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प्रबन्ध सम्पादक
डॉ० हरनाम सिंह
असि. प्रोफेसर—अर्थशास्त्र,
लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय,
लखनऊ।

सम्पादक
राजकुमार
सचिव,
सुमंगलम् सेवा साधना संस्थान,
लखनऊ।

सह सम्पादक
डॉ० राघवेन्द्र प्रताप सिंह
असि. प्रोफेसर, दर्शनशास्त्र,
बाबू अमर बहादुर सिंह विधि महाविद्यालय,
कुण्डा प्रतापगढ़, उ०प्र०।

प्रकाशक



SUMANGALAM
सुमंगलम् सेवा साधना संस्थान

नवीन मार्केट, कैसरबाग, लखनऊ—उ०प्र०।

संरक्षक

- ❖ प्रो. के.एन. सिंह, कुलपति, दक्षिण बिहार केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय, बिहार।
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- ❖ डॉ. परमेन्द्र सिंह, जम्मू।
- ❖ डॉ. राजकुमार चौबे, झारखण्ड, बिहार।
- ❖ डॉ. रेखा त्रिपाठी, कानपुर, उ०प्र०।

सम्पादक मण्डल

- ❖ प्रो. सन्तोष कुमार गुप्त अध्यक्ष, अर्थशास्त्र विभाग, श्री मु.म.टा.स्ना.महाविद्यालय, बलिया।
- ❖ प्रो. अशोक कुमार सिंह, अध्यक्ष, मृदा एवं कृषि रसायन विभाग, श्री मु.म.टा.स्ना.महा., बलिया।
- ❖ डॉ. विनोद कुमार, प्राचार्य, संघटक राजकीय महाविद्यालय, हसनपुर अमरोहा।
- ❖ डॉ. जयन्त उपाध्याय, अध्यक्ष, दर्शनशास्त्र विभाग, म.गा.अ.हिन्दी विश्वविद्यालय, वर्धा, म०प्र०।
- ❖ डॉ. निरंजन कुमार यादव, हिन्दी, राजकीय महिला स्नातकोत्तर महाविद्यालय, गाजीपुर।
- ❖ डॉ. ओम प्रकाश सिंह, राजनीतिशास्त्र विभाग, महायोगी गोरखनाथ विश्वविद्यालय, गोरखपुर।
- ❖ डॉ. राजीव कुमार श्रीवास्तव, समाजशास्त्र, श्री सुदृष्टबाबा स्ना.महा, रानीगंज, बलिया।
- ❖ डॉ. अश्वनी कुमार यादव, इतिहास विभाग, शिवाजी कॉलेज, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय, दिल्ली।

विधि सलाहकार

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डॉ० निर्मला सिंह

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कमला आर्य कन्या पीजी कॉलेज मिर्जापुर (उ०प्र०)

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सारांश: यह शोध पत्र भारतीय समाज में महिला सशक्तिकरण की ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि और समकालीन प्रासंगिकता का विश्लेषण करता है। इसमें महिला सशक्तिकरण की परिभाषा, उसके सामाजिक और विकासात्मक महत्व को रेखांकित करते हुए सरकार द्वारा संचालित बेंटी बचाओ-बेंटी पढ़ाओ, प्रधानमंत्री मातृ वंदना, मुद्रा योजना, जननी सुरक्षा, स्टैंड अप इंडिया, सुकन्या समृद्धि और निर्भया योजना जैसी प्रमुख लोक कल्याणकारी योजनाओं की समीक्षा की गई है। शोध में इन योजनाओं के माध्यम से महिलाओं को शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, सुरक्षा और आर्थिक आत्मनिर्भरता की दिशा में मिले अवसरों का विश्लेषण किया गया है। साथ ही स्व-सहायता समूहों, शहरी आजीविका मिशन और पंचायतों में महिलाओं की भागीदारी को भी रेखांकित किया गया है। किंतु योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन में जागरूकता की कमी, भ्रष्टाचार, पारिवारिक रूढ़ियाँ, तकनीकी ज्ञान की न्यूनता और प्रशासनिक जटिलताएँ प्रमुख बाधाएँ बनी हुई हैं। अंततः शोध यह प्रस्तावित करता है कि यदि इन योजनाओं को जनआंदोलन का रूप दिया जाए और महिलाओं को निर्णय प्रक्रिया में वास्तविक भागीदारी मिले, तो सशक्तिकरण केवल एक लक्ष्य नहीं, बल्कि समाज का स्वाभाविक स्वरूप बन सकता है।

कुजीभूत शब्द : महिला सशक्तिकरण, भ्रष्टाचार, पारिवारिक रूढ़ियाँ, सामाजिक समानता, महिला नेतृत्व

परिचय— भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति सदियों से विचार और विरोधाभास का विषय रही है। एक ओर वे शक्ति, ज्ञान और करुणा की मूर्त मानी जाती रही हैं, तो दूसरी ओर वे सामाजिक असमानता, शोषण और उपेक्षा का भी शिकार बनी हैं। इतिहास के पन्नों में महिला सशक्तिकरण के Sporadic प्रयास अवश्य मिलते हैं, परंतु इनका प्रभाव सीमित था। स्वतंत्र भारत के संविधान ने समानता, स्वतंत्रता और न्याय के अधिकारों को सुनिश्चित करते हुए महिलाओं को सामाजिक न्याय की मुख्यधारा में लाने की नींव रखी। आज महिला सशक्तिकरण केवल एक सामाजिक आवश्यकता नहीं, बल्कि समग्र राष्ट्र विकास की आधारशिला बन चुका है। इसी दिशा में सरकार ने समय-समय पर लोक कल्याणकारी योजनाएँ लागू की हैं, जिनका उद्देश्य महिलाओं को सामाजिक, आर्थिक, राजनीतिक और शैक्षिक दृष्टि से सशक्त करना है। यह शोध पत्र इन्हीं योजनाओं की प्रभावशीलता, पहुँच, और व्यावहारिक परिणामों का मूल्यांकन करता है।

महिला सशक्तिकरण का अर्थ है महिलाओं को उनके अधिकारों के प्रति जागरूक बनाना, उन्हें आत्मनिर्भर करना, और सामाजिक निर्णयों में उनकी सक्रिय भागीदारी को प्रोत्साहित करना। यह एक प्रक्रिया है, जिसके अंतर्गत महिलाओं को संसाधनों तक पहुँच, शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य सेवा, सुरक्षा, नेतृत्व, और आजीविका के पर्याप्त अवसर दिए जाते हैं। सशक्तिकरण केवल अधिकार प्राप्ति नहीं, बल्कि जीवन के हर स्तर पर स्वतंत्र निर्णय लेने की शक्ति है। सामाजिक परिवर्तन तभी संभव है जब महिलाएँ अपने अधिकारों को न केवल पहचानें, बल्कि उन्हें सक्रिय रूप से उपयोग भी करें। इसके लिए संस्थागत समर्थन, कानूनी संरचना, और व्यवहारिक योजनाएँ आवश्यक होती हैं, जो उन्हें गरिमा और आत्मसम्मान के साथ जीवन जीने का अवसर दें।

लोक कल्याणकारी योजनाएं— भारतीय राज्य ने संविधान के अनुच्छेद 38 और 39 के अंतर्गत सामाजिक और आर्थिक न्याय सुनिश्चित करने का संकल्प लिया है। इसी उद्देश्य से विभिन्न योजनाएँ बनाई गई हैं, जिनमें महिलाओं की भागीदारी और उत्थान प्रमुख उद्देश्य रहा है। सरकार द्वारा चलाई गई योजनाएँ समाज के सबसे कमजोर वर्ग को लक्षित करती हैं, ताकि उन्हें विकास की समान धारा में शामिल किया जा सके। महिला केंद्रित योजनाएँ बहुआयामी हैं—कुछ शिक्षा को बढ़ावा देती हैं, कुछ स्वास्थ्य पर केंद्रित हैं, तो कुछ आजीविका और सुरक्षा पर। इन योजनाओं की सफलता इस बात पर निर्भर करती है कि उन्हें कितनी पारदर्शिता, समयबद्धता और भागीदारी के साथ लागू किया गया।

