the world are making a comeback. This picture beautifully depicts the reversal of the situation.[24]

Description of the sixth *Patachitra:*

Title: *Swapner Songshar*

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in bengali

This picture depicts the hopes and aspirations of ordinary people, whose lives are now affected by the pandemic and lockdown. The impact of the Corona virus poses a threat to the lives of ordinary people. As a result, the dream of building a happy family is disappearing from people's lives.[25]

Description of the seventh *Patachitra:*

Title: *Sanitizer vaccine*

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

This painting is an incredibly satirical work of art by the artist. The picture shows a *babu* or Bengali gentleman dancing with a bottle of liquor in his hand. The alcoholic man was surprised after learning that alcohol-based sanitizers were helpful in preventing the COVID-19 virus. He then tried to explain to his wife the benefits of drinking alcohol. As a result, his wife became furious and went to beat him with a broom.[26]

Description of the eighth *Patachitra:*

Title: *Shakti rupe* (sold)

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

Whenever the world falls into deep crisis, a new god or goddess emerges as a savior. Devout Hindus believe in this doctrine. In this painting, the artist shows a new goddess through Goddess Durga, who has appeared on earth to protect everyone from the pandemic demon.[27]

Description of the ninth *Patachitra:*

Title: *Mukhor Dhari* (sold)

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

The artist evokes humor in this painting. The face mask is compared here to a net tied around a cow's mouth, preventing it from eating crops. The head of an animal sits on a human body, and the human and the animal look at each other.[28]

Description of the tenth *Patachitra:*

Title: *Parijayi Bondhu*

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

While the entire world came to a standstill during the lockdown, our environment witnessed a rebirth. Environmental pollution is reduced and migratory birds from other continents arrive in large numbers. This picture attempts to celebrate that beautiful moment.[29]

Description of the eleventh *Patachitra:*

Title: *Amaar Dushtu Koi?* (sold)

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

Masks not only protect us but also help hide our faces. Even familiar people are often unrecognizable when they are wearing a mask. This is very useful for young lovers in the village, because they can hide from their parents by wearing a mask.[30]

Description of the twelfth *Patachitra:*

Title: *Tumi toh jano*

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

We are all aware of the importance of wearing masks, both as a protective measure and to show respect for each other. But, it takes time for a person to form habits. So many times when we go out and find ourselves in strange situations, we find that we have forgotten to wear a mask. One such strange moment is shown in this picture. The image shows two rural women trying to cover their faces when confronted by a policeman. However, the policeman himself did not wear a mask.[31]

Description of the thirteenth *Patachitra:*

Title: *60 Na 90 Peg* (sold)

Medium: Earth colour on paper

Size: 20.00 X 14.00 inches

Year: 2020

Signature: Lower right in Bengali

The Lockdown creates boredom. The picture shows a couple engaging in arm wrestling over a trivial matter to overcome the monotony of their lives.[32]

Conclusion:

Globalization has triggered cultural changes in the world and society. The ultra-modern use of technology caught our attention. Our entertainment has made the old means of communication obsolete and is gradually driving them towards extinction.

However, with the passage of time, there have been some changes in the traditional way of displaying *Patachitra*. In the interest of the development of this artist community, there is a need for a comprehensive clarion call to various government agencies and policy makers. However, globalization has enabled several strategies to create self-reliance among the *Patuas* and the livelihood of the *Patuas* is being revitalized by building a viable business network by harboring this *Patashilpa*.

Notes and References:

1. **i) Interview**: Muktar Bedia; Age: 55; Occupation: Earns a living by showing pats; Educational Qualification: Illiterate; Financial Status: Low income; Address: Itagaria, P.O. Itagaria, P.S. Suri, District: Birbhum, PIN-731103; Date: 23 January 2018; Place: Itagaria
   ii) Interview: Siraj Chitrakar; Age: 60; Occupation: Earns a living by showing Pats; Educational Qualification: Illiterate; Financial Status: Low income; Address: Itagaria, P.O. Itagaria, P.S. Suri, District: Birbhum, PIN-731103; Date: 23.10.16; Place: Itagaria
2. i) **Interview**: Swapan Patua; Age: 61; Occupation: Day laborer; Educational Qualification: Illiterate; Financial Status: Low income; Address: Bonta, P.O. Kurumgram, District: Birbhum, P.S. Margram, Pin-731242; Date: 23.10.16; Place: Bonta
   ii) Interview: Rabia Bedia; Age: 60; Occupation: Earns a living by showing Pats; Educational Qualification: Illiterate; Financial Status: Low income; Address: Itagaria, P.O. Itagaria, P.S. Suri, District: Birbhum, PIN-731103; Date: 23.10.16; Place: Itagaria
3. **Interview**: Dukhushyam Chitrakar (*Patua Guru*); Age: 75; Occupation: Patachitra artist, Writer and Composer of Patua Geet; Educational Qualification: Illiterate; Financial Status: Lower middle class; Address: VIL+P.O. Naya, P.S. Pingla, District: Paschim Medinipur, PIN-721140; Date: 13 August 2021; Place: Dukhushyam's house, Naya
4. **Interview**: Dukhushyam Chitrakar; *op.cit.,* Date: 25 January 2022; Place: Dukhushyam's House, Naya
5. Bhatt 1988: 3, National Archives of India (Delhi), Sr. No. 203, Group No. II-S.F.(b)
6. **Interview**: Dukhushyam Chitrakar; *op.cit.,* Date: 25 January 2022; Place: Dukhushyam's House, Naya
7. **Field Work:** Akubpur, P.O. Sutahata, District: Purba Medinipur, PIN-721645; Date: 2 April 2024
8. **Field Work:** Nirbhaypur, P.O. Monoharpur, District: Paschim Medinipur, PIN-721201; Date: 7 March 2024
9. **Interview**: Gurupada Chitrakar; Age: 53; Occupation: Well known Patachitra artist; Educational Qualification: Illiterate; Financial Status: Lower middle class; Address: VIL+P.O. Naya, P.S. Pingla, District: Paschim Medinipur, PIN-721140; Date: 9 March, 2017; Place: In Gurupada Chitrakar's house, Naya
10. **Field Work:** Naya, VIL+P.O. Naya, P.S. Pingla, District: Paschim Medinipur, Pin-721140; Date: 13-15 August 2021
11. **Interview**: Saikat Chitrakar (Son of Gurupada Chitrakar); Age: 29; Occupation: Patachitra artist; Educational Qualification: Upto class 8; Financial Status: Lower middle class; Address: VIL+P.O. Naya, P.S. Pingla, District: Paschim Medinipur, PIN-721140; Date: 21 August, 2022; Place: In Gurupada Chitrakar's house, Naya
12. **Interview**: Anwar Chitrakar; Age: 53; Occupation: Patachitra artist, sell Pats in fairs; Educational Qualification: Upto Class 4; Financial Status: Lower middle class; Address: VIL+P.O. Naya, P.S. Pingla, District: Paschim Medinipur, PIN-721140; Date: 14 November 2019; Place: Naya
13. **i) Interview**: Kalpana Chitrakar; Age: 43; Occupation: Patachitra artist, Sells Patachitras at fairs; Educational Qualification: Illiterate; Financial Status: Lower middle class; Address: Habichak, P.O. Nandapur, P.S. Chandipur, District: Purba Medinipur, PIN-721656; Date: 30 January, 2020; Place: Habichak

ii) **Interview**: Abejan Chitrakar; Age: 36; Occupation: Patachitra artist, sell Pats in fairs; Educational Qualification: Illiterate; Financial Status: Lower middle class; Address: VIL+P.O. Naya, P.S. Pingla, District: Paschim Medinipur,

PIN-721140; Date: 16 November 2019; Place: Naya

14. **i) Field Work:** Habichak, P.O. Nandapur, P.S. Chandipur, District: Purba Medinipur, Pin-721625; Date: 30 January 2020

    ii) Field Work: Nankar Chak, P.O. Nandapur, P.S. Chandipur, District: Purba Medinipur, Pin-721625; Date: 17 March 2023

    iii) Field Work: Muradpur, P.O. Muradpur, P.S. Chandipur, District: Purba Medinipur, Pin-721625; Date: 4 January 2024

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Education is a Right, Not a Privilege: The Struggle for Inclusion among Street Children in Hastings, Kolkata (West Bengal)

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Abstract

Children are not only the citizens of tomorrow but also the foundation for sustainable national development, making the protection and fulfillment of their rights a core responsibility of any society. Among these rights, access to quality education is paramount, as it empowers children to break cycles of poverty, marginalization, and exclusion. Although India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1992, children across the country continue to face critical challenges such as child mortality, malnutrition, abuse, child marriage, illiteracy, school dropouts, and systemic inequality. These issues are particularly acute among street-connected children, who live without stable shelter or access to basic amenities. In Kolkata, a city known for its contrasts between extreme affluence and deep poverty, this reality is starkly visible in areas like Hastings, where street-dwelling families live in precarious conditions under the open sky. For children of families, achieving Sustainable Development, the Goal 4 (Quality Education) remains far from reach. The Right to Development is compromised at every level. This research investigates the complex barriers to educational access for street children in Hastings, focusing on both direct obstacles, such as lack of identity documents, economic compulsion to work, and unsafe living conditions and indirect obstacle, namely, systemic issues including gendered vulnerabilities, social stigma, and inadequate execution of government education schemes. Using a phenomenological and participatory research design, the study employed household enumeration surveys, in-depth interviews with children and their families, and consultations with civil society actors and development professionals. This mixed-methods approach enabled a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences and structural exclusions faced by these children. Data were analyzed through both descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and critical gaps. The findings demonstrate how fragmented, short-term, and poorly coordinated interventions often fail to address the root causes of educational exclusion and instead contribute to higher dropout rates and the denial of social entitlements. The study concludes with a strong recommendation for

the development of integrated, rights-based, and child-centered policy frameworks that are informed by the ground realities of urban homelessness. Such policies must aim not only to provide access to formal education but also to create safe, inclusive environments, where every child, regardless of their socio-economic status, can learn, grow, and thrive with dignity.

Key Words: *Education, Street Children, Pavement Dwellers, Sustainable Development Goals*

Introduction: Education is universally acknowledged as both a fundamental human right and a powerful catalyst for sustainable development. It equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values, necessary for personal growth, social integration, economic mobility and political participation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) reaffirm education as an inalienable right for every child, regardless of their background or circumstances (UNICEF, 1989). India ratified the UNCRC in 1992, thereby committing to uphold the rights of children to survival, development, protection, and participation, including the right to free and compulsory primary education. Further reinforcing this commitment, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all (United Nations, 2015). However, the translation of these rights from policy to practice remains deeply uneven, particularly for the most marginalized children.

Among those most excluded from the formal education system are street children - a heterogeneous and highly vulnerable group who live, work or spend most of their time on the streets, without consistent access to shelter, care or basic services. These children face multidimensional deprivation stemming from poverty, lack of parental support, unstable housing, social invisibility, and systemic discrimination (Balagopalan, 2011). According to estimates, India is home to over 1.7 million homeless people, a significant proportion of whom are children living in urban public spaces (Census of India, 2011). These children are often left out of national data systems, and their needs are rarely addressed in urban planning or education policy frameworks.

Kolkata, the capital of the state of West Bengal and one of India's major metropolitan cities, reflects these disparities in stark detail. The city is marked by visible contrasts, modern infrastructure and affluence on one hand, and sprawling informal settlements and homelessness on the other. The Hastings area in central Kolkata, located near military installations and commercial hubs, is home to a significant population of street-dwelling families. Here, families live on pavements, under flyovers or in makeshift shelters. They are struggling daily with food insecurity, lack of sanitation, exposure to violence and health hazards. In such contexts, education becomes a distant dream, often perceived as a luxury rather than a right. Children are

more likely to be engaged in begging, vending, rag-picking or domestic chores than attending school (Butera, 2016).

While India has taken legislative strides to ensure educational inclusion, particularly through the declaration of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009; the ground realities reveal significant gaps in implementation. The RTE Act guarantees education for all children aged 6 to 14 years, which includes provisions for disadvantaged groups as well. However, the lack of permanent address, identity proof or birth certificates poses serious obstacles to school enrolment for street children (Jha & Parvati, 2010). Moreover, the absence of safe shelter, frequent migration, the need to contribute to family income and systemic neglect, exacerbate dropout rates and hinder long-term learning. Girls, in particular, face gendered vulnerabilities such as early marriage, sexual harassment and caregiving responsibilities; further limiting their access to education (Save the Children, 2018).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups have stepped in to bridge some of these gaps through informal education centers, bridge courses or advocacy programs. However, these efforts often suffer from short-term funding, fragmented approaches, and lack of integration with the formal schooling system. Without structural policy reforms and targeted inclusion strategies, such interventions remain inadequate to address the deep-rooted causes of educational exclusion among street-connected children (Sinha, 2017).

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on understanding the barriers to accessing quality education among street children living in the Hastings area of Kolkata. Employing a participatory, phenomenological and mixed-methods research design, the study investigates both direct and indirect factors affecting educational inclusion. Through a combination of complete household enumeration, in-depth interviews with children and caregivers and interactions with community stakeholders, this research aims to map the lived realities of these children and the systemic failures that continue to marginalize them. The analysis also considers how informal urban settlements intersect with issues of identity, citizenship, gender and survival and how these are ultimately shaping the educational trajectories of street-dwelling children.

This study argues that education must be understood not as a privilege available to the few but as a non-negotiable right for all, regardless of socio-economic or legal status. Bridging the gap between policy promises and present ground realities requires rights-based, child-centered, and context-sensitive policy frameworks. It also demands coordinated efforts between the state, civil society, urban planners, and educational institutions to ensure that children living in street situations are not left behind in India's development story.

Review of Literature: The issue of street children's exclusion from formal education systems is well-documented across global and Indian contexts, yet remains under-researched in urban development and education policy discourse. Scholars, practitioners and international organizations have long emphasized that street-connected children represent one of the most vulnerable groups facing systemic denial of basic rights, including the right to education, identity and protection (UNICEF, 2005; Aptekar & Heinonen, 2003). In India, where urban inequality continues to widen, the plight of street children is exacerbated by institutional neglect, administrative barriers and social stigma.

The term street children refer to children for whom the street is both a source of livelihood and place of residence, either full-time or part-time, without adequate adult supervision or care (UNICEF, 2005). While the definition itself varies across contexts, most scholars agree that street-connected children are not a homogenous group but live in varying degrees of disconnection from familial and institutional support (Thomas de Benitez, 2011). In India they are often invisible in formal data systems, making policy targeting and intervention difficult (Sarkar, 2014).

Studies show that street children face multi-dimensional forms of vulnerability including poverty, violence, sexual exploitation, health risks and legal marginalization; which contribute to their educational exclusion (Balagopalan, 2014; Butera, 2016). The lack of birth certificates, address proof, and identity documents renders them stateless in the eyes of the bureaucracy. Thereby denying them access to schools, public distribution systems, and health services (Sinha, 2017).

Although the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 legally guarantees free and compulsory education for children aged between 6 to 14 years; several studies have questioned the Act's ability to accommodate children in non-normative or mobile living conditions, such as those on the streets (Jha & Parvati, 2010; Ramachandran, 2015). The Act primarily caters to children enrolled in formal schooling, leaving gaps for children outside the system. Moreover, schools often refuse admission due to the absence of identity documents or fixed residence, violating the spirit of inclusiveness the RTE is meant to promote (Singh & Mukherjee, 2017).

Research by Save the Children (2018) in Delhi and Kolkata found that more than half of the street children surveyed had never been to school, and those who had often dropped out due to domestic responsibilities, frequent relocation, bullying or economic pressure. These findings resonate with similar studies conducted across Indian cities (Sundar, 2019), which highlight how school infrastructure, pedagogy and institutional behaviour fail to adapt to the lived realities of street-connected children.

The educational experiences of street children are also heavily influenced by gender. Girls face additional risks, including early marriage, domestic labor and sexual violence and trafficking. All of these reduce their chances of accessing or continuing education (UNESCO, 2012; Save the Children, 2018). Balagopalan (2014) notes that gender intersects with class and spatial marginality to create specific forms of exclusion for adolescent girls, particularly in urban slums and street communities.

Several NGOs and civil society organizations have attempted to bridge the educational gap through non-formal education centers, bridge schools, and community-based learning models. While these efforts have been partially successful in bringing children into learning environments, studies argue that they often lack sustainability, fail to integrate with the formal education system and tend to operate in isolation from state mechanisms (Sinha, 2017; Thomas, 2015). Furthermore, these models rarely address systemic issues like the lack of identity documentation or socio-legal protection, which continue to hinder school enrolment and retention.

Urban homelessness and migration are central to understanding the educational exclusion of street children. However, policies targeting urban poverty and education remain fragmented. While the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) include street children in their target groups, their implementation is marred by poor coordination, insufficient budget allocation and weak monitoring (Raghavan, 2020). Moreover, urban education policies rarely account for the mobility, precarity and complex family structures of street-dwelling populations.

Gaps in Existing Literature: Although several studies explore the condition of street children in major metropolitan cities like Delhi and Mumbai, relatively few focus on Kolkata, particularly on localized urban zones like Hastings, which represent unique socio-spatial configurations. There is also limited research that adopts a participatory and phenomenological approach to understanding the lived experiences of street children in relation to educational access. Most studies rely on macro-level data or institutional perspectives, often missing the nuanced challenges faced at the community level.

Objectives of the Study:

1) To examine the socio-demographic profile of pavement dwelling communities in the Hastings area of Kolkata.
2) To identify the key barriers faced by street-connected children in accessing formal educational opportunities.
3) To analyze the underlying and indirect factors contributing to school dropout among street children.

Methodology: *Research Design***:** This research adopts a phenomenological and participatory approach to explore and document the lived experiences of pavement dwelling women and children in the Hastings area of the city of Kolkata. The phenomenological orientation of the study allows for a deeper understanding of the subjective realities of homelessness, urban poverty and marginalization, as experienced by those directly affected. By engaging participants in sharing their narratives, life stories and everyday struggles; particularly in relation to housing insecurity and educational exclusion; the study seeks to uncover the multilayered and intersectional nature of urban homelessness.

A key premise of this research is that for homeless individuals, especially women and children, survival becomes the primary concern. Therefore, their lived experiences offer valuable insights into the strategies, coping mechanisms, and negotiations they engage in to navigate precarious urban conditions. The study is exploratory in nature, aiming to unpack the complex interplay between structure and agency that shapes the lives of the homeless. Rather than relying solely on institutional definitions or policy discourses, this study grounds its conceptualization of homelessness in the realities articulated by the participants themselves.

Through qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, narrative analysis and household level enumeration, the research captures the daily routines, livelihood strategies and systemic barriers faced by the participants. Particular emphasis was placed on understanding the gendered dimensions of homelessness, especially the experiences of homeless women and girls, whose vulnerabilities are compounded by patriarchal norms, safety concerns, and caregiving responsibilities. The life stories of these participants not only illuminate the factors that cause and perpetuate homelessness but also provide critical insights for designing effective and inclusive policy interventions.

In addition to firsthand accounts from pavement dwellers, the study also incorporates perspectives from civil society actors, development professionals and activists who work closely with the homeless population in Kolkata. Their reflections help contextualize the field realities and bridge the gap between grassroots experiences and institutional responses.

Kolkata, as the capital city of West Bengal, serves as a significant urban context for this study. The city attracts a large number of rural and interstate migrants seeking employment and livelihood opportunities, many of whom end up in informal or pavement based settlements due to the lack of affordable housing. While several government agencies, NGOs and civil society organizations have highlighted the issue of homelessness, there remains a pressing need for grounded, participatory research that captures the actual lived experiences of the homeless population. This study, therefore, attempts to move beyond abstract policy narratives and contribute to a more nuanced and actionable understanding of homelessness as a sociological

phenomenon embedded in structural inequality, spatial exclusion and everyday resistance.

Research Method: The research employed qualitative research methods combining interviews, surveys with homeless individuals and a thorough review of existing literature and policies related to homelessness in Kolkata to find adequate responses to the research questions.

Population of the Study: The details of the studied area are given below -

Sl No.	Area	Location	KMC Ward No.	Borough No.	Homeless Population
1	Hastings	Under the flyover of Hastings near Khidirpore. Kolkata	75	IX	168

*KMC means Kolkata Municipal Corporation`

As per the survey, there were 36 homeless families at Hastings. The total number of school-age children of these 36 families is 78. All these 78 children along with their family members were surveyed to study their vulnerability and access to quality education.

Method of Data Collection: This study adopted a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the lived experiences and challenges faced by the street-dwelling population in the Hastings area of Kolkata. The qualitative orientation of the research was grounded in the belief that homelessness and educational exclusion are complex, context dependent phenomena best understood through direct engagement with those most affected.

Primary data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with homeless individuals, with a particular focus on women and children. These interviews followed a semi structured format, allowing for guided conversation, while also enabling respondents to elaborate on personal narratives related to their socio-economic conditions, survival strategies, housing instability and access to basic services such as education, healthcare and food security. This format provided the flexibility to probe deeper into emerging themes while maintaining consistency across interviews.

To complement individual narratives and facilitate collective insight, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were organized with groups of pavement dwellers. These discussions created a space for shared reflection and mutual validation of experiences, revealing common patterns of hardship, resource sharing strategies and the social dynamics of life on the street. FGDs also helped to identify community level issues and coping mechanisms that might not surface in one-on-one interviews.

Further, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with a range of stakeholders including local NGO workers, elected ward councilors, school teachers and community leaders from civil society organizations. These interviews offered valuable institutional and policy-level perspectives on homelessness, urban poverty and the barriers to educational access for street-connected children. The insights gained from these informants enriched the contextual understanding of the structural limitations within the local governance and service delivery systems.

To deepen community engagement and enhance the participatory dimension of the study, various participatory appraisal tools were utilized. These included social and spatial mapping exercises, seasonal calendars, and problem-ranking activities. These visual and participatory methods enabled respondents to articulate their lived realities, priorities, and constraints in a way that transcended traditional verbal responses. The visual data not only facilitated deeper discussions but also supported the identification of patterns and perceptions that may have remained unexpressed in formal interviews.

In parallel, interviews were conducted with representatives from relevant government and non-governmental institutions to explore administrative and systemic barriers in delivering entitlements and services to the homeless population. These discussions aimed to identify gaps in policy implementation, bureaucratic challenges and the scope for institutional reform or targeted programmatic interventions.

Additionally, perspectives from everyday community stakeholders, such as, local shopkeepers, traffic police, municipal workers and others who interact with the homeless population in public spaces were gathered to understand the social perceptions, informal support networks and public attitudes towards pavement dwellers. These interactions provided valuable insight into the everyday social environment in which homelessness is both negotiated and contested.

All qualitative data, whether narrative, visual or institutional, were subjected to concurrent thematic analysis, allowing for cross-validation and triangulation of findings across different data sources. This methodological triangulation ensured a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the social, educational, and institutional dimensions of homelessness in Hastings. The approach not only enhanced the reliability of the findings but also foregrounded the voices and lived experiences of the homeless population as central to the study's analysis and interpretation.

Tools for data collection: Interview Guide, Participatory Appraisal tools, Mapping, Diaries/ Journals, Existing Secondary Data.

Data Analysis: To analyze the qualitative data collected during the study, a combination of thematic analysis and narrative analysis, was employed. These complementary approaches enabled both the identification of recurring patterns across participants and the retention of individual voices, situated within their unique social and experiential contexts.

All interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant conversations were transcribed verbatim, ensuring an accurate representation of the data. The analysis began with open coding, where the transcripts were segmented into smaller units of meaning. These initial codes were then iteratively refined through axial and selective coding, allowing for the development of higher order categories and the emergence of recurrent themes. This coding process aimed not only to describe what participants said but also to interpret the deeper meanings and social implications embedded in their narratives.

Within the thematic analysis, particular attention was given in identifying shared challenges, such as, barriers to formal education, economic vulnerability, health insecurity, institutional neglect and gender based disparities. These themes were then organized into broader conceptual categories that reflect the structural and systemic nature of urban homelessness and educational exclusion.

Simultaneously, narrative analysis was used to explore how individuals, particularly homeless adults and street-connected children constructed their life stories and made sense of their lived realities. This approach illuminated how personal histories, relationships, spatial displacement and institutional interactions shaped their experiences. Respondents through storytelling, revealed not only the material dimensions of poverty but also the emotional and psychological dimensions of marginalization, offering rich insight into how they navigate their complex urban environments.

To deepen the interpretative depth of the analysis, contextual and comparative techniques were applied. Contextual analysis allowed for a nuanced understanding of how themes manifested across different demographic groups, spatial settings and institutional contexts. Comparative analysis further enabled the identification of similarities and divergences in the experiences of children versus adults, women versus men, and institutional actors versus community members. This multi-perspective approach enhanced the comprehensiveness of the findings and underscored the intersectional nature of homelessness and educational exclusion.

Additionally, conceptual mapping and network diagramming were used to visualize the relationships between themes, sub-themes, and underlying factors. These visual tools were instrumental in identifying central phenomena and their interconnected components, namely, the linkages between lack of documentation, administrative apathy, child labor and school

dropout. Mapping also supported the identification of causal pathways and feedback loops that perpetuate cycles of exclusion.

The entire process of data management, coding and analysis was facilitated using ATLAS.ti, specialized software for qualitative research. This tool enabled systematic organization, retrieval, and visualization of data; thereby ensuring analytical rigor and transparency throughout the research process.

Ethical Considerations: All data were collected only after obtaining informed consent from the participants. The confidentiality and privacy of all respondents were strictly maintained by anonymizing personal identifiers in transcripts and reports. Every effort was made to ensure that the analysis respectfully and accurately reflects the voices, lived experiences and perspectives of homeless individuals, without misrepresentation or harm. Ethical sensitivity was upheld throughout the research process, particularly given the vulnerability of the population involved.

Major Findings: An in-depth analysis of the residential conditions of 36 pavement dwelling families in the Hastings locality of Kolkata reveals a persistent and entrenched pattern of homelessness. Of the total families surveyed, 19 (approximately 52.7%) have lived on the streets for less than a decade, while 12 families (33.3%) have been homeless for 10 to 20 years. Most notably, five families (13.9%) have endured life for 20 years without stable shelter. These figures reflect not just prolonged displacement but a disturbing trend of chronic and intergenerational homelessness. For many children, the street is not a temporary shelter but the only home they have ever known, a condition that gravely undermines their right to development, safety and education. Long-term homelessness results in severe instability, making consistent schooling, adequate nutrition and safe childhood development virtually unattainable.

The economic livelihoods of these families are equally precarious. Among the 78 working individuals identified within the surveyed households, the majority that is 49 persons (62.8%) are engaged in unskilled, daily wage labour. These are typically in construction, porterage or other informal sectors. Another 10 individuals (12.8%) survive through rag picking; while 8 (10.3%) persons work as domestic helpers. Begging constitutes the primary livelihood for six individuals (7.7%). Three others sell horse racing fixtures informally near the racecourse. Only two individuals reported relatively stable, though still informal, employment. One is an auto-rickshaw driver and the other is a hospital support staff. These occupations are insecure, low-paying and devoid of basic labour protections, leaving families trapped in a cycle of economic stagnation with no opportunity for upward mobility.

The economic profile of these households underscores the severity of their deprivation. The average monthly income per family is ₹4,478, barely sufficient to meet survival needs. A detailed analysis of expenditure patterns shows that ₹2,958 is spent on food, followed by ₹359 on clothing, ₹316 on healthcare, and ₹212 on miscellaneous needs. Strikingly, only ₹36 per month, on average, is allocated to education. This is reflecting the marginal prioritization of schooling in households overwhelmed by the imperatives of daily survival. Education, under such conditions, becomes a luxury rather than a right.

Further complicating the situation is the absence of adult supervision during the day. With the average adult working over 8.3 hours daily, children are often left to navigate the streets alone. This lack of oversight exposes them to multiple risks, including physical insecurity, substance abuse, peer pressure and early entry into the labour force. The environment in which they grow up is not conducive to learning. It is shaped by noise, exposure, stress and constant uncertainty.

Substance abuse emerged as a critical concern within the community. Among those surveyed, 41 individuals (52.56%) were identified as substance users, including five minors. The substances ranged from alcohol and tobacco to more harmful drugs. For children, growing up in households where substance use is normalized increases their vulnerability to trauma, emotional neglect and behavioural issues. These factors directly contribute to academic failure and dropout.

Even when children are enrolled in school, multiple structural barriers remain. Due to the provisions of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, many children are enrolled in age-appropriate classes without any assessment of their learning level. For children who have never attended school or have experienced long gaps in education, this leads to overwhelming classroom experiences. Lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills, they struggle to cope, become demoralized and either formally drop out or exhibit chronic absenteeism. This rigid and one-size-fits-all model of education fails to accommodate their lived realities and learning needs.

The data further indicates that 30.98% of school-age children were not enrolled in any formal education program. Among those enrolled, 63.26% had poor attendance records, attending less than 70% of school days. Additionally, 17 children (22% of the total school-age group) were actively engaged in child labour to support their families. These findings highlight the trade-offs families face between immediate economic survival and long term educational investment, as well as the profound opportunity costs of schooling.

A notable trend emerging from the field was the preference among some children for non-formal educational models. Approximately 33.38% of children expressed reluctance to attend

formal schools, citing a stronger affinity for short-duration; informal classes often run by NGOs. These community based learning spaces typically offer basic literacy instruction, meals, clothing or recreational support and are seen by children as more welcoming, less pressurized, and practically supportive. They provide not only education but a sense of inclusion, dignity and relief from the alienation experienced in formal institutions.

However, the challenges of learning are not confined to the school environment. For street children, the home itself being a pavement, offers no conducive space for study. Most households lack electricity, privacy or any quiet environment for academic engagement. Parents, many of whom are illiterate and physically exhausted, are unable to assist with homework or provide emotional encouragement. The stress and insecurity of street life render education not simply inaccessible but structurally excluded from the daily rhythm of survival. In such conditions, education is not just de-prioritized but it is practically impossible.

In light of these findings, it becomes evident that Sustainable Development Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education for all, remains far from realization in the lives of Kolkata's Street children. The problem lies not solely in the availability of school infrastructure or enrolment policies but in the systemic and multifaceted exclusion faced by homeless children. Poverty, child labour, substance abuse, academic mismatch, parental illiteracy and unsupportive home environments constitute a dense and interconnected web of disadvantage that perpetuates educational marginalization.

To dismantle this cycle, there is a pressing need to reimagine the education system as more than a series of enrolment statistics or classroom provisions. It must evolve into a flexible, community-integrated and empathetic ecosystem that meets children both physically and psychologically. The Right to Education, if it is to be a transformative force rather than a symbolic promise, must be grounded in the lived realities of the most marginalized. Only then can education serve not only as a legal right but as a pathway to dignity, development, and the genuine possibility of a better future for India's street children.

Policy Recommendations and Way Forward: The findings from the pavement-dwelling community in Hastings, Kolkata, reveal a complex and layered crisis in educational access driven by entrenched poverty, chronic homelessness, academic exclusion and the absence of familial and institutional support. In the light of these challenges, there is an urgent need for a set of context sensitive, integrated and community responsive interventions that can bridge the gap between educational policy and the lived realities of street-connected children. These are given below.

i) Bridge Education Programs: One of the most critical interventions is the implementation of structured bridge education or remedial learning programs for children who have

missed foundational years of schooling. As this study highlights, many children are directly placed in age-appropriate classes under the Right to Education (RTE) framework, despite lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills. This mismatch contributes to frustration, alienation, and eventual dropout. Bridge courses, offering intensive, targeted instruction, can help these children catch up academically before being mainstreamed into formal classrooms.

ii) Flexible and Alternative Schooling Models: Given the irregular routines and economic responsibilities of many children, flexible schooling options are essential. These include evening schools, mobile classrooms and informal learning centres that operate in or near the communities where pavement-dwelling children reside. Such models align with the community's expressed preference for non-formal, short-duration education sessions that offer a sense of familiarity, flexibility and safety. These alternatives can serve as crucial entry points into the broader education system for children engaged in labor or caregiving roles.

iii) Community-Based Study Hubs: The absence of a conducive home learning environment due to lack of electricity, space and parental support, necessitates the creation of community study hubs. These safe, local spaces can provide after school academic support, access to learning materials and a quiet environment for studying. Operated by trained volunteers or educators, such hubs can mitigate some of the most immediate barriers to learning and offer continuity for students struggling to keep pace.

iv) Parental Engagement and Sensitization: Parental attitudes play a pivotal role in educational outcomes. Many of the parents surveyed are illiterate or unaware of how to support their children's schooling. Parental sensitization campaigns, grounded in community dialogue and peer-led initiatives, can help shift perceptions about the value of education and build greater involvement in children's learning journeys. These campaigns should emphasize long-term benefits of education, while also acknowledging and addressing the daily survival pressures faced by families.

v) Holistic and Integrated Support Services: Education cannot be pursued in isolation. Given the high levels of poverty, health vulnerabilities and emotional trauma observed in the Hastings community, education must be integrated with broader social protection services. These include access to regular nutrition, healthcare, mental health counseling and hygiene support. Creating linkages between schools and service providers can help address the nonacademic factors that impact school attendance, performance and retention.

vi) Mentorship and Child Monitoring Mechanisms: Introducing community based mentorship and monitoring systems can play a critical role in identifying and supporting at-risk children. Trained mentors, social workers or education facilitators should regularly follow up with children vulnerable to absenteeism, dropout or psychosocial distress. Personalized attention and emotional support through such programs can re-establish a sense of belonging, motivation and continuity in their education journeys.

vii) Substance Abuse Prevention and Rehabilitation Programs: The presence of substance addiction, especially among minors, requires immediate and sustained intervention. Integrated substance abuse programs, including counseling, awareness sessions and referrals to rehabilitation centres, must be part of the overall support framework. These services should be tailored to children's specific needs and designed to work in tandem with educational and family outreach efforts.