प्रमुख महिला कल्याणकारी योजनाएं— भारत सरकार ने महिलाओं की सामाजिक, शैक्षिक, आर्थिक और स्वास्थ्य संबंधी स्थिति को सुधारने हेतु समय-समय पर अनेक योजनाएँ शुरू की हैं। ये योजनाएँ महिलाओं को केवल लाभार्थी नहीं बनातीं, बल्कि उन्हें समाज के निर्णयों में भागीदार भी बनाती हैं। प्रत्येक योजना के लागू होने का समय और उसका महत्व नीचे उल्लेखित है:

1. **बेंटी बचाओ, बेंटी पढ़ाओ योजना (2015) :** इस योजना का उद्देश्य बालिकाओं के प्रति समाज में व्याप्त भेदभाव को समाप्त करना, लिंगानुपात को सुधारना और बालिका शिक्षा को बढ़ावा देना था। 22



- जनवरी 2015 को हरियाणा के पानीपत से आरंभ हुई यह योजना उन जिलों को प्राथमिकता देती है जहाँ लिंगानुपात असंतुलित है। इसके माध्यम से समाज में लड़कियों के प्रति दृष्टिकोण में सकारात्मक बदलाव आया है। स्कूली नामांकन दरों में सुधार और बाल विवाह में गिरावट देखी गई है।
2. **प्रधानमंत्री मातृ वंदना योजना (2017)** : पहली बार गर्भवती महिलाओं को आर्थिक सहायता देकर उन्हें पोषण और स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की ओर प्रेरित करना इस योजना का प्रमुख उद्देश्य था। 1 जनवरी 2017 को शुरू हुई यह योजना उन महिलाओं के लिए वरदान बनी है जो असंगठित क्षेत्रों में कार्यरत हैं। तीन किशतों में ₹5000 की राशि से महिलाओं को पोषण आहार लेने और प्रसव पूर्व जांच कराने में मदद मिली है। यह योजना मातृत्व सुरक्षा की दिशा में एक ठोस कदम मानी जाती है।
 3. **प्रधानमंत्री मुद्रा योजना (2015)** : महिलाओं को स्वरोजगार हेतु बिना गारंटी के ऋण उपलब्ध कराना, जिससे वे व्यापार, सेवा या उत्पादन कार्य प्रारंभ कर सकें इस योजना का उद्देश्य था।
 4. 8 अप्रैल 2015 को इस योजना की शुरुआत हुई थी। इसमें 'शिशु', 'किशोर' और 'तरुण' श्रेणियों में ऋण प्रदान किया जाता है। महिला उद्यमिता को बढ़ावा मिला है, खासकर ग्रामीण और पिछड़े इलाकों में। इससे महिलाओं की आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता और आत्मसम्मान में वृद्धि हुई है।
 5. **जननी सुरक्षा योजना (2005)** : इस योजना का उद्देश्य गरीब और हाशिए पर रहने वाली गर्भवती महिलाओं को संस्थागत प्रसव के लिए प्रेरित करना और मातृ एवं शिशु मृत्यु दर में कमी लाना था। 12 अप्रैल 2005 को शुरू की गई यह योजना विशेष रूप से ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों की महिलाओं को ध्यान में रखकर बनाई गई थी। आशा कार्यकर्ताओं की सहायता से इस योजना ने लाखों महिलाओं को अस्पताल में सुरक्षित प्रसव हेतु प्रेरित किया है, जिससे मातृ मृत्यु दर में उल्लेखनीय कमी आई है।
 6. **स्टैंड अप इंडिया योजना (2016)**: अनुसूचित जाति, अनुसूचित जनजाति और महिलाओं को उद्यमिता के लिए ऋण उपलब्ध कराना ताकि वे व्यवसायिक रूप से सशक्त बन सकें इस योजना का प्रमुख उद्देश्य था। 5 अप्रैल 2016 को लागू की गई यह योजना महिलाओं को ₹10 लाख से ₹1 करोड़ तक का बैंक ऋण देने में सहायक है। इसके कारण महिला नेतृत्व और औद्योगिक क्षेत्र में उनकी भागीदारी बढ़ी है। साथ ही यह योजना स्वरोजगार और नई नौकरियों के निर्माण में भी योगदान देती है।
 7. **सुकन्या समृद्धि योजना (2015)** : इस योजना का उद्देश्य बालिकाओं के उज्ज्वल भविष्य को आर्थिक रूप से सुरक्षित बनाना, विशेषकर शिक्षा और विवाह के लिए बचत को प्रोत्साहन देना था। यह योजना 22 जनवरी 2015 को बेटे बचाओ, बेटे पढ़ाओ के साथ शुरू हुई थी। इसमें बालिका के नाम पर खाता खोलकर उसमें नियमित बचत की जाती है, जिस पर उच्च ब्याज दर और कर छूट मिलती है। इससे अभिभावकों में बालिका के भविष्य को लेकर सुरक्षा की भावना बढ़ी है।
 8. **निर्भया योजना (2013)** : महिलाओं की सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करना और यौन हिंसा के मामलों में त्वरित सहायता व न्याय प्रदान करना इस योजना का प्रमुख उद्देश्य था। 2012 में दिल्ली में हुए निर्भया कांड के बाद इस योजना की घोषणा 2013 के केंद्रीय बजट में की गई थी। इसके अंतर्गत वन स्टॉप सेंटर, 24x7 हेल्पलाइन, फास्ट ट्रैक कोर्ट, महिला पुलिस स्टेशन और सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर सुरक्षा उपायों की व्यवस्था की गई है। यह योजना भयमुक्त वातावरण निर्मित करने की दिशा में एक अहम प्रयास है।

इन सभी योजनाओं ने समय के साथ महिला सशक्तिकरण के क्षेत्र में व्यापक योगदान दिया है। जहां एक ओर बेटे बचाओ और सुकन्या समृद्धि योजना ने लड़कियों की सामाजिक स्वीकार्यता और भविष्य को सुरक्षित किया, वहीं जननी सुरक्षा और मातृ वंदना योजना ने मातृत्व को सुरक्षित और सम्मानजनक बनाया। मुद्रा और स्टैंड अप इंडिया जैसी योजनाओं ने महिलाओं को आर्थिक रूप से आत्मनिर्भर बनाया, और निर्भया योजना ने उन्हें सुरक्षा का विश्वास दिया। आज की महिला केवल लाभ प्राप्त करने वाली नहीं है, बल्कि एक निर्णायक, उत्पादक और प्रेरणादायक शक्ति बन चुकी है। इन योजनाओं के प्रभाव से न केवल महिलाएं सशक्त हुई हैं, बल्कि समाज की सोच, व्यवस्था और प्रगति की दिशा भी परिवर्तित हुई है।

ग्रामीण और शहरी महिलाओं की स्थिति में बदलाव— उक्त योजनाओं से निम्नलिखित बदलाव देखने को मिलता है

- **स्व-सहायता समूहों का प्रभाव**: राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन के अंतर्गत गठित स्व-सहायता समूहों (SHG) ने महिलाओं को आत्मनिर्भर बनाया है। महिलाएं अब बकरी पालन, सिलाई-कढ़ाई, मसाला निर्माण, जैविक खेती जैसे कार्यों में संलग्न हैं। इससे न केवल उनका आर्थिक जीवन सुधरा है, बल्कि उनमें नेतृत्व, निर्णय क्षमता और सामाजिक आत्मविश्वास भी बढ़ा है।



- **शहरी आजीविका मिशन का योगदान:** शहरी गरीब महिलाओं को प्रशिक्षण, ऋण सुविधा और आजीविका के साधन प्रदान किए गए हैं। इससे महिलाएं अब केवल घरेलू कार्य तक सीमित नहीं रहीं, बल्कि वे व्यवसाय, स्टार्टअप, और डिजिटल सेवाओं से भी जुड़ रही हैं।
- **शिक्षा और तकनीकी सशक्तिकरण:** महिलाओं के लिए छात्रवृत्ति योजनाएं, उच्च शिक्षा में आरक्षण, डिजिटल इंडिया कार्यक्रम और महिला आईटी प्रशिक्षण केंद्रों ने उन्हें तकनीकी और अकादमिक रूप से सशक्त किया है। आज महिलाएं डॉक्टर, इंजीनियर, वैज्ञानिक, शिक्षक और प्रशासक के रूप में देश की सेवा कर रही हैं।
- **सामाजिक नेतृत्व में महिलाओं की भागीदारी:** पंचायती राज में 33प्रतिशत आरक्षण ने महिला नेतृत्व को समाज के सामने लाकर खड़ा किया है। महिला सरपंचों, वार्ड पार्षदों और पंचायत प्रतिनिधियों ने शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और स्वच्छता जैसे विषयों में महत्वपूर्ण कार्य किए हैं। इससे उनकी राजनीतिक पहचान, सामाजिक भागीदारी और निर्णयात्मक क्षमता में वृद्धि हुई है।

योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन में चुनौतियाँ— योजनाओं की क्रियान्वयन में निम्नलिखित चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ता है जो इस प्रकार हैं।

1. **ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में जागरूकता की कमी:** भारत के अधिकांश ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में महिलाओं को योजनाओं की जानकारी ही नहीं होती। जानकारी के अभाव में वे इन योजनाओं का लाभ नहीं उठा पातीं। इसके पीछे शिक्षा का अभाव, सूचना तंत्र की सीमित पहुँच, और संचार माध्यमों की प्रभावहीनता प्रमुख कारण हैं। अक्सर योजनाओं की भाषा, प्रचार सामग्री और कार्यान्वयन प्रणाली इतनी जटिल होती है कि ग्रामीण महिलाएं स्वयं को इससे अलग पाती हैं। इसके परिणामस्वरूप योजनाएं केवल शहरी या अर्धशहरी वर्ग तक ही सीमित रह जाती हैं।

2. **भ्रष्टाचार और लेन-देन की समस्या:** कई कल्याणकारी योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन में स्थानीय स्तर पर भ्रष्टाचार एक बड़ी बाधा है। लाभ प्राप्त करने के लिए कभी-कभी बिचौलियों, दलालों या अधिकारियों को रिश्वत देनी पड़ती है, जिससे योजनाओं की निष्पक्षता और पारदर्शिता पर प्रश्नचिह्न लग जाता है। महिला लाभार्थियों को अक्सर योजनाओं के वास्तविक लाभ से वंचित रहना पड़ता है। इससे न केवल योजना की विश्वसनीयता घटती है, बल्कि समाज में शासन के प्रति अविश्वास की भावना भी बढ़ती है।

3. **सामाजिक और पारिवारिक रूढ़ियाँ:** कई बार योजनाओं की पहुँच महिलाओं तक नहीं हो पाती क्योंकि समाज और परिवार उन्हें सक्रिय भागीदारी की अनुमति नहीं देता। परंपरागत मान्यताएँ जैसे कि "महिला का कार्य केवल घर तक सीमित है"—उन्हें शिक्षा, रोजगार या सामाजिक गतिविधियों से रोकती हैं। इन रूढ़ियों के कारण महिलाएं न तो योजना के बारे में जानकारी ले पाती हैं और न ही उनका लाभ उठा पाती हैं। यह सामाजिक मानसिकता महिला सशक्तिकरण की राह की सबसे बड़ी बाधाओं में से एक है।

4. **प्रशासनिक विलंब और जटिलताएँ:** सरकारी योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन में प्रक्रियात्मक विलंब और अनावश्यक जटिलताएँ भी बड़ी बाधा हैं। दस्तावेजों की अधिकता, लंबी आवेदन प्रक्रिया, लाभान्वयन की धीमी गति, तथा विभिन्न कार्यालयों के चक्कर लगाने जैसी समस्याओं से महिलाएं हतोत्साहित हो जाती हैं। ग्रामीण व अशिक्षित महिलाएं तो इस प्रक्रिया को समझ ही नहीं पातीं। इससे वास्तविक लाभार्थी योजना तक नहीं पहुँच पाती और योजना केवल आंकड़ों तक सीमित रह जाती है।

5. **तकनीकी ज्ञान का अभाव:** आजकल अधिकतर योजनाएं डिजिटल माध्यमों से संचालित की जा रही हैं। जैसे ई-गवर्नेंस, ऑनलाइन आवेदन, मोबाइल ऐप आदि। लेकिन अधिकांश महिलाओं, विशेषकर ग्रामीण या अशिक्षित वर्ग की महिलाओं में तकनीकी ज्ञान की भारी कमी है। डिजिटल डिवाइड के चलते वे पोर्टल, एप या डिजिटल भुगतान की प्रक्रिया से अनभिज्ञ रहती हैं। इसके कारण योजनाएं उनके लिए जटिल और दूर की चीज बन जाती हैं, भले ही वे पात्र हों।

6. **महिलाओं की भागीदारी सीमित होना:** कई योजनाओं में महिलाओं की भागीदारी केवल कागजी होती है। निर्णय प्रक्रिया, निगरानी तंत्र, और योजना निर्माण में उनकी उपस्थिति न्यूनतम रहती है। नीति निर्धारण और क्रियान्वयन में यदि महिलाओं को बराबर का प्रतिनिधित्व न दिया जाए तो योजनाएं उनकी वास्तविक जरूरतों को नहीं समझ पातीं। इससे योजनाएं एकपक्षीय या पुरुष प्रधान दृष्टिकोण से बनती हैं और महिला सशक्तिकरण का उद्देश्य अधूरा रह जाता है।

इन चुनौतियों का समाधान केवल प्रशासनिक सुधारों से नहीं, बल्कि सामाजिक चेतना, शैक्षिक सुधार और महिला नेतृत्व के सुदृढ़ीकरण से संभव है।

संभावनाएँ और सुधार के सुझाव — महिला सशक्तिकरण में लोक कल्याणकारी योजनाओं को प्रभावी बनाने हेतु संभावनाएँ और सुधार के प्रमुख मौलिक बिंदु इस प्रकार हैं