Conclusion:

The study titled "Education as a Right, Not a Privilege: The Struggle for Inclusion among Street Children in Hastings, Kolkata (West Bengal)" brings to light a sobering yet urgent reality. Despite constitutional guarantees and international commitments, a substantial number of children in urban India remain systematically excluded from the promise of quality education. While schools may exist and enrolment may be facilitated under the Right to Education (RTE), the lived experiences of street children reveal that formal access does not equate to functional inclusion.

Findings from the Hastings community illustrate that the barriers to education are deeply entrenched in chronic poverty, the absence of parental support due to long working hours, unsafe and unstable home environments and the prevalence of substance abuse. These challenges are compounded by an education system that fails to accommodate the disrupted learning trajectories of street-connected children. The rigid implementation of age based grade placement, without any remedial or bridging support, effectively marginalizes children who lack foundational literacy and numeracy skills, often leading to alienation, absenteeism and eventual dropout.

Furthermore, the preference expressed by many children for informal, non-traditional learning spaces, typically run by NGOs or charitable groups, underscores their disconnection from mainstream schooling. This inclination reflects not only a practical adaptation to the harsh realities of their environment but also a deep disillusionment with an education system that does not reflect their needs, pace or life circumstances.

What emerges clearly from this research is that the failure to achieve Sustainable

Development Goal 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education) in such contexts is not simply a matter of inadequate infrastructure. It is a consequence of policy inattention, lack of empathy in program design and insufficient support mechanisms for children on the margins. Unless educational interventions are recalibrated to address the unique realities of street-dwelling populations, efforts to promote universal education will remain structurally flawed and socially unjust.

There is a pressing need for a paradigm shift from an enrolment centric model to a child-centric, context-responsive framework. Such an approach must incorporate bridging education programs, flexible schooling models, integrated social services and active community engagement. True inclusion will not be achieved merely by bringing children into school buildings but by ensuring that they can learn, thrive and complete their education with dignity and hope.

Only by reimagining education as a tool of empowerment, adapted to the lived struggles of the most vulnerable, we can begin to fulfil the transformative promise of the Right to Education for every child, everywhere.

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Pandita Ramabai: A Radical Feminist Reformer in a Patriarchal society

Paromita Sarkar

Abstract

India in the nineteenth century under the influence of British colonialism witnessed a number of socio-religious reform movements. Among such movements women's education gained a lot of prominence. But the fact remained that Indian society was largely patriarchal and the male reformers supported women's education but only limited to the domestic sphere. Pandita Ramabai on the other hand as a female, educated, social reformer, had a totally different take on women's education and addressed women's issues in her own unique way. She reframed and formulated widowhood and womanhood in a way no male reformer would have thought of. She talked to equal rights of women in a male dominated society, a thought which was much ahead of her time.

Keywords: *Widowhood, Brahmanical Patriarchy, Child marriage, Education*

Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth century, women faced a lot of atrocities in the form of child marriage, widowhood and other humiliating religious practices. Widows were economically vulnerable as they did not have any property rights and had to solely depend on the male kin for their sustenance. They were socially ostracised and lacked any form of dignity. Widowhood was not a choice but a practice that was forced upon them. Widows were considered slaves or household labour who worked in the house in return for food and shelter. Situations were even worse for child widows. Brahmanical patriarchy considered widows to be a woman sexually and socially dead but physically alive. (Chakravarti 1993)They were debarred from the male gaze and forced to follow the humiliating practice of shaving off their hair. Widows were disfigured by such practices so that they remain unattractive. Manusmriti is the main text that established orthodox Brahmanism and suggested ways of controlling women. Women were directed to treat their husbands as Gods and to serve them throughout their lives. Brahmanism introduced a hierarchal structure in society based on caste and the patriarchal controls over women were directed according to caste. So, the high caste women faced the worst kind of

repression. British colonialism gave opportunity for the women to resist against societal norms through education and opening new avenues to explore. Some of the women among others who sought to raise their voice against the patriarchal society were Tarabai Shinde, Rakhmabai and Pandita Ramabai.

Pandita Ramabai's reformist agenda and her critique of the Brahmanical system and society has not gained much prominence in mainstream history as compared to male reformist such as Rammohan Roy or Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. 'Brahmanic patriarchy' was a concept that was used by historian Uma Chakraborty to define the society that India had during the colonial period. Men felt that women need not be independent, rather they should be controlled by men and restricted by rituals and practices. Ramabai strongly opposed Brahmanical patriarchy and later in her life converted to Christianity. Being a high caste Hindu widow during her time such as act was considered anti national. During the 9th century widows led secluded lives within the confines of the home shackled to various religious practices. Ramabai openly challenged the Brahmanical patriarchal system, as she was well versed in Sanskrit texts, a public speaker having a significantly prominent public life. She also dared to renounce her own religion and accepted a religion which was stamped as the religion of the oppressors, the British Imperialism. Even though she was a widow, she enjoyed making public appearances which was against the conventions and customs during that time. All these acts made her a menace to the Hindu nationalist during her time.

Childhood and Early Education

Ramabai was born to a Brahmin family, her father Anant Shastri Dongre was an orthodox Maharashtrian Brahmin Pandit but at the same time he believed in imparting knowledge to the women of the society and refused to accept customs and practices such as marrying off girls at a young age. Living in a forest hermit school and being brought up in such an unconventional environment helped Ramabai to gain a strong personality and reject the gender specific norms set up by the society. (Chakravarty 2013) Her mother Lakshmibai was a Sanskrit scholar who had great organisational skills. Throughout the day she took care of the ashram and at night she devoted herself reading Puranic literature. Ramabai received her Sanskrit and Puranic training both from her father and mother. Even though her education remained confined to the traditional Hindu texts she always had an independent and critical mind. When she started having deeper insights into the Brahmanic texts she was stunned to find that those texts depicted women as the lowly section of the society. Later on, in her life she gained national as well an international recognition as a learned Sanskrit scholar. It's really fascinating to imagine that a person who never received any formal education in any school or college could gain such feats.

Religion and Feminism

While reading about Pandita Ramabai one can clearly identify how religion and feminism both played a significant role in her life. Ramabai's feminism can be traced to her exposure to a number of America's first wave feminists with whom she closely interacted, they were Dr. Rachel Bodley, Dr. Emma Brainard Ryder etc. During her stay in America she witnessed the movement by American women demanding suffrage. Ramabai felt that this was a historic event which liberated women as they stepped into public sphere. She grew up in a Brahmanical Hindu society, later she got closely associated with the Anglican Church, all these influences and experienced shaped her life and works. She questioned the manner in which traditional religion was interpreted or practiced in the society. She had to fight political battles on the grounds of her religious choices at every point of her life. On the one hand she refused to follow the caste practices on the other hand she was never a devout Christian. She led her life according to her own religiosity. It seemed that her act of conversion to Christianity was an act of liberation from the conservative practices of her birth religion. Likewise, during this time many women of Mukti Mission who converted to Christianity felt it was act of gendered protest where questioned the marginalised status that was granted to them by the society.

Ramabai's arrival to Kolkata

After the death of her parents she travelled all over India mainly for pilgrimage and ultimately reached Calcutta (now Kolkata) where she made a public appearance for the very first time. During her travels she got the opportunity to closely observe Hindu religion and all its practices and ceremonies. As she had in-depth knowledge of the religious sacred texts, she started questioning the practices that proliferated during that time and insisted that the Hindus have misinterpreted the Vedas. Kolkata opened up totally new avenue for Ramabai. Kolkata was considered the nerve centre of the 19th century Indian Renaissance. With the introduction of Western education and English language India slowly started moving towards the age of reason and liberal thoughts shunning superstitions and religious prejudices. When Ramabai shifted to Kolkata she became introduced to the books on Hindu law, western ideas and philosophies. Ramabai was accepted wholeheartedly and was honoured with the titles of Pandita and Saraswati. Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore organised an event to honour her with the title of Pandita. To the reformers she was an epitome of knowledge, often compared to Gargi and Maitreyi – the two most significant and learned female characters of the Vedic age. When she came in contact with the leaders of Brahma Samaj, she got motivated to give public lectures where she talked of women's oppression in the name of religious custom and stated ways of their liberation using her knowledge of ancient Sanskrit texts. In associating closely with Brahmo Samaj and Keshab Chandra Sen she felt that the Samaj resonated her

ideas and beliefs. (Kosambi 1988) Just like her the Brahmos tried to free themselves of the conflicting rituals of orthodox Hinduism while giving due respect to the actual Hindu texts like the Vedas and Upanishads. The Samaj also tried to liberate women from the evil practice of child marriage. As she continued to intensely study the Dharma Shastras she came across a number of discrepancies, and she started questioning the Hindu scriptures. Pandita got an opportunity to interact with the most esteemed reformers like Dwarkanath Ganguli who worked effortlessly for the liberation of women and Sasipada Ganguli, who was steadfast in educating women and opened a number of educational institutions for girls and widow's home. She realised that according to the Hindu texts' women has been allotted a lower status as compared to men. They were even denied Moksha or salvation. She pointed out the Upanishads mentions women having equal space along with men while discussing about religion and philosophy but the Brahmins prohibited such texts for women and misinterpreted the religious texts to establish control and domination over them. Women were allocated a passive role of producing male successors. Ramabai defied the orthodoxy and traditions of Brahmanism and chose to marry Bipin Bihari Madhavi, who was a shudra. But her marriage lasted only for two years as her husband died shortly after. But she refused to accept the secluded life of widowhood as prescribed by the orthodox Hindu scriptures. Instead she decided to dedicate her life for the upliftment of women and worked relentlessly to achieve her goal. In Kolkata Ramabai had an atmosphere of freedom and free flow of ideas from all over the world but Pune had another thing in store for her. In Pune she had to endure a highly orthodox society where she was critiqued for having a mind of her own.

Encounter with the orthodox society of Maharashtra

Around 1882 Ramabai went back to Maharashtra and started working with moderate reformers like Ranade and Bhandarkar. But Maharashtra had a much more conservative society as compared to Kolkata. A female social reformer was looked upon with a lot of suspicion. Whenever she tried to speak in a public gathering the men started shouting and bullying her and drowning her voice. In a number of occasions, she not allowed to complete her speech. One of the most prominent reformers of Western India was M.G Ranade. Other reformers included Bhau Mahajan, Krishnashastri Chiplunkar etc. who were striving to bring about social reform in Maharashtra in areas of caste and gender. The socioeconomic norms that were imposed upon the widows were mainly directed towards depriving them. The kind lifestyle the widows were supposed to lead meant that they had low entitlement. They were the burden of the family. With the dawn of the British rule, social practices such as Sati and Child Marriage were vehemently criticised and laws were passed to put an end to such practices. The upper-class male reformers supported the British in this as women from their class faced the worst form of oppression. But they were definitely not thinking in terms of gender equality as they

upheld the superiority of men in society. To them women should always restrict themselves to household chores, performing the duty of a perfect wife and mother and working tirelessly for the betterment to the male counterparts. They were not really inclined in allowing girls to attend Christian missionary schools as it might lead to intermingling of castes. The male reformers, however liberal they might project themselves actually supported and never desired to disrupt the gender assigned role that was established in the society. The social reform movements that were organised mostly engaged in 'recasting women' rather than demolishing the patriarchal or Brahmanical structures. Knowledge of English language became yet another tool of superiority and masculine authority. The husbands became the teachers, thus reinforcing the patriarchal structure. (Chandra 2009)

Arya Mahila Samaj

Ramabai's acquaintance with prominent personalities like Justice Ranade and wife helped her conduct various social activities and also establish Arya Mahila Samaj an organisation mainly involved in carrying out activities for the betterment of women. She started setting up different branches of the Arya Mahila Samaj, where she narrated the Puranas to a more liberal audience and discussed various issues that plagued women during that time. Ramabai felt the urgency to have women teachers and doctors with whom other women would feel comfortable and discuss their problems freely. She ventilated her concern before the Hunter Commission on Education in 1882 and underlined the importance of women education. The agenda which was closet to her heart was setting up of widow's home, for the high caste Hindus who had to face the worst kind of oppression. The orthodox reformers severely criticised her for her public engagement. They strongly believed that women should never engage themselves in freeing the society of the perceived ills. Men were responsible for the safety of women and reform practices wherever needed. (Omvedt 2000) Ramabai as a widow, in the orthodox patriarchal society of Poona was often looked upon and faced public scrutiny. She was often heckled by aggressive men when she made public appearances.

Arya Mahila Samaj was the first women's organisation in Maharashtra. The organisation had an egalitarian composition as no one was discriminated on the ground of caste or class. This particular organisation was distinctive as it talked about women's issues which were addressed by women themselves. Women started to have a voice. They for the first time they openly talked about the problems they faced. Ramabai outlined the basic thrust areas of the Arya Mahila Samaj, which included prohibition of child marriage, inhibiting men from having more than one wife, campaigning for female education and helping women in distress. At the meeting of the Arya Mahila Sabha, she urged women to free themselves from the shackles of religious customs which were demeaning.

The Hunter Commission

During her stay in Pune, Ramabai's most valued contribution was her address to the Hunter Commission on Women's Education. She emphasised that in order to educate girls, women of the society should be first trained in their own language along with English. The women trainers or educators should be higher salaries compared to men. Definitely this proposal proved that Ramabai's thought process was way beyond her time. She insisted on having women teachers. She felt that women were more capable than men in teaching younger children with love and care. Another problem of Indian education system that she pointed out, was dearth of opportunity for women in the field of medicine. Women always felt shy or uncomfortable in discussing their health issues to male doctors, and thus their diseases remained undiagnosed. So, women should study medicine so as to help their fellow beings. (Chakravarty 2013) Ramabai gave her address in Marathi which was later translated to English by Hunter and distributed throughout India and England. The orthodox Indian society reacted sharply but her public fame could be felt far beyond the Indian boundaries. Her address to the Hunter Commission was not welcomed by conservatives like Tilak. They felt that such public speeches by women contaminated the society.

Interaction with the Western World

Women were almost treated as slaves, born to serve their husbands. In a society dominated by male reformers Ramabai felt desolate. She was frantically trying to find solace in a religion which could accommodate her social agenda and help her attain spiritual fulfilment. At this point she started to incline towards Christianity. Christianity promised egalitarianism and Ramabai felt that this would help her to go beyond the high caste widows and offer help to people in general irrespective of their caste and gender identity. Very soon Ramabai realised that in order to get medical education she would have to travel abroad. She started writing published a number of books namely Stree Dharma Niti and High Caste Hindu Women, in order to raise funds. These books emphasised more on women's need for self-cultivation as they performed the role of wife and mother. She also stressed upon the hardships faced by High Caste Hindu widow's especially enforced widowhood and child widow. In Stri Dharma Niti she guided women on how to nurture them for marriage, become an ideal companion to their husband and raise brave and responsible sons who would dedicate themselves in the ongoing freedom struggle. It might seem that Ramabai endorsed the picture of an ideal wife, but it also needs to be said that she believed in late marriage and freedom of women to choose one's partner. Stri Dharma Niti gained wide acclaim and was accepted by the Education Department as a text book for the schools set up for girls. So, it can be said that the book was in confirmation to the prevailing societal culture and values. In the High Caste Hindu Women-

Ramabai cited the Manu Dharma Shastra and revealed how the Brahmanic texts authorised and inflicted oppressive customs on high caste women. The book ended with Ramabai making an appeal to the Americans to come forward and help the Indian women in distress for the sake of humanity. (White 2022) Later on in her life when she visited England and America she wrote Cry of Indian Women. The book had details of the kind of oppression women faced due to child marriage and widowhood. This book also dealt largely with gender equality. As during this time, she was exposed to the progressive ideas of the West.

Ramabai's conversion to Christianity

When Ramabai reached England, she was moved by the rescue operations carried out by Sisters of the Community of St Mary the Virgin in London in order to help distressed women. She started believing that Christ could be the spiritual saviour who would enlighten the oppressed women in India. She thus converted to Christianity, breaking completely from the religious traditions of her ancestors. Such an act was not readily accepted by her countrymen. They blamed her as whimsical and traitor. The only person who justified her stand was Jyotiba Phule. He insisted that Ramabai was a learned woman who had seen for herself the atrocities inflicted on Hindu women in Indian society and thus had to distance herself from Brahmanic Hinduism. In England she studied natural sciences, mathematics and English and in return gave her services as a Sanskrit teacher.

After spending four years studying in England, Ramabai travelled to USA. She got acquainted with feminists from Philadelphia and Boston. Here she shared her dream of setting up a shelter for the downgraded high caste Hindu widows in India. Her plans made widespread appeal among the Americans, which ultimately led to the setting up of Ramabai Association of Boston which would provide monetary support for setting up training centres for women and printing text books for them. In America Ramabai was deeply influenced by reformists such as Lucy Stone and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who spoke out for women's rights and fought for their political rights. She felt that women in India must understand the importance of education in order to fight for their rights. Ramabai was convinced that the American model of Liberal democracy was ideal as it provided equal opportunities to all sections of the society, socially, politically and economically.

Address at Indian National Congress

Another pathbreaking incident in the life of Pandita Ramabai was her address at the Fifth Annual Indian National Congress in 1889. Bardlaugh invited her to address the Congress and she also took the initiative to gather few other women delegates to accompany her. The patriarchal Indian society believed that politics was not meant for women. But Ramabai was

resolute and unswerving while addressing the Congress. She spoke for women's rights. Like women should also be given the right to speech. She demanded that women should have right to choose the kind of lifestyle they wished to have after being a widow, since men never followed any religious norms after the death of their wives. (Jha 2020) Widowhood with all its evil practices should not enforced upon any women. Ramabai was convinced that if women are given an opportunity, many of them would gladly join their husbands in the fight for freedom. She mesmerised the audience with her insightful thoughts and her views gained recognition. Very soon Ramabai gained widespread national recognition and was invited for lectures in Chennai and the Central Provinces where she spoke out loud for gender equality. Even though society was largely hostile to her liberal thoughts, she relentlessly fought for the rights of women.

Sharada Sadan

Ramabai's dream was setting up a home for learning for the homeless widows. With the financial support of the Ramabai Association of America she was able to set up Saharada Sadan in Bombay in March 1889, an initiative which was so close to her heart. An institution which was one of a kind during that time. Ramabai can be regarded as a forerunner among the social reformers of Maharashtra who could convince the Western world and gather foreign funds for a cause that was very much indigenous. Ramabai had converted to Christianity and many doubted that foreign funding meant that the residents of Sharada Sadan would be converted to Christianity. She was fiercely criticised by Tilak for setting up an institution where women would live away from control of the male member of the family. It was obvious that even though widows were mostly neglected and unwanted in the families, men were not willing to loose control over them. Society doubted and critiqued Ramabai, but the fact remains that Sharada Sadan had paved the way for women's emancipation. Ramabai decided that Sharada Sadan would be secular and no religious teachings would be encouraged. The Sadan introduced its inmates with renewed ways of life. Ramabai insisted that widow remarriage could not possibly be the only recourse for widows. They should also have the opportunity to take up professions like teachers or nurses or workers. At Mukti Sadan in Kadgoan girls were taught weaving, dairy farming, cooking, gardening, running a printing a press etc. so that they could become self-sufficient. Ramabai's mission was to integrate widows into society where they were considered miserable and cursed. At Sharada Sadan she was able to boost the self esteem of the girls who lived there. The widows faced a lot of suffering and ostracism in their families and slowly they started to share their experiences with each other. The women who were previously victims now learnt to help and take care of each other through new ways of life. Sharada Sadan which was initially started for the widows became home for a lot of other women. She encouraged teaching Botany and studying the Universe with hands on practical

classes. She felt that such teaching methods would be much more comprehensive and the knowledge gained would never be forgotten. (White 2022)

Due to bubonic plague epidemic in Western India Ramabai shifted from Pune to Kadegaon and established Mukti Mission in 1889 on a farm in Kedgaon. Unlike Sharada Sadan this was a Christian organisation. This mission was called Mukti as it focused on the emancipation of young girls who were victims of child marriage and widowhood, it was their safe space. By 1907 Mukti had broadened its horizons. It had a school right from Kindergarten to High school, a hospital, a printing press etc. It also had training departments to develop income generating skills among its residents. For those with students with disabilities a deaf and dumb school was also introduced. In Kedgaon Ramabai gave shelter to women who struggled to survive during the famine that wrecked the Western and Central India. Many of these women did not belong to the upper castes.

Conclusion

Pandita Ramabai was a radical feminist social reformer. Unlike women of her times she was well read and spent most of her life travelling independently without the support or guidance of any male partner. She was a prolific writer who never received any formal education but could gather funds by selling her books. She was a deeply religious person and right from her childhood she got an opportunity to study religious texts which were prohibited for women. With her profound knowledge of Sanskrit texts, she could make a critique of the socio religious practices that were followed only to supress women and establish a patriarchal society. Ramabai can also be called an educationalist. Throughout her life she strived for introducing women education and women's rights. She travelled unassisted to the Western world and convinced the foreigners to donate for an Indian cause. She felt that the education in the right form should give the power of reason. She established institutions to improve the deplorable conditions of women and make them self-dependent and self-reliant. She introduced radical models of learning and empowerment in Sharada Sadan and Mukti Mission. In a male dominated public space she could successfully carve out a space for herself. In a society where the male reformers felt that it was their duty to emancipate the distressed women, Ramabai took upon herself to rescue women from the life of widowhood through her own personal experience. Even though she was criticised and branded as anti-national for her conversion to Christianity but it could not deter her from her path of social reform. The life and works of Ramabai can be regarded as the first wave of feminism in Western India. Being a woman of high caste herself, she fought tirelessly against patriarchy and worked for women's education and wanted them to have a self-confident public life. Studying her life, we get a glimpse of what it was to be a feminist during the colonial period.

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Role of Library in Promoting Quality Education in Higher Educational Institutions.

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Abstract

Libraries are integral part in promoting Quality Education in Higher Educational Institutions, serving as a dynamic hub for learning, research, and collaboration. This abstract explores the multifaceted contributions of libraries towards enhancing the educational experience in higher education settings. Libraries serve as repositories of knowledge, offering access to diverse collections of print and digital resources that support curriculum objectives and scholarly inquiry. The objectives of the study are to encompass the understanding of multifaceted contributions of libraries to academic success, analysing the impact of library resources and services on student learning outcomes, and identifying best practices for leveraging library resources effectively. Through a comprehensive review of scholarly literature, case studies, and empirical research, libraries' diverse contributions to the educational process are explored. Mixed Method Analysis is utilized to assess the efficacy of library programs in enhancing student engagement and academic achievement. The findings of Quantitative study state the level of student's satisfactions of their library in their educational institution, the findings of qualitative method, underscore the indispensable role of libraries in fostering a culture of inquiry, critical thinking, and lifelong learning within higher institutions. This study concludes by emphasizing the significance of evidence-based practices in optimizing library services and education, thereby enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education in the digital age.

Key words: *Library, Quality Education, Higher Education.*

Introduction

The role of libraries in higher education is of immense significance, as they are considered essential components of university education. The academic and research processes heavily rely on library networks for their success. Libraries are integral to the facilitation of educational programs, acting as essential resources in the teaching, learning, and research endeavours within Institutions of Higher Education. Library plays a crucial role in achieving the goals and objectives of the Higher Education. Top of Form Libraries stand as vast reservoirs of

knowledge, encompassing scholarly outputs accumulated over time. They not only preserve this wealth of academic content but also disseminate it across generations. Ranging from textbooks and research articles to theses and dissertations, libraries offer scholars a rich repository tailored to their specific interests. The scope of information resources transcends physical boundaries, with academic communities gaining access to a global array of documents. Moreover, the transition from print to digital media has expanded the avenues for accessing information, now accessible via cloud platforms. Libraries serve as indispensable mediators between knowledge and seekers, catering to the scholarly community's needs within their respective institutions. Neglecting or assigning low priority to libraries, as highlighted by the Kothari Education Commission (1964-65), can have detrimental effects on educational institutions. The Commission emphasized the vital role of libraries in higher education, underscoring their essential contribution to the successful implementation of educational programs. It highlighted how detrimental it is to ignore libraries and give them no importance. Academic library is the vital component which develops the teaching-learning and research activity (Bhagvanhai & Chaudhari 2018). The University Education Commission (1948-49), led by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, also emphasized the fundamental importance of libraries and laboratories in facilitating quality teaching. Radhakrishnan viewed libraries as the heart of university endeavours, vital for both research and educational activities. In his vision, libraries served as indispensable tools for students' learning, enabling them to explore higher branches of knowledge and engage in scholarly research effectively. In 1957 when S. R. Ranganathan participated in UGC agenda regarding 'Role of library in academic development he stated the pivotal role of libraries in academic development highlighting the enduring nature of libraries as the heart of education, ensuring the continuity of knowledge across generations. Ranganathan's "five laws of library science" provide timeless principles for maximizing library utilization, emphasizing the importance of accessibility, efficiency, and adaptation to evolving informational needs.

Amidst the advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and consistent support from government agencies like the UGC and ICAR, libraries continue to evolve as indispensable components of higher education. These agencies provide support to ensure optimal utilization of informational resources, aligning with Ranganathan's principles of library science. In today's context, the laws emphasize the dynamic nature of libraries and the imperative of efficiently managing burgeoning informational resources to meet the evolving needs of scholars and researchers.

Library and resource centre: The library is more than just a place for books; it is a key resource for learning and research. To strengthen quality education, it should include National and International Journals such as IJCRT, INSPA, KS, *SODH SAMIKSHA* etc. for the latest

research, a section for dissertations and thesis by students and teachers, books in multiple languages are to be available in the library to support all learners, and rare collections of old or out-of-print books, e-book, e-journals, magazines such as Careers 360 is India's largest Career counselling organization to help students take a more informed decision, Economic and Political Weekley, Prati Yogita Darpan English, etc. are more such, Newspapers and reputed magazines from organizations like NCERT and UGC keeps students updated on current trends and policies. These resources make the library a valuable centre for both preserving knowledge and supporting academic growth. An institutional Library should also organise thematic programme on scholar communication, orientation program, reference programme, for the upliftment of the quality education.

Review of Literature

Lan Yang (2011) emphasizes the vital role of libraries in promoting quality education in higher education institutions. The paper positions libraries as a "second classroom," contributing to students' moral, cultural, scientific, and technological development. The author outlines libraries' key functions: cultivating students' morals, enhancing scientific and cultural literacy, supporting professional and technical education, and improving overall student quality. The paper advocates for people-oriented management, modern service facilities, humanized services, and librarian capacity development to strengthen the library's educational function. The study concludes that libraries are indispensable for achieving comprehensive quality education, as they foster independent learning, creativity, and innovation among students.

Chaudhari (2018) provides insights, the instrumental role played by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in India in advancing libraries through initiatives like the Information and Library Network Centre (INFLIBNET).The development of the Software for University Libraries (SOUL) by INFLIBNET and the establishment of the *Shodhganga* database for citing theses from various Indian universities are highlighted as significant milestones in modernizing academic. Challenges in leveraging digital technologies and supporting Open Access Resources are acknowledged. Overall, the paper underscores libraries' vital contribution to knowledge dissemination and academic excellence in higher education.

Kuh and Gonyea (2023) examined the nature and value of students' experiences with the academic library. Its goal is to ascertain the distinctive ways in which libraries enhance the calibre of work students put forth and the progress they make while attending college. Its aim is to discover the unique contributions of library to the quality of effort students

expend in other educationally purposeful activities, the gains they report making during college, and their overall satisfaction with the college experience. Their study examines over 300,000 undergraduate students' experiences with academic libraries between 1984 and 2002 using the Questionnaire on College Student Experiences. Findings of the study show how use of the library by the students has evolved over time. The research emphasizes information-literacy's importance, suggesting campuses prioritizing it are more likely to produce information-literate graduates.

Kaur (2021) has given literature review, which examines the pivotal role of libraries in higher education, tracing their historical evolution and highlighting their multifaceted functions. The review emphasizes the transformative impact of technology on library services, underscores the importance of librarians as educators, and addresses emerging trends and challenges. Kaur's synthesis of scholarly literature provides a comprehensive understanding of how libraries serve as dynamic spaces for learning, research, and academic support within the higher education ecosystem, emphasizing their indispensable role in fostering academic excellence. In conclusion, Kaur's literature review provides a thorough explanation of the function of libraries in higher education, synthesizing key themes, trends, and challenges from a diverse range of scholarly sources, illuminating the multifaceted functions of libraries and their evolving significance in supporting teaching, learning, and research endeavours.

Parmar and Rajive (2019) discussed in their paper the pivotal role of libraries in advancing higher education, particularly within the context of government initiatives and technological advancements. It highlights various strategies employed by libraries, such as digital collection development and information literacy programs, to assist with research, teaching, and extension initiatives in universities. Additionally, the paper emphasizes the multifaceted roles played by libraries, including their function as educators, learning spaces, and knowledge managers. While providing valuable insights, the paper could benefit from further exploration of specific case studies and challenges faced by libraries in fulfilling their roles effectively. Overall, it serves as a comprehensive resource for understanding the evolving landscape of libraries in higher education and the importance of leveraging technology and governmental support to enhance academic endeavours.

Nworie *et al.* (2018) explore the role of academic libraries in advancing Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)—ensuring quality education and lifelong learning—through digital platforms. The authors argue that libraries contribute significantly to educational quality by offering digital reference services, information literacy training, and institutional repositories. They also emphasize the importance of social media engagement, mobile

technology integration, and digitization of archival materials to enhance accessibility and inclusiveness. The paper notes that achieving these goals requires institutional support, staff capacity building, and improved ICT infrastructure. By linking library innovation with sustainable educational development, the study highlights libraries as essential partners in achieving quality education in Nigeria.

M. K Abubakar's (2022) paper explores the often-overlooked role of academic libraries in enhancing teaching and learning for sustainable development in Nigeria. The author contends there have been substantial attempts to enhance instructional strategies and curricular content, the potential contributions of academic libraries remain underappreciated. Through a review of the literature and personal experience, the author emphasizes the value of well-run libraries in giving people access to information that is essential for efficient teaching, learning, and research. The author also suggests that academic libraries could handle the difficulties. The government faces in promoting high-quality education by utilizing social media and ICT literacy. While the paper offers valuable insights, further exploration of specific case studies and challenges faced by academic libraries would enhance its depth.

A. Ullah and Usman (2023) highlight that libraries serve as repositories of knowledge, providing access to diverse resources including books, journals, databases, and digital materials. They emphasize that libraries play a crucial role in facilitating research, promoting literacy, and creating conducive learning environments. Through methodologies utilizing subject-specific databases and targeted keywords, the authors demonstrate the significance of libraries in fostering academic success and lifelong learning among students and faculty in Pakistan's higher education landscape.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

From the review stated above it can be concluded can enormous study has been conducted on the role of library and it significance in the higher educational institutions, but very few or no importance has been given to the need of fostering and maintaining the library for promoting the quality education in the institutions of higher education.

Objectives

In order to collect the data, the researcher has constructed a Self-Standardised tool named as Student's Satisfaction Scale. The tool compromised of five items on the facilities provided in their Institutional Library and was analysed on the basis of 5 Point Likert Scale, namely, *Fully Satisfied, Partly Satisfied, Not Sure, Partly Dissatisfied, Fully Dissatisfied*. The data was collected from the sample was analysed by converting them into percentages. Item analysis

was done of each item. The obtained percentages were represented using a bar graph to draw conclusion regarding the presence of Role of Library in Promoting Quality Education in the institution.

Method of Analysis

The analysis was done in two parts. Firstly, for the first objective, a conceptual analysis was done by referring to various books, journals and thesis. Secondly, descriptive analysis was done of the data collected from the samples for second objective. For descriptive analysis, each statement had five options; namely, *Fully Satisfied, Partly Satisfied, Not Sure, Partly Dissatisfied, Fully Dissatisfied.* The data collected from the samples were analysed by converting them into percentages. Thereby the percentages of student's responses for each opinion were calculated for the analysis of the items. The percentages calculated were represented in a bar graph. This draws the conclusion regarding the presence of Role of Library in Promoting Quality Education in the institution.