- स्थानीय स्तर पर जागरूकता अभियान चलाए जाएं, जिनमें नुक्कड़ नाटक, चित्र प्रदर्शनी, और जन संवाद के माध्यम से महिलाओं को योजनाओं की जानकारी दी जाए।
- प्रत्येक ग्राम पंचायत में महिला सूचना केंद्र स्थापित किया जाए, जहाँ से महिलाएं योजनाओं, आवेदन प्रक्रियाओं और सरकारी सेवाओं की जानकारी प्राप्त कर सकें।
- महिला सलाहकार समिति को ग्राम विकास योजनाओं में परामर्शदाता के रूप में जोड़ा जाए, ताकि नीतियों में महिलाओं की वास्तविक भागीदारी सुनिश्चित हो।
- योजनाओं की सफलता को मापने के लिए स्थानीय स्तर पर सामाजिक लेखा परीक्षा (वबपंस/नकपज) की व्यवस्था की जाए, जिसमें महिलाओं की सक्रिय भूमिका हो।
- डिजिटल शिक्षा शिविर आयोजित किए जाएं, जहाँ महिलाओं को मोबाइल, ऑनलाइन फॉर्म, बैंकिंग और पोर्टल उपयोग का प्रशिक्षण मिले।
- महिला स्वयंसेवी समूहों को सरकारी योजनाओं के प्रचार और निगरानी का भागीदार बनाया जाए, जिससे सामुदायिक सहभागिता बढ़े।
- स्कूल और कॉलेजों में लिंग-संवेदनशील पाठ्यक्रम अनिवार्य किया जाए, जिससे आने वाली पीढ़ियों में लैंगिक समानता की सोच विकसित हो।
- स्थानीय पुलिस थानों में महिला हेल्प डेस्क को सशक्त किया जाए, जहाँ महिलाओं की समस्याओं को संवेदनशीलता के साथ सुना जाए।
- महिलाओं के लिए मोबाइल हेल्पलाइन और ऐप को क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं में सुलभ बनाया जाए, ताकि तकनीकी बाधाएँ दूर हो सकें।
- प्रशासनिक स्तर पर महिला अधिकारियों की संख्या बढ़ाई जाए, ताकि योजनाओं में संवेदनशीलता और निष्पक्षता बनी रहे।
- सफल महिला उद्यमियों, सरपंचों और शिक्षिकाओं की प्रेरणादायक कहानियों को मीडिया और पाठ्यपुस्तकों में शामिल किया जाए, जिससे अन्य महिलाएं प्रेरित हों।
- ग्रामीण स्तर पर महिला बैंकिंग सेवाओं का विस्तार किया जाए, जैसे कि महिला मित्र बैंकिंग प्रतिनिधि जो घर-घर जाकर सेवाएं दें।

लोक कल्याणकारी योजनाएं महिला सशक्तिकरण की दिशा में एक सशक्त कदम रही हैं। इन योजनाओं ने महिलाओं को समाज की परिधि से हटाकर केंद्र में स्थापित किया है। आज महिलाएं केवल लाभार्थी नहीं, बल्कि परिवर्तन की वाहक बन रही हैं। फिर भी यह यात्रा अभी अधूरी है। समाज को मानसिक रूप से और अधिक समावेशी, न्यायपूर्ण और लिंग-संवेदनशील बनाना होगा। आवश्यकता इस बात की है कि इन योजनाओं को केवल सरकारी दस्तावेज न समझा जाए, बल्कि सामाजिक आंदोलन का रूप दिया जाए। जब प्रत्येक महिला आत्मसम्मान, सुरक्षा और अधिकार के साथ जीवन जीने लगेगी, तभी सच्चे अर्थों में महिला सशक्तिकरण की परिकल्पना साकार होगी।

संदर्भ ग्रंथ सूची

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स्वामी विवेकानन्द की मानववादी दृष्टि

डॉ० राघवेंद्र प्रताप सिंह

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सारांश: भारत-भूमि अपने ज्ञान और चिंतन परम्परा द्वारा सम्पूर्ण विश्व को मार्ग दिखाता रहा है। जिससे इसे 'विश्वगुरु' की उपाधि से अलंकृत किया गया था। यह धरा अनेक संत-महात्माओं ऋषि मुनियों तथा विद्वानों के ज्ञान से सिंचित है। ऐसी ही एक विभूति स्वामी विवेकानन्द के नाम से विश्वविख्यात है। जिनका व्यक्तित्व एवं कृतित्व इस संसार के लिए अनुकरणीय है। स्वामी विवेकानन्द का जन्म 12 जनवरी 1863 ई० को कलकत्ता में हुआ था। इनके बचपन का नाम नरेन्द्रनाथ दत्त था। इनकी माता का नाम भुवनेश्वरी तथा पिता का नाम विश्वनाथ था। यह बचपन से ही जिज्ञासु प्रवृत्ति के थे। अपने आस-पास घटने वाली घटनाओं की जाँच-परख करना तथा उनका उत्तर खोजना इनकी रुचि थी। इस प्रकार विवेकानन्द की तेजस्विता का आभास बाल्यकाल से ही होने लगा था। स्वामी अपूर्वानन्द लिखते हैं कि—“उनके भीतर मात्र ज्योतिर्मंडल के ऋषि ही नहीं, बुद्ध, शंकर, नेपोलियन, बाल्मीकी, व्यास आदि महान आत्माएँ मानो एक साथ अभिभूत हुए थे।”¹ इनके अन्दर आध्यात्मिक शक्ति, मानवता, दयालुता, तेज, परोपकार, धैर्य, आत्मविश्वास के साथ-साथ शारीरिक एवं मानसिक बल प्रचुर मात्रा में भरा पड़ा था, जिसके फलस्वरूप इनके अन्दर अप्रतिम नेतृत्व की शक्ति व्याप्त थी।

युवावस्था में उनकी भेंट श्री रामकृष्ण परमहंस से हुई, जिसके उपरांत उनके जीवन का काया-पलट हो गया। जिनके मार्गदर्शन में आप ध्यान-साधना कर दृढ़वती संयासी बने। ज्ञानार्जन के उपरांत श्री रामकृष्ण परमहंस की अनुभूतियों एवं उनके उपदेशों का मानव कल्याणार्थ प्रचार-प्रसार करने लगे, साथ ही प्राचीन भारतीय परंपराओं की अंतर्निहित प्रतिभाओं के आधार पर भारत भूमि को पुनः सशक्त बनाने में जुट गए तथा समस्त विश्व में एक महान दार्शनिक रूप में ख्यात हुए।

कुजीभूत शब्द : ज्ञान, चिंतन, विश्वगुरु, ध्यान-साधना, मानववादी चिंतन, आध्यात्मिक शक्ति, मानवता, दयालुता

परिचय— अंतःकरण में व्याप्त करुणा-संवेदना के कारण स्वामी विवेकानन्द में संपूर्ण मानवता समाविष्ट थी। वह विश्व के समस्त दरिद्रनारायण के प्रति अपनी संवेदना व्यक्त करते हुए कहते हैं कि— “मैं तत्व जिज्ञासु नहीं हूँ! दार्शनिक भी नहीं हूँ, नहीं मैं साधु भी नहीं हूँ, मैं गरीब हूँ, गरीबों से प्यार करता हूँ।”² अतएव यह अपने अन्तःकरण से महामानव थे। उनका दर्शन अद्वैत वेदांत से प्रेरित है। इन्होंने अपने चिंतन द्वारा समस्त जगत के कल्याणार्थ वेदांत ज्ञान को प्रसारित करने का कार्य किया। इसके मूल में गुरु का आदेश तथा पीड़ित मानवता के प्रति उनके हृदय की संवेदनशीलता थी। आपके विचारों में सामाजिक विचार के रूप में दरिद्रनारायण (मानव सेवा), शिक्षा के महत्व, नारी सशक्तिकरण, राष्ट्रवाद का समर्थन मुख्य रहा। इनके दार्शनिक विचारों में वेदांत, गीता का निष्काम कर्म तथा आध्यात्मिक मानववाद के चिंतन प्राप्त होते हैं। चूँकि विवेकानन्द ने भारतीय समाज की सामाजिक, धार्मिक एवं आर्थिक परिस्थितियों को उनके बीच जाकर जाना था। इस दृष्टि की पृष्ठभूमि में ही इनके दार्शनिक चिंतन का उद्भव हुआ। उन्होंने देखा कि समाज में फैले अंधविश्वास और बौद्धिक रूढ़िवादिता के कारण उत्पन्न अनेक कुरीतियाँ समाज में व्याप्त हैं, जिसके कारण आध्यात्मिक मूल्यों की ज्योति धीमी पड़ गई है। अतः उन्होंने देशकाल परिस्थिति के अनुसार आध्यात्मिक जागरण हेतु प्रबल प्रयास किया। इसके लिए विवेकानन्द ने विभिन्न धर्म से निहित उपदेशों-संदर्भों को समझने-परखने का प्रयास किया एवं ऐसी विचारधाराओं को प्रसारित किया, जिसमें आध्यात्मिक मूल्यों को प्राथमिकता प्राप्त है।³