Objective Wise Analysis:

OBJECTIVE 1

The objective of the paper was to analyse the Role of Library in Promoting Quality Education in Higher Educational Institution.

AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	ROLE OF LIBRARY IN PROMOTING QUALITY EDUCATION
Lovepreet Kaur	2021	The role of libraries in higher education: A literature review	• Academic libraries have always provided accountability for the training, knowledge access and consultation of faculty in the design of courses. • Libraries strive to offer networked resources to employees; they can support their students best in distant places
Bhagvanhai H. Chaudhari,	2016	The role of library in higher education	• Library emphasizes the equity as well as access to all who are keen to learn, read and conduct research work. • Libraries serve mankind, As using technology wisely to improve services, protecting open access to knowledge, and honouring the past and fostering the future.
George D. Kuh and Robert M. Gonyea	July 2023	The Role of the Academic Library in Promoting Student Engagement in Learning	• A key component of the institution's ability to fulfil its academic goal is the library. The academic library is especially regarded by students as a safe place that fosters academic success in cooperation with peers and ethnic backgrounds, much like the campus union offers a space for social events. The library provids valuable service for higher education students that is increasing in number

Seema Parmar	2019	Role of Libraries In Higher Education System In India In 21st Century Seema Parmar	• Leads in bringing Institutional Effectiveness • Enhance Professional Values in Users • Libraries serve as educational institutions on how to use the Internet effectively, and get necessary data, and seek scientific information efficiently, it also • In order to extend learning and foster new innovation and ideas, intellectuals are given a platform to engage with one another and share ideas.
Lan Yang	2011	Orientation and Functions of Library in Quality Education of College	• Libraries are the ideal environment for fostering students' moral development. • Libraries play a crucial role in enhancing students' scientific knowledge and overall cultural development. • Libraries are the Effective Helper for Developing Professional Technology Education. • The Open University system, online learning, and continuing education are all important components of the library's role in knowledge transmission and dissemination. . • The higher educational institution's libraries have assumed greater importance in a country like India where the majority of students, cannot afford books. • Its excellence is the extent to which its resources and services support the institution's academic pursuits.

From the Reviews it could be stated that in order to maximise the benefits of libraries, advancement of resources should be used, to benefit the students and adequate infrastructure has to be maintained. Good internet facilities have to be installed for the library. The institutional Libraries cannot be neglected otherwise it will bring down the quality of education and if these are maintained and managed well, will support future of higher education in India. Libraries, conversely, must prioritize user-centric approaches. Services should revolve around the needs of the users. To achieve these, libraries must establish clear priorities; such as, manage user expectations effectively and embrace innovative methods to deliver swift and reliable services. It is imperative for libraries to adopt new mechanisms that enable them to provide consistent and efficient services, thereby enhancing the user experience and meeting the evolving needs of their patrons.

Objective 2

The objective of the paper is to find out the Student's Satisfaction in their Institutions' Library for Promoting Quality Education.

In response to this object, data was collected and percentage was calculated of the responses and the results are represented graphically for the Interpretation of the data.

Table 7: Responses of students on Library

		ITEMS			
SCALE	**1. Peaceful Environment**	**2. Sufficient Books**	**3. Computers connected to speed Internet**	**4. Hassle-free Procedure**	**5. Updated Books and well maintained**
Fully satisfied	72%	36%	28%	33%	42%
Partly satisfied	19%	30%	23%	27%	19%
Not sure	5%	11%	25%	20%	20%
Partly dissaisfied	4%	19%	9%	11%	7%
Fully dissatisfied	1%	5%	15%	9%	12%

Figure 7: Graphical Representation of Students on Library

Observation

Item 1: Peaceful Environment

In this item 60% student are Fully Satisfied and 19% are Partly Satisfied while 5% are Not Sure and remaining 4% and 1% are Partly Dissatisfied and Fully Dissatisfied respectively.

Item 2: Sufficient Books

In this item 36% are Fully Satisfied while 30% is Partly Satisfied and 11% is Not Sure while 19% is Partly Satisfied and remaining 5% are Fully Dissatisfied with the statement that there are sufficient Books available in their Institutional Library.

Item 3: Computers are connected to speed Internet

In this item 28% are Fully Satisfied while 23% are Partly Satisfied and another 25% are Not Sure while the remaining 9% and 15% are Partly and Fully Dissatisfied respectively, with the speed of internet connection in their Library.

Item 4: Hassle-Free Procedure

In this item 33% are Fully Satisfied while 27% are Partly Satisfied and 20% is Not sure whether the Library has a Hassel free Procedures for issuing books and remaining 11% and 9% are Partly and Fully Dissatisfied respectively to the item.

Item 5: Books are Up-dated and well maintained

In this item 42% students are Fully Satisfied and 19% are Partly Satisfied while 20% are Not sure and the remaining 7% and 12% are Partly Dissatisfied and Fully Dissatisfied of the item that whether the books are updated and well maintained in their institutional Library.

Interpretation

The interpretations outline student perceptions of their Library in their institution. Majority of the students are fully satisfied with the peaceful environment of the library. Most students are also highly satisfied with the availability of books in the library. Significant number of students is fully satisfied with the high-speed internet in the library and internet connectivity. A substantial percentage of students find library procedures hassle-free. Only a few expressed uncertainty or dissatisfaction. The highest percentage of students are satisfied with the library's updated books and their maintenance, while some are uncertain or dissatisfied with the tranquillity and calmness of the environment.

Recommendations:

The institution has maintained the calm and peaceful ambience in the library. It also has considerably increased collection of books and optimized their distribution, with the hassle-free processes in the library. The Institution also acknowledges concerns of students with the fresh collection and maintenance of books. Measures are taken to ensure that the library's collection is updated and well-maintained. However, there is little Dissatisfaction addressed with the concerns raised by students on Internet speed. Overall, the analysis indicates more areas of satisfaction but still there are areas that need improvement. Tailoring interventions based on these insights can enhance the overall library experience for students. Regular feedback mechanisms can also help in continuously refining library services. The institution needs to setup with more high-speed connectivity to resolve the issues. Huge data download can be a reason for disturbed internet because more user and heavy download does affect the speed. The overall analysis indicates areas of satisfaction and areas that need improvement. Tailoring interventions based on these findings can enhance the overall library experience for students. Regular feedback mechanisms can also help in continuously refining library services

Conclusion

Libraries are crucial for education and should be an integral part of our learning system. They provide essential resources for students and for academic growth. Every country needs libraries to ensure that people have access to knowledge and have learning opportunities. Insufficient library facilities can hinder educational progress, so it is important to encourage their use by students and educators. Libraries play a vital role in offering resources to students, especially those in remote areas, through network services. Despite challenges in access and resource allocation, libraries strive to serve a diverse range of users and provide valuable support for curriculum development and academic consultation. Academic libraries are key in fostering learning environments and supporting faculty and students in their educational endeavours. They are essential for accessing information and promoting research. To conclude, libraries may adopt innovative approaches like online resources and distance education to better serve the needs of students and educators. These advancements can enhance the popularity and effectiveness of libraries in higher educational Institutions.

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The Caste-Class Question: A Review of Intersections and Contradictions

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to revisit and (re)interrogate the age-old caste and class question and thus delve into a critical inquiry of the existing scholarships concerning theoretical frameworks of caste. Breaking away from colonial (mis)interpretations and the subsequent *Dumontian* understanding of Indian society, this paper illustrates intricate relationships of caste with land, private property, division of labour and subsequent class relations. By doing so, the paper asserts that the socio-cultural attributes, such as, caste, are determined and shaped over the playfield of class relations.

Keywords: *Caste, Class, Dominant Caste, Division of Labour, Brahminical Approach, Marxist Perspective*

Introduction

The debate on whether caste or class is the primary reality in India has been a long-standing concern in Sociology (Gupta 1981: 2093). Some of the common misconceptions regarding caste and class in India are; "caste and class are polar opposites; caste is being replaced by class; caste is a rural phenomenon whereas class is found in urban-industrial settings; caste is an ascriptive system and class is based on the achievement principle; caste is a closed system and does not permit mobility for its members, whereas class is an open system and allows mobility for its members; India has/had a caste system, hence a 'caste model' for studying society; and the West has/had classes, hence a 'class model' for studying Western societies" (Sharma 1984: 1).

These ideas have their roots in the colonial dichotomy prevalent during the British and post-independence eras. The primary reason of this (mis)conceived dichotomy is that it is not based on people's observed or documented behaviour but rather on the beliefs held and expressed by specific segments of society. As understood in the classical texts, it gave caste a primary and universal significance. However, the fundamental unit of the system, the various

castes, which are thought to be non-antagonistic, are governed by a few more or less clearly stated principles or rules that govern the entire system (Sharma 1984: 2).

Indian society is a complex mesh of social, economic, and cultural elements. Amongst various social institutions, the caste system and class divisions hold a prominent place in determining individuals' social and economic status. In Indian history and society, it is often argued that caste and class are two distinct concepts. However, according to Hira Singh (2014), classes existed in India long before the caste system was fully developed, and the caste hierarchy was primarily built on the foundation of class relations. Singh supports this argument with reference to the emergence of the Brahmin and Kshatriya classes in the Vedic period. He explains that these two upper Varnas became dominant due to their control over crucial resources. The Brahmins managed religious and ritual authority, while the Kshatriyas held power over military and administrative structures (Singh 2014: 16). This material control predates the codification of the caste system and laid the groundwork for the later solidification of these divisions into a rigid, hereditary hierarchy. Singh's argument suggests that the caste system was not an independent or purely religious phenomenon, but a structural response to pre-existing class relations, wherein economic and power disparities were ideologically legitimized and institutionalized through religious and social systems.

The aim of this paper is to revisit and re-interrogate the age-old caste and class questions. Thus delve into a critical inquiry of the existing scholarships concerning theoretical frameworks of caste. Breaking away from colonial mis-interpretations and the subsequent Dumontian understanding of Indian society, this paper illustrates intricate relationships of caste with land, private property, division of labour and subsequent class relations. By doing so, the paper asserts that the socio-cultural attributes, such as, caste, are determined and shaped over the playfield of class relations. In Gramscian terms, this can be better understood as the relationship between base and superstructure, where class relations act as the base and caste as a part of the superstructure (Gramsci 1971: 377). At the same time, it is important to note that the relationship between base and superstructure, class and caste in this case, is not neatly compartmentalised. It is a dialectical relationship which continuously configurates and shapes each other, with class relations acting as the foundational determinant. This approach to study the caste-class question reopens further avenues to conduct research and understand the changing dynamics of the Indian society today.

Methods and Methodology: Reading the Caste-Class Question

This paper adopts a critical review methodology, seeking to re-examine the caste-class question not through isolated textual analysis but through a layered engagement with theoretical frameworks, field studies, and historical material. The approach is rooted in the conviction

that the caste question cannot be adequately addressed without a dialectical understanding of its relationship to class relations, a methodological choice aligned with the Marxist tradition of historical materialism (Desai 1981: 13-14; Singh 2023: 62).

The texts chosen for this review are not incidental but selected for the way they have shaped or challenged dominant academic narratives. Work of Louis Dumont's Homo Hierarchicus (1970), which laid foundation to the study, was engaged with for their lasting influence on the 'Brahminical' framing of caste, whereas the sociological interventions of Béteille (1965), Srinivas (1959) and Gupta (1981) provide crucial correctives from the 'field-view' perspective. To counterbalance the ascriptive-idealist lens of much early sociological writing, this paper turns to scholars like Kosambi (1965) and Sharma (1980). Their historical analyses ground caste hierarchies in evolving economic and political contexts.

At each step, the focus has been to foreground the dialectics of social structures rather than accepting static categories. Particular attention has been paid to ethnographic studies and economic histories which illuminate the ways caste is articulated through land ownership, labour division, and political control (Bardhan 1984: 88-90; Jeffrey 2000: 121). This methodological framework deliberately blends textual analysis with empirical studies to avoid the pitfalls of both abstraction and anecdote.

Thus, this paper is not a linear literature review but an iterative process of reading caste through class, emphasising those texts, in which they attempt to question the ideological partitioning of these categories.

Structured Overview of the Argument

In order to critically interrogate the caste-class question through both theoretical and empirical lenses, this paper unfolds through a structured sequence of sections. Each of these sections is built upon the previous section. The first substantive section, "Caste as Primordial Reality: The Dumontian Legacy", opens with a critique of the Brahminical approach, particularly Louis Dumont's influential thesis that caste is a self-sustaining and ideologically closed system rooted in Hindu ritual hierarchies. This section highlights the limitations of this framework in accounting for the socio-economic dimensions of caste.

The second section, "The Concept of the Dominant Caste", engages with M. N. Srinivas' formulation of the 'dominant caste' and its subsequent critiques. The discussion emphasizes how the 'dominant caste' category masks underlying class relations and inadvertently shifts focus away from the material foundations of social power.

The third section, "Class, Caste, and Power: Understanding the Rural Landscape", explores the intersection of caste, class, and power through ethnographic studies, particularly in rural

settings. This section demonstrates how the entrenchment of economic inequalities – especially in terms of land ownership and political clout – underpins the persistence of caste hierarchies.

The fourth section, "Caste and Land: The Role of Private Property", traces the evolution of caste relations in connection with the transformation of land tenure systems, particularly the feudal and post-feudal arrangements that consolidated the economic dominance of certain caste groups.

The fifth section, "Occupational Guilds, Tribe-Caste Continuum, and Caste-Class Interplay", revisits the historical emergence of caste from occupational formations and tribal social structures, unpacking the class dimensions embedded within these transitions.

The sixth section, "Division of Labourers", investigates the hereditary nature of the division of labour in the caste system, and its centrality to the reproduction of class-based exploitation – reinforcing both social immobility and economic inequality.

The seventh section, "Marxist Perspective on Caste", reaffirms the importance of historical materialism as an analytical framework to interrogate caste beyond its surface-level manifestations, challenging idealist and cultural explanations.

The eighth section, "Class Relations and the Caste System", synthesizes the theoretical arguments developed earlier by revisiting the relationship between class structures and the evolution of caste hierarchies. Drawing on both classical and contemporary Marxist scholarship, this section argues that caste has always functioned as a historically specific mode of class domination, rather than as a *sui generis* social order.

Finally, the Conclusion consolidates the critique by restating the argument that caste, rather than being an autonomous or cultural system, is deeply embedded in and conditioned by class relations and must be studied accordingly for both academic clarity and emancipator politics.

Caste as Primordial Reality: The Dumontian Legacy

The two primary paradigms of understanding caste are the Brahminical and Marxist approaches. The Brahminical approach believes castes to be the primordial reality of Indian society, as derived from the Dumontian understanding of the Hindu ideology, and establishes a strict hierarchy based on ritual purity. This hierarchy is absolute, with power being of secondary importance.

The Dumontian understanding of Indian society emerges from the Weberian differentiation between class and status, with caste falling under the latter category. However, Weber's characterization of class and status is somewhat ambiguous, particularly regarding the long-term differences between the two. While economic power stabilization is essential for status

usurpation, it also creates a precarious situation. Unfortunately, Weber's conceptualization does not resolve this ambiguity (Singh 2014: 1).

As per the Brahminical approach, caste is a unique status group defined by a specific characteristic. Customs, laws, and rituals all work together to maintain caste distinctions, which results in ritual impurity if there is any physical interaction between people from different castes. This stigma can only be resolved through religious acts. The caste system is thus believed to be a psychological manifestation, perpetually binding down the inhabitants of India. To bring about a more just, egalitarian and progressive order, caste sentiment or belief in the caste system needs to be erased from the minds of Indians (Gupta 1981: 2094).

Gupta (1981: 2096) notes that the caste system cannot be explained as a mental embodiment as it resulted from a long historical process that involved constant competition between various communities for political and economic power. The Brahmin's authority in spiritual matters has been challenged frequently, and even the spiritual leader's role was not always a Brahmin's prerogative. He further suggests that the legitimating of kingship was primarily political and economic, with the role of the priest suppressing the secular nature of kingly power. A king's peers provided political and military support necessary for rule.

While Weber argues that India's lack of feudalism can be attributed to the caste system, which places the Brahmin at the highest spiritual authority, Thapar (2002: 63) suggests that the clan concept organizes the Hindu social structure. Further, one major flaw in Weber's perspective on feudalism in India and the West is that he only considers the political relationships between landlords and ignores the relationships between serfs and landlords, which is the fundamental basis of feudalism. Instead, he separates a specific cultural trait, fealty, from its structural foundations, making it the hallmark of feudalism. Weber posits that Western society progressed from tribalism to slavery, then to serfdom (feudalism), and ultimately to capitalism. On the other hand, the Indian society, structured by the caste system rooted in Hinduism, did not progress beyond the tribal stage (Singh 2014: 15).

The Hindu religion has shaped the issue of caste consciousness in India and continues to be influenced by it to this day. However, it is essential to note that caste stratification in India is not solely based on religion, particularly Hinduism. Suraj Bandopadhyay and Donal Von Eschen (1991: 354) state that studies on stratification often differentiate between three static or cross-sectional dimensions, that is, economic class, status, and power; and one dynamic or temporal dimension i.e. social mobility. A system may be stratified along each of the static dimensions. However, these dimensions can intersect, resulting in an individual's low position on one being counterbalanced by a higher position on another, which prevents the overall system from being excessively stratified. Conversely, a system could be highly stratified concerning the

static dimensions because they tend to coincide while experiencing significant social mobility over time, thus negating the system's classification as highly stratified.

The Concept of the Dominant Caste

Srinivas' (2009) concept of the 'dominant caste' includes the six characteristics of a significant amount of arable land in the region, numerical strength, and a high position in the social hierarchy, as well as access to urban resources, administrative positions, and western education has faced challenges in the rural society. In rural society, all of these characteristics are secondary or tertiary manifestations of the formation of the upper-class stratum. However, these traditional scholars, similar to colonial administrators, baulked at acknowledging class relationships. As a result, since not all six of the caste's attributes must be present in a single caste entity, as its originator later admitted, the class was forced into a nebulous identity of the 'dominant caste' (Srinivas 2009: 75).

André Béteille (1991: 3-28) argued that the caste system's rigidity and hierarchical nature creates a power dynamic, leading to economic and political conflicts. He proposed modifying the traditional caste model, emphasizing the role of economic and political conflict in shaping the caste structure. He further states that, with the aid of certain scholars, the 'casteisation' of society is now advancing to the level of high politics. On the other hand, caste is increasingly being recognized at low politics as an identification within the class stratum in which its members belong. In reality, the upper echelons of politics have been much infiltrated by the promoted false consciousness, created by both politicians and scholars, that even the Mandal Commission designated caste as the standard for social backwardness in India (Béteille 1991: 12).

Class, Caste and Power: Understanding the Rural Landscape

In his seminal work, 'Caste, Class, and Power' (1965), André Béteille offers a nuanced analysis of the relationship between caste, class, and power in rural India, challenging prevailing narratives on social stratification. Béteille's study focuses on a South Indian village, the village of Kottayam, and provides an ethnographic examination of how caste hierarchies intersect with class structures to maintain social inequality.

Béteille contends that while caste continues to be a dominant form of social stratification, it is deeply intertwined with economic factors. His work reveals how the elite classes in the village maintain their dominance not only through traditional caste-based social structures but also through control over economic resources, such as land. He stresses that class relations are central in understanding power dynamics, but caste continues to play a crucial role in determining the distribution of power and privilege.

One of Béteille's major contributions is his analysis of how social mobility is constrained by both caste and class, showing that even though economic mobility might seem possible through changes in occupation or wealth, it is significantly limited by the rigid caste system that continues to affect individuals' opportunities and access to power.

The three static dimensions, namely, class, status, and power, exhibit steep stratification and are closely aligned, with social mobility remaining relatively low over the long term. When examining economic stratification, a significant gap in data emerges, particularly in rural contexts. Rural census and survey data often fail to adequately capture the extent of economic inequalities, primarily due to the limitations of large-scale surveys in addressing the nuances of rural life. This gap in data leads to an incomplete picture of the true economic stratification within rural communities. For example, anthropological village studies, such as those conducted by Béteille (1965) in his study of a Tanjore village, provide a more nuanced understanding of rural inequality by focusing on the intersection of caste and class in determining access to resources, land ownership, and political power. These studies reveal significant inequalities that are often overlooked by aggregate census data. For instance, while census data may categorize individuals broadly by income brackets or occupational categories, they often fail to capture the informal power structures within villages that significantly influence economic outcomes. In contrast, ethnographic studies document the stark disparities in landholding patterns, the monopolization of resources by certain caste groups, and the hierarchical control of village politics, which perpetuate economic inequality. Thus, anthropological research highlights the importance of looking beyond formal data to understand the full extent of economic stratification, providing a more complete view of the social fabric in rural India.

The correlation between caste and class remains strong in rural areas due to the inheritance of land, buildings, and jewellery, primarily passed down through generations. This inheritance system is a significant factor in maintaining economic power within certain caste groups. The new occupational structure has created more opportunities for lower castes to advance, but well-paying jobs remain disproportionately accessible to those from higher-caste backgrounds. As Béteille (1965: 54) notes, upper castes are often given preference by employers due to their historical possession of literacy and educational skills, which have been critical in accessing better employment opportunities. Despite shifting occupational structures and some degree of social mobility, the villagers continue to maintain a strong connection between caste and class by aligning a caste's status with its evolving economic achievements (Béteille 1965: 63). This phenomenon underscores the ongoing relevance of caste as a determinant of economic position and social power, despite the modernizing influence of changing job markets.

The majority of villages have highly structured, pyramidal patron-client networks, where the majority of villagers are clients of a small number of elite family cliques, each of which is typically well organized internally. This structure is deeply embedded in the political fabric of rural India, where elite families exert significant control over local institutions. As Béteille (1965: 78) argues, these ruling families often dominate all aspects of village life, including the panchayats, and have such strong connections with the state that many believe they can commit crimes without facing punishment. In contrast, most villagers are disorganised, with few formal connections, and they are often excluded from co-operatives or other formal associations. As Jeffrey (2000: 121) notes, the elite families' control over the village's economy and politics creates a system of patronage that limits political participation from the general population. The majority of villagers, on the other hand, hardly engage in politics at all and frequently harbour fear towards government officials and politically influential families in their communities, perceiving the latter as corrupt and self-serving. This disconnect between the elite and the common villagers often leads to a lack of political agency among the rural poor, with many being wary of political participation and viewing it as a tool for elite self-preservation rather than genuine societal progress (Béteille 1965: 78; Jeffrey 2000: 121).

Power and caste are closely related, with the powerful being from higher castes. The wealthy, upper caste neighbourhood got most of the drinking wells, while the lower class; lower caste neighbourhood lacked and needed such sources. The relationship between power, class, and caste is complex and bidirectional. Power is critical in achieving wealth and high caste status, increasing power, class, and caste status. In the rural society of the study area, class, status, and power are highly stratified and closely connected. However, could social mobility play a role in moderating this system over time? The empirical data suggests otherwise. The mobility data yields three significant conclusions, which are relatively uncommon in quantitative studies of rural India.

The villages have just recently experienced much change. As Béteille (1965: 80) observes, rural villages in India have been undergoing significant transformations due to economic shifts, political developments, and social reorganization. The recent mobility that has taken place is primarily structural rather than exchange-based. Exchange mobility is often considered the most accurate indicator of a stratification system's effectiveness, whereby some individuals fall in social position, while others rise to take their place (Weber 1978: 229). However, most movement in the villages has only been structural, linked to shifts in the arrangement of positions within the social hierarchy. As Béteille (1965: 75) points out, structural mobility results from changes in the relative proportions of desired and undesirable positions within the village. Such shifts often occur when certain positions gain or lose economic value or when new positions emerge within the community due to economic or political developments. This

type of mobility, therefore, reflects the overall reorganization of the social structure rather than individual upward or downward movement within the established hierarchy.

The limited exchange mobility in rural areas has reinforced the strong connection between class, caste, and power, as it has primarily involved upper-caste families moving up and lower-caste families moving down (Béteille 1965: 78). Members of the upper castes leverage their preferential access to government services such as irrigation, modern agricultural inputs, and high-paying non-agricultural jobs to enhance their status (Béteille 1965: 85). Recently, however, there has been some movement in the opposite direction, with lower-caste individuals gaining access to better opportunities. This shift, though gradual, is beginning to polarize the rural economy, further entrenching economic disparities along caste lines and potentially deepening social divisions (Jeffrey 2000: 142). This is contrary to the expectations of many authors (Chakravarti 1993: 58; Desai 2007: 112), who believed that the emergence of a new occupational structure would weaken the connection between caste and class.

Caste and Land: The Role of Private Property

Singh (2014: 14) states that India transitioned during the Vedic period. Religious and secular beneficiaries gained control over land and other agricultural resources during this time, creating two main classes: landlords, who held land grants, and peasants, who were the primary producers. The landlords limited the peasants' unrestricted access to lands. As a result, two classes were established: dependent peasants, who were allowed to own land in exchange for tributes and rent, and landlords, who held a monopoly on economic and political power, giving rise to a system of feudalism.

Indian land grants were characterised by several features that reflected their feudal nature. One such feature was primogeniture, which was enforced as a mechanism to ensure that the estate was not divided among heirs, thereby enabling it to fulfil the public duties associated with these land grants. Primogeniture was also seen as prioritising the ruling class's interests over familial ones. This practice ensured that the estate remained intact and cohesive, which would have compromised its productivity and ability to serve the public good. This feudal system of land grants was, therefore, designed to maintain the power and influence of the ruling class while also ensuring that the land remained productive and served the needs of society.

The distinction between private property and chieftship was significant within Hindu legal doctrine. Chiefship, as defined in anthropological studies, (e.g., Clastres, 1977: 78), refers to a form of political leadership that is distinct from private property systems. According to this principle, the chiefship was exempt from the division of private property, which followed the

principle of primogeniture. As per this principle, in matters of private property, each son would receive an equal share of the family estate, while the chiefship was considered the property of the public domain, and its owner was required to perform the duties of a royal official.

Occupational Guilds, Tribe-Caste Continuum, and Caste-Class Interplay

Nirmal Kumar Bose's (1961) idea of caste emerging from the formation of occupational guilds offers a sociologically grounded understanding of caste beyond the rigidity of ritual status alone. According to Bose (1961: 20-25), castes in India historically evolved out of professional groups that functioned as self-regulating guilds. These occupational communities often bore internal cohesion, endogamy, and autonomy in work-related affairs. Over time, as these guilds settled into more static and intergenerational occupations, they acquired ritual identities and social rankings, gradually giving rise to caste formations. Importantly, Bose's formulation challenges the notion of caste as a purely religious or ideological system; instead, he locates its emergence in material, productive relations. This perspective resonates with Dumont's (1970) critique but departs from it by rooting caste in economic life rather than in ideology alone.

The 'tribe-caste continuum', a concept further elaborated by anthropologists, namely, Bailey (1960) and Srinivas (1966), is equally crucial for understanding caste-class interplay. In several regions, especially in the colonial and early postcolonial periods, tribal communities began to mimic caste-based practices to gain access to land rights, state patronage, or social legitimacy. This process, sometimes described as 'Sanskritisation', did not imply a unidirectional movement towards caste hierarchy but rather a strategic adaptation to socio-economic conditions. As Xaxa (1999: 1519-1520) notes, these transformations were driven by external pressures such as land alienation, the integration into market economies, and political restructuring. The overlap and mutual influence between caste and tribe thus reflect a dynamic socio-economic interplay rather than a rigid dichotomy.

This continuum also illustrates the broader class implications of caste in India. As peasant groups or tribal communities were absorbed into the agrarian structure, often through state-mediated processes of land settlement or forest clearing, they encountered a hierarchy not only of ritual purity but also of property and labour relations. Caste groups thus came to mirror class distinctions, where dominant castes controlled land and surplus extraction, while subordinated castes or tribes provided labour. This fusion of caste and class is evidenced in regions, such as, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, where tribal peasantries were progressively proletarianzed and ritual status became an idiom for class subordination (Bardhan 1984: 88-90).

In summing up, the historical emergence of caste through occupational guilds and the tribe-caste continuum are both embedded in material transformations, namely, land control,

occupational division and political economy. These formations cannot be understood without a critical estimation of how caste structures were continuously shaped by and in turn structured class relations.

Division of Labour/ Labourers

Human society produces various forms of social existence through social labour across multiple domains of activity. The division of labour refers to how social labour is organized and can be classified as mental and manual, skilled and unskilled, clean/unclean, supervisory/non-supervisory, coercive/non-coercive, and activities about the base or superstructure. Hereditary forms of labour division, such as the caste system in India gave birth to social classes or groups that control the means of production and impose social laws that govern a particular division of labour in the form of a caste system (Bapuji 2009: 339-356).

Individuals from the lower castes face resource scarcity, limiting their capacity to engage in productive activities. These resources are primarily controlled by the upper castes, which constitute only a tiny fraction of the population. As a result, the majority of individuals in the lower castes are constrained to perform menial and often unpleasant manual labour. Conversely, the majority of skilled labour that demands both physical and intellectual expertise is performed by those in the upper castes (Ranganayakamma 2002).

Ranganayakamma further argues that to address the issue of 'caste' in society, it is necessary to reform the traditional division of labour and eliminate the private ownership rights over the means of production held by the upper castes. With the elimination of this system, upper caste individuals who are not currently employed will join the workforce. The old division of labour will be abolished as a result, resulting in the lower castes being forced into mental labour and the upper castes into manual labour. It is essential to adjust the division of labour so that each person can perform specific types of manual and mental labour, including dirty jobs that are both less and more filthy, for society to function correctly. This shift also involves inter-caste marriages and other superstructural changes, which, however, cannot occur unless there is a drastic change in property relations and the current division of labour (Ranganayakamma 2002).

Marxist Perspective on Caste

In his Presidential Address delivered at the 15th All India Sociological Conference held at Meerut, A. R. Desai proposed and explained the relevance of the Marxist approach to the study of Indian society. He addresses his critics and explains his arguments as follows:

"I would like to draw attention to a deep prejudicial attitude among scholars to the Marxist approach. It is commonly believed that Marxism is a form of naive economic determinism,

or that it treats economic factor as the sole factor determining every aspect of human life. Marx, as we have seen even in his preliminary formulation, is not trying to reduce everything in economic terms. In fact, he was engaged in pointing out crucial importance of the basic activity, namely, the activity of producing things, for survival and persistence of mankind. He was rather attempting to uncover the inter-relationship between this basic activity, characterised as "economic" activity and other activities, and forms of organizations commonly described as "non-economic" in the totality of social existence by pointing out how social relations of production i.e. property relations which shape the vital activity needed for very survival, persistence and development of human species, should be viewed as axial for understanding any society and the changes that take place within it. Marx also pointed out that different subformations within a society would be understood adequately if seen in the context of the historical level of means of production and the nature of property relations which shape and provide the resource availability and resource allocation for different institutions constituting that society" (Desai 1981: 13-14).

As we can clearly see here, Desai was well aware of the caricature of Marxism projected as naive economic determinism. In response, he presented a holistic and sociologically relevant Marxist approach.

The Marxist perspective on the caste system emphasizes socio-historical factors, instead of the idea that it originated from the Hindu mind. Marxism views the caste system as a system that developed and crystallized over time and served to rationalize and legitimize a system of exploitation.

Class Relations and the Caste System

To fully understand the nature and evolution of the caste system in India, it is essential to consider the role of class relations. The caste system has undergone many changes throughout its history, and shifts in the underlying class structure of Indian society have been the main driving force behind these changes. Scholars such as D. D. Kosambi and R. S. Sharma have shown that caste hierarchies often mirrored the material relations of production and control over surplus. Kosambi (1965: 111-115) emphasized the importance of changes in agrarian relations, urbanization and trade, in shaping caste formations. Similarly, Sharma (1980: 25-31) illustrated how land ownership and the rise of feudal relations during the early medieval period transformed caste into a mechanism of surplus extraction and labour control. More recently, sociologists such as Javeed Alam (1999) and Dipankar Gupta (2000) have argued that caste persists in modern India not in spite of, but through, its adaptation to capitalist development and electoral politics. Alam (1999: 18-21) points to the incorporation of caste into democratic mobilization, while Gupta (2000: 73-76) demonstrates how caste identity is reconfigured under market forces, revealing a continuing entanglement between caste and class.

The basis of caste, according to Singh (2023: 63), is the monopoly of the means of production and subsistence. The basis of the caste system and the basis for the exploitation, marginalisation, and stigmatisation of the Dalits lies, on the one hand, with absolute reliance of the Dalits on the dominant castes for their survival; together with the monopoly of political power and cultural influence/ideologies by the dominant castes, on the other. More importantly, according to Singh (2023: 62), only the Marxist approach possesses the ideas, theoretical framework and methodology necessary to deconstruct caste due to the interaction of political, cultural, and ideological elements from a broad historical perspective. The first step towards decolonising the sociology of caste is to replace the trans-historical, cultural, and religious view of caste that characterises mainstream sociology with a historical-materialist approach, which is a prerequisite for the theory of caste and the praxis of caste annihilation.

Conclusion

In the preceding sections, the author has dealt with the existing scholarship as to how the categories of caste and class are sought to be defined and related to each other. As discussed, the two primary paradigms of understanding caste are the Brahminical and Marxist approaches. The Brahminical approach believes castes to be the primordial reality of Indian society, as derived from the Dumontian understanding of the Hindu ideology, and establishes a strict hierarchy based on ritual purity. Caste is considered as a self-sustaining and ideologically closed system rooted in Hindu ritual hierarchies. This Brahminical approach, which we call Dumontian in the discipline of sociology, is also colloquially translated as 'Brahminism' in the arena of social and political discourses.

There are limitations of the Dumontian framework in accounting for the socio-economic dimensions of caste, as highlighted in the discussions on private property, labour, dominant caste, etc. The Dumontian framework and subsequent derivations have thus rightly been criticised by scholars ranging from post-colonial, structural-functionalist to Marxist schools (Khare 2009); ultimately leading to the triumph of the 'field-view' over 'book-view' of caste (Jodhka 1998: 324). This shift reflects a broader conceptual journey in caste studies, from viewing caste as a static, textual and pan-Indian system rooted in Brahminical ideology and to understand it as a dynamic, locally embedded structure shaped by everyday social and economic relations (Srinivas 1955; Beteille 1965; Jodhka 1998: 324). At the same time, this scholarly engagement and development has failed to travel beyond the boundaries of academia, with the socio-political arena still being overwhelmed with a 'Brahminical' school of thought and its religio-cultural critique.

Marx and Engels had famously said, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx and Engels 1986: 35). The philosophy and approach of

historical materialism was subsequently established as a universalist framework to study origins and development of various societies from antiquity to present. On the other hand, colonial and orientalist frameworks sought to establish 'uniqueness' of the colonized East in contrast to the 'civilized' West, resulting in the myth that India is a caste society, which cannot be fully comprehended by utilising frameworks and tools of class analysis. An asterisk was put over "all hitherto existing society*", marking India and the East as excluded.

Indian societies, just like any other society, are a product of historical transformations in political economy and continue to be shaped by the same. The socio-cultural attributes, like caste, are determined and shaped over the field of class relations. The dominance of a particular caste is not edged in stone but is constantly contested and negotiated. Rapidly changing class relations, owing to deeper penetrations of market economy, has resulted in newer assertions and coping-up mechanisms.

This paper also contests the category of 'dominant caste', as conceptualized by sociologists (Srinivas 1959: 1). The definitions of 'dominant caste' sought to adopt various facets of class analysis; without committing to the philosophy and method of class analysis per se. This obscured a thorough study of class reality of India and instead presented to us a distorted 'caste-view' of Indian societies. The debate on caste studies got stuck between the frameworks of 'book-view' and 'field-view' (Jodhka 1998: 324), but a critical inquiry of the overall encompassing paradigm of 'caste-view' needs to be undertaken.

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Thresholds of Pain and Passage: War and Immigration in Lisa See's *Shanghai Girls*

Bula Rani Howlader

Abstract

No (normative) history of any Nation tells the complete tale of the Nation, especially the tale behind the facts and beyond the facts. Chinese history is no exception. China, the second largest Asian country, has experienced multifarious social, political and economic upheavals since the early twentieth century. Historically, China was ruled by several imperial dynasties starting from 221 BCE till the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912. Later, it became a republican country. However, the relative peace of the prolonged Qing dynasty was disrupted by the anti-imperialist Boxer Rebellion, which ultimately led to the end of the Chinese monarchy and the birth of the Chinese Republic. This transition, however, ushered in a period of turbulence, including the Chinese Civil War in 1927 and the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. Official Historical records mention these facts, but the atrocities committed against the civilians are not acknowledged in the mainstream historical discourse of both China and Japan. Lisa See, a Chinese-American writer, in her 2009 novel Shanghai Girls, uncovers war as a gendered trauma and immigration as a struggle that constructs fractured yet resilient identities. It examines the Chinese immigrants' experience in America in the light of this narrative against the backdrop of the War.

Key Words: *war, atrocity, Chinese, American, immigrant, experience*

Introduction: No (normative) history of any Nation tells the complete tale of the Nation, especially the tale behind the facts and beyond the facts. Chinese history is no exception. China, the second-largest Asian country, has experienced multifarious social, political and economic upheavals since the early twentieth century. Historically, China was ruled by several imperial dynasties starting from 221 BCE till the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912. Later, it became a republican country. However, the relative peace of the prolonged Qing dynasty was disrupted by the anti-imperialist Boxer Rebellion, which ultimately led to the end of the Chinese monarchy and the birth of the Chinese Republic. This transition, however, ushered in a period of turbulence, including the Chinese Civil War in 1927 and the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. Official Historical records mention these facts, but the atrocities committed

against the civilians are not acknowledged in the mainstream historical discourse of both China and Japan. Lisa See, a Chinese-American writer, in her 2009 novel Shanghai Girls, uncovers war as a gendered trauma and immigration as a struggle that constructs fractured yet resilient identities. It examines the Chinese immigrants' experience in America in the light of this narrative against the backdrop of the War. It portrays the conflict between the promise of the 'American dream' and the reality of exclusion and destitution of Chinese immigrants' experience, featuring cultural dislocation, systemic racism and challenges of adaptation.

War and Immigration: War has always been perceived as having a profound impact on shaping the pattern of numerous changes, including immigration, which is often a crucial issue during or after war, as immigration often becomes a survival measure. In chapter 2, "The forces drive International Migration" of their book *The Age of Migration*, Castles and Miller refer to war as one of the driving forces of migration, as war involves armed conflicts, persecution and human rights abuses (Castles and Miller 70-71). This denotes forced migration does not make immigration just a demographic shift, but it reflects the tension between global politics, economy and cultural aspects. This alliance is intricate as both phenomena are multifaceted. War can be categorized into different forms, but all of them pertain to humanitarian distress and hardship. War is large-scale political violence that involves issues of trauma, memory, displacement, loss, refugees, forced migrants & immigration. After or even during each war, there are varied routes of migration which end up in a considerable number of immigrants. A huge number of immigrants make the political environment of a Nation unsteady and insecure on the part of the nation of immigration. The United States, which is known as the nation of immigration, though it claims to be a multicultural and transnational 'melting pot,' was never free from the conundrum of immigration. Immigration disrupts ethnic and religious integrity or 'fractionalization' as mentioned by Gebremedhin and Mavisakalyan (Gebremedhin and Mavisakalyan, 2013: 319). Since immigration takes a toll-like social discord and aggressive friction among different ethnic groups and communities, the government of the nation concerned begins 'preventive militarization' (Gebremedhin and Mavisakalyan, 2013: 318). Ward's article titled "Immigration after the War" shows the concern over the 'Eugenic Problem' faced by the United States. He comments regarding the Great European War that,

"There is widespread anxiety concerning the "dumping" of cheap European goods on our markets after the war is over. Goods from abroad concern pocketbooks only. Human beings from abroad enter into our national life. They contribute to the blood of the future American people. They determine what our race is to be. It is the cargo of men, and woman, and children, not the cargoes of goods that are the real problem" (Ward, 1917: 147)

Chinese (Human) Cargos & Immigration: Chinese Immigration in the USA dates to the middle of the 19th century. There is always a "pull" and "push" factor in the case of immigration in any nation, and the Chinese had a history of immigration as they had travelled the world for centuries. The California Gold Rush was one of the major "pull" factors for Chinese immigrants in the 19th century. They heard stories of the gold coming out of the mountains, and they wanted to try their luck by having the riches. The 'California Gold Rush' era witnessed a rapid migration due to a sudden surge in the economy of the United States, which caused a rapid migration from all corners of the world to the United States. Once the gold rush ended, the Chinese migrants became cheap labourers, mostly in the industrial sector. In the last quarter of the 19th century, these Chinese American labourers became the most skilled labourers in the United States, but the economic depression of the 1870s caused massive unemployment and extreme antagonism towards the Chinese Americans. Then came a mighty blow on the Chinese people, as in 1882, the American Government banned Chinese immigration by passing the Chinese Exclusion Act. Until 1943, when China became an ally of America in World War II, the Chinese people not only faced negative and hostile attitudes towards them but also legal restrictions in the immigration process due to the Exclusion Act. This is the political trajectory that See has set for the plot of her story. Pearl and May's journey from war-ravaged China through the immigration station at Angel Island to their settlement in the United States illustrates that migration during wartime involves multiple steps. It is an ongoing process involving the social, economic and political conditions of the nation, hence a collective phenomenon. In the global and transnational context, migration is driven by economic deprivation or economic upliftment, geographical preferences, employment opportunities, etc, but wartime migration concerns violence, persecution, destruction of properties and other resources. Migration caused by war includes refugees, displaced people within the nation, asylum seekers and the growth of diaspora. As such, war and migration work as a cycle. War configures the global refugee flows, Diasporas and identity politics. The devastation of the Second Sino-Japanese War and their eventual arrival in America brings into focus the Chinese Exclusion Act between the period 1882-1943. During this time, on the one hand, Chinese Americans were suffering the unfavourable attitude of the American public and Government; on the other hand, Chinese people were living in the threat of the opposition of their allies, namely, Japan. In 1943, before the repealation of the Chinese Exclusion Act, ordinary Chinese civilians had to suffer the traumas of war and the immigration process, especially the experience of the detention camp or immigration station underscores the structural dimension of systemic racism and thereby forms the part of history of Asian immigration to the U.S. The Chin family is one of the victims of that entrenched racism. Pearl feels at the immigration station, "We are treated more poorly than the cargo that travelled with us" (See, 2009: 58).

Saga of Shanghai Sisters: See's Shanghai Girls brings out the traumatic experiences of both war and immigration. Hence, the question of categorization or any debate whether this fiction comes under immigration literature or war literature is illogical. This text converges with both. The literature review shows an inclination towards historical analysis and feminist analysis of this text. However, this paper examines the text through the intersecting framework of war and immigration.

Shanghai Girls by Lisa See was published in 2009, and it became a New York Times bestselling historical novel. See is one of those Chinese American writers who has presented her connection with China and immigration experiences through different fictional representations. See's paternal great-grandfather emigrated from China, and See tries to portray this connection in her other fiction, like Snow Flower and the Secret Fan (2005), Peony in Love (2007), China Dolls (2014), The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane (2017), and The Island of Sea Women (2019). She also wrote a libretto for an opera, *On* Gold Mountain (1995), which is based on her family biography of the same name. Like See, her characters in Shanghai Girls, Pearl and May, are also residents of Los Angeles.

The initial few chapters of the story explore the complex yet beautiful bond between two Shanghai sisters, Pearl Chin and May Chin, in pre-war Shanghai. In 1937, before the war, Shanghai was a modern city of riches and glamour. It was a composite city of people from all walks of life, businessmen, beggars, gangsters, gamblers, artists, criminals, leaders and whatnot. She shares her life with her rich parents and 18-year-old sister, May. They seem to enjoy a happy, carefree and luxurious life as they believe themselves as modern girls caring little for tradition and custom. They are beautiful, and they have no inhibition in posing for a commercial artist and being featured in calendar ads. Pearl feels romantically for the artist Z.G., who does not reciprocate her feelings. Pearl's life takes a complete turn when their father loses all their fortune in gambling, and to survive, he sells his two daughters to the wealthy businessman Louie. Their marriage was a contract made between his father and Old businessman Louie. As per the contract, Pearl was to marry the older son, Sam, and May was to marry the younger son, Vernon. After two days, Pearl and May got married to the handsome eldest son, Sam and the intellectually weak youngest son, Vern. But it was just the beginning of their misfortune. After their marriage, both Sam and Vern go to America, where Pearl and May are supposed to follow them after a month. When this family's misfortune meets the great political violence war in 1937, their lives are radically changed. The Japanese attack in China brings them to the immigration station from China to America. Pearl's narration of their horrific experiences is not the experience of the Chin family only; it brings into focus the ravages of war suffered by the Chinese civilians. Pearl and May try to get away from

their post-marriage commitments by travelling to America and meeting their husbands, but the situation holds them back. Their father was threatened to kill by the Green Gang thugs if they refrained from keeping the marriage contracts.

The readers come to know about the war-ravaged China and the precarious immigration station from where people are trying to escape their destiny in the first-person narrative and perspective of Pearl Chin, a 21-year-old graduate girl in 1937 Shanghai. The Japanese attacked Shanghai at that time, and Pearl and May had no other option but to flee from Shanghai with their mother. Their beloved city was ravaged by Japanese bombs, and they began their journey through the Chinese countryside by hiring a rickshaw. But misfortune followed them, and while trying to enter Hong Kong, they unexpectedly came across a contingent of Japanese soldiers and were subjected to inhuman torture and gang rape. Their mother, Mrs. Chin, dies, leaving her two daughters at the hands of fate. They were traumatized and shocked. Pearl gets serious internal injuries that block her chances of getting pregnant.

After this traumatic experience, Pearl and May eventually reached America. Somehow, they landed at an immigration station outside San Francisco. The immigration policy of America detained them for months at an immigration station on Angel Island. They are questioned by government officials on being suspected as Asian spies. Pearl comes to know about May's pregnancy, and later, when the baby, Joy, is born, she gives the baby her identity as its mother, as May and Vern never led a conjugal life. To get out of Angel Island, they worked hard to educate themselves by studying the coaching book and answering all the questions satisfactorily to be able to be shifted as the wives of American citizens. Finally, they meet their husbands in Chinatown of Los Angeles. But soon this contentment of reunion converts to distress. Their father-in-law, the Old Man Louie, engages them in the family business and controls everything about them. After some time, May starts to get small jobs in Hollywood and starts a business of casting Chinese film actors. Pearl puts a lot of labour into the family business. The sisters, like in the Shanghai days, continue to fight over who is better off in life. In due course, they come to know that Old Man Louie and Sam are unauthorized immigrants in America. This jeopardizes Pearl's citizenship status as an immigrant. The family tries to conceal this truth, but when the FBI started an investigation in the 1950s on immigrants, especially Chinese Americans, Sam commits suicide to prevent Pearl's deportation. Pearl, on the other hand, discovers May's affair with artist Z.G. and that he is Joy's father. Joy overheard this conversation and left for China to discover the Chinese roots. May realizes the sisterly bond and takes responsibility for the family business until Pearl finds Joy and returns both.

The profound theme of war and immigration has been realistically portrayed through

the saga of two sisters. The title of this paper emphasizes the ravages of war and the precariousness of immigration stations. This attracts attention to the unfortunate incidents Pearl and May have to suffer, namely, forced migration, the trauma of rape and murder, detention, immigration, hardship, racism, loss and displacement.

War, history and women: In 1937 Japan invaded China, and immediately after, Beijing and Tianjin. The Japanese siege Shanghai. The brutal rape of Chin and Pearl reminds one of the brutal Nanjing massacre, where humanity is shattered due to imperialist policy, "kill all, burn all and destroy all" (See, 2009: 104). According to the record, more than 200000 civilians suffered from looting, rape and mass burial. Modern Chinese history recounts this episode as the "darkest age", and world history recounts this as the "Asian holocaust" ("Second Sino-Japanese war") as the most traumatic experience of war in contemporary world history. But both the fact and fiction foreground rape and other forms of sexual violence as a tool of war. According to the UN report "The devastating use of sexual violence as a weapon of war"(United Nations) published in the context of war atrocities in Ethiopia, Haiti, and Ukraine, Armed gangs use rape and sexual violence to "instil fear, intimidate, subjugate, and control local populations (BINUH and OHCHR)." Armed Gangs also apply sexual violence as a strategy in larger regiments of terror and violence as was in Shanghai that time. It was ready for resistance with heavy air, sea and naval opposition with the best-skilled army troops. Japanese soldiers used it as a weapon to punish people of opposition to "assert power and control over people living in their own areas" (BINUH and OHCHR) and the rival soldiers. So, among the victims of any war, usually, women and children are the ones who bear the utmost damage. Therefore, women always remain vulnerable to sexual violence during any conflict, like the war in most nations. Pearl is horrified seeing her mother raped and beaten, "… even her blood and her screams don't stop the soldiers. They unwrap her feet, the bindings swirling through the air like acrobats' ribbons. Her feet look the colour of a corpse gone cold-bluish white with shades of green and purple beneath the crushed flesh…Her cries are not those of footbinding or childbirth. They are the deep, anguished screams of an animal experiencing agony beyond comprehension" (See, 2009: 50).

Immigration and Detention: Immigration policy changes from time to time. During the time of conflict, the policy becomes stringent, and the immigration process is thoroughly scrutinized. They became victims of forced displacement and landed at the immigration station to survive the ravages of war. But even that could not save them. IOM Glossary on Migration defines forced displacement or migration as a migratory movement that involves force, compulsion or coercion. Although Pearl and Chin are married to American citizens, their situation is not significantly different from that of refugees. Like the refugees, they are fleeing their country

due to "a well-founded fear" of persecution due to "reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group" ("Criteria for recognizing family status") or political opinion and who are outside of their country of nationality or permanent residence and due to this fear are unable to or unwilling to return to it. So, fate brings Pearl and May to the immigration station. Through this text, See questions the use of immigration detention. There, they faced everything from medical examinations to interrogation, but the description of the detention centre is horrifying. "Rows of bunks two across and three high are connected to one another by iron poles attached to the ceiling and floor. There are no "beds" to sleep on, just wire mesh….The vertical gaps between the bunks are so tight that at first glance I can see I won't be able to extend my arm without hitting the one above" (See, 2009: 59). Lucy Fiske calls these detention centres 'super-max' prisons where the people are allocated identification numbers and "are subjected to arbitrary rules and sometimes arbitrary and excessive use of force, distanced from legal protections by their incarceration, lack of knowledge, little political voice and their status as non-citizens, non-people" (Fiske, 2016: 3). Fiske also mentions "Life inside immigration detention centres is precarious, filled with uncertainty and monotony and, too often, with degrading treatment. This gives rise to detainee protest" (Fiske, 2016: 3). Their detention at Angel Island recalls the real history of Chinese immigrants during the active period of the Chinese Exclusion Act. It was called the 'Ellis Island of the West', (Lee, 2010: 45) where immigrants were kept for detention and interrogation for weeks, months and years. This immigration station suggests the liminal space of migration between the migrants' old existence and the new one that is to be born. They are neither accepted nor sent back. Constant and prolonged period of bureaucratic violence in the form of interrogation and surveillance turns the detention site into a trauma zone. They are put into 'threshold trauma' (Bhabha, 1994: 218), being a victim of cultural and spatial rupture while and after crossing the border. This trauma continues to rupture their psychic and cultural world. They have suffered multi-layers of trauma-pre migration trauma, transit trauma and then post-migration trauma.

Immigration and Its Baggage: Immigration is a phenomenon that comes with a lot of social, legal, and political baggage. The two Chinese sisters' journey to become Chinese American wives is intricate and unending. The text depicts the immigrants' predicament in terms of living and work environment in the host country. Pearl and May are uncertain about their life as Chinese Americans as they constantly negotiate and reconstruct their identity. They are stuck in a 'diaspora space' (Brah, 1996: 208) as Brah argues ", Diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, are contested" (Brah, 1996: 208). Their experience at the immigration station reflects the unfavourable US immigration policy towards the Chinese people. They were barred from emigrating to China

due to suspicious activities surrounding them. The diplomatic relationship between China and America has been problematic and shifting from time to time.

Displacement results not just in material loss, but in an existential crisis in general. The social roles and codes are eroded; the gender roles of men and women are redrawn in a bid to survive the new environment. The larger social support and the kinship ties that bind a community vanish. Often forced to live in refugee camps, the mobility and opportunities of a community become heavily restricted.

But finally, when they land in America, destiny thrusts them into newer challenges. They realized the sharp contrast between their past life and their present immigrant life. The Chinatown of Los Angeles was in sharp contrast with their real Chinatown. The prosperity, lustre, abundance, and authenticity of the original Chinatown were replaced by shabbiness, loss, discomfort and derangement. A strange sense of disruption and dislocation engulfed them as the people in Chinatown were refugees. Though Pearl and May's identity was also that they were the wives of American citizens, and in that sense, Chinese Americans' loss was no different from other refugees. Volkan in his article "Mourning, Large-Group Identity, and the Refugee Experience" mentions, "Since moving from one location to a foreign location involves loss of family members and friends; loss of ancestors' burial grounds; loss of familiar language, songs, smells, and food; loss of previous support system, all dislocation experiences can be examined in terms of the refugees', and even voluntary immigrants', ability to mourn and/or resistance against the mourning process (Volkan, 2018: 24) The first thing Pearl experiences is culture shock. The two sisters entered a "dual-edged phenomenon: more willing than men to accept menial and low-paying jobs, they more quickly become wage earners and are thereby introduced to new configurations of traditional gender roles" (Castles and Miller, 2009: 182). She shows how, in their immigrant life, they often suffer racial discrimination. In American society, Asians, especially Chinese people, are considered 'perpetual foreigners' (Tuan, 1998: 5). So, Pearl and May are seen to face discrimination everywhere, starting from the immigration station to the different places of their host country. Pearl notices at the immigration station, "The white passengers are pulled out of the line and brought forward, while a couple of squat and very solid guards push away the Chinese who've made the mistake of standing at the frontline…They are, I realize, White Russians. They're lower than the poorest Shanghainese, and yet they're given special treatment" (See, 2009: 58). The Chinese Exclusion Act and the prohibition of the naturalizing process of the Chinese people are two obvious proofs of the anti-Chinese sentiment of the West. The Chinese immigrants survived in fear until the repeal of the Exclusion Act. But they fight and try to accept this new life as Chinese Americans.

Conclusion: In this narrative, See's portrayal of Pearl and May's experience in war-ravaged China and at the precarious immigration station reinforces the gendered violence in both war and the immigration process through sexual exploitation, familial silencing, and cultural erasure. See connects psychological and cultural estrangement through gendered trauma. As war victims and then forced migrants, Pearl and May carry trauma which gets imprinted in their diasporic psyche. Yet this trauma functions as a catalyst for a counter-discursive agency, allowing Pearl and May to reframe victimhood into survival. They succeed in negotiating between their two existences by evolving through memory, language, and culture. Thereby, *Shanghai Girls* interrogates the intersection of gender, migration, and ethnicity in the context of war and displacement. See, through this narrative, reclaims trauma as a narrative strategy for resistance, resilience, and reconstructed identity across transnational boundaries.

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Mindfulness Training at Retreat: A Qualitative Study by Practising *Vipassanā* at Retreat

Mithu Lahiri

Abstract

This study examines the significance of *vipassanā* meditation training at S.N. Goenka's retreats, focusing on its relevance for non-monastic participants. It explores the structured schedule, curriculum, and environment of the retreat, emphasizing its effectiveness and widespread appeal through the lens of a participatory observer. A key focus is on the practice of the *dasa pāramī* (ten perfections) and their impact on contemporary wellness among attendees.

The paper highlights the role of motivation in participant outcomes, revealing that spiritual aspirations significantly enhance engagement and performance, whereas outcomes differ for those motivated by other reasons. Psychological health assessments integrated into the retreat process further contribute to enriching participants' experiences, fostering both subjective and spiritual well-being. The research underscores the transformative potential of mindfulness practices, such as mindful eating, which realign participants' internal rhythms, promoting holistic health.

This work provides a nuanced perspective on the retreat's relevance, significance, and acceptance among participants, offering insights into its role in advancing psychological and spiritual health. It argues that *vipassanā* meditation effectively addresses contemporary wellness needs while resonating deeply with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Keywords: *Vipassanā* retreat, Mindfulness Meditation, *Dasa Pāramī*, Unconscious ego, *Mettā Bhāvnā*.

Introduction

Mindfulness meditation has become a subject of increasing interest and demand in contemporary society. Its origins can be traced back to Buddhist literature, where the Pāli term *sati*—translated as "mindfulness"—is a foundational element of meditative practice. Historically, mindfulness was cultivated primarily within monastic communities, from the time of the Buddha until the 18th century. In the 19th century, monastic teachers in Myanmar began extending these practices to lay communities as a means of spiritual development. The

global spread of mindfulness accelerated in the late 20th century when Jon Kabat-Zinn adapted it into secular therapeutic interventions through programs such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), framing mindfulness as a practical tool for health and well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Schlieter, 2017).

Within India, S. N. Goenka played a pivotal role in introducing retreat-based *vipassanā* meditation courses, which have since attracted participants worldwide. In contemporary times, the *Vipassanā* retreat can offer mindfulness practice through formal and informal contexts. The formal is structured meditation through samatha and vipassanā training and practice. Mindfulness is practiced informally through everyday activities like mindful walking, eating, and chores. The COVID-19 pandemic further heightened interest in mindfulness as individuals sought practices to support resilience, emotional balance, and overall wellness (Sinha et al., 2020).

As a student of Pāli literature, the author seeks to examine the contemporary relevance and impact of mindfulness training, particularly through Goenka's *vipassanā* meditation retreats. This study is guided by three primary research questions:

1. To what extent does *vipassanā* meditation uproot latent egoic tendencies (*anusaya/ āsava*), and does this contribute to the development of humility as one advance along the path of the ten *pāramī*?
2. Does participation in a *vipassanā* meditation retreat recalibrate circadian rhythms, supporting a more regulated daily routine and enhanced psychological and physical well-being?
3. Would a pre-retreat psychological screening or self-reflection tool support first-time participants in understanding their current mental state and clarifying their motivations for attending? To what extent can mindfulness retreats offer meaningful benefits to a diverse range of individuals, and are there circumstances in which such retreats may be unsuitable? Is the environment and curriculum of mindfulness retreats accessible and inclusive for participants from varied socio-cultural, cognitive, or physical backgrounds?

This research, therefore, investigates *vipassanā* meditation as a practice that fosters personal growth, examines the need for psychological preparedness and support, and reflects on the accessibility of retreats. The paper is organized into the following sections: a conceptual overview of mindfulness meditation, a brief introduction to the *dasa pāramī*, participatory observations—including the researcher's lived experience of Day 0 at the retreat—and finally, a discussion and conclusion.

Methodology

This study examines mindfulness training at retreats, focusing on its significance for non-monastic individuals. It explores the acceptance of the curriculum and the environmental effects on participants who complete the course. As a researcher, it is important to recognize the resonance and effectiveness of the *vipassanā* process. However, to maintain objectivity, the researcher must remain detached from the process and observe it without bias. To ensure impartiality, the researcher has shaped the methodology based on practical experience.

The researcher explored the objectives of participating in *vipassanā* courses at Goenka's meditation centres. These centres offer two roles: *dhamma sādhaka* (meditator) and *dhamma sevaka* (volunteer). Both roles aim to cultivate the four sublime states (*mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, *upekkhā*). *Dhamma sevaka* assist meditators by ensuring they wake up early, serve meals, provide care during practice, and help during emergencies. Both roles support the development of these sublime states.

From 2022 to 2024, the researcher participated in four 10-day *Vipassanā* courses. As a practitioner, the researcher experienced the roles of *dhamma sādhaka* and *dhamma sevaka* during the course. The first retreat experience took place at Dhamma Giri (Maharashtra) as *dhamma sādhaka*s[1], similarly at Dhamma Koṇḍānā (Telengana) and Dhamma Kuṭi (Chattisgarh), served as *dhamma sevaka* at Dhamma Gaṅgā (West Bengal).

Concept of Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness is regarded as a safeguard for the mind, preventing it from reacting with desire or aversion. It fosters the development of insight into whether mental states are wholesome or unwholesome. When combined with clear comprehension, mindfulness lays the foundation for the growth of wisdom, which is essential for achieving spiritual liberation (Ditrich, 2016). Buddhism aims for transcendence, attained through the Eightfold Path, which integrates both practical and ethical elements. The purpose of meditation, including mindfulness, is to achieve liberation from suffering—referred to in Pāli as *bodhi*. While often translated as "enlightenment," a more accurate term is "awakening"—awakening from the delusions, cravings, and aversions that cause suffering. Mindfulness is a key element in the broader soteriological framework of early Buddhism, which emerged within the religious discourses of ancient India and is inherently connected to them (Ditrich, 2016).

The mindfulness practice is popularly known as insight meditation in English and *samatha-vipassanā bhābanā* in Pāli literature. In the Pāli literature, the *samatha-vipassanā bhābanā* is explained in one word as *ekāyano magga*. The main objectives of this technique are to be free from worldly suffering and stop the cycle of life and death (MN.10., DN.30.). The *dhamma*

does not impose anything or stop any one to practice it on the basis of religious or demographic diversity. *Vīpassanā* helps to balance the inclination of individuals towards materialistic possessions (Singhal and Sriram 2023). Mindfulness is a spiritual practice for becoming self-aware. In a world where the body is admirable for beauty and strength, mindfulness teaches spiritual seekers to accept their physical imperfections and use them as tools for spiritual growth (Lazaridou, Pentaris, 2016).

Brief Introduction to the *Dasa Pāramī*

The *pāramī* (perfections) constitute a vital framework within the Buddhist path, guiding practitioners toward enlightenment (*nibbāna*) and liberation from worldly suffering. According to Buddhist tradition, the attainment of *nibbāna* is possible when these perfections are cultivated to their highest maturity. While the concept of *pāramī* is not explicitly elaborated in the earliest canonical texts, it is systematically developed in later canonical and commentarial literature, particularly in connection with the *Bodhisatta* ideal.

Tradition holds that before attaining Buddhahood, Siddhartha Gautama perfected the *dasa pāramī* (ten perfections) over the course of countless lifetimes, spanning four incalculable aeons (*asaṅkhyeyya*) and a hundred thousand world cycles. This long process highlights the centrality of the *pāramī* for anyone aspiring to liberation: they are not merely moral virtues, but transformative qualities to be embodied and cultivated for the welfare of both oneself and others.

The eminent commentator Buddhaghosa, in his *Visuddhimagga*, underscores the profound consequences of practicing the *pāramī*. He explains that their development strengthens wholesome mental states, supports the arising of the ten powers (*dasa bala*), fourfold confidence (*catuvesārajja*), six higher knowledges (*chaḷabhiññā*), and the eighteen unique qualities of Buddha (*aṭṭhārasa āveṇika dhammā*). Thus, the *pāramī* serve not only as a moral foundation but also as the very basis of Buddhahood itself.

Etymologically, the term *pāramī* (or *pāramitā* in Sanskrit) is often translated as "perfection" or "completeness" (Mahāthera, 2011). In *Theravāda* Buddhism, the *dasa pāramī* refer to ten noble qualities systematically cultivated by the *Bodhisatta*: *dāna* (generosity), *sīla* (virtue), *nekkhamma* (renunciation), *paññā* (wisdom), *viriya* (energy), *khanti* (patience), *sacca* (truthfulness), *adhiṭṭhāna* (determination), *mettā* (loving-kindness), and *upekkhā* (equanimity). These are presented most prominently in the *Jātaka* literature, where the Bodhisatta's past lives exemplify their gradual perfection.

Bhikkhu Bodhi (2005) notes that all the *pāramī* share a unifying principle: they are invariably rooted in compassion and guided by skilful means. Their characteristic is to benefit

others; their function is to provide unwavering support and assistance; their manifestation is the constant wish for the welfare of all beings; and their proximate cause is great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*). It is precisely the fusion of compassion and wisdom that transforms ordinary virtues into *pāramī*, making them the distinctive practices of the *Bodhisatta*. As Xien (2018) adds, the cultivation of these perfections purifies karma and enables an unobstructed progression along the path to ultimate liberation.

Dāna Parami

The first of the ten *pāramī* is *dāna*—the practice of giving or generosity. The treatises on the *pāramī* emphasize that a *Bodhisatta* is always ready to support and serve others, yet never seeks favours for himself. In a spirit of abundance, he gives freely, without distinction of caste, creed, or colour, and without expectation of personal gain. His giving is neither motivated by selfishness nor by possessiveness. In its essence, *dāna* is characterized by relinquishment. Its function is to weaken and dispel greed for possessions, while its manifestation lies in non-attachment and in the attainment of prosperity and a favourable rebirth. The immediate condition for giving is the availability of something that can be offered. The perfection of giving is thus rooted in the volition to surrender oneself and one's belongings, accompanied by compassion and skilful means (Bodhi, 2005). *Theravāda* sources further classify dāna into three types, according to the nature of what is given: the giving of material requisites (āmisadāna), directed towards those in need; the giving of fearlessness (*abhayadāna*), which involves offering protection and safety; and the giving of the *dhamma* (*dhammadāna*), considered the highest form of generosity, as it addresses the ultimate welfare of the recipient (Xien, 2018). In this way, the practice of dāna is not merely an act of offering, but one that responds to the needs of the recipients, fostering both compassion and wisdom in the giver.