विवेकानन्द के विचारों में सबसे गहरा प्रभाव भारतीय दर्शन के रूप में वेदांत दर्शन का दिखाई पड़ता है। उनके दार्शनिक विचार प्राचीन भारतीय शास्त्रों, उपनिषदों एवं वेदों पर आधारित हैं। वेदांत के अलावा विवेकानन्द के विचारों पर कहीं-कहीं बौद्ध दर्शन का स्पष्ट प्रभाव दिखाई देता है। उनके विचारों में तीन संदर्भों द्वारा बौद्ध दर्शन का विचार स्पष्ट होता है। प्रथम सन्दर्भ में विवेकानन्द का सर्वमुक्ति का विचार है। इसके अंतर्गत बौद्ध दर्शन के महायान के 'बोधिसत्त्व' का विचार परिलक्षित होता है। जिसमें महायान संप्रदाय में वर्णित किया गया है कि— जिस प्रकार आंधी में किसी नाव द्वारा नदी पार करने के उपरांत, उस नाव को इस प्रकार छोड़ना चाहिए कि पुनः उसका उपयोग कर अन्य व्यक्ति भी नदी पार कर सकें। इस सिद्धांत के अनुरूप बुद्ध भी निर्वाण प्राप्ति के उपरांत भ्रमण करते हुए दूसरों को दुःख निरोध का मार्ग दिखाने के लिए सहायता करते रहे। स्वामी विवेकानन्द इस वैचारिक अधिष्ठान द्वारा परार्थमूलक, विचारों को मानवीय मूल्य के रूप में महत्वपूर्ण स्थान देते हैं। इसी प्रभाव में इन्होंने आध्यात्मिक जागरण में सेवा कार्य को प्रमुख रूप से प्रेरित किया है; जो इनके मानववादी दृष्टि को परिलक्षित करती



है। द्वितीय सन्दर्भ में बौद्ध दर्शन के अष्टांगिक मार्ग के 'सम्यक कर्मान्त' एवं तृतीय सन्दर्भ में 'सम्यक आजीव' जैसे विचारों द्वारा भी विवेकानन्द प्रभावित दिखाई देते हैं।⁴

विवेकानन्द भारतीय विचारधाराओं के अतिरिक्त ईसाई धर्म के 'ईशा' के चारित्रिक बल के प्रति प्रभावित दिखाई देते हैं, जहाँ ईशा मसीह भयावह शारीरिक कष्ट के बीच सूली पर चढ़े, फिर भी ईशा ने ईश्वर से उन लोगों के प्रति क्षमा की प्रार्थना की। यह आत्मबल, चारित्रिक बल द्वारा ही संभव है। इस प्रकार चारित्रिक बल को इन्होंने अपने आध्यात्मिक मार्ग में जोड़ा है। प्राचीन भारतीय दर्शन में चारित्रिक बल की अवधारणा को निश्चित रूप से उद्धृत किया गया है परंतु यह दृष्टान्त विवेकानन्द पर अपनी गहरी छाप छोड़ता है। अतः विवेकानन्द ईसाई धर्म से सेवा तथा प्रेम की सीख लेते हैं।⁵

आपके विचारों में अधविश्वास, रूढ़िवादिता के प्रति जो प्रतिवाद है वह ब्रम्ह-समाज का प्रभाव प्रदर्शित होता है। विवेकानन्द गीता के निष्काम कर्म के विचार को भी अपने आध्यात्मिक मार्ग में समावेशित करते हैं। विभिन्न ज्ञान संग्रहों के बावजूद भी विवेकानन्द के विचारों के केन्द्र में सर्व प्रमुख इनके गुरु श्री रामकृष्ण परमहंस का ज्ञानोपदेश है। विभिन्न स्रोतों से ज्ञान ग्रहण करने के उपरांत भी विवेकानन्द के विचारों का केन्द्र बिन्दु उनके गुरु स्वामी रामकृष्ण परमहंस के ज्ञान सम्बंधी उपदेश ही है।

क्योंकि अपने गुरु के प्रभावों द्वारा ही, समस्त कल्याणकारी ज्ञान प्रसादों को इन्होंने आत्मसात कर पाया है, जो मानव के कल्याणार्थ उपयोगी है। स्वामी रामकृष्ण परमहंस ने ही विवेकानन्द के जीवन को आध्यात्मिक स्वरूप प्रदान किया। स्वामी निखिलानन्द कहते हैं कि— "ये उनके गुरु श्रेष्ठ ही थे जिन्होंने उन्हें आत्म के ईश्वरीय रूप, ईश्वर के अद्वैत रूप, सत्ता का एकत्व स्वरूप तथा इसके अतिरिक्त एक अन्य प्रमुख तत्व, सभी धर्म में निहित सामंजस्य एवं सार्वभौमता की शिक्षा दी थी। अतः यह सत्य है कि स्वामी रामकृष्ण ने ही उन्हें आध्यात्मिक अनुशासन तथा चिंतन की दीक्षा दी।"⁶

स्वामी विवेकानन्द 'वेदांत' के अंतर्गत ही समस्त सृष्टि, व्यष्टि, परमेश्वरी, मानवता का विवेचन करते हैं।⁷ मार्च 1896 ई० को हार्वर्ड विश्वविद्यालय की स्नातक दर्शन परिषद में अपने व्याख्यान में वेदांत दर्शन के बारे में कहते हैं कि— "भारत में संप्रति जितने दार्शनिक संप्रदाय हैं, वे सभी वेदांत दर्शन के अंतर्गत आते हैं। वेदांत की कई प्रकार की व्याख्याएं हुई हैं और मेरे विचार से वे सभी प्रगतिशील रही हैं। प्रारंभ में व्याख्याएं द्वैतवादी हुईं, अंत में अद्वैतवादी। वेदांत शब्द का शाब्दिक अर्थ है 'वेद का अंत'। वेद हिंदुओं के आदि धर्म ग्रंथ हैं।"⁸

वेदांत को हिंदुओं का धर्म ग्रंथ माना गया है। भारतीय दर्शन में वेदों को ही आस्तिक दर्शन और नास्तिक दर्शन का आधार माना गया है। जो दर्शन वेदों के स्वीकार करते हैं उन्हें आस्तिक दर्शन और जो वेदों को नहीं मानते हैं, उन्हें नास्तिक दर्शन कहा जाता है। आस्तिक भारतीय दर्शन को षड-दर्शन कहा जाता है जिसके आस्तिक दर्शनों के अलग-अलग स्वरूप हैं तथा चिंतन पद्धतियां अलग-अलग हैं। किन्तु यह सभी वेद आधारित है, तथा भारतीय परिवेश में उपजे अन्य भारतीय दर्शन पर भी वेदों के प्रभाव स्पष्ट रूप से दिखाई देते हैं, जो पाश्चात्य दर्शनों के विपरीत मानवीय जीवन मूल्यों के उद्भव एवं संरक्षण के लिए संकल्पित दिखाई देते हैं। यह कहा जा सकता है कि वेदांत में वर्णित चिंतन धारा समस्त विश्व के कल्याण का मार्ग है। जो इस मानव केंद्रित सृष्टि में सामंजस्यता के लिए आवश्यक है।