Sīla Parami

The second of the *pāramī* is *sīla* (morality or moral conduct). For a *Bodhisatta* who has undertaken the life of a recluse, the practice of virtue is expressed through diligent observance of the disciplinary rules prescribed for renunciants. If, however, an individual leads the household life, his commitment to morality is upheld through adherence to the *pañca-sīla* (five Precepts). This entails abstaining from killing and harming living beings, refraining from stealing or taking what is not given, avoiding sexual misconduct, abstaining from false and harmful speech—including lying, harsh words, divisive speech, and frivolous talk—and refraining from intoxicants that cloud the mind and weaken mindfulness. In its broader sense, *sīla* is described as having the characteristic of composing and harmonizing one's actions (*sīlana*), coordinating behaviour (*samādhāna*), and establishing stability (*paṭiṭṭhāna*). Its

primary function is to dispel moral corruption and to ensure conduct that is blameless. The manifestation of virtue is moral purity, while its supportive conditions are moral shame (*hiri*) and moral dread (*ottappa*), which safeguard against unwholesome deeds. The perfection of virtue is expressed through wholesome conduct of body and speech, guided by compassion and skilful means. It entails refraining from unwholesome actions and nurturing the volition to undertake what is wholesome and beneficial (Bodhi, 2005). *Theravāda* texts explain moral discipline in four aspects: (1) restraint in accordance with the *pāṭimokkha* rules (*pāṭimokkhasaṃvara*); (2) restraint of the sense faculties (*indriyasaṃvara*), whereby one exercises mindfulness and self-control in relation to sensory experience; (3) purity of livelihood (ājīvapārisuddhi), ensuring that one's means of living are honest and ethically sound; and (4) proper reliance on the four requisites (*paccayasannissita*), using food, clothing, shelter, and medicine with wisdom and mindfulness (Xien, 2018). Thus, whether as a renunciate or a householder, the *Bodhisatta*'s practice of morality is not limited to abstention from wrongdoing, but represents a positive discipline that cultivates inner harmony, ethical responsibility, and compassion towards all beings. As such, *sīla* provides the firm foundation upon which higher mental cultivation and wisdom can be developed, ensuring that the path of the Bodhisatta is rooted in both integrity and compassion.

Nekkhamma Pāramī

The third *pāramī* is *nekkhamma* (renunciation), which plays a vital role in supporting and perfecting the practice of morality. For *Bodhisatta*, the cultivation of renunciation involves both the voluntary relinquishment of worldly pleasures through adopting an ascetic way of life, as well as the temporary overcoming of the mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) that obstruct meditative absorption (*jhāna*). In essence, *nekkhamma* is characterized by the deliberate turning away from attachment to sensual pleasures and conditioned existence. Its function is to reveal their inherent unsatisfactoriness, while its manifestation is expressed through the act of withdrawal and detachment from them. What gives rise to this renunciation is a sense of spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), the deep realization of the impermanence and futility of worldly attachments. The perfection of renunciation, therefore, lies in the volition of consciousness that willingly abandons sensual pleasures and clings to existence. This act of letting go is not rooted in aversion, but arises from wisdom, compassion, and skilful means, allowing the *Bodhisatta* to cultivate inner freedom and prepare the mind for higher meditative states. Renunciation, in this sense, is not merely a rejection of the world but a compassionate choice that frees the mind from bondage, creating the conditions for the deeper realization of truth (Bodhi, 2005; Xien, 2018).

Paññā Pāramī

The fourth of the *pāramī* is *paññā* (wisdom), which is central to the *Bodhisattv*a's path. *Paññā* signifies the capacity to see things as they truly are, rather than merely accepting their surface appearance. It is the deep understanding of the real nature of phenomena and the discernment of what is truly beneficial and what is harmful to oneself and others. For this reason, the *Boddhisattva* strives to cultivate wisdom from every possible circumstance and source, treating life itself as a field of learning. Wisdom is characterized by its penetrative quality, likened to the arrow of a skilled archer that strikes its target with precision. Its function is to illuminate reality, comparable to the way a lamp dispels darkness, and its manifestation is clarity, or non-confusion, much like a guide who leads the way through a dense forest. The supportive conditions for wisdom are concentration and the realization of the Four Noble Truths, which provide the foundation for insight. The perfection of wisdom lies in the comprehensive understanding of both the general and particular characteristics of *dhamma*—that is, the universal features of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, as well as the distinct qualities of individual phenomena. Importantly, this perfection is not a cold intellectual pursuit but is always accompanied by compassion and skilful means, ensuring that wisdom serves the welfare of all beings (Bodhi, 2005; Xien, 2018).

Viriya Pāramī

The fifth of the *pāramī* is *viriya* (energy or perseverance). For the *Boddhisattva*, *viriya* represents the tireless exertion of body and mind for the welfare and happiness of others. It is not merely physical strength, but rather the strength of character and determination that sustains wholesome action. In this sense, energy is understood as the persistent effort to cultivate the good, abandon the unwholesome, and dedicate oneself wholeheartedly to the service of others, both in thought and in deed. The characteristic of *viriya* is striving; its function is to strengthen and fortify the mind against obstacles. Its manifestation is seen in indefatigability—the refusal to be discouraged or defeated in the face of difficulty. The condition that gives rise to energy is often a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*), or the recognition of the fleeting nature of life, which inspires the *Boddhisattva* to act with vigour and determination. The perfection of energy is thus expressed through the unceasing application of bodily and mental effort for the benefit of others, guided always by compassion and skilful means (Bodhi, 2005; Xien, 2018). It is through such tireless perseverance that the *Boddhisattva* exemplifies courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the path, transforming energy into a force for liberation and the welfare of all beings.

Khanti Pāramī

The sixth of the *pāramī* is *khanti* (patience), which is regarded as the capacity to endure difficulties with composure and to meet the faults of others with forbearance. For the *Boddhisattva*, patience is not a passive submission but an active strength of character, cultivated to such an extent that even in the face of severe harm—such as the loss of his own limbs—he remains unshaken, free from anger, and grounded in compassion. Patience is characterized by acceptance; its function is to endure both favourable and unfavourable conditions without agitation. Its manifestation is tolerance and non-opposition, allowing the mind to remain balanced in the midst of hardship. The condition that supports patience is insight into the true nature of phenomena—the understanding that all experiences, whether pleasant or painful, are impermanent and devoid of self. The perfection of patience, therefore, is the conscious endurance of harm and adversity, whether caused by other beings or by natural conditions. This endurance is not marked by aversion or resentment but by equanimity, compassion, and skilful means. In this way, *khanti* becomes a transformative force, enabling the *Boddhisattva* to meet the world's challenges without hostility, and to turn suffering into an opportunity for cultivating deeper wisdom and boundless compassion (Bodhi, 2005; Xien, 2018).

Sacca Pāramī

The seventh of the *pāramī* is *sacca* (truthfulness), which signifies unwavering honesty and fidelity to one's word. For the *Boddhisattva*, truthfulness is not merely a matter of speech but a quality that permeates thought, word, and deed. It is said of him: "He acts as he speaks, and he speaks as he acts" (*yathāvādi tathākārī, yathākārī tathāvādi*), highlighting the perfect alignment between his inner integrity and outward conduct. Truthfulness is characterized by non-deceptiveness in speech. Its function is to confirm what accords with fact, and its manifestation is excellence and trustworthiness, qualities that inspire confidence in others. The condition that gives rise to truthfulness is honesty itself—the innate inclination to reject falsehood and remain faithful to reality. The perfection of truthfulness is realized through consistent non-deceptiveness in speech and action, which may be analysed in terms of abstinence from falsehood, the volition to uphold truth, and the cultivation of integrity in every aspect of life. Always guided by compassion and skilful means, the *Bodhisattva'*s commitment to truth does not serve personal advantage but the welfare of all beings (Bodhi, 2005; Xien, 2018). In this way, *sacca* emerges as one of the most salient characteristics of a *Boddhisattva*, ensuring that his words are reliable, his actions transparent, and his presence a source of moral strength for others.

Adhiṭṭhāna Pāramī

The eighth of the *pāramī* is *adhiṭṭhāna* (determination), often translated as resolution, decision, or self-determination. Within the *Boddhisattva* path, *adhiṭṭhāna* is regarded as the firm foundation upon which all the other perfections rest. Without resolute determination, the *Bodhisattva* could not fulfil the other *pāramī*s or persevere in his tireless efforts for the welfare and happiness of all beings. Determination is the quality that enables the *Bodhisattva* to remain steadfast in his goal, regardless of the difficulties that may arise. Whether confronted with illness, grief, or disaster, he does not turn away from his chosen path. In essence, *adhiṭṭhāna* is characterized by the resolve to commit firmly to the requisites of enlightenment. Its function is to overcome the opposites of indecision and wavering; its manifestation is unshakable firmness in pursuing the task; and its supportive condition is the aspiration toward the requisites of awakening. The perfection of determination is the unwavering commitment to undertake and sustain activities for the good of others, a determination rooted not in self-interest but in compassion and skilful means. In this way, *adhiṭṭhāna* becomes more than willpower—it is the inner strength that aligns aspiration with action, ensuring that the *Bodhisattva* remains unyielding in his pursuit of awakening and the liberation of all beings (Bodhi, 2005; Xien, 2018).

Mettā Pāramī

The ninth of the *pāramī* is *mettā* (loving-kindness), the quality of boundless goodwill that underlies the *Bodhisattva*'s altruistic path. With unshakable *mettā*, the *Bodhisattva* is devoted to the welfare of all beings, without discrimination of caste, creed, colour, or gender. It is this selfless love that moves him to renounce his own immediate liberation in order to work tirelessly for the deliverance of others. Permeated by universal goodwill, he neither instils fear in others nor harbours fear himself, embodying harmony and trust wherever he goes. From the standpoint of the *Bodhisattva* ideal, *mettā* may be regarded as one of the deepest motives for undertaking the path of perfections. The *Ekarāja Jātaka* illustrates this spirit with the words: "No one can strike terror in me, nor am I afraid of anyone, for I am strengthened by the power of my loving-kindness, and I always take delight in the open forest." Here, loving-kindness is portrayed not as weakness, but as an inner strength that sustains courage, serenity, and joy. In doctrinal terms, mettā has the characteristic of promoting the welfare of beings; its function is both to provide for their well-being and to dispel resentment; its manifestation is gentle kindliness, and its supporting condition is the perception of the lovable and positive qualities in others. The perfection of loving-kindness is the volition to work for the happiness and welfare of the world, always accompanied by compassion and skilful means. In essence, *mettā* is the active expression of benevolence, transforming the *Bodhisattva*'s inner goodwill into a universal embrace of all beings (Bodhi, 2005; Xien, 2018).

Upekkhā Pāramī

The tenth of the *pāramī* is *upekkhā* (equanimity), a virtue regarded as both the most challenging and the most essential to cultivate. The Pali term *upekkhā* is derived from *upa* ("justly, impartially, rightly") and *ikkhati* ("to see, discern, or view"). Etymologically, it means "to see impartially" or "to discern rightly," signifying a mode of perception free from attachment and aversion, favour and disfavour. Importantly, equanimity does not imply indifference or cold neutrality; rather, it denotes a balanced state of mind that remains steady in the face of life's fluctuations. This perfection is especially difficult for lay practitioners, who live in the midst of an unbalanced world governed by ever-changing fortunes. Human life is inevitably marked by the "eight worldly conditions" (*lokadhamma*): praise and blame, fame and disrepute, gain and loss, pleasure and pain. In the face of such vicissitudes, the *Bodhisattva* stands unmoved, like a solid rock that remains steady against the shifting winds of fortune, exercising perfect equanimity grounded in wisdom and compassion. Doctrinally, equanimity is characterized by neutrality, its function is to view all experiences impartially, and its manifestation is the subsiding of attraction and repulsion. The reflection that all beings are heirs of their own *kamma* serves as its supportive condition. The perfection of equanimity, therefore, is the impartial attitude toward both agreeable and disagreeable beings and circumstances, a disposition that transcends bias and prejudice. Accompanied by compassion and skilful means, *upekkhā* ensures that the *Bodhisattva* acts neither out of attachment nor aversion, but with a mind imbued with balance, clarity, and unwavering dedication to the welfare of all beings (Bodhi, 2005; Xien, 2018).

According to the *dhamma* or *vipassanā* tradition of Sayagi U Ba Khin and his great disciples, SN Goenka School have given great importance to practicing *dasa Pāramī*, by attending the 10-day *vipassanā* course at retreat. The *pāramī* is good in human qualities, which helps to cross the ocean of misery and get enlightened to be free from worldly sufferings. This tradition helps attain *dasa pāramī* and encourages practitioners to reshape internally. They also endorse joining a course once a year. The environment in these centres helps to attain the *pāramī*.

Participatory Observation and Experience at the Retreat: From Day- 0 to Day-11

Noble Silence: From the very outset of the course, all participants are required to observe *Noble Silence*, which extends until the morning of the last day. This silence is not limited to refraining from speech but encompasses silence of body, speech, and mind. Participants are instructed to avoid all forms of communication with fellow meditators—whether through gestures, sign languages, written notes, or eye contact. Interaction is permitted only when strictly necessary, such as communicating with the teacher for guidance or approaching the management team regarding food, accommodation, or health-related matters. Even in such cases, participants are

advised to keep these exchanges minimal, fostering the sense that they are working in complete isolation. In line with this principle, participants are prohibited from engaging in any other activity that may lead to distraction, including gardening, picking flowers, or interacting with animals. Reading, writing, or recording is equally restricted, ensuring that the mind remains fully devoted to the practice.

Restrictions on Personal Belongings: Participants are not permitted to bring miscellaneous items such as snacks, notebooks, pens, or books. Any such items must be surrendered to the organizing committee. In cases of non-compliance, the committee reserves the right to inspect rooms, and disciplinary action may follow. The essentials, however, are always provided by the *dhamma sevikā*[2], who serve under the direction of the teacher.

Meals in the Dining Hall: The first meal experience on Day 0 left a lasting impression. Following the 5:00 a.m. bell, the author joined fellow meditators in the dining hall, where a modest portion of *poha* was served. Mistaking it for an evening snack, she ate sparingly, only to discover later from experienced participants that this was, in fact, the final meal of the day. Breakfast would not be served until 6:30 the following morning. Over the 10-day period, she learned that the schedule was fixed: two main meals (breakfast and lunch), with a light evening refreshment consisting of puffed rice, fruit, and tea or milk. After snacks on Day 0, the *dhamma sevikā* and office staff conducted the orientation, distributed identity cards, and assigned seat numbers.

Course Commencement

Day-0-to-Day-11

The course formally commenced between 6:30 and 7:00 p.m. on Day 0, when the *Dhamma teachers*[3] introduced themselves and played an audio recording of the inaugural discourse. In the recording, *Guruji*[4] emphasized the importance of seeking permission to begin training, after which participants undertook the *tri ratna (buddha, dhamma, sangha)* chant and the *pañca sīla*[5] vows.The structure and objectives of the course were outlined, beginning with ānāpāna meditation and extending to *vipassanā* practice, with three compulsory group sittings each day in the *dhamma* Hall. Attendance at evening discourses was mandatory, while personal practice could be undertaken in the meditation hall, individual cells, and residences. The significance of noble silence was highlighted once again, alongside the rationale for serving simple vegetarian meals, reinforcing mindful eating as part of the discipline. At the close of the session, participants were instructed to focus exclusively on ānāpāna meditation the following day.

Observations from the First and Fourth Retreats at Dhamma Kuṭi: During her first retreat,

the researcher was unfamiliar with the practice of noble silence until a senior student explained it on Day 0. From that moment until the morning of day 10, all forms of verbal and non-verbal communication were prohibited, including touching plants, animals, or even exchanging a smile. Any genuine requirement could only be conveyed through the *dhamma sevikā*, who would consult the ācārya. Breaches of this discipline were reported, and violators could be warned or reprimanded by the *dhamma ācārya*. The researcher experienced this during her first course at *Dhamma Giri*: on the evening of Day 9, she communicated non-verbally with a fellow participant who had inquired about the course. A *dhamma sevikā* noticed this exchange and reported it. The ācārya subsequently reminded and urged that noble silence must be followed , and to remain focused solely on breath and sensations.

By contrast, during her fourth retreat at *Dhamma* Kuṭi in October 2024, she observed a different approach. In some instances, breaches of noble silence were overlooked by the *dhamma sevikā*. On the evening of Day 10, however, one participant openly confessed to breaking the silence, prompting the ācārya to reiterate the value of the discipline to the entire group.

The feedback session on *mettā day* (Day 10) offered profound insights into participant motivations. Unlike her first course, this retreat gave participants the opportunity to share their reasons for joining. Her observation revealed a marked difference between male and female participants. Men primarily sought spiritual growth and were generally motivated by intrinsic factors. Women, however, often cited external or circumstantial reasons—health concerns, personal difficulties, or professional requirements. For example, women above 50 frequently joined to address physical ailments, while younger women (aged 24–28) hoped to enhance concentration. One participant, a 31-year-old pregnant doctor, attended at her parents' insistence due to marital issues, though she struggled throughout the retreat and often broke noble silence. Another, a 26-year-old woman, was obliged to participate because it was mandated in her professional training.

Interestingly, none of the male participants discontinued the course, while two women left between Days 1 and 3. Moreover, women were more prone to breaking noble silence, whereas men consistently adhered to the rules. From this, she inferred that those who joined the retreat out of intrinsic motivation were more committed to the discipline, while those who attended due to external pressures or obligations found it harder to maintain the rigorous practice.

Experiencing the Ten *Pāramī* Through Four *Vipassanā* Retreats

The author of the present study engaged in four intensive 10-day *vipassanā* courses, during which the cultivation of *dasa pāramī* (ten perfections) was not only doctrinally encountered

but also experientially embodied. Across these retreats, her understanding of renunciation, mindfulness, and self-discipline deepened significantly. The first retreat provided initial exposure to foundational *pāramī* such as *nekkhamma* (renunciation), *sīla* (ethical conduct), *dāna* (generosity), and *paññā* (wisdom). Yet, it was only through subsequent retreats that the fuller and more nuanced significance of all ten *pāramī* became clear.

Nekkhamma: Renunciation in Household Life

Nekkhamma, or renunciation, is traditionally associated with the monastic community, where monks and nuns renounce household life, possessions, and personal identity markers such as hair and robes in pursuit of spiritual liberation. In the context of lay practitioners, however, renunciation does not imply abandonment of family or worldly duties. Rather, it is an internal practice of detachment from craving and clinging while continuing to fulfil social and familial responsibilities.

The *vipassanā* retreat created conditions that temporarily mirrored a monastic lifestyle. The researcher observed that participants abstained from communication, consumed only simple vegetarian food provided by the centre, and relied on the generosity of donors. While householders were not required to shave their heads or take vows, the retreat's structured discipline cultivated humility and reduced the sense of ego. From this experience, the author concluded that renunciation is not defined by external abandonment of material possessions but by the relinquishing of ego-driven attachment and personal desire.

Sīla: Ethical Conduct in Daily Life

Ethical conduct (*sīla*) was woven throughout the retreat experience. Having previously been a non-vegetarian, the author was initially surprised by the provision of strictly vegetarian meals. This practice directly aligned with the first precept (*pāṇātipātā*), abstaining from the destruction of living beings, and encouraged conscious mindfulness of non-harming.

Further, participants were required to surrender valuables, including money, which reinforced the second precept (*adinnādānā*), cultivating detachment from materialism and the desire for ownership. Male and female participants were accommodated separately—even married couples—to reduce distractions and safeguard the sanctity of practice. Noble Silence (*ariyo tuṇhībhāvo*) was observed, ensuring abstention from false or frivolous speech (*musāvāda*). The researcher noted that the retreat environment was carefully structured to minimize external distractions, thus allowing participants to embody *sīla* as a lived discipline rather than merely an abstract principle.

Dāna: Generosity and Giving

The retreat provided a lived framework for practicing *dāna* (generosity) in three interrelated forms: śrama dāna (service through physical labour), *tapo dāna* (dedication of effort to meditation), and *artha dāna* (material giving). Participants engaged in voluntary chores, which enabled the cultivation of selfless service (śrama dāna). The sustained meditative practice itself was recognised as *tapo dāna*, a contribution of inner discipline and energy to the collective spiritual field. Finally, financial contributions were encouraged in the form of *artha dāna*, yet were entirely voluntary, underscoring that genuine generosity arises from sincerity rather than compulsion.

Through this holistic practice, the author recognised *dāna pāramī* not as an obligation but as a heartfelt expression of sincerity and interconnectedness that sustains both individual practice and the wider community.

Paññā: Wisdom Through Mindfulness

Wisdom (*paññā*) was cultivated through direct observation of bodily sensations, leading to insight into impermanence (*anicca*). The researcher realised that sensations—pleasant or painful—arise and pass away, and that clinging to them leads inevitably to suffering (*dukkha*). This embodied realisation extended to thoughts and emotions, deepening her understanding that all conditioned phenomena are transient.

The value of *upekkhā* (equanimity) was also internalised through observing the conduct of *sevaka* (volunteers), who maintained patience and compassion even when participants were inattentive or non-compliant. Greeting practitioners with folded hands (*namaskāra mudrā*), they modelled equanimity in action. This reinforced the author's understanding that wisdom is not merely cognitive but is enacted through calm, balanced responses in everyday interactions.

Khanti: Tolerance and Patience

The *pāramī* of tolerance (*khanti*) emerged vividly during the author's third retreat. Surrounded by participants struggling with illness, coughing, and sneezing during group sittings, the researcher initially felt irritation. By redirecting attention to her breath and extending *mettā* (loving-kindness), she gradually cultivated acceptance and compassion. This process highlighted that tolerance is less about enduring external disturbances and more about transforming inner reactivity into mindful patience.

Adhitthāna: Determination and Resolve

Determination (*adhitthāna*) was strengthened particularly in the third and fourth retreats. Initially, the author found it difficult to remain in a fixed meditation posture (*ekāsana*),

frequently shifting due to discomfort. Over time, however, she cultivated the resolve to remain still, even amidst significant bodily pain.

During her fourth retreat, prolonged sittings revealed the impermanent nature of painful sensations, reinforcing the principle of *anicca*. The embodied realisation that discomfort constantly arises and passes away fostered deeper concentration (*samādhi*) and aligned with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta's* emphasis on mindful observation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) and sensations (*vedanānupassanā*). In this way, *adhiṭṭhāna* became not simply willpower but a disciplined resolve grounded in insight.

The Timetable Helps Reshape Lifestyle

In the Goenka retreat, the daily routine begins at 4:30 a.m. and concludes at 9:00 p.m., structured to foster discipline and continuity in practice. Three mandatory group sittings are held in the *dhamma* hall each day. From 4:30 to 6:30 a.m., participants practice either in the *dhamma* hall or the *sūnya gāra*[6] (meditation room). Between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m., both new and experienced participants meditate, followed by a short class with the teacher. On the first day, new participants are permitted to practice ānāpāna in their quarters during this period.

From 1:00 to 2:30 p.m., participants continue their practice in their allotted cells or in the *dhamma* hall. Between 3:30 and 5:00 p.m., they may choose a location of their preference for meditation. The evening discourse by S. N. Goenka takes place from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., followed by a final group practice from 8:30 to 9:00 p.m., during which the schedule for the following day is announced.

The mandatory group sittings occur three times daily: morning (8:00–9:00 a.m.), afternoon (2:30–3:30 p.m.), and evening (6:00–7:00 p.m.). From the initial day (Day 0) until the first half of Day 4, participants practice only ānāpāna. From the second half of Day 4 until the first group sitting on Day 10, the practice shifts to *vipassanā*, guided by the recorded instructions of S. N. Goenka.

Non-Completion of the Course by Participants

During the author's observations at the retreat, it became evident that some participants discontinued the course, particularly between Day 0 and Day 4. This was noticeable through empty seats in both the *dhamma* hall and the dining hall. While volunteering during her second course, the author noted that three female participants, aged 21 to 26, left prematurely. Upon inquiry, it was revealed that they experienced heightened anxiety and were unable to manage their thoughts in the retreat's silent environment. One of them had been clinically diagnosed

with anxiety in 2020 and had been advised by her psychologist to engage in conversation whenever experiencing distress or negative thoughts—a practice that conflicted with the retreat's discipline of noble silence. The other two participants, though undiagnosed, similarly found it difficult to adapt to the retreat atmosphere. In subsequent retreats, the author was not always able to ascertain the reasons for participants' departures. However, during her first course, she personally witnessed a middle-aged woman faint during the discourse on the seventh day. That same evening, the author herself also experienced unease, marked by anxiety and hunger, which deepened her understanding of the physical and psychological challenges posed by the retreat environment. These observations underscore that the journey of meditation and mindfulness is not uniformly accessible. While the retreat offers profound opportunities for self-reflection and transformation, it may also surface unresolved emotions and fears that are difficult to confront. For this reason, the author emphasizes the importance of approaching such intensive practices with compassion, both towards oneself and towards fellow practitioners navigating similar challenges.

Discussion

This study begins with the key questions regarding the relevance of the 10-day *vipassanā* course for non-monastic people at the retreat. The first question is: To what extent does *vipassanā* meditation uproot latent egoic tendencies (*anusaya*/āsava), and does this contribute to the development of humility as one advances along the path of the ten *pāramī*?

The residential vipassanā training with philosophical environments which support dissolving the unconscious ego, with selflessness, also developed to stop reacting to the situation, simultaneously had the positive effect on self-concept in the youth (Emavardhana and Christopher, 1997). Mindfulness meditation does not aim to suppress or forget the ego, but rather to transform it. Through sustained and attentive observation of mental processes, the practitioner gradually dissolves the constructed or false ego. In this way, the ego becomes refined—not eradicated, but redirected—towards a deeper awareness of the impersonal nature of the mind. This transformation empowers what may be called the 'enlightened ego,' which is not driven by self-centeredness but aligned with the flow of present-moment experience (Epstein, 1988). Drawing from personal experience, the scholar notes that the retreat's environment, curriculum, and discourses are instrumental in enabling participants to transcend the ego. By renouncing material attachments and living with only basic necessities—food, clothing, and shelter—participants cultivate humility and simplicity. The provision of adequate facilities and the practice of receiving food and bedding from others, as emphasised by S.N. Goenka, serve as subtle mechanisms for dissolving the false sense of self. Furthermore, the retreat's ethos of *mettā* (universal love) ensures that socio-demographic status holds no relevance, as

all participants follow the same rules and share an equal living environment, reinforcing the process of ego reduction.

As both a researcher and participant, she observed that engaging with the 10 *pāramī* allowed individuals to become humbler and more compassionate. The renunciation of comfort and the embrace of simplicity diminished the desire for excess. Practices such as *khanti* (patience) and *mettā* (loving-kindness) further nurtured kindness and compassion toward others. In the *dhamma* hall, when co-participants coughed or sneezed, the researcher focused on her breath and sent them *mettā*. After completing the training, this learning helped her develop and maintain concentration even in undesirable circumstances. In daily life, if practitioners adopt a similar approach, accepting others' problems with tolerance and kindness can lead to positive outcomes.

The practice of *dāna* at the retreat is also diverse like; śrama dāna, *dhana dāna*, *tapo dāna*. Participants engage in labour, such as cleaning and other retreat-based chores which is known as śrama dāna, offering money (as per individual's accountability) which is called *dhana dāna*, and the *tapo dāna* by practicing *vipassanā* at the *dhamma* hall. This contributes to the well-functioning of the retreat and creates a sense of collective responsibilities of the *vipassanā* participants. It emphasizes that a healthy and hygienic environment, both in the home and in society, requires the contribution of individual labour. *Adhitthāna*, or determination, is another essential aspect of the retreat experience. By maintaining a stable posture during meditation, participants learn to control their minds, enhancing their concentration and wisdom. The ten-day course has mandatory group meditation thrice a day, morning (8 to 9 am), afternoon (2.30 to 3.30 pm) and evening (6 to 7pm). During this time participants should never miss the sessions and should not change their posture. The fourth day and the tenth day are called *vipassanā* days, during which the participants are not encouraged to change their posture, thus they can initially select a comfortable posture and hold that for the rest of the session. If participants have pain in their leg, they cannot change their posture. The personal experience of the researcher was that at that time she had various sensations in her legs, mostly she felt severe pain and restlessness in her body but with practice those sensations used to in her body and mind. Pain and restlessness helped her state of determination in her daily routine. It helps to complete any household chores or other work in one sitting. Concentration also developed by the practice. Determination develops the mental strength for completing any major or minor task. The participants cannot leave the session after beginning the *vipassanā* session.

Without determination, no one can reach their goals; whether spiritual or materialistic. By maintaining a stable posture during meditation, participants learn to control their minds, enhancing their concentration and wisdom.

Sīla is another key element of the retreat, benefiting not only the individual but also society. The precepts of refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and substance abuse help build an honest character. *Sacca* in particular, fosters understanding of the present moment and aids concentration. By focusing on the present, participants can cultivate wisdom, recognizing the impermanent nature of all things. Practicing non-reactivity helps develop equanimity, which in turn nurtures kindness and humility in an individual's character.

The second question posed is: Does the retreat reshape the human clock, promoting a healthier daily rhythm and overall well-being?

The structured retreat schedule plays a transformative role in reshaping participants' habits and lifestyles. In contemporary society, individuals often follow irregular routines—marked by late nights, insufficient rest, and unmindful eating. In contrast, the retreat fosters a disciplined rhythm of early rising and early sleeping, alongside mindful eating practices. The daily timetable, spanning from 4:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., demonstrates the significance of utilizing the full day in a balanced manner. This experience enables participants to accomplish tasks punctually, which in turn fosters a sense of satisfaction and psychological well-being.

From participatory observation, it was evident that certain retreat practices contribute significantly to the development of healthier habits. For instance, the observance of **Noble Silence**—extending for ten days—removes distractions by prohibiting verbal, non-verbal, and digital communication. The absence of mobile phones, social media, and casual interaction allows participants to disengage from unnecessary communication and overuse of technology. Many reported that this facilitated greater self-awareness, reduced compulsive behaviours, and encouraged mindful interpersonal engagement after the retreat.

Restrictions on personal belongings, such as books, notebooks, and snacks, further minimized external stimulation, ensuring that attention remained focused on practice. The dining hall routine reinforced this lifestyle shift. Participants adjusted to having two principal meals (breakfast and lunch) and a light evening refreshment. The initial challenge of adapting to this schedule gradually gave way to appreciation of its health benefits, including reduced indulgence, improved digestion, and a greater awareness of the body's needs.

The **daily timetable** also functioned as an effective framework for reshaping lifestyle. The combination of early waking, long hours of meditation, structured group sittings, and evening discourses by S. N. Goenka created a rhythm that balanced mental discipline with physical endurance. The transition from ānāpāna (awareness of breath) in the early days to *vipassanā* from Day 4 onwards deepened participants' engagement, reinforcing consistency of practice throughout the day.

Taken together, these practices not only regulate the biological clock but also cultivate mental clarity, discipline, and emotional balance. The structured rhythm of the retreat thus acts as a corrective to modern lifestyle imbalances, promoting both physical health and psychological well-being.

The third question asks: Would a pre-retreat psychological screening or self-reflection tool support first-time participants in understanding their current mental state and clarifying their motivations for attending? To what extent can mindfulness retreats offer meaningful benefits to a diverse range of individuals, and are there circumstances in which such retreats may be unsuitable? Is the environment and curriculum of mindfulness retreats accessible and inclusive for participants from varied socio-cultural, cognitive, or physical backgrounds?

Based on the researcher's dual experience as a *sādhaka* (meditator) and *sevaka* (volunteer), it became evident that adaptation to the retreat environment varied considerably. Several first-time participants, particularly women, either discontinued the course prematurely—most often between Day 0 and Day 4—or struggled to maintain the discipline of noble silence. For instance, during the researcher's second retreat, three female participants departed within the first four days due to heightened anxiety and difficulty adjusting to the silent, disciplined atmosphere. Similarly, in the fourth retreat, two female participants broke noble silence despite reminders of its importance. In contrast, male participants in the same courses tended to adhere to the rules more consistently and were more likely to complete the retreat.

Feedback sessions suggested that the motivation for attending played a decisive role in whether participants were able to persevere. Those seeking spiritual growth, such as deeper self-awareness or insight into the law of nature, demonstrated resilience and commitment. In contrast, individuals attending primarily for physical well-being or improved concentration often found the rigorous discipline difficult to sustain.

These observations underscore the potential value of psychological counselling or preliminary assessments, particularly for first-time participants. Individuals experiencing anxiety, depression, or other psychological vulnerabilities often found noble silence and the strict timetable overwhelming. As Emavardhana and Christopher (1997) note, participants without major psychological difficulties may more readily deconstruct the ego and embrace selflessness, whereas those with unresolved issues are more likely to struggle. Yet, retreat authorities currently do not conduct formal assessments, leaving some participants unprepared for the challenges of intensive meditation.

A comparative perspective further illustrates this point. Some contemporary retreat models, particularly in Western contexts, have begun integrating psychological screening

or preparatory sessions as part of the admission process. For instance, mindfulness-based programs such as MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) and MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy) often include initial interviews or questionnaires designed to assess participants' mental health status and clarify expectations (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Segal, Williams, and Teasdale, 2013). Similarly, certain Zen and Christian contemplative retreats request medical and psychological histories before admission, recognizing that silence and intensive meditation can surface unresolved trauma or emotional distress. Compared to these models, *vipassanā* retreats under the Goenka tradition generally adopt an open-access approach, requiring little more than a commitment to observe the ten-day discipline. This accessibility allows individuals from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to participate freely, without financial or institutional barriers. However, the absence of psychological assessment means that some participants may enter unprepared, leading to early discontinuation or distress.