वेदांत के द्वारा विवेकानन्द जी इस व्यष्टि से लेकर समष्टि तक के उत्पत्ति विनाश के चक्र को दर्शाते हुए कहते हैं कि— "सभी वेदांती तीन बातों में एकमत है। यह सभी ईश्वर को, वेदों के श्रुत रूप को तथा सृष्टि चक्र को मानते हैं। सृष्टि संबंधी मत इस प्रकार है कि समस्त विश्व का जड़ पदार्थ आकाश नामक मूल जड़-सत्ता से उद्भूत हुआ है। गुरुत्वाकर्षण, आकर्षण या निकर्षण, जीवन आदि जितनी शक्तियां हैं, वे सभी आदिशक्ति 'प्राण' से उत्पन्न हुई हैं। आकाश पर प्राण का प्रभाव पड़ने से विश्व का सर्जन या प्रक्षेपण होता है। सृष्टि के आरंभ में आकाश स्थिर तथा अव्यक्त रहता है। बाद में प्राण ज्यों-ज्यों अधिकाधिक क्रियाशील होता है, त्यों-त्यों अधिकाधिक स्थूल पदार्थ उत्पन्न होते हैं। यथा— पेड़-पौधे, पशु-पक्षी, मनुष्य नक्षत्र आदि। कालांतर में सृष्टि की प्रगति समाप्त हो जाती है और प्रलय प्रारंभ होता है। सभी पदार्थ सूक्ष्मातिसूक्ष्म रूपों को प्राप्त करते हुए मूलभूत आकाश एवं प्राण में परिवर्तन हो जाते हैं। तब नया सृष्टि चक्र प्रारंभ होता है। आकाश एवं प्राण के परे एक सत्ता है, जिसे 'महत्' कहते हैं। महत् आकाश एवं प्राण का निर्माण नहीं करता, स्वयं उनके रूप धारण कर लेता है।"⁹

स्वामी विवेकानन्द के मानववादी दृष्टि को समझने के लिए हमें उनके मानव के स्वरूप को समझना होगा। मानव के स्वरूप की विवेचना के प्रारंभ में प्रश्न उत्पन्न होता है कि— मनुष्य क्या है? जिस रूप में हम मानव को देखते हैं। वह मानव है या जिस आत्मतत्त्व से वह प्रकाशित है, वह मानव है। स्वामी विवेकानन्द मानव के दो स्वरूपों की व्याख्या करते हैं। प्रथम भौतिक मानव तथा दूसरा आध्यात्मिक मानव। भौतिक मानव के अंतर्गत शरीर है तथा आध्यात्मिक मानव के अन्तर्गत उसके अन्दर व्याप्त 'आत्म' तत्व है जो उसे सत्-असत् के प्रति प्रेरित करता है।



विवेकानंद मानव के भौतिक स्वरूप की उपेक्षा नहीं करते, बल्कि भौतिक पक्ष को महत्वपूर्ण स्थान देते हैं। उदाहरण देखे तो मानव को बार-बार कहा जाता है कि अपने आध्यात्मिक शक्ति को जागृत करो। अर्थात् मानव के आध्यात्मिक स्वरूप के अलावा भौतिक स्वरूप का महत्व स्पष्ट होता है जिससे भौतिक स्वरूप के आभाव में मानव आध्यात्मिकता को प्राप्त नहीं कर सकता।

मानव के भौतिक पक्ष के अंतर्गत मनुष्य के जैविक, मनोवैज्ञानिक पक्ष आते हैं। भौतिक स्वरूप को स्पष्ट करते हुए कहते हैं कि—“शरीर तथा साधारण शारीरिक क्रियाओं की संरचना, उनके विभिन्न कार्यों तथा उनके महत्व को समझ लेने का अर्थ है, मानव के भौतिक स्वरूप को समझ लेना।”¹⁰

स्वामी विवेकानंद का मानना है कि मनुष्य अन्य जीवों की शारीरिक क्षमता से श्रेष्ठ है। क्योंकि मानव मस्तिष्क अन्य जीवों से अत्यधिक विकसित होता है, जो अपने जीवन को व्यवस्थित बनाने में सक्षम है।

विवेकानंद के अनुसार मानव अपनी भौतिक विशेषताओं के कारण ही आध्यात्मिक स्वरूप की जागृति करता है तथा आध्यात्मिक अंश ही उसके भौतिक स्वरूप की विशेषता है। अतएव मनुष्य का जो वास्तविक स्वरूप है, वह भौतिक शरीर में आध्यात्मिकता के संचार से ही पूरा होता है। विवेकानंद इस वास्तविक रूप को ‘आत्म-शक्ति’ या ‘आत्मन’ कहते हैं। आत्मन को ईश्वर-स्वरूप ‘ब्रह्म’ के रूप में निरूपित करते हैं। इस प्रकार इन्होंने मानव के वास्तविक स्वरूप ‘आत्मरूप’ को मूलतः ब्रह्मरूप मना है।¹¹ स्वामी विवेकानंद मानव को ब्रह्म-स्वरूप मानते हुए; इस सृष्टि को एकात्मक स्वरूप में देखते हैं। अतः इसको दृष्टीगत रखते हुए इन्होंने सामाजिक विचारों को आत्मसात करते हुए प्रस्तुत किया है।

स्वामी विवेकानंद वेदांत दर्शन के एक सिद्धांत को निर्दिष्ट करते हुए कहते हैं कि— “जो विश्व के सभी धर्मों में पाया जाता है, प्रतिपादित करता है और यह दावा करता है कि मनुष्य वस्तुतः दिव्य है तथा जो कुछ भी हम लोग अपने चारों ओर देखते हैं, वह उसी दिव्यता के बोध से उदभूत है। हर एक वस्तु जो सुंदर बलयुक्त तथा कल्याणकारी है और मानव प्रकृति में जो कुछ भी शक्तिशाली है, वह सब उसी दिव्यता से उत्पन्न है। यह दिव्यता यद्यपि बहुतो में अव्यक्त रहती है। मूलतः मनुष्य-मनुष्य में कोई भेद नहीं है, सभी सामान रूप से दिव्य है।”¹²

मनुष्य दिव्य है। पूर्ण स्वतंत्र है। जिसे कुछ अलग से प्राप्त नहीं करना है। उसके अंदर व्याप्त प्रकाश स्वभावतः अनावरण से प्रकाशित हो जाता है क्योंकि मानव की प्रकृति ही इस प्रकार की होती है। विवेकानंद जी के अनुसार मानव पूर्णत्व, अमरत्व तथा आत्म-साक्षात्कार के लिए, इसलिए व्याकुल रहता है कि वह अपने मूल स्वरूप को पहचान नहीं पाता है। एक उदाहरण में वर्णित है कि— एक शेरनी अपने प्रसव काल में शिकार के लिए निकली, उसने भेड़ों के झुंड पर आक्रमण किया और उसी समय शावक को जन्म देते वह मर गयी। इससे निराश्रित शावक के बच्चे को भेड़ों ने पालन-पोषण किया। पुनः एक बार एक शेर ने उन भेड़ों पर आक्रमण किया। उनके बीच शेर के बच्चे को पाकर उसे उसके शेर होने का बोध नदी में परछाई दिखा कर कराया। जिससे वह अपने स्वरूप को पहचान पाया। ठीक उसी प्रकार मनुष्य पूर्ण होने की स्थिति को नहीं पहचान पाता है और अपने पूर्णता के लिए प्रयास करते हुए उचित मार्गदर्शन के अभाव में अपने सामान्य ज्ञान के आधार पर उसका साक्षात्कार नहीं कर पाता है।¹³

प्रश्नोचित है कि हमें अपने स्वरूप का ज्ञान कैसे होगा? इसका उत्तर देते हुए विवेकानंद जी कहते हैं कि इसके लिए हमें कहीं अन्यत्र नहीं जाना है। हम अपने नैतिक प्रयासों द्वारा स्वयं इसके निकट जा रहे होते हैं। व्यक्ति अपने अंतःकरण में एकत्व के भाव का अनुभूति रखता है। स्वामी विवेकानंद ने मानव मात्र की अवहेलना को महान पाप कहा है। उनके अनुसार मानव मात्र का सम्मान हमारे नैतिक सामाजिक और आध्यात्मिक उत्थान की चाभी है।¹⁴ विवेकानंद जी धर्म को कार्य में परिवर्तित करने का उपदेश देते रहते हैं उनके अनुसार त्याग और सेवा-धर्म ही भारतीय धर्म और संस्कृति की प्राण है। सच्ची धार्मिकता स्नेह और दया है। इसलिए हमेशा पूजा भाव से सेवा करने का उपदेश देते हैं। उनका स्पष्ट विचार है कि हम किसी की सहायता नहीं कर सकते, केवल सेवा कर सकते हैं। इसलिए अगर अवसर मिले तो ईश्वर की संतानों की सेवा करके ईश्वर सेवा करनी चाहिए।¹⁵

दरिद्रनारायण के निष्ठ सेवक स्वामी विवेकानंद जी किसी भी राष्ट्र के कल्याण के लिए नारी का अभ्युदय आवश्यक मानते हैं। उनका कहना है कि जिस प्रकार एक पक्षी का एक पंख से उड़ना संभव नहीं है ठीक उसी प्रकार नारी अभ्युदय के बिना राष्ट्र का विकास संभव नहीं है। विवेकानंद जी कहते हैं कि —“ स्त्रियों की पूजा करके ही सभी जातियां बड़ी हुई है। जिस देश, जिस जाति में स्त्रियों की पूजा नहीं होती वह देश, वह जाति कभी बड़ी नहीं हुई और ना ही हो सकेगी। तुम्हारी जाति का जो पतन हुआ है, उसका प्रधान कारण है— इन्हीं सब शक्ति-मूर्तियों की अवहेलना।”¹⁶ स्वामी विवेकानंद ने भारतीय जन-जीवन की शिक्षा व्यवस्था में मानवता तथा चरित्र निर्माण करने वाली शिक्षा के नितांत आवश्यकता को प्रदर्शित किया है। उनके अनुसार सभी प्रकार की शिक्षा और संस्कृति का मूल ‘धर्म’ होना चाहिए। इन्होंने, अपने व्याख्यानों में इसे सदा प्रस्तुत किया है।



शिक्षा को परिभाषित करते हुए विवेकानंद जी कहते हैं की-“मनुष्य की अंतर्निहित पूर्णता को अभिव्यक्त करना ही शिक्षा है। मनुष्य को स्वावलम्बी बनाने वाली शिक्षा ही सच्ची शिक्षा है।”¹⁷

भारतीय दर्शन के इतिहास में स्वामी विवेकानंद का स्वरूप न केवल अद्वैत-दर्शन की गरिमा को स्थापित करता है, अपितु इनके जीवन शैली द्वारा मनुष्य की गरिमा की स्थापना देखने को मिलती है। इन्होंने राष्ट्र के प्रति प्रेम-समर्पण के भाव को जागृत किया, जिसे लक्ष्य मानकर अनेकों ने अपने राष्ट्र के लिए जीवन का उत्सर्ग कर दिया। आपके मानवीय संवेदनाओं द्वारा मानव-जीवन को एक लक्ष्य प्राप्त होता है, जिससे समाज में क्रांतिकारी बदलाव हुए।

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सारांश: 19 वीं सदी के उत्तरार्ध और 20 वीं सदी के शुरुआती काल में भारतीय राष्ट्रवाद के विकास को वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस की भूमिका के बिना नहीं समझा जा सकता। अब तक अंग्रेजी भाषा के समाचार पत्र पर आधारित शोध हुआ है। वही क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं के पत्र-पत्रिकाओं पर सीमित ध्यान दिया गया। यह शोध इसी कमी को पूरा करने का प्रयास करता है तथा 1870 से 1920 के बीच उत्तर प्रदेश में वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस की भूमिका का अध्ययन करता है, जो भारतीय राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन का एक महत्वपूर्ण आरंभिक चरण था। वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस ने राजनीतिक जागरूकता सामाजिक सुधार तथा राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन के विस्तार में योगदान दिया और भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम की नींव को भी मजबूत किया।

सत्य, अहिंसा जैसे गांधीवादी विचारों को जन-जन तक पहुँचाने में क्षेत्रीय भाषायी प्रेस की क्या भूमिका रही, इसके अलावा ब्रिटिश सरकार द्वारा बढ़ते प्रभाव के प्रति अपनाई गई नीतियों की भी बात करता है। उत्तर प्रदेश में वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस ने राष्ट्रवादी विचारों के प्रसार में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। हिंदी और उर्दू भाषाओं में प्रकाशित पत्र-पत्रिकाओं ने सामाजिक एवं भाषाई विभाजन को कम करते हुए एक साझा राजनीतिक चेतना का निर्माण किया। प्रेस के बढ़ते प्रभाव के कारण ब्रिटिश सरकार ने दमनात्मक कानून लागू किये। इस लेख में प्रताप, अभ्युदय, भारतेंदु इत्यादि जैसे प्रकाशन के आधार पर वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस की भूमिका को आँका गया है।

कुजीभूत शब्द : वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस, राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन, सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र, क्षेत्रीय भाषा, ब्रिटिश भारत, सामाजिक सुधार

परिचय— उन्नीसवीं सदी के उत्तरार्ध का समय भारतीय समाज के इतिहास में महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन का काल था। इस अवधि में शिक्षा के प्रसार, नए शिक्षण संस्थानों की स्थापना और शहरी केंद्रों के विस्तार ने सामाजिक जीवन को नए रूप में ढालना शुरू किया। अंग्रेजी शासन के दौरान आधुनिक शिक्षा के प्रसार ने एक ऐसे शिक्षित वर्ग को जन्म दिया जो सामाजिक, राजनीतिक और बौद्धिक प्रश्नों के प्रति अधिक जागरूक था।¹ इसी समय मुद्रण तकनीक का उपयोग भी धीरे-धीरे बढ़ने लगा, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप समाचार-पत्रों और पत्र-पत्रिकाओं का प्रकाशन अधिक व्यापक स्तर पर होने लगा। इन प्रकाशनों ने केवल सूचना प्रदान करने का कार्य ही नहीं किया, बल्कि उन्होंने समाज में विचारों के आदान-प्रदान के लिए एक महत्वपूर्ण माध्यम भी तैयार किया।²

प्रिंट संस्कृति के विस्तार ने सार्वजनिक जीवन में नई संभावनाएँ उत्पन्न कीं। समाचार-पत्रों के माध्यम से सामाजिक, धार्मिक और राजनीतिक विषयों पर विचार व्यक्त किए जाने लगे। पहले जिन मुद्दों पर चर्चा सीमित समूहों या स्थानीय स्तर तक ही सीमित रहती थी, वे अब मुद्रित रूप में व्यापक समाज तक पहुँचने लगे। इससे समाज के भीतर विचारों के आदान-प्रदान का दायरा बढ़ा और लोगों के बीच सार्वजनिक बहस की एक नई संस्कृति विकसित होने लगी।³ समाचार-पत्रों ने पाठकों को न केवल घटनाओं की जानकारी दी, बल्कि उन्हें उन घटनाओं के व्यापक सामाजिक और राजनीतिक संदर्भ को समझने में भी सहायता प्रदान की। इस दौर में समाचार-पत्र केवल समाचार देने वाले साधन नहीं थे। उनके संपादकीय लेख और टिप्पणियाँ अक्सर समकालीन परिस्थितियों की व्याख्या भी प्रस्तुत करते थे। किसी घटना का विवरण देने के साथ-साथ उसके संभावित प्रभावों और उसके पीछे निहित कारणों पर भी चर्चा की जाती थी। इस प्रकार प्रेस धीरे-धीरे एक ऐसे मंच के रूप में विकसित होने लगा जहाँ समाज और राजनीति से जुड़े प्रश्नों पर गंभीर विचार-विमर्श संभव हो सका।