The researcher therefore proposes that pre-retreat screening and orientation—including a brief psychological evaluation, motivational interview by assistant teachers, and an introduction to key aspects of the retreat such as simplified meals, restricted communication, and the daily timetable—could enhance readiness and reduce discontinuation. While *vipassanā* retreats offer profound opportunities for transformation, they may not be universally accessible. Their benefits appear most pronounced for individuals who join voluntarily, with mental stability, clarity of intention, and a genuine desire to engage with the realities of life and the universe. Ensuring psychological preparedness and clear motivation could make the retreat experience more inclusive, while safeguarding the integrity of the meditative environment.

Conclusion

Mindfulness meditation, as practiced in the ten-day *vipassanā* retreat[7], provides a structured space in which participants gradually loosen attachment to the false ego, cultivating qualities of humility, self-acceptance, and compassion. While the retreat setting emphasizes equality—removing socio-demographic distinctions and minimizing personal entitlement through simple meals and shared living conditions—the deeper transformation arises from disciplined practice, including early rising, mindful eating, noble silence, and extended hours of meditation. These routines effectively realign the body clock, fostering healthier rhythms, mental clarity, and emotional stability, all of which stand in contrast to the irregular patterns of modern life.

At the same time, the study highlights that transformation through *vipassanā* is not universally accessible. The retreat environment is most effective for participants motivated by spiritual well-being and self-inquiry, whereas those seeking material or immediate benefits

often struggle with its rigor. Moreover, psychological stability and clarity of intention emerge as essential prerequisites for completing the course. Without such readiness, participants may discontinue early or fail to engage fully with the practice.

Based on the researcher's participatory observations, the integration of basic psychological assessments and motivational interviews prior to the retreat could greatly enhance participant preparedness and reduce disruptions. Such measures would not only safeguard the meditative environment but also promote inclusivity, ensuring that individuals are adequately supported to meet the demands of intensive practice.

Ultimately, the findings affirm that *vipassanā* retreats hold profound potential for personal transformation, but this potential is realized only when approached with sincerity, mental stability, and readiness for discipline. As mindfulness and meditation practices continue to expand globally, greater attention to participant preparation and support will be vital for sustaining both the integrity of the retreat model and the well-being of those who undertake it.

Future Application of this Work

This study's findings are applicable to the course organizers and retreat staff, especially in identifying participants' motivations for attending. If the *vipassanā* organization conducts psychological assessments to understand why participants join—whether willingly or due to external pressure—it could significantly benefit both participants and the organizing committee. This approach would ensure that participants are better prepared for the retreat experience, enhancing their ability to benefit from the program.

Acknowledgment

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Endnotes:

[1] In the *vipassanā* retreats, those who are attending courses for learning or practicing meditation, they are called *dhamma sādhaka*. The male practitioners are called *dhamma sādhaka* and the females are *dhamma sādhikā*.

[2] In the *vipassanā* retreat those who are attending courses for volunteering. The male participants are addressed as *dhamma sevaka* and female participants are as *dhamma sevikā.*

[3] In a *vipassanā* retreat, the supervision of the course is carried out by the assistant teacher and the teacher is called as *Dhamma Ācārya*, without whom the centre cannot conduct the program. Senior meditators may apply for the role of assistant teacher, and their selection is made by the teacher and the retreat authority. Experienced assistant teachers can, in turn, apply for the position of teacher. The post of the *Dhamma Ācārya* contribute as partial volunteers; by guiding meditators to the way to practise *samatha* and *vipassanā*, explaining the rules, and introducing the course curriculum from day 0 to 11. From Day 1 to Day 10, the teacher meets small groups of meditators after the afternoon session to inquire about their experiences of bodily sensations, followed by two to three minutes of guided practice. Additionally, between 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. (after lunch), the teacher holds one-on-one meetings with meditators, offering them an opportunity to discuss their sensations, thoughts, or any questions related to their meditation practice.

[4] Followers of Goenka's retreat address him as Guruji. The instructions are provided by the Guruji's audio recordings, with the procedure of anapana and vipassana meditation, and more matters from zero to eleven days. Every evening, the discourse session happens with Guruji's audio-video

[5] *Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami, b. Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami, c. Kamesu micchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami, d. Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami, e. Surameraya majja pamadatthana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

[6] According to the author's observation, the *sūnyagār* is a small meditation cell designed specifically for the practice of *vipassanā*. The room is modest in size, dimly lit with a low-watt bulb, and furnished with simple square cushions covered in blue cloth. It has a single door with minimal ventilation, creating a cool and quiet atmosphere conducive to deep concentration. These cells are generally attached to the pagoda structure and are made available to practitioners during the retreat—old students gain access from the first day, while new students are permitted to use them between the fifth and ninth days. Notably, older retreat centres often contain a larger number of *sūnyagār*, whereas newer centres may lack them. Wherever a pagoda has been constructed, however, *sūnyagār* are included as an integral feature.

[7]The researcher attended several *vipassanā* retreats across different locations in India in the role of a participatory observer. Observations were recorded through informal field notes and reflective journaling, with attention to participants' behavioural patterns, course structure, and interactions with teachers.

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Floor Art Motifs as Cultural Time-Capsules: Mythical Narratives and Identity in Floor line Traditions

Varuna Semwal[1], Shreejit Guha[2], Debkumar Chakrabarti[3]

Abstract

Floor arts in India serve as a profound reflection of identity for local cultures, intertwining myths and legends with ritualistic practices. With its roots in pre-history and imbibing modernity through value-addition, floor arts exist as a testimony to history and its continued impact in the present. With the motifs travelling along with the demography and cultural exchange, they have come to represent diverse concepts in different cultures, often associated with mythical narratives. This study explores the intricate relationship between floor designs, mythical narratives, and cultural identity, focusing on the "Yamduaar" or "Gate of Yam," a symbol of protection against evil forces, as represented in the Broto Alpona tradition of Bengal. The tradition of "Bhai-Phonta," where sisters pray for their brothers' long life, encapsulates this connection through a rhyme that refers to Yam's gate, illustrating the protective essence of these rituals. The rhyme emphasizes the act of marking the brother's forehead and metaphorically links it to the divine myth of Goddess Yamuna- who prays for her brother Yam- the Hindu God of Death, thereby reinforcing the cultural significance of the floor art as a ritualistic practice. The gate of Yam has been depicted in the Bengali culture for centuries through the motif of "Yamduaar" employed in the Broto Alpona tradition. Yamduaar appears and re-appears in various narratives around the Indian subcontinent, creating a strong background narrative to the motif.

Furthermore, similar designs are observed across India, such as the "Chakravyuh" in Uttarakhand, which alludes to a military formation from the Mahabharata, showcasing how the same design can embody different identities across cultures. Parallels can be drawn with the motif "Labyrinth" – a popular motif from Greek mythology, widely used in the western world. This study employs content analysis and expert discussions to delve into how these floor designs manifest mythical narratives, ultimately referring to a shared cultural heritage. This exploration not only highlights the aesthetic value of these art forms but also emphasizes their role as a cultural time capsule, preserving the myths and rituals that shape the identities of communities.

Keywords: *Yamduaar, Broto Alpona, Chakravyuh, Labyrinth, Floor line-art, Folk-Narratives.*

Introdution

Symbols have been one of the defining identity elements representing cultural ethos. In visual manifestations of culture such as in art, symbols in the form of motifs encapsulate narratives to be perceived by the denizens of the culture. With the Onion Model of Culture, Hofstede et al. (1990) depicted the levels of depth in which cultural phenomena are embedded in people's minds. The degree of depth also signifies the resilience of cultural phenomenon types: The more superficially rooted a cultural phenomenon is, the more probable it is to be modified or abandoned (Sawagvudcharee, 2018).

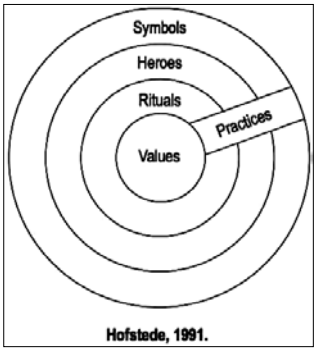


Figure.1. shows Onion Model of Culture, Hofstede. Source: https://www.coderfrontline.com/
elements-of-the-culture-onion/

Motifs in visual culture have been in utilization for centuries carrying historical and social perspectives of the times in which they emerged. In visual arts such as Broto Alpona from West Bengal, India and Bangladesh, motifs have been central to visual composition as well as the carrier of cultural contexts. While the motifs contain narratives from specific cultures, it has been observed that certain visually similar motifs are shared between cultures. A popular example is the motif of a labyrinth, known as the "Yamduaar" in the Broto Alpana Tradition (Biswas, 2015), also found throughout India, popularly known as the famed "Chakravyuh" formation, as used in the mythical Mahabharata War (Dudeja, 2018). Similar labyrinth pattern can be found across the globe, transcending cultures.

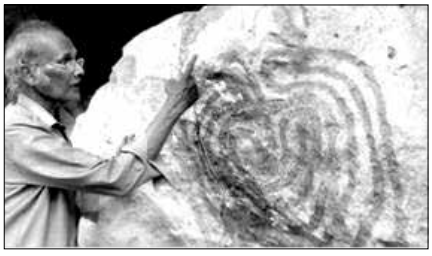


Figure.2. shows archaeologist Kadiyala Venkateswara Rao at the labyrinth in Kolimeru village, East Godavari district. Source: https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Vijayawada/prehistoric-labyrinth-discoveredgodavari/article19892482.ece#:~:text=The%20labyrinth%2C%20dating%20back%20to,the%20cave%20facing%20the%20Sun.

In the East Godavari area, close to Kolimeru hamlet near Tuni, a prehistoric painting depicting a labyrinth has been found in a cave perched on a hill. The Neolithic-era labyrinth is made up of seven red-ochre circles painted in white pigment on a rectangular rock in front of the cave that faces the (Kumar, 2015). The finding of the labyrinth sheds light on archaic civilizations' understanding of astronomical indications in addition to their previous religious customs, such as sun worshipping or predicting seasonal changes and natural calamities (Hindu, 2017).





Figure.3. (a) shows sculpture of Chakravyuh, Source: (Brooks, 1953);
(b) shows the Yamduaar from Broto Alpona. Source: (Biswas, 2015)



Figure.4. Shows the Cretean Coin from Crete Greece, Source: http://vla.chez-alice.fr/d95.htm

Evidence of the enduring cultural importance of the Labyrinth in Crete is found in ancient Cretan coinage, particularly from the city of Knossos. Coins dating to the 4th century BCE often depict a stylized version of the Labyrinth on one side, typically as a square or circular motif (Anon., n.d.). The myth of the Labyrinth is supposed to have its origins in the Minoan culture, which flourished on Crete between 2000 and 1400 BCE. Few studies suggested that the narrative was inspired by the Palace of Knossos (Herva, 2023), a vast and ornate Minoan palace in modern-day Heraklion, Crete. The palace contained complex passageways and apartments that may be described as a "Labyrinth".



Figure 5. Shows an ancient coil-like symbol resembling a labyrinth design from Tantra practice. Source: SOHAM Himalayan Centre

Fig. 5 shows a geometrical mandala-like symbol resembling a modern-day Yantra (designs in Tantra believed to invoke deities). In Tantra practice, Yantras are sacred designs believed to invoke cosmic energies, facilitating transformative experiences. The words surrounding the central motif, in Devanagari script, appears to be mantras recited to activate the symbol. Such instructional suggestions direct focus on spirituality and rituals directed towards attaining spiritual experiences.

While the coiled symbol shows similarity to the labyrinth design, the design shows aspects of Tantric practices that have been prevalent in the ancient Southeast Asia. Exploring links to such ancient practices may provide insights into the varying interpretations of the same designs across the region.



Figure.6. Shows the Labyrinth developed by Govt of India to promote tourism and preservation of culture heritage in Miyawaki Forest at Gujarat's Ekta Nagar. Source: https://www.indianarrative.com/culture-news/pm-modi-inaugurates-maze-garden-and-miyawaki-forest-at-gujarats-ekta-nagar-66587.html

The Maze Garden is part of a broader initiative to develop tourism in Ekta Nagar, which also includes a Miyawaki Forest designed to promote biodiversity and environmental awareness. This labyrinth garden is not just a recreational space but also serves as a cultural and educational attraction that highlights India's commitment to sustainable tourism and environmental conservation (Whitmore, 2004).

While the background of such transcendental nature of the motif is unknown as according to the current state of study, this investigation, through interviews with experts and content analysis, sought to understand the possibility of thematic association among the similar motifs from different cultural backgrounds through a study into their narrative contexts, often connected to mythology and memories of cultural practice.

Methodology

This study examines the complex symbols of labyrinths from India, emphasizing their artistic, historical, and cultural value. The research uses a qualitative approach, analysing the labyrinth

symbols' content and holding in-depth interviews with Aipan experts (N=2), art historians (N=2), Anthropologists (N=2) to obtain expert insights. The collected data was then analysed along with the secondary data collected from background literature survey to reach the conclusion.

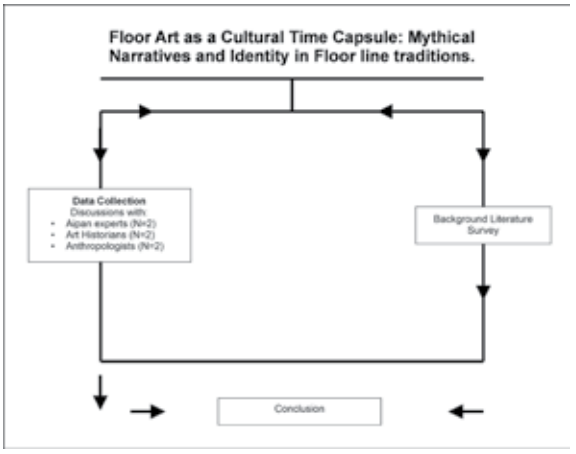


Figure.7. Shows the study diagrammatic design of the methodology followed for this study.

Result of discussion

The discussions with the experts, historians and anthropologists (n=6) yielded some interesting interpretations of the labyrinth motif. Given below is a summary of the interpretations:

***Womb of the mother*:** According to some experts, the labyrinth is often interpreted as a powerful symbol of the womb of the Mother (Shelton, 2013), encapsulating the cyclical journey of life, death, and rebirth. This metaphor underscores the sacred, life-giving power of the females, linking it to the worship of the Mother Goddess, prevalent in Vedic culture. As individuals navigate the labyrinth's intricate paths, they engage in a pilgrimage that mirrors gestation, wherein each twist and turn represents the complexities of existence and personal transformation (Eternalised, 2024). Labyrinths and spirals too, predispose to womb-like symbolism. As Lima de Freitas states, to delve into a labyrinth is to step back into the "bosom of Mother Earth," imagined as the earth as yoni or womb (ELECTRONICA, 2024). In every culture, a cave or underground maze is a cosmic womb/tomb: prehistoric and megalithic labyrinth designs are typically linked at the same time with death (the underworld) and fertility. For instance, in European megalithic art, scientists discovered "Ringwallbilder" patterns– concentric circles penetrated by a central spiral or line – that resemble both female genitals and fertilization iconography (semen entering an ovum) (Lundquist, 2006).



Figure 8 shows the Ringwallbilder Pattern in a ancient temple, in Mysore.
Source: https://www.theyogicjournal.com/pdf/2018/vol3issue2/PartK/3-2-116-503.pdf

These motifs, clearly, link the journey through a maze with the fruitful cycle of life. The labyrinth archetype (from ancient Crete to Celtic Britain) generally is a womb–spiral symbol of change: one enters "the interior of the earth," moves through death and uncertainty, and is reborn at the center. This connection emphasizes the labyrinth's role as a spiritual tool for self-discovery and healing, resonating with ancient beliefs surrounding femininity (Kaleshwara, 2020)

***Naag Aipan*:** In Kumaon, the labyrinthine patterns of Aipan art symbolize protection and fertility, reflecting the intricate pathways of life. This art form embodies a spiritual journey, connecting the divine with everyday existence, much like the serpentine forms of the Naag (Serpent), representing continuity and renewal. One expert suggested the existence of an identical design of the Naag Aipan, an Aipan design used to pay reverence to the Naga Gods (D'Silva, 2019). In Himalayan cultures and all over India, Nagas were semi-divine beings living in subterranean realms, rivers, lakes, and springs. They were protectors of water—a power of nature that was essential to fertility, agriculture, and the very survival of life (Chang, 2024). In farming cultures like 15th-century Kumaon, where life was balanced on the seasons' rains and fertility of land, the Nagas were both protectors and possible threats. Their blessings were sought to bestow fertile crops, the protection of animals, and the health of the people.



Figure 9. shows a 12th century sculpture of a Naga couple (Naga and Nagini) at Chennakeshava temple at Belur, Karnataka. Source: https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C4%81ga

The relationship, though, was not of only worship—it was also one of fear and reserve. In a country like India, where snakes were in abundance- a threat to the daily livelihood of humans, the worship of serpentine Gods is a natural occurrence- the early humans worshipped the things they were afraid of. Nagas were said to be angry if overlooked or slighted, and they could inflict drought, disease, or catastrophe. Their poison could destroy, but their blessing could cure. Therefore, appeasing them with rites, oblations, and sacred iconography was a necessary act of cosmic equilibrium. The Naag Aipan, therefore, is a promise and an entreaty—a visual prayer inscribed on doorways, beside sources of water, and at sacred places to recognize the Nagas' ascendancy over the powers of nature. The snake-like nature of the Naag Aipan reflects the coiled posture of snakes and reminds one of the meandering ways of nature and of fate. It is a symbol of continuity since snakes shed skin to claim new ones. Rooted mythological beliefs state that all lands were "borrowed" from the Nagas by human beings who appropriated lands as per their own utility (Dinu Das, 2017). Such a myth is usually present in oral myths and folklores (Andrews, 2025), where tracing serpentine lines is a gesture of reparation—an act of respect towards the original owners of the land. This connection with wells and water tanks gives credence to this because such places were considered to be gates to the Naga world.

War formation: In the Indian epic Mahabharata, a war formation- "Chakravyuh" has been mentioned in the Drona Parva, where Dronacharya designed the labyrinth formation, which resulted in the entrapment and killing of Abhimanyu. It has been mentioned that the formation enables the enemy to navigate inside and facilitate their own entrapment, utility similar to Yamduaar. In the rich tapestry of Indian mythology and cultural practices, the concepts of Yamduaar from Broto Alpona and the Chakravyuh from the Mahabharata share intriguing philosophical parallels. Both symbolize protective barriers, employing intricate designs and strategies to encapsulate and contain energies or adversaries, each rooted in a deep cultural and spiritual ethos (Lundén, 2003). Rajnaun in the Hamirpur district, Himachal Pradesh, is historically and mythologically important village site to be associated with the Chakravyuh, a complex military formation described in the Mahabharata. People are of the view that during the Agyatvas when the Pandavas, particularly Arjuna, were in exile, they practiced and may have inscribed the complex formation in stone itself in this region. This place, known as the Arjun Chakravyuh Rachna, is claimed to be among the few to have such a structure, after Kurukshetra (Pandey, 2023).



Figure 10 shows the Arjun Chakravyuh Rachna at Rajnaun Village, Himachal Pradesh. The image stone formation believed to represent the Chakravyuh—a complex military formation described in the Mahabharata. Source: https://www.opindia.com/2023/02/according-to-legends-arjuna-learned-about-the-chakravyuh-at-rajnaun-in-himachal-pradesh/

***The Cycle of Karma*:** The philosophy of the design enables the notion of entrapment, drawing parallels to the vicious cycle of Karma and rebirth, popular across various ancient religions, the way out being attaining enlightenment (Banerjee, 2018). The concept of karma has been present since time of the Upanishads. Thus, in Brahmana- a Vedic stuti attached to the Samhitas, "karma" was used to mean the ritual work of the brahman, work which was attended by – as was the law cause and effect – favorable, materialistic consequences after death for the brahmin who might attain the world of the Gods. Indian philosophical-religious thought from this point on starts to question the meaning of all the facts of a man's life and not only those of ritual facts. Reflection about the ritual process of "cause and effect" it was inevitable to find that all action, by the sheer fact of obtaining an outcome, was comprehended in an unlimited chain of causes and effect. There was a question of the fate of the "atman"- the human soul- often believed to be the person's true self, after life has ended for a person, due to ritual deeds. Thus, the Brahmans' thinkers attempted to find during life things which were also causes which had to be accompanied by their respective effects. These activities (karma) are associated with "avidya", as it is ignorance that leads human beings to forget the consequences of activities. The term "samsara" is also related to the terms "avidya" and "karma." Samsara is the cycle of the world's existence of birth, death, and rebirth (Natesan, 2009). As per last life activities, the individual can get reincarnated and assigned a destiny to fulfill in the life, associated with the past life activities. Each individual has behind him a series of past lives, in which he has endured infinitely much and intensely. Eternally, each person has strayed away from existence to lived ignorant of the truth that the pleasures are transient and the pains permanent, he/she has continued to show his/her aspiration for a new life. Whereas samsara gives person temporary pleasures to make him/her want to be reborn and enjoy the luxuries of the world, only when one transcends this cycle of death and rebirth can one enjoy complete and eternal happiness is attained (Bjorling, 1996). This freedom is referred to as "moksha". It is said that after a certain number of reincarnations, man becomes one with the cosmic spirit. The ultimate purpose of life has been called "nirvana," "moksha," or "samadhi." It is being defined as realization of man's union with God, union with the entire universe, full knowledge of self-detachment from worldly desires.

Protection from negative forces: Aligning with the other representations, the labyrinth design has been utilized in floor art designs such as in Broto Alpona where it is known as "Yamduar" at the front of the outer line (creepers) of the Alpona to ward off evil forces (Mukhopadhyay, 2023) as shown in Figure 3 (b). Since Broto Alpona is an indigenous art form practiced primarily by the indigenous communities of Bengal region in India, the higher strata consisting of the higher castes often averted from it. Broto Alpona remained an indigenous practice, and the element of evil forces differ greatly from that in the Vedic philosophies. While according

to the Vedic scriptures, evil can be defined as a disruption in the cosmic order (Radhakrishnan 1999: 41), the indigenous metaphors for evil were embodied spirits who could get lost in the labyrinth, preventing them from entering the central area of the Alpona design.

Conclusion

Culture and collective memory are influenced by mythology (Pethes), Myths depict or symbolize the moral lessons, norms of society, or memories of history, and become more or less enmeshed in the culture of the society. Accounts related to Theseus, the Minotaur, and the Chakravyuh, as well as the Mahabharata, illustrate the point that myths can reflect civilization and encapsulate rather intricate human experiences. Looking at such myths through various cultural practices, broad themes can be derived that touch on human concerns and issues of existence (Wang, 2017).

The Labyrinth has come to represent more than just a physical structure; it symbolizes the intellectual and psychological challenges associated with navigating complex problems. In a broader cultural context, the Labyrinth can be viewed as a metaphor for the human condition—one in which individuals must confront fear, uncertainty, and seemingly insurmountable obstacles, much like Theseus. The presence of the Minotaur within the Labyrinth introduces the idea of duality: reason and civility (Theseus) versus primal, animalistic nature (the Minotaur).



Figure.11. Shows the major varying interpretations of the Labyrinth design into two main themes as communicated: Entrapment and Self-realization.

In essence, the interpretations underscore a timeless lesson: the path to liberation, whether from a battlefield formation or spiritual entrapment, lies in the wisdom to navigate complexity with clarity and purpose. Entrapment may symbolize the materialistic constraints of earthly life. Self-realization may resemble the concepts of Nirvana and Moksh, signifying liberation from earthly bindings. Yamduaar reflects the belief that understanding the spiritual dimensions of art and life can safeguard against unseen dangers. It highlights the notion that protection is not merely physical but also metaphysical, emphasizing a holistic approach to safety and well-being. The parallels between the Chakravyuh and Yamduaar reveal a deeper cultural narrative about the balance between entrapment and liberation, protection and exposure. They teach

that while challenges and adversities are inevitable, true mastery lies in understanding both entry and exit, ensuring that we are neither trapped by circumstances nor vulnerable to unseen threats. The usage of labyrinth in temples and parks as a process of walking meditation as shown in Figure 12 (a),(b) asserts the same.

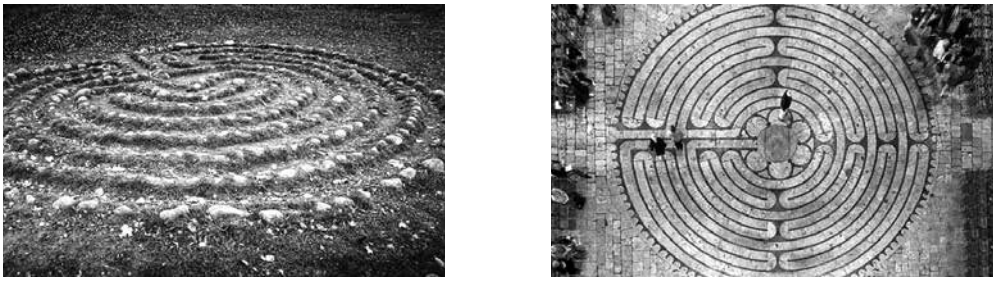


Figure 12 (a) & (b) shows examples of labyrinth design at parks and churches which is used for meditative walking practises.
Source: https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20240508-labyrinth-walking-an-ancient-activ ty-that-could-help-ease-anxiety

Labyrinth symbols occur across the globe and cultures. While this study sought to summarise the various interpretations of the symbols primarily from an Indian perspective, more research may be driven towards the factors impacting appearance of the symbol in varying cultures with no known connections in the ancient world.

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Weaving Traditions with Resilience: The Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Sustaining Community Health in the Indian Sundarbans

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Abstract

The Indian Sundarbans, the world's largest contiguous mangrove ecosystem, supports rural communities that depend extensively on indigenous traditional knowledge (ITK) for primary healthcare, given the constraints of formal medical infrastructure. This study documents the ethno-medicinal practices of 15 traditional healers across four villages in the Sandeshkhali-II Block of North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal. A total of 57 plant species from 33 families were identified for the treatment of 23 categories of human ailments. Urinary disorders, diarrhea, dysentery, fever, animal bites, and leukorrhea emerged as the most frequently treated conditions. Leaves were the most commonly utilized plant part (34%). Pastes (41.05%) and powders (21.05%) were the predominant preparation methods. Oral administration accounted for 68.42% of treatments. External applications used mainly for skin diseases, wounds, and arthritis. Analysis revealed significant associations between plant families and disease groups, providing insights into potential phytochemical linkages. The study further highlights the socio-cultural importance of local healers, who sustain their practices through community recognition and modest rewards. Findings indicate the urgency of documenting, preserving and scientifically validating ITK, while advocating for policy frameworks that integrate ethnomedicine into formal healthcare systems. Strengthening knowledge transfer and ensuring intellectual property rights are essential for safeguarding this cultural heritage and enhancing health resilience in vulnerable coastal regions.

Key Words: *Indigenous Traditional Knowledge, Ethno-medicine, Medicinal Plants, Sundarbans, Primary Healthca*

1. Introduction

For hundreds of years, rural communities across the globe especially regions with dense ethnic populations have relied heavily on traditional medicine as a core element of their healthcare practices (Misganaw et al., 2021). In a particular locality, a group of ethnic people is noticed by their treasure of traditional knowledge and wisdom that passes through generations either verbally or in written records (Kalu, 2022). Ethno-medicine, part of the traditional knowledge system, is practiced by local herbal healers and medicine men and holds immense cultural and societal value (Grigo 2022; Kalu). "Traditional medicine" refers to the methods of protecting and rebuilding health that prevailed before the advent of modern medicine. Indigenous peoples residing in harmony with nature across diverse regions worldwide, including India, possess an immense understanding of their natural environment and an invaluable knowledge base of local medicinal plants (Bhushan et al., 2018; Negi et al., 2023). Communities have traditionally depended on native medicinal plants as their first line of defence in addressing numerous health problems (Warburton and Martin, 1999). While many of these plants have modern pharmacological properties, others are integral to indigenous medicinal practices, addressing the health needs of local communities. These medicinal plants have historically played a significant role and are expected to remain pivotal in traditional and modern healthcare practices. The importance of medicinal plants is expected to play significant roles in geographically less integrated areas, such as islands, with constrained public health facilities. Understanding the use of traditional, plant-based medicinal practices and examination of their pharmaceutical potential can help us bridge the traditional medicine within the manifold of formal public health systems.

According to WHO (2019), nearly 87% member countries incorporate traditional medicine into their national healthcare frameworks. In India, medicinal plants are deeply ingrained in traditional medical practices such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH). Historically, these plants have been instrumental in discovering treatments for both human and animal diseases (Singh et al., 2021). The ancient Indian systems of medical practices, including various systems of traditional medical practice worldwide that utilize diverse medicinal plant species, are now gaining renewed importance in modern times. Indigenous knowledge systems play a vital role in shaping modern medicine, offering valuable insights that continue to influence drug discovery and healthcare innovations. For instance, notable pharmaceutical drugs like aspirin, artemisinin, vincristine, and vinblastine, were all derived from traditional medicinal plants such as *Spirea ulmaria* Schultz (Meadowsweet), *Artemisia annua* L., and *Catharanthus roseus* (L.) G.Don (Su and Miller 2015; World Health Organization 2019). One notable example is the discovery of artemisinin as an antimalarial

drug, which led to Tu Youyou receiving the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2015, further highlights the importance of traditional knowledge in modern medicine (Su and Miller, 2015).

With the rising demand for traditional medicines, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a growing interest in harnessing the pharmacological potential of medicinal plants. This demand has put increasing pressure on the need for sustainable management of natural resources (Nautiyal et al., 2020). India's National Intellectual Property Rights (NIPR) Policy, 2016 acknowledges the importance of preserving and promoting this rich and largely unexplored repository of traditional knowledge (Savale and Savale, 2016; Gupta and Bhattacharya, 2024). Sustainability, particularly in the research and use of medicinal plants, is crucial to ensure the long-term availability and use of traditional and synthetic drugs (Cordell, 2011). More than 4,000 plant species have been used in the preparation of AYUSH drugs in traditional Indian medicinal practices (Ojha et al., 2020), reflecting the global resurgence of interest in plant-based medicines (Vijendra and Kumar, 2010). Traditional health practices are also crucial for achieving universal health coverage because of their cost-effectiveness, easy availability, and existing traditional knowledge (James et al., 2021).

The Sundarbans is recognized as the largest mangrove forest in the world, encompassing an area of 140,000 hectares, and consists of several low-lying islands formed by the river deltas of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna, situated along the Bay of Bengal. It is a rich reservoir of natural resources, including a diverse range of medicinal plants. This region covers about 10,000 km² across both India and Bangladesh, with at least 40% located in the Indian Sundarbans of West Bengal. The Sundarbans serves as a habitat for over 150 species of commercial fish, 270 species of birds, 42 mammal species, 35 types of reptiles, and 8 species of amphibians (Jana et al., 2024). Despite its rich biodiversity, the Sundarbans face challenges such as environmental degradation and livelihood insecurities. The local communities, who often engage in agriculture, fishing, livestock rearing, and honey harvesting, face numerous health risks due to their proximity to wildlife and exposure to harsh environmental conditions (Sajjad et al., 2024). In this context, limited access to formal healthcare has made traditional medical support systems, particularly the indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants, critical to addressing health challenges in the region.

While ethnomedicinal studies have been conducted in other regions of India, systematic documentation of indigenous traditional knowledge from the Indian Sundarbans remains scarce. Given the region's ecological uniqueness, socio-cultural context, and limited access to healthcare, this study provides one of the first comprehensive accounts of medicinal plants and healer practices in Sandeshkhali-II Block. It not only records the diversity of species

and ailments treated but also integrates taxonomic validation, phylogenetic analysis, and statistical association, offering insights rarely explored in ethnomedicinal surveys of this fragile ecosystem.

Given the historical importance of medicinal plants in Indian traditional medicine, we aim to document the traditional knowledge of herbal healers in selected regions of the Indian Sunderbans. This knowledge may be valuable for the development of sustainable healthcare strategies and conservation of biodiversity and natural resources. Specifically, the study aims to – (i) Document and classify the medicinal plant species employed by traditional healers in the Indian Sundarbans, with attention to their taxonomic and therapeutic significance. (ii) Examine the utilization practices of medicinal plants, including the plant parts used, methods of preparation, and routes of administration in primary healthcare. (iii) Apply phylogenetic and statistical analyses to explore associations between plant families and disease categories, thereby providing analytical insights into ethnomedicinal practices.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study area

The Indian Sundarbans region is divided into two main districts, namely North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas, which together comprise a total of 19 community development blocks. This particular study was undertaken in the Sandeshkhali-II Block of North 24 Parganas district, which lies between the latitudes of 21°32' N to 22°40' N and longitudes of 88°05' E to 89°00' E (**Figure 1**). Sandeshkhali-II Block was purposively selected due to its remoteness and limited access to modern healthcare facilities, as many residents rely on traditional knowledge-based medicinal plants to treat various ailments. Four villages, (Atapur, Manipur, Jaygopakpur, and Dhuchnikhali) from the Sandeshkhali-II Block were chosen through stakeholder consultation including Ramakrishna Mission Lokashiksha Parishad (https://rkmlsp.org/) and expert judgments regarding the prevalence of traditional healthcare practices among the people. According to the 2011 Census, the Sandeshkhali-II Block of the North 24 Parganas district had a population of 160,976, comprising 79,055 females and 81,921 males across 37,771 families. The average sex ratio in the block was 965 females per 1,000 males. The overall literacy rate was 70.96%, with male literacy at 68.61% and female literacy at 53.89%. (Retrieved from *https://www.censusindia.co.in/subdistrict/sandeshkhali-ii-block-north-twenty-four-parganas-west-bengal- 2335* on 06 August 2024).

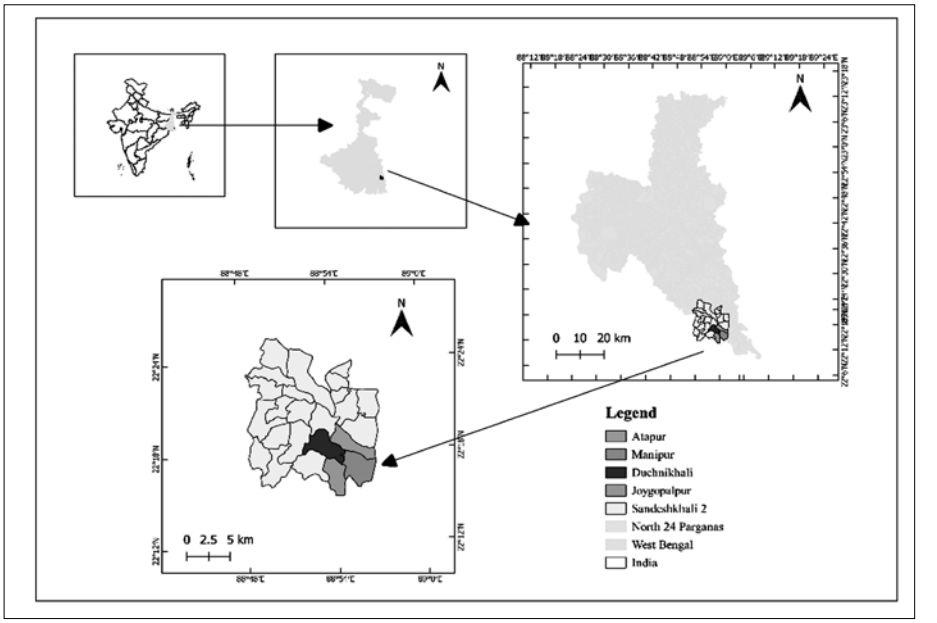


Figure 1: Study location of Sandeshkhali II Block of North 24 Parganas District, West Bengal, India

2.2 Data collection and analysis

Through informal interactions with the villagers and key informants, 15 traditional herbal healers were identified using snowball sampling, which is often used to identify traditional healers (Mwaka et al., 2023). In-depth interviews were conducted with the identified healers after obtaining their prior informed consent. While obtaining consent from the healers, relevant issues associated with this research were explained in their native language, i.e., *Bengali*. Data were collected through direct observation of people being treated using various combinations of medicinal plants, in-depth interviews using semi-structured interview forms, and narrative recording (Weckerle et al., 2018). The information documented during the interviews included the vernacular names of plants, their habits, parts used, methods of medicine preparation, dosages recommended for adults and children, modes of intake, and dietary restrictions. Photographs of the healers and plants were taken with due consent, and herbarium sheets were prepared using standard methods (Kottapalli et al., 2016). The plants were identified based on a comprehensive survey across various online virtual herbariums such as Tropicos (https://www.tropicos.org/), JSTOR Global Plants (https://plants.jstor.org/), Plants of the World Online (https://powo.science.kew.org/), The Plant List (www.theplantlist.org), www.worldfloraonline.org, MPNS (http://mpns.kew.org) along with online botanical garden resources such as Kew

Gardens (https://www.kew.org/), United States Botanic Garden (https://www.usbg.gov/). Opinions of Plant Taxonomists and relevant literature were also consulted, followed by the authentication of the scientific names of the plants using NCBI taxonomic information (Schoch et al., 2020). A phylogenetic tree was obtained using the NCBI taxonomy ID (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Taxonomy/CommonTree/wwwcmt.cgi) followed by the data used in an online iTOL database (Letunic and Bork, 2024; The Angiosperm Phylogeny Group, 2016).

2.3 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted by processing use-value assessments, ranking, and comparisons in Microsoft Excel. Correspondence analysis (CA), employing the measure of association through χ^2, was conducted using a contingency table derived from the original data. The CA was performed using SPSS version 21 (IBM 2012). Graphs were generated by using the RAWGraphs platform (Mauri et al., 2017) and for the visualization of the physiological relationship of the plants with different diseases; the graphics were prepared in MS PowerPoint with a link to Biorender software (https://www.biorender.com). The data visualization including the phylogenetic tree was made in an online iTOL database (Letunic and Bork 2024).

3. Results

3.1 Demographic profile of the herbal healers

Demographic details of the herbal healers (*n=15*) from four villages in the block, including their age, average years of herbal healing practice, educational qualifications, and primary and secondary occupations, are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Demographic details of the herbal healers (*n=15*)

Parameters	**Respondents' Characteristics**
Total number of respondents	15 Herbal healers
Location of respondents (village)	Atapur, Manipur, Jaygopakpur and Dhuchnikhali
Gender	Male –12, Female-3,
Age of the respondents	Male: 23 years (Lowest)-73 years (Highest)
	Female: 45 years, 54 years and 60 years.
Mode of Knowledge acquisition	Family Tradition, Own Innovation, Others Herbal Healers, and Literature.
Average years of practice	19 years

Rewards from clients	Money, Dress (Pants, Shirts)
Educational qualifications	Primary– Higher Secondary
Primary occupation	Agriculture, Fishery, Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA), community health worker, Casual Labourer, Business and Herbal Healing.
Secondary occupation	Transport worker, Labour, Agriculture.

3.2 Distribution of plant families, plant growth habits, method of medicine preparation, plant parts used for treating diseases

The percentage distribution of medicinal plants based on their families is given **(Figure 2A)**, The Lamiaceae family, consisting of seven species, exhibited the highest usage frequency, contributing 14.74% to the total medicinal use based on the counts. Other notable families include Apocynaceae (7.37%), Combretaceae (6.32%), and Zingiberaceae (6.32%), Families such as Arecaceae, Asteraceae, Amaranthaceae, Fabaceae, and Phyllanthaceae were also used in disease treatment (ranged between 4% and 5%). Furthermore, Apiaceae and Malvaceae, each with two species, and Meliaceae, with one species, accounted for 3.16%.

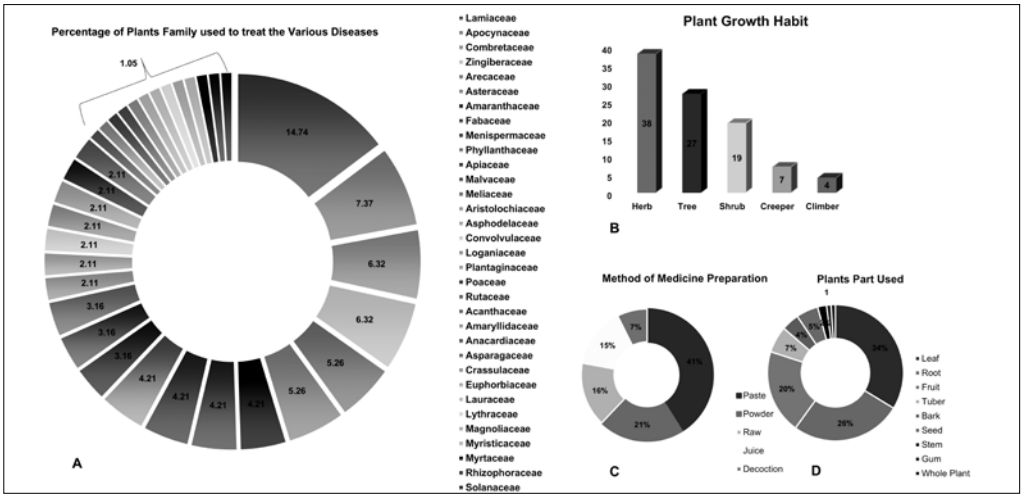


Figure 2: Percentage distribution, plant growth habit, method of medicine preparation, and plant parts used for the ITK documented medicinal plants

Out of the 57 documented plant species, herbs were the most common growth form with 25 species, followed by trees with 16 species, shrubs with 10 species, creepers with 4 species, and climbers with 2 species. This classification offers insight into the ecological adaptability of medicinal plant species (**Figure 2B**) highlighting potential avenues for conservation,

particularly for species that are rare or underrepresented in their respective plant families.

The methods of edible medicine preparation advocated by the local herbal healers or based on traditional knowledge fall into five categories (**Figure 2C**): (i) plant parts used to prepare decoctions in combination with water, (ii) plant parts applied as a juice, (iii) paste extracted from the fresh parts of the plant, (iv) powder made from dried material, and (v) raw plant parts consumed by chewing. Among these, the paste was the most used form (41.05%), of medicine preparations, followed by powder (21.05%). Plant materials are sometimes used in their raw form (15.79%), as juice (14.74%), or as decoctions (7.37%). In the preparation of medicines (**Figure 2D**), leaves were the most commonly used plant part, accounting for 34% of usage, followed by roots (26%), fruits (20%), tubers (7%), seeds (5%), bark (4%), stems (2%), and, in rare cases, gum and the whole plant, each used on a single occasion (1%).

3.3 Medicinal plant diversity

The recorded plant species in the region mostly belong to families Rhizophoraceae, Avicenniaceae, and Euphorbiaceae, comprising approximately 245 plant genera and an estimated 343 plant species (Prain, 1908). The current study recorded the use of 57 distinct plant species, across 33 plant families, treating of 23 documented diseases. Taxonomic identifiers (I.D.) retrieved from the National Centre for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) taxonomy database (Schoch et al., 2020). A phylogenetic tree (**Figure 3**) was used to construct to elucidate the evolutionary relationships among the plant species used by local healers, offering an evolutionary perspective of the region's medicinal plants The phylogenetic tree**,** highlights the plant species used, diseases treated (single or multiple), and the specific plant parts used for preparing medicinal formulations. A detailed comparison was made between plants used for single-disease treatment and those treating more than one disease. Methods of application (e.g., oral, external, or a combination of both) were also recorded, emphasizing the diversity in medicinal use. For instance, *T. cordifolia* and *Stephania japonica* (Thunb.) Miers, both fall under the Menispermaceae family, are represented as a single clade in the phylogenetic tree. According to local herbal healers, the bark of *T. cordifolia* is used to treat three health conditions: animal bites (cats, dogs, and snakes), fever, and sciatic nerve pain. In contrast, the root of *S. japonica* is used specifically to treat piles. Regarding the mode of application, medicines derived from *T. cordifolia* are taken orally, whereas those from the leaves of *S. japonica* are applied externally. Detailed illustrations of all 57 species and their medicinal applications are provided in **Figure 3**. Additionally, the phylogenetic analysis may contribute to deciphering a broader perspective of how evolutionary relationships might influence the medicinal efficacy of species within these plant families. For instance, the prevalence

of Lamiaceae could indicate potential phylogenetic traits contributing to its medicinal importance. Based on the survey, oral administration of these traditional medicines was the predominant route of medicinal application, accounting for 68.42% (65 cases), while external application was applied in 29.47% cases

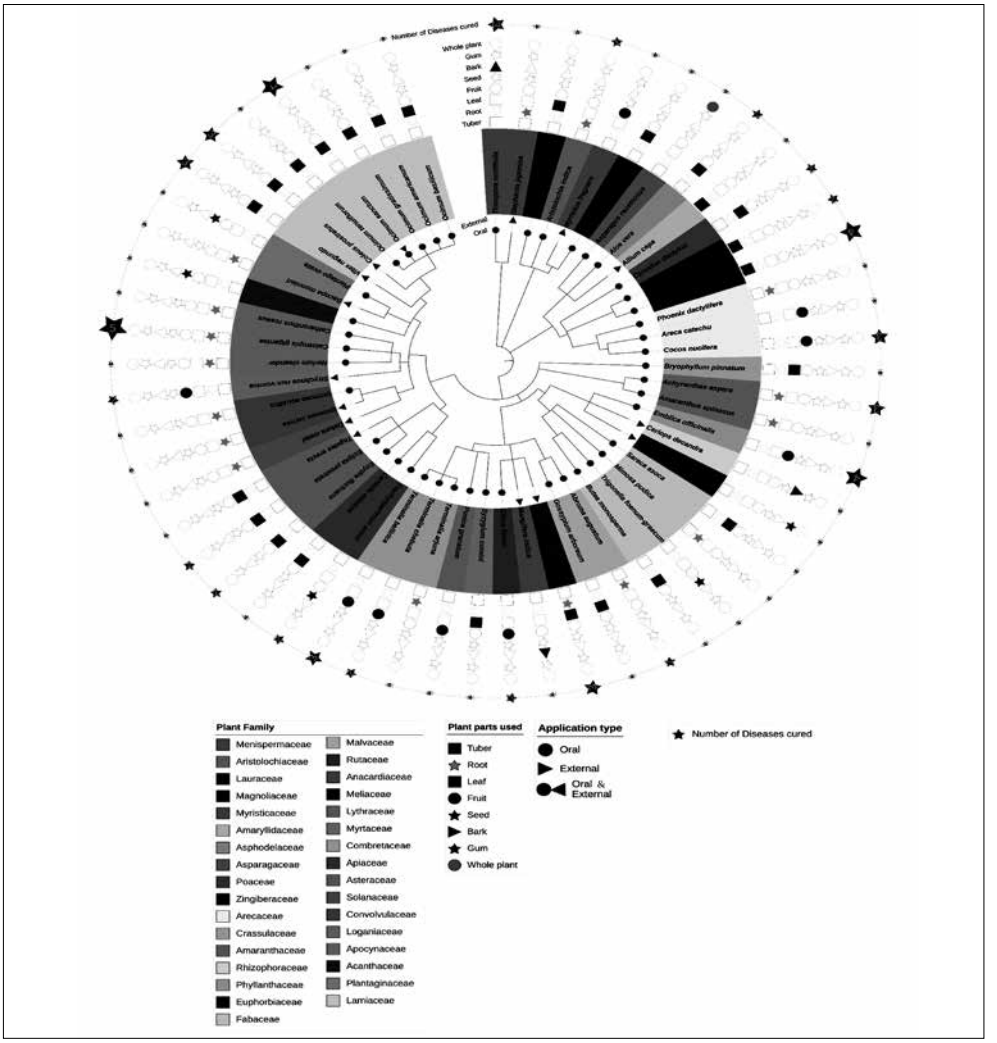


Figure 3: Phylogenetic tree of the ITK documented medicinal plants, illustrating their family, specific plant parts used, number of health conditions addressed, and the application type of the herbal medicine:

(**Figure 3**). In two instances (2.11%), oral and external methods were employed concurrently to treat chickenpox and measles using raw crude extracts or through the preparation of paste from the leaves of *Ocimum sanctum* L. Oral medication was primarily used for conditions such as diarrhea, dysentery, chickenpox, gastritis, urinary disorders, sciatica, skin diseases (allergy), leukorrhea, constipation, measles, and animal bites (e.g., snake, cat, or dog). In contrast, external treatments were preferred for conditions such as piles, toothaches, jaundice, certain skin diseases, ear infections, asthma, cuts, wounds, and arthritis.

Table 2 provides a detailed list of the most frequently used plant species, illustrating their integrative use in curing both single and multiple diseases/ailments. The presence of species used for the treatment of multiple diseases suggests potential bioactive compounds with broad therapeutic effects, a finding that can be further explored through pharmacological screening. This also underscores the need for further phytochemical and pharmacological studies on species within closely related taxonomic groups to validate the claims of the local healers.

Table 2: ITK documented medicinal plants used in traditional medicine by the herbal healers of Sandeshkhali-II Block, West Bengal, India

Sl. No.	Scientific Name	Local/ Vernacular name	Plants Family	Number of diseases treated	Name of the diseases treated
1	*Hygrophila auriculata* (Schumach.) Heine	Talmakhana/kulekhara	Acanthaceae	1	Diarrhea and Dysentery
2	*Achyranthes aspera* L.	Apang	Amaranthaceae	3	Toothache; Animal bites (cat, dog, snake); Urinary disorder
3	*Amaranthus spinosus* L.	Kanta note		1	Urinary disorder
4	*Allium cepa* L.	Peanch/Onion	Amaryllidaceae	1	Headache
5	*Mangifera indica* L.	Aam	Anacardiaceae	1	Jaundice
6	*Centella asiatica (L.) Urb.*	Thankuni	Apiaceae	1	Chickenpox
7	*Trachyspermum ammi (L.) Sprague*	Jowan		2	Diarrhea and Dysentery; Gastritis
8	*Calotropis gigantea* (L.) W.T.Aiton	Set akonda	Apocynaceae	5	Asthma; Urinary disorder; Animal bites (cat, dog, snake); Jaundice; Fever
9	*Catharanthus roseus* (L.) G.Don	Nayan tara		1	Urinary disorder
10	*Nerium oleander* L.	Moha somudra/ Set korobi		1	Animal bites (cat, dog, snake)

11	*Areca catechu* L.	Supori	Arecaceae	1	Urinary disorder
12	*Cocos nucifera* L.	Coconut		3	Ear piercing; Allergy; Urinary disorder
13	*Phoenix dactylifera* L.	Khejur gach		1	Urinary disorder
14	*Aristolochia indica* L.	Iswar mul	Aristolochiaceae	2	Animal bites (cat, dog, snake); Urinary disorder
15	*Asparagus racemosus* Willd.	Soto mul	Asparagaceae	1	Animal bites (cat, dog, snake)
16	*Aloe vera* (L.) Burm.f.	Aloe vera	Asphodelaceae	2	Sciatica; Leukorrhea
17	*Eclipta prostrata* (L.) L.	Kesuti/Kes raj/ Vringaraj	Asteraceae	2	Allergy; Chickenpox
18	*Enydra fluctuans* Lour.	Heloncha		2	Leukorrhea; Urinary disorder
19	*Tagetes erecta* L.	Ganda ful gach		1	Sciatica
20	*Terminalia arjuna* (Roxb. ex DC.) Wight & Arn.	Arjun	Combretaceae	1	Leukorrhea
21	*Terminalia bellirica* (Gaertn.) Roxb.	Bohera		3	Cuts and Wounds; Gastritis; Liver disease
22	*Terminalia chebula* Retz.	Horitoki		2	Gastritis; Liver disease
23	*Ipomoea aquatica* Forssk.	Kolmi lota	Convolvulaceae	1	Urinary disorder
24	*Ipomoea carnea* Jacq.	Dhol Kolmi		1	Toothache
25	*Bryophyllum pinnatum* (Lam.) Oken	Pathor Kuchi	Crassulaceae	1	Diarrhea and Dysentery
26	*Jatropha gossypiifolia* L.	Baghbheranda, Eranda-ga-chh, Kulsera, Totkabendi	Euphorbiaceae	1	Hair loss
27	*Butea monosperma* (Lam.) Kuntze	Polash	Fabaceae	1	Menorrhea
28	*Mimosa pudica* L.	Set Lojjapoti		1	Leukorrhea
29	*Saraca asoca* (Roxb.) Willd.	Ashok		1	Leukorrhea
30	*Trigonella foenum-graecum* L.	Methi		1	Measles
31	*Ocimum basilicum* L.	Radha/Ban tulsi	Lamiaceae	1	Fever
32	*Ocimum americanum* L.	Dulal tulsi		1	Fever
33	*Ocimum gratissimum* L.	Ram tulsi		1	Fever
34	*Ocimum sanctum* L.	Tulsi		4	Allergy; Chickenpox; Diarrhea and Dysentery; Measles
35	*Ocimum tenuiflorum* L.	Krishna tulsi		1	Fever
36	*Coleus prostrates* (Gürke) A.J.Paton	Mushokani		3	Chickenpox; Headache; Menorrhea
37	*Vitex negundo* L.	Kalo nishindha		3	Animal bites (cat, dog, snake); Cuts and Wounds; Allergy

38	*Cinnamomum tamala* (Buch.-Ham.) T.Nees & C.H.Eberm.	Tez pata	Lauraceae	1	Fever
39	*Strychnos nux-vomica* L.	Kuchila	Loganiaceae	2	Cuts and Wounds
40	*Punica granatum* L.	Dalim	Lythraceae	1	Diarrhea and Dysentery
41	*Magnolia tripetala* (L.) L.	Dodhi somudra	Magnoliaceae	1	Urinary disorder
42	*Abroma augustum* (L.) L.f.	Ulotkomol	Malvaceae	2	Piles; Urinary disorder
43	*Gossypium arboreum* L.	Karpas tulo		1	Fever
44	*Azadirachta indica* A.Juss.	Neem	Meliaceae	3	Jaundice; Piles; Ringworm
45	*Stephania japonica* (Thunb.) Miers	Nimuka lota	Menispermaceae	1	Piles
46	*Tinospora cordifolia* (Willd.) Hook.f. & Thomson	Amrito guloncho		3	Animal bites (cat, dog, snake); Fever; Sciatica
47	*Myristica fragrans* Houtt.	Jaifol	Myristicaceae	1	Cuts and Wounds
48	*Syzygium cumini* (L.) Skeels	Jam	Myrtaceae	1	Diarrhea and Dysentery
49	*Phyllanthus emblica* L. *(syn. Emblica officinalis* Gaertn)	Amloki	Phyllanthaceae	4	Diarrhea and Dysentery; Gastritis; Leukorrhea; Liver disease
50	*Bacopa monnieri* (L.) Wettst.	Ada borboti/ Bramvi sag	Plantaginaceae	1	Jaundice
51	*Plantago ovata Forssk.*	Isukuler Vusi		1	Diarrhea and Dysentery
52	*Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers.	Durba ghas (set)	Poaceae	2	Constipation; Urinary disorder
53	*Ceriops decandra* (Griff.) W.Theob.	Goran	Rhizophoraceae	1	Cuts and Wounds
54	*Citrus limon* (L.) Osbeck	Pati lebu	Rutaceae	2	Diarrhea and Dysentery; Ringworm
55	*Datura metel* L.	Dhutra	Solanaceae	1	Arthritis
56	*Curcuma longa* L.	Holud	Zingiberaceae	2	Allergy; Liver disease
57	*Zingiber officinale* Roscoe	Ada gach		4	Chickenpox; Diarrhea and Dysentery; Fever; Urinary disorder

3.4 Health conditions addressed by traditional medicines

Traditional medicinal plants are utilized to treat a variety of health conditions and listed in Table-2. The relationships between different human diseases and the plant species used to treat them are presented in **Figure 4A**, highlighting the distinct plant family in disease treatments. The analysis comprises 57 plant species distributed across 33 plant families and linked to 23 human diseases. The visualization illustrates the relationship according to the frequency of plant species used to treat various ailments. The largest number of plant species, fourteen species (14.74%) were used for treating urinary disorders, followed by ten species (10.53%) used for diarrhea and dysentery, nine species (9.47%) for fever, and seven species (7.37%) for treating animal bites (such as from cats, dogs, or snakes). (**Figure 4A**). Other notable treated illness includes leukorrhea with six species (6.32%), cuts and wounds including chickenpox with five species (5.26%), and gastritis, jaundice, and liver disease with four species (4.21%). For conditions like allergies, piles, and nerve disorders (e.g., sciatica), three species (3.16%) are used.

To understand the statistical significance of the association among the thirty-three plant families used in treating 23 documented diseases in the study, a bivariate correspondence analysis was performed, which revealed that 46.1% of the data variance was explained by two dimensions (**Figure 4B**). A visual scrutiny of **Figure 4B** suggests that Euphorbiaceae plant family is used to treat constipation and piles. Close associations between various plant families and specific diseases were observed, such as Phyllanthaceae with gastritis, liver disease, and leukorrhea; Fabaceae with diarrhea and dysentery; and Anacardiaceae, Solanaceae, Euphorbiaceae, and Myristicaceae with ringworm, sciatica, and hair loss. Plant families treating a common group of diseases often clustered together, thus corroborating the findings of **Figure 4A**. For instance, Aracaceae, Apocynaceae, and Amaranthaceae plant families treated urinary disorders and found at the third quadrant of **Figure 4B**. However, the mere occurrence of a plant family treating a disease or disorder may not warrant a statistical association. For instance, although plant families such as Minispermiaceae, Lauraceae, and Zingiberaceae (**Figure 4A**) featured together in the fourth quadrant, they were found to have treated different diseases, all of these families were not clustered together (refer to Supplementary **Table S1**).

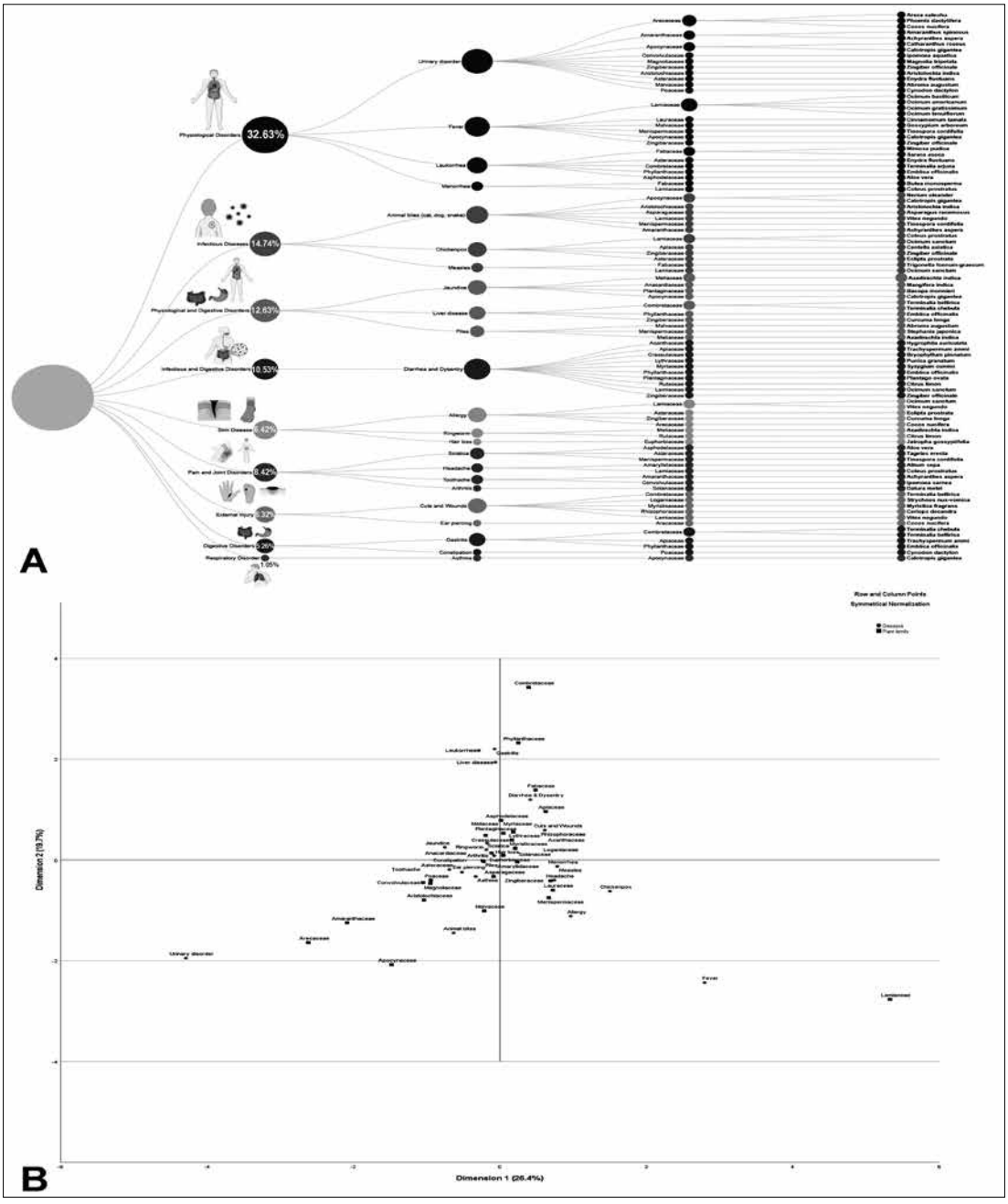


Figure 4: Relationship and association of diseases with different plant species.

4. Discussion

Human dependence on nature for health and well-being has been age-old, with traditional medicine serving this purpose for centuries, passed down through generations. While the advent of modern medicine has largely replaced the use of traditional practices, ethnomedicine remains prevalent across diverse communities worldwide (Mahapatra et al., 2019). Ethnomedicine has laid the foundation for modern healthcare, with numerous plant-derived drug molecules already in use and many more anticipated in the future. In recent years, traditional medicine has gained renewed interest due to its accessibility, minimal side effects, and the availability of historical knowledge, unlike modern medicine, which is often expensive and requires the prescription of trained professionals, such as doctors (Gogoi et al., 2024). However, the preservation of this rich repository of ancient knowledge, along with its underlying resources, specifically the vast diversity of plants and the traditional healthcare practitioners who possess this expertise, is crucial for future generations.

A significant portion of the Sundarbans population relies directly or indirectly on agriculture and allied activities, including the sustainable utilization of mangrove forests, as their main source of livelihood (Sarkar et al., 2024). Frequent forays into the forest for resources such as honey, wood, fish seeds, and other materials expose villagers to heightened risks of snake bites and other health-related challenges. Moreover, limited infrastructure and inadequate access to clean drinking water exacerbate the prevalence of urinary disorders, fever, diarrhea, and dysentery (Ashrafuzzaman et al., 2023).

The region's poor road networks and logistical constraints restrict access to modern healthcare facilities, compelling a substantial portion of the population to depend on traditional medicinal knowledge for managing various ailments (Barman, 2023). This dependence highlights the vital role of traditional plant-based medicine in meeting healthcare needs, particularly given the environmental challenges and limited infrastructure in the region.

The Lamiaceae family ranked highest in usage frequency, followed by the Apocynaceae, Combretaceae, and Zingiberaceae families. The Lamiaceae family was also prominently represented in other ethnomedicinal studies, likely due to its distinctive floristic characteristics, aromatic properties, flavors, and rich phytochemical composition (González-Tejero et al., 2008). Plants produce a diverse range of bioactive compounds, categorized into various classes of secondary metabolites such as phenolics (including flavonoids, isoflavonoids, anthocyanins, tannins, coumarins, and quinones), phenyl propanoids, phenyl ethanoids, alkaloids, cyanogenic glycosides, glucosinolates, and terpenoids (such as sterols and essential oils), triterpenoids, etc. These compounds are frequently toxic and are produced as defense mechanisms by plants in response to environmental stress or threats. Interestingly, these bioactive compounds have

been extensively utilized for human welfare, particularly in therapeutic applications (Kaur and Ahmed, 2021; Matos et al., 2022). The Lamiaceae plant family has been widely utilized in addressing various health issues, including pain management (Uritu et al., 2018) and Vector-borne diseases such as dengue, yellow fever, Zika, and chikungunya are transmitted by the Aedes aegypti (Linnaeus) mosquito (Santos et al., 2022). Essential oils extracted from plants in this family have demonstrated antimicrobial, antifungal, antioxidant, anti-angiogenic, and anti-tumoral properties (Nieto, 2017). Additionally, oleanolic acid derived from *Achyranthes aspera* L. has been traditionally used by herbal healers in North India to treat respiratory disorders, skin diseases, fever, and typhoid (Mahapatra et al., 2019). The hydrolyzable tannins, chebulagic acid, and punicalagin, derived from *Terminalia chebula* Retz. of the Combretaceae family, have been shown to effectively inactivate free virus particles and inhibit the entry of Herpes Simplex Virus 1 (HSV-1) (Lin et al., 2011). Owing to their vast chemical diversity, researchers worldwide are actively investigating these plant-derived compounds for their potential as antimicrobial agents in infectious diseases and as remedies for various physiological and health disorders. The bioactive compounds from plants offer an avenue for large-scale production, making plant-derived medicines the foundation of many pharmaceutical companies, globally. Interestingly, in many Asian countries, including India, plants continue to be the preferred choice in healthcare due to their affordability, and widespread availability over synthetic drugs even in remote locations (Gogoi et al., 2024).

Underrepresented plant families, such as Acanthaceae, Amaryllidaceae, Anacardiaceae, Aristolochiaceae, and others, may reflect the limited geographical range of the study or ecological factors that result in their reduced availability. Furthermore, limited knowledge about these families in treating ailments could explain their lower representation. This limitation suggests potential areas for further research, particularly in phytochemical characterization, and highlights the need to expand the geographical and ecological scope of the study to obtain a more realistic understanding of species richness and traditional knowledge inheritance.

Locally available plants are used to treat 23 categories of health conditions, with urinary disorders, diarrhea and dysentery, animal bites (from cats, snakes, and dogs), fever, leukorrhea, chickenpox, and cuts and wounds being the most frequently treated ailments. The Sundarbans region is characterized by its rich biodiversity, with over 42% of documented plant species traditionally utilized for the treatment of snake bites, urinary disorders, diarrhea, and dysentery. However, the region's vulnerability to climatic fluctuations, including severe annual cyclones, poses significant challenges to both its ecosystem and local communities (Mandal et al., 2024). These cyclonic events result in prolonged submergence of land under the water table, contributing to a rise in waterborne diseases (Mondal et al., 2023)

While these conditions were prominent in the region, the prevalence of diseases was not recorded in this study. Identifying the principal diseases in the region and integrating documented traditional knowledge from other regions could complement sustainable healthcare practices and conserve both the plants and associated traditional knowledge. Among the forms of plant preparation, herbs, followed by trees, were most frequently documented, possibly due to the use of whole herbaceous plants. Various plant parts, including bark, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, and roots, were utilized either singly or in combination for traditional drug preparation, emphasizing their prevalence in the survey. This reliance on ethnomedicinal practices underscores the need for further investigation and preservation of traditional plant-based healthcare approaches in the region.

Oral administration, typically in the form of decoctions, juices, pastes, or powders, was the most common route of treatment. In some cases, external applications were also noted, particularly for conditions such as skin diseases, leukorrhea, cuts, wounds, and animal bites. This highlights the extensive knowledge of herbal healers in treating pathophysiological conditions within their communities. However, the absence of data on lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer indicates either a lack of knowledge within the community or the geographical significance of the Sundarbans, which may limit the prevalence of these conditions. This may restrict the availability of medicinal plants or the ability of healers to highlight treatments for these diseases.

The correspondence analysis showed a close association between many plant families and specific diseases. The plant families clustered together with specific diseases might contribute to their phytochemicals in treating the diseases, which may also offer avenues for undiscovered phytochemicals where the associated plant families in treating the specific diseases are not properly validated at scientific level, although the information received from the traditional healers justified (Detroja et al., 2007).

5. Conclusions

This study documented the extensive ethnomedicinal knowledge of traditional healers in the Indian Sundarbans, identifying 57 plant species from 33 families used to treat 23 categories of ailments. Leaves emerged as the most frequently used plant part, with pastes and powders being the dominant preparation methods, while oral administration accounted for the majority of treatments. Beyond descriptive documentation, the application of phylogenetic analysis and correspondence analysis provided novel perspectives by linking evolutionary relationships and statistical associations with disease treatments, an approach seldom employed in ethnomedicinal surveys.

The findings highlight the dual significance of indigenous traditional knowledge: as a critical healthcare resource in regions with limited medical infrastructure and as a reservoir of potential bioactive compounds for future pharmacological research. The socio-cultural role of healers, supported through community recognition yet constrained by their declining numbers, highlights both the resilience and vulnerability of these knowledge systems.

Many local and neighbouring residents visit herbal healers for ailments like colds, muscle pain, wounds, headaches, skin rashes, and stomach issues, often offering small tokens of appreciation. Most healers are compensated monetarily (46.66%), with clothing (26.66%), or both (13.33%), while 13.33% serve voluntarily. Despite their focus on traditional remedies, the lack of stable income may discourage future generations from continuing this practice.

This study advances existing ethnomedicinal research by situating indigenous knowledge within the unique socio-ecological context of the Sundarbans. By combining species documentation with statistical and phylogenetic analyses, it contributes new insights into the therapeutic linkages between plant families and disease categories. Such integration of healer-based practices with scientific validation underscores the urgent need to preserve and promote ITK, ensuring its transmission across generations and its incorporation into sustainable healthcare strategies. Future studies should expand across other blocks of the Sundarbans to capture greater species richness and healer practices, while policy interventions must safeguard intellectual property rights and support biodiversity conservation.

The study makes the following recommendations:

a) The government should empower traditional healers through skill development, structured training, institutional support, and access to financial and material resources, while safeguarding their intellectual property rights. Awareness campaigns and educational initiatives must also promote public appreciation of traditional medicine and encourage community participation in preserving this cultural heritage.

b) Integrating local herbal healers with modern technology can ensure the long-term sustainability of healthcare by merging traditional practices with contemporary advancements.

Limitations of the Study

One of the key challenges in the survey was identifying the traditional knowledge holders, for which a snowball sampling method was employed to discover the herbal practitioners. Although 15 herbal healers were interviewed regarding their use of medicinal plants, the survey provided extensive coverage of medicinal plant families and offered a quantitative analysis of each plant species contributing to disease treatment. Nevertheless, expanding the

sample size by surveying a larger portion of the Sundarban ecosystem would enhance the documentation of traditional knowledge and uncover additional medicinal plants, advancing future research and promoting the wider popularity of traditional healthcare practices.

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Competing interests

All the authors declare there are no conflicts of interest.

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A Comparative Study on Home Management Abilities of Working and Non-working women of Kolkata

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Abstract

From the very beginning, women are involved in house hold activities which is considered the only job they can do. With the passing of time, role of women has been transformed and they are free to choose their education to pursue employment opportunities. Home management is a crucial task of daily life, innovative planning, organizing, and efficiently utilizing resources for the well-being of the family. But ultimate house handling duties are in the hands of women though they are working or not, thus they need to have a good knowledge about different aspects of home management to maintain a balanced life and take appropriate decisions about it. With the advancement of science, technology and modern home facilities make an opportunity to show leadership and managerial skill of women in managing their home. This research paper is regarding different aspects of family life and house hold activities whether they are working or non-working women. Also in this research, the role of education, their financial status, and family status are to be studied on Home management abilities. For this purpose "Home Management Scale" is to be administered on working and non-working women of Kolkata district, total of 100 women. Descriptive statistics and t-test has been used to make comparison between the two groups of working and non-working women. This study will help to understand differences, challenges, and coping mechanisms and also focus on women empowerment through support system.

Keywords: *Working and non-working women, Home management abilities, Kolkata*

Introduction

One of the most beautiful creations on this earth is the "women", whom we get "in the form of mother, sister, wife and a friend who are at the same time tough and tender". Role of women are always important in the house hold activities from the very past whether they are well educated or not, working or not, but making decisions are not always in the hands of women. Women are the most important part of our family and society. With the realm of change, women are in every sphere of different sectors. They are free to decide their working status as they decide their education.

Home is the most important non-formal agency of Education which is responsible for shaping an overall personality of a human being consisting of values, morals, culture, attitude, and nature. Managing a home or a company, both needs leadership qualities and managerial abilities which is a systematic learning all together (Vijayeta & Behera; 2018). With rising educational opportunities and social shifts, more women are entering the workforce. Population growth, economic strain, and limited resources are pushing both men and women to seek employment. As a result, managing the home is no longer just about housekeeping- it now demands a systematic and scientific approach (Kalia, 2005 & Jenny, 2013).

Home management plays a crucial role in ensuring the smooth functioning of family life. It encompasses a wide range of responsibilities including family time, food and cloth management, furniture, equipment, time and energy management. With the rising participation of women in the workforce, the dual responsibility of managing both home and job has significantly impacted their daily routines.

Review of Literature

Lennon (1994), viewed that full time household work involves more autonomy but more interruptions, greater physical effort but less routine, fewer time pressure but more responsibility than paid job. Lennon in his study compared homemakers and working women and found that homemakers appear to benefit from having less routinized work than working women.

Engels (1998) stated that experience of homemakers are not much of happiness as they have to work full day long. It is often observed that homemakers and working women are different in terms of their responsibilities and also need different kind of support system to cope up effectively with their chosen roles. There always exists a controversy regarding the duties of mother, looking after the needs of the family, etc., who is better, working women or homemakers?

"The changing role of women" an article by G. Delina (2009), mentioned that working married women have to face more difficulties in their lives as compared to non-working married women. It is concluded as married working women don't contribute significantly for the well-being of their family may be their attention is diverted between office and home. They cannot give proper attention too for their family and it leads to their marital maladjustment.

Chowdhury & Ahmad (2017), in their article, "A study of psychological well-being among homemakers and working women ", stated that although it is a general assumption that a good job can contribute to overall quality of life through financial freedom, which provides satisfaction also. But the scenario is just opposite in case of homemakers as working women need to make more social readjustments that can contribute to stress, anxiety and psychological discomfort.

Kaur (2018) emphasized the role of time management in dual-earner households.

Sharma & Dey (2020) found that working women developed better task delegation skills compared to non-working women.

Mitra (2019) highlighted that non-working women displayed more involvement in childcare and nutrition planning

There is limited research exploring how employment status affects home management capabilities. This study is essential to highlight the strengths and challenges faced by both working and non-working women and to inform family and social support systems accordingly. This study attempts to bridge the gap in comparative understanding between these two roles.

Objectives

1. To study the home management abilities of working women
2. To study the home management abilities of non-working women
3. To compare the home management abilities, mean of working and non-working women

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the home management abilities of working and non-working women

Methodology

This study is based on descriptive and comparative survey design using a quantitative approach.

Sample selection

Data has been collected from different area of Kolkata district. Kolkata is the capital of West Bengal where people came from different cultural background and a huge number of women are engaged in different kinds of jobs. Working women are selected from where data can be easily available like teaching, non-teaching staff, bank and IT offices and non-working women, who are house wives and students and aspirants. Purposive sampling technique is adapted for this study and a total of 100 samples have been taken. These comprise of 50 working and 50 non-working women under the age group of 25-50 years residing in different parts of Kolkata district only.

Tools for Data Collection

Home Management Scale developed by Haseen Taj and Hemlatha (2001), which includes 102 items has been used for the present study. This scale is subdivided into five areas, that are-

1. Transaction with family members, 2. Food management, 3. Cloth management, 4. Management of furniture and equipment and 5. Management of Time and energy.

Data collection and Analysis

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents on the basis of basic information

Category	Sub category	Working		Non-working		Total
		N	%	N	%	
Age	26-35	15	30	17	34	32
	36-45	19	38	20	40	39
	46-55	16	32	13	26	29
	Total	50	100	50	100	100
Education	10^{th}	14	28	20	40	34
	12^{th}	14	28	15	30	29
	B. A	13	26	10	20	23
	M.A	9	18	5	10	14
	Total	50	100	50	100	100
Type of Family	Joint	12	24	15	30	27
	Nuclear	38	76	35	70	73
	Total	**50**	**100**	**50**	**100**	**100**

Table 1 represents the distribution of data collected from working and non-working women categorically in the form of Age, Level of Education and Type of Family.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents on the basis of home management activities

Sub-category	Non-working		Working		Total
Transaction with Family members	N	%	N	%	N
Average (19-24)	15	30	20	40	35
Good (25-30)	35	70	30	60	65
Total	**50**	**100**	**50**	**100**	**100**

Food management					
Average (144-184)	17	34	24	48	41
Good (185-225)	33	66	26	52	59
Total	**50**	**100**	**50**	**100**	**100**
Cloth management					
Average (79-104)	13	26	16	32	29
Good (105-130)	37	74	34	68	71
Total	**50**	**100**	**50**	**100**	**100**
Furniture and equipment management					
Average (40-57)	10	20	14	28	24
Good (58-75)	40	80	36	72	76
Total	**50**	**100**	**50**	**100**	**100**
Time and energy management					
Average (29-39)	7	14	9	18	16
Good (40-50)	43	86	41	82	84
Total	**50**	**100**	**50**	**100**	**100**

Table 2 depicts the data score working and non-working women occupy in the 5 different segments of the home management scale. This data represents that all the 100 respondents had score between averages to good, it may be because Kolkata is the capital of West Bengal and people are educated and sincere to handling their job and home together.

In the first sub theme, Transaction with Family members, 70% non-working women have found with good score where 60% working women spend time with family members. In case of average section 40% working women and 30% non-working women score lies. Thus, it can be interpreted that non-working women scored slightly higher in managing family transaction.

In the next segment of Food management, 66% non-working women and 52% working women scored good where 34% non-working women and 24% working women scored average. This implies that non-working women performed better in food management.

As of Cloth management 74% non-working women and 68% working women get good score and 32% working and 26% non-working women scored average. This indicates that both groups perform well, but non-working women again show slightly better outcomes.

In the 4th segment of this scale, 80% non-working women and 72% working women scored well in managing furniture and equipment. Non-working women (20%) and Working women (28%) occupy average score in this sub theme. Here also non-working women showed stronger result in good position.

In the last segment, 86% non-working and 82% working women scored good and only 18% working and 14% non-working women scored average in managing time and energy. This implies that very good time and energy management by both the groups, though non-working women have a slight edge.

Across all the five categories, non-working women slightly outperform than working women in home management activities. The majority in both groups fall into the "Good" category, showing strong home management skills.

Home Management Ability Score:

Table: 3 Group Statistics

Working status		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	Working Women	50	419.9200	40.96531	5.79337
	Non-working Women	50	428.2000	45.07001	6.37386

There is the table showing group statistics for working and non-working women. See table-3 and t-test value in table no. 4.

Table: 4 Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Group Scores

Variable	F	P	T	Df	p (two-tailed)	Mean Difference	SE Difference	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Score (Equal variances assumed)	1.16	.285	-0.96	98	.339	-8.28	8.61	-25.37	8.81

Result

As P value is 0.96, greater than 0.05 (P>0.05), thus we accept the null hypothesis which implies non-significant difference. The t-test reveals no significant difference between the groups of working and non-working women. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranged from -25.37 to 8.81.

Interpretation

The present study examined the differences in home management abilities between working and non-working women of Kolkata across the 5 domains of Transaction with Family members, Food management, Cloth management, Furniture and equipment management, and Time and energy management. The findings indicate that both groups show significant abilities, but with variation in the good and average results. Though non-working women scored high in the 5 segments of home management scale by getting 'Good' score but working women scored high in getting 'Average' score. But in terms of overall home management abilities there is no significant difference between working and non-working women.

Discussion

The results show that employment brings structure and multitasking skills, enhancing certain home management capabilities. The data has been analyzed in the form of mean, standard deviation and t-value for home management abilities. This present study reveals most useful facts which are beneficial for the empowerment of women. Non-working women get time to delegate their time in home management but working women also able to balance their job and home side by side. Non-working women devote greater attention to detail in household activities than working women. Due to time constrain working women perform average home management in the 5 segments mostly to free financially. But in the segments of overall home management abilities statistically there is no significant difference between the two groups.

In the prior studies, there are 3 studies shows that non-working women shows more managerial skill in home involvement than working women, but the present study shows no significant difference between two groups of working and non-working women. Though among the 5 domains non-working women scored slightly high with good scores than the working women.

Home management involves planning, organizing, decision making, and implementing tasks related to household responsibilities. Education plays a major role, whether it is formal, informal, or self-learning to improve planning and organizing skills, better financial management, enhanced decision making, health and nutritional awareness, resource management, parenting and childcare. The knowledge and skills gained directly influenced the quality, efficiency and harmony of home life.

Thus, it implies working women also can manage their home at the same time doing their professional work. If they delegate work and responsibilities with the family members in a shared manner that can lead to balanced life. This gender stereotype should be gone and women should be empowered economically, doesn't matter how much they paid, but must be paid for their work.

Conclusion

This study compared the home management abilities of working and non-working women across various domains like Transaction with family, management of food, cloth, furniture equipment and time energy. Data showed no significant difference between the two groups in overall home management abilities though there are segments wise slight difference scoring in 'Good' and 'Average' result. Employment influences home management patterns with smart execution and support system. Women have that multitasking ability where they can balance between personal and professional life effectively obviously with the support they required and shared responsibilities. There should be some awareness programs to promote shared domestic responsibilities; time management training for women and family supports that can actually help women to continue their job side by side of their homely and familial role.

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Marriage as an Institution: Gender Fluidity and Homosexuality

Reshmi Chakraborty

Abstract

Marriage, as a primary institution, faces many challenges and poses many questions due to rapid social transformation. Cohabitation which is popularly known as 'live-in-relationship' is becoming common nowadays. The emergence of urbanization, globalization along with industrialization not only makes a sharp change in the economic structure of the society but also generates individualistic thought and liberty among the masses. As a result, a new emerging community 'LGBTQIAH' has been coming in force to get their equal right in the existing 'marriage institution'.

Basically gender is socially constructed which is multidimensional and fluid in nature. Society generates many ideas about the notion of gender which is crystallized in human mind and soul through socialization. The idea of sexuality is still treated as a taboo to discuss in public sphere. The Supreme Court of India de-criminalized homosexuality in the year 2018. But till now, heterosexual marriage is accepted but homosexuality is stigmatized in the society. They have to struggle in their everyday life to access their fundamental rights along with other social and legal recognition.

In these circumstances, the present paper tries to analyze the concept of gender, sexuality and marriage theoretically through sociological and anthropological understandings.

Key words: *Gender, Sex, Homosexuality, Marriage, LGBTQIAH+*

Introduction

India is a country of diversified social phenomena. In this country family and marriage are two inseparable part of social life. Though in present day's modern world the role and importance of marriage has been questioned rigorously but there is no contradiction that it is accepted as the most beautiful relation between couples. Marriage is universal in nature and plays fundamental role to form the familial bond. It is a socially accepted institution in which the sexual union of man and woman flourished. It is also lawfully approved relationship, which crafts the social

and legal form of inheritance, succession and many more aspects. It is an amalgamation of interpersonal relationship of the married couple having social, legal, biological and cultural aspects along with certain rules, regulations and rights associated with their conjugal life.

Various sociologists and anthropologists describe marriage from different aspects. These reflect the importance of mate selection, social control over sexual promiscuity, socially and legally approved rights and sexual relationship between husband and wife, duties towards each other, social stability etc. Rivers (1914) describes marriage as an institution which contains socially constructed meaningful moral ethics related to sexual relationship between male and female within the tie of marriage. According to Majumdar and Madan (1956) marriage reflects a systematic way of socially approved conjugal behavior. It is a set of religious customs or/and public ceremony which has social sanction to authorize two persons of opposite sexes to engage in sexual and socio-economic relation with one another. Malinowski described marriage as a contract for the production and maintenance of children. Basically he emphasizes on parenthood. In his words marriage is '…that constitute the family life: mode of living, economics of the household, and above all the relation of the parents to their children' (Malinowski 1913: 90).

Generally marriage plays a crucial role in regularizing sexual urges of the individual of society in a systematic way and creates a stable equilibrium for living. At the same time, another primary function of marriage is caring and rearing of the children born out of the union. Every human children starting from their birth need a familial attachment to take care of them. Marriage provides the necessary parental bonding of the children for having a secure childhood.

Leach (1961), recognizes marriage as 'a bundle of rights,' He identifies several rights associate with it, such as, legal fatherhood and legal motherhood; the right of sexual monopoly between the married partners; right to domestic services and other forms of labor; property right; and rights to property for the children of the spouses. But from this bundle of rights, no single right or set of rights might be defined as central to the universal definition of marriage.

Anthropologists have viewed the institution of marriage from an evolutionary perspective. Classical evolutionists have demonstrated the evolution of marriage in sequences. Every single society has its own social statute and regulations concerning the context of marriage. Starting from the beginning of the civilization the connotation of marriage has evolved through various stages. Marriage is the key to formation of family. Morgan (1982) was of the opinion that, in the beginning, primitive human society did not possess family life because at that time the concept of marriage was not formed. Primitive society represented promiscuity. It did not have

any restriction in sexual relation. Though there is no evidence for the assumption but still it is generally thought that initially no such restriction for sexual contract. After that the concept of group marriage appears. In case of group marriage, all males of a group marry all females of another group. Morgan argues, group marriage is the first stage of marriage institution. But many thinkers have critically argued that, group marriage is merely a hypothetical perception. There is no evidence of such marriage in primitive society or in modern. Apart from Morgan, other prominent thinkers like Taylor, Maine, McLennan etc. have also discussed evolution of the institution of marriage. Through the passage of time marriage changed from promiscuous group marriage to polygamy, including polyandry and polygyny. Finally it reached the stage of monogamy (Majumdar 1956; Brown 2020; Garetto 2018).

According to Hoebel (1972), marriage has a cultural complex that defers based on time-space dimension and the sharing of responsibility on the part of husband and wife gives the human marriage a unique stability and magnitude. Society is not static but it is dynamic in nature. Marriage, as a primary institution, faces many challenges and poses many questions due to rapid social transformation. In contemporary societies it becomes more liberal with the phrase 'living as married' and can be interpreted in various ways. Cohabitation which is popularly known as 'live-in-relationship' is becoming common in city life and increasing day by day. Not only the definition but the rights, rules, forms of marriage are also changing depending on social transformation.

Social constructionist approach is relevant in this context. The approach emphasizes how the context of marriage has been constructed by society in different social milieu. Based on time-space dimension, the meaning of marriage and the associated social factors i.e., power relation, conjugal understanding, concept of parenthood along with the preference of sexuality have changed (William 1993).

Previously, society sanctioned arranged marriage, where both the families became dominating factors in mate selection process. The compatibility of the husband and wife did not have an important impact on marriage. Presently with the increase of love marriage the connotation of marriage has shifted its paradigm. Now, intensification of partners' choice turns out as one of the prominent factors of marriage. Simultaneously, marriage breaks the idea of gender dichotomy. Same-sex marriage becomes the emerging social trend in last few decades in India.

Earlier, homosexuality treated as an offensive action in India. In colonial India, the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 identified *Hijras*, that is the people who were hermaphrodites, transgender, eunuchs and of other sexual minorities, as dangerous criminals. These people were attached

with kidnapping and castrating of children. According to the Act, police had the right to arrest the cross dressers, the *Hijras* and transgender who dressed like women in public. Punishment for such activities was up to two years of imprisonment or a fine or both. They were also not allowed to adopt children (Reddy 2005; Saxena 2011).

After Independence, government had taken various plans and programmes for the development of the marginal sections of society. But still Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, criminalized homosexual activity as it is 'unnatural' (Talwar 1999). People were afraid to disclose their identity in public forum. Previously homosexuality was treated as an offensive action in India. But with the de-criminalization of homosexuality by the Supreme Court of India, in 2018 and with abolition of the law 377, sexual minority groups feel comfortable to disclose their sexual orientation in public sphere (Chakraborty 2018). With these changing social situations the notion of marriage has become more liberal.

In this regard, Habermas' (1985) perception of cultural knowledge is quite related where he opines that, the human knowledge is culturally constructed and reconstructed through the understanding of its participants. Communicative action plays crucial role to craft human knowledge and the process of identity formation is also correlated with it. The functional aspect of the society synchronized by communicative actions led social solidarity in right way. It may be said that marriage is not a one dimensional reality rather it has multi-dimensional facets which need in-depth understanding.

In the paper, the writer tries to analyze the context of marriage beyond gender dichotomy, crossing the limitation of heterosexual perception to non-normative ways of life. The paper is theoretical in nature and applies subjective perspective through sociological and anthropological understanding. As regards, methodology, the paper is theoretical in nature and subjective perspectives are applied through sociological and anthropological understanding. Two case studies were carried out for in-depth study.

Notion of Gender and Sexuality

Human individuals are social in nature. Without the existence of society the survival of individuals are not possible. Talcott Parsons defined society as '….a total complex of human relationships…' (Singh,1983:53). Each society has its own *sui-generis* cultural background, social rules, regulations, customs, moral ethics and traditional ethos. All these elements of society create significant impression on the ways of life of the people.

In this world of social construction, the idea of marriage is interrelated with the notion of gender and sexuality. Natures of all these concepts are changing on the basis of socio-cultural dimensions. Identity formation is a process which has diverse situational circumstances.

Individuals born in this society may have some biological features with which their 'sex' or sexual identity, as male or female are determined. Through the process of socialization, they come in contact with the norms of society and are socialized. This process starts from the birth of the child and continues till the last breath of the life of an individual. The self of an individual has been built through socialization which is necessary for identity formation. When sex is a biological creation, gender identity is constructed and reconstructed by the society. Through the process of socialization gender identity of an individual is formed either as masculine or feminine. Society makes sure how an individual maintains his or her life. From the ways of communication to the dressing sense; meaning of body for every detailed movement; using names for occupational choices; society imposes various stereotype idealizations based on gender identity. In general, majority of the common people follow these gender rules of the society. But some people are always there who enjoy their life, crossing the boundary of male-female binaries. They are known as transgenders.

Basically gender expression is not dependent on the physical condition of the person rather it is the inner self of the individual. Gender identity of a person can match with his or her assigned sex, generally recognized as gender-congruent. Simultaneously, when the self-identity or self-expression of individual's gender does not reflect his or her assigned sex and gender, the person is labeled as gender-variant.

Transgender is an umbrella term which includes different types of sexual minority groups, namely, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, trans-sexual, queer, intersex, a-gender and *hijra*. These people experience a sharp dissimilarity between their assigned sex and their own understanding of gender identity (Chakraborty 2018). They express their gender identity, crossing the binary division of male-female. Their mode of communication, dressing pattern and physical presence make a noticeable difference from the rest of the heterosexual or normative society. Sometimes they desire to go through multiple surgical procedures to achieve their desired body. At the same time, there are a large number of trans-persons, who never go through any sex change procedures in their life. For them gender is not confined into their body, it is fluid in nature.

Beyond the binary division of gender, some people are there, who classify themselves neither as male nor as female or in any other way known as a-gender people (Agius 2012). Actually LGBTQIAH+ community is not a homogeneous group. The group includes a diverse variety of individuals who have distinct sexual lifestyle. They defer from the mainstream heterosexual population of the society. Their *sui-gener* is kind of sexual orientation make them distinct from heterosexual population. At the same time, they have different ways of gender expression and sexual orientation distinct from each other in their own community

(Fisher 2002; Graham 2011). Sexual orientation of transgender people can be heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual (Kalra, 2012). An in-depth thoughtful vision is necessary to understand the reality of the LGBTQIAH+ community.

Presently, there is a wide spread belief in society that homosexuality and gender fluidity is a new western concept. But in academic domain prominent sociological and anthropological studies are there which demonstrate the evidence of non-normative gender in various ways. Eminent anthropologist Malinowski has documented various forms of sexuality in his studies of Trobriand Islanders between 1915 and 1918. In his book, '*The Sexual Life of the Savages in North-Western Melanesia*' Malinowski (1929) depicted that, the terminologies like 'homosexual intercourse, bestiality, exhibitionism, oral and anal eroticism' are all 'psycho-analytic' terms and has been treated as inadequate and alternative form of proper sexual impulse (Malinowski 1929: 382).

Foucault in his book '*The History of Sexuality'* has recognized 'homosexuality' as an 'identity'. He has mentioned that in the last part of nineteenth century homosexuality became visible as an act which was punishable (Foucault 1979). Queer is another most important theoretical development in the mid 1980s. It was influenced by the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault's theory discussed the perception of crossing the binary of gender and critically examined heterosexuality as mainstream sexual orientation.

The concept of gender fluidity is prominently evident in the history of Indian society and culture. Indian classical literatures and mythological texts like Rig-veda, Natyasastra, Kamasutra, Manu Smriti, Ramayana, Mahabharata and many others have documented several stories of gender fluid characters. Indology portrays the presence of transgender and homosexual people in different historical era and it may be considered as Indian heritages (Michelraj 2015; Nanda 1999; Pattanaik 2000; Roscoe 2013; Scholtz 2001; Sharma 2009).

A variety of sexuality is demonstrated in Indian temple architectures like in the temples of Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh, in Ellora caves in Maharashtra and Sun Temple in Kornak. There are various sculptures of homosexual activity at Khajuraho temple. The sculptures in the temples are carved with illustrations of same-sex relations, including sculptures of men and women erotically embracing each other with sexual fluidity. The Ellora caves which depict the life of Gautam Budha, the founder of Buddhism, also have such paintings portraying men and women in same-sex intercourse (Ray 2018). The Sun temple in Konark also exhibits similar images. These exemplify the historical image of liberal India.

As per advanced medical research, homosexuality is as normal as heterosexuality. There is nothing abnormal in it. It is not immoral and should not be stigmatized. The human rights

activists talk in favour of personal dignity, privacy and human rights of the transgender community. Before 2018, Indian constitution labeled homosexuality as a criminal offence (section 377 IPC). But the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court of India has removed the criminal stigma and recognized their gender identity as well as sexuality (Chakraborty 2018).

It has an immense impact on transgender people. Transgender people are breaking their shell and discussing their needs openly in public sphere. Basically marriage signifies companionship of two persons having their *sui-generis* sexual orientation. It can be heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. It is primarily a person's private life. Everyone has the right to select his or her own life partner without any gender based discrepancy. According to the Constitution of India (Article 21), the right to marry is a fundamental right. So that denying the marriage beyond gender binary divisions is a violation of their rights. Indian Constitution stands against discrimination based on sex, caste, belief or religion (Basu 2006). It also tries to secure civil rights and other benefits to every citizen. But the transgender are still facing stigma and struggling to ensure their civil rights in this age of twenty-first century. The Constitution affirms equality in all spheres but the moot question is whether it is being applied or not.

Case studies

In order to understand the real crisis of marriage and gender fluidity, two separate case studies are made. The first legal marriage of transgender in West Bengal had taken place between Shree Ghatak Muhury and Sanjay Muhury in the year 2017. If we focus deeply in this case, Shree was born as a male and changed himself as female. This was a case of male to female transgender and or transsexual. Primarily though being a male he was a gay effeminate male. On the other hand Sanjay was born a biological male. He could be heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual or queer in nature. After completion of sex change surgery Shree married Sanjay socially and legally. Now socially it was a conjugal relationship between a male and a transsexual female, but legally it was not a transgender marriage rather it was treated as a basic heterosexual marriage union. Because of the fact that after sex change procedure, Shree become a female legally.

In another case of Tista Das and Dipan Chakraborty, Tista was born as a male and changed himself to a woman. Dipan was born as a female and changed herself as a male. They both have a journey and long struggle to achieve their gender which they dream about. But when they decided to get married legally, again the marriage law considered it as a heterosexual union. They wanted to register their marriage as a 'Rainbow Marriage' but there is no such provision.

Discussion

The symbolic meaning of 'Rainbow' is interesting. According to the opinion of the writer, a rainbow is not always visible. It needs specific environment to be visible and its beauty lies in its spectrum of varied colours. It contains seven colours which are pole apart from each other but together create the mesmerizing view of rainbow. Just like rainbow, the transgender community has diverse people under its horizon, who are non-normative of gender. They are different from each other but together they fight for their rights. Together they echo for their survival. They need the proper social upbringing in which they can have a prestigious life with all the basic requirements to develop themselves.

Actually, transgender community has to face tremendous social stigma. It continues throughout their life. At the same time sex change surgery is a complicated one and one has to go through so much pain, sacrifice, social pressure, financial issues, as well as physical difficulties in this journey. After that if the legal systems refused to recognize their real identity it becomes pathetic for them and increases their identity crisis rigorously.

Same sex marriages have been legalized in many countries. Society, social law and the legal system are interconnected to each other. With the changing notion of the society the laws are always changing according to the social needs. The Supreme Court of India has already de-criminalized homosexuality but does not recognize homosexual marriages or marriage beyond gender binary. There are many same sex marriages taking place in Indian society, but all of those are socially conducted. Basically marriage is related with other legal rights like adoption, inheritances, maintenance, etc., therefore it may take time for formulating a strong verdict for legal marriages beyond gender and for enactment of law, governing various issues related to that.

Conclusion

Basically India is a country of diversity, liberal mindset combined with traditional ethos. A little segment of this society rejoices individualism in their private life. Majority of the people are still in the dilemma of tradition and modernity. Traditional patriarchal value system is prevalent in Indian society. The birth of a male child is celebrated and marriage is treated as an approved mode of producing a child. In this context individual's choice becomes secondary and child procreation is a fundamental requirement to continue inheritance and the society. In that case heterosexuality is treated as a natural condition, whereas homosexuality is considered as a stigma and deviance. Presently Indian society sanctions monogamous nuclear family life emphasizing on the traditional role of family and marriage. However, the situations are changing rapidly. Many people enjoy their sexuality in their own ways, breaking away from

the stereotyped binary division of gender. At the same time numerous heterosexual families are there, who decided not to be parents biologically. It appears that the connotations of marriage with gender identity are drastically changing its paradigm in twenty first century. We can be optimistic that in near future the LGBTQIAH+ community will get their all citizenship rights in a humanistic manner. They will achieve the right to choose the partner and experience marriage not only in social platform nor in the shed of heterosexual marriage but also with all legal privileges along with other legal aspects in the domain of rainbow marriage.

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