उत्तर भारत में इस परिवर्तन का प्रभाव विशेष रूप से दिखाई देता है। हिंदी और उर्दू भाषाओं में प्रकाशित समाचार-पत्रों ने स्थानीय समाज के बड़े हिस्से तक अपनी पहुँच बनाई। क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं में प्रकाशित होने के कारण ये समाचार-पत्र अधिक लोगों के लिए सुलभ थे और उनके विचारों का प्रभाव भी व्यापक था। इन पत्रों में प्रशासनिक नीतियों, सामाजिक सुधारों और राजनीतिक घटनाओं से संबंधित समाचार और लेख नियमित रूप से प्रकाशित होते थे, जिससे पाठकों के बीच राजनीतिक विषयों के प्रति रुचि और जागरूकता दोनों बढ़ने लगी।⁴

उत्तर प्रदेश, जिसे उस समय नॉर्थ-वेस्टर्न प्रोविंसेज और अवध के नाम से जाना जाता था, इस विकसित हो रही पत्रकारिता का एक महत्वपूर्ण केंद्र बन गया था। इलाहाबाद, बनारस, लखनऊ और कानपुर जैसे नगरों में कई समाचार-पत्र और पत्रिकाएँ प्रकाशित हो रही थीं।⁵ इन शहरों में शिक्षित मध्यवर्ग, शैक्षणिक संस्थानों और प्रशासनिक गतिविधियों की उपस्थिति ने पत्रकारिता के विकास के लिए अनुकूल वातावरण तैयार किया। परिणामस्वरूप यहाँ का प्रेस धीरे-धीरे अधिक सक्रिय और प्रभावशाली बनता गया।



समाचार-पत्रों में केवल स्थानीय घटनाओं का विवरण ही नहीं दिया जाता था, बल्कि व्यापक राजनीतिक परिस्थितियों और औपनिवेशिक शासन की नीतियों पर भी चर्चा की जाती थी। समय के साथ-साथ कुछ समाचार-पत्र प्रशासनिक निर्णयों की आलोचना भी करने लगे। इस प्रकार प्रेस केवल सूचना का माध्यम नहीं रहा, बल्कि वह समाज और शासन के बीच संवाद स्थापित करने का एक महत्वपूर्ण साधन बन गया। इसी संदर्भ में 1870 से 1920 के बीच उत्तर प्रदेश में वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस और राजनीति के संबंध का अध्ययन विशेष महत्व रखता है, क्योंकि इसी अवधि में प्रेस ने राजनीतिक जागरूकता और सार्वजनिक मत के निर्माण में उल्लेखनीय भूमिका निभानी शुरू की।

उत्तर प्रदेश की राजनीतिक पृष्ठभूमि: 1870 से 1920 का काल उत्तर प्रदेश के राजनीतिक इतिहास में महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तनों का समय था। 1857 के विद्रोह के बाद ब्रिटिश शासन ने प्रशासनिक व्यवस्था को पुनर्गठित किया और शासन को अधिक संगठित तथा नियंत्रित रूप देने का प्रयास किया।⁶ इस अनुभव ने सरकार को भारतीय समाज में असंतोष की संभावनाओं के प्रति सतर्क बना दिया। फिर भी इन प्रयासों के बावजूद समाज में धीरे-धीरे राजनीतिक जागरूकता का विस्तार होने लगा।

उन्नीसवीं सदी के उत्तरार्ध में आधुनिक शिक्षा के प्रसार के साथ एक नए शिक्षित मध्यम वर्ग का उदय हुआ। यह वर्ग विद्यालयों, कॉलेजों और विश्वविद्यालयों से शिक्षा प्राप्त कर रहा था और प्रशासनिक सेवाओं, कानून, शिक्षा तथा अन्य पेशेवर क्षेत्रों में अपनी उपस्थिति दर्ज करा रहा था। शिक्षित मध्यम वर्ग ने सामाजिक और राजनीतिक प्रश्नों पर विचार करना प्रारम्भ किया।⁷ सार्वजनिक जीवन में सक्रिय भूमिका निभाने लगा। इस वर्ग के पास विचारों को व्यक्त करने के साधन भी उपलब्ध थे, जिनमें समाचार-पत्र और पत्रिकाएँ विशेष रूप से महत्वपूर्ण थे। पत्रकारिता के माध्यम से इस वर्ग ने शासन की नीतियों, सामाजिक सुधारों और राजनीतिक घटनाओं पर अपनी राय व्यक्त करनी शुरू की।

इस समय उत्तर प्रदेश के प्रमुख नगर जैसे इलाहाबाद, बनारस, लखनऊ और कानपुर बौद्धिक तथा राजनीतिक गतिविधियों के केंद्र बनते जा रहे थे।⁸ यहाँ शैक्षणिक संस्थानों, प्रशासनिक दफ्तरों और सांस्कृतिक संस्थाओं की उपस्थिति ने एक ऐसा वातावरण तैयार किया जिसमें विचारों का आदान-प्रदान संभव हो सका। इन नगरों में साहित्यिक सभाएँ, सामाजिक संगठन और सार्वजनिक मंच भी सक्रिय थे, जहाँ समकालीन मुद्दों पर चर्चा होती थी। इस प्रकार धीरे-धीरे एक ऐसा सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र विकसित होने लगा जिसमें समाज के विभिन्न वर्ग अपनी भागीदारी दर्ज कराने लगे।

इसी अवधि में राजनीतिक संगठनों और सार्वजनिक सभाओं की संख्या भी बढ़ने लगी। सामाजिक और राजनीतिक मुद्दों पर विचार व्यक्त करने के लिए विभिन्न प्रकार के संगठन बनाए गए, जिनके माध्यम से सार्वजनिक बैठकों और अभियानों का आयोजन किया जाता था। इन गतिविधियों की खबरें समाचार-पत्रों में प्रकाशित होने लगीं, जिससे व्यापक समाज तक इनकी जानकारी पहुँचने लगी। परिणामस्वरूप लोगों में राजनीतिक घटनाओं के प्रति रुचि और जागरूकता दोनों का विकास हुआ।

इसके अतिरिक्त सामाजिक सुधार आंदोलनों ने भी राजनीतिक चेतना को प्रभावित किया। शिक्षा, महिला अधिकारों, सामाजिक कुरीतियों और धार्मिक सुधार से जुड़े प्रश्नों पर लगातार चर्चा होने लगी। इन विषयों पर होने वाली बहसें अक्सर समाचार-पत्रों और सार्वजनिक मंचों के माध्यम से समाज के सामने आती थीं। इससे यह स्पष्ट होने लगा कि सामाजिक परिवर्तन और राजनीतिक जागरूकता एक-दूसरे से गहराई से जुड़े हुए हैं।

इस प्रकार 1870 से 1920 के बीच उत्तर प्रदेश में एक ऐसा राजनीतिक वातावरण विकसित हो रहा था जिसमें शिक्षित वर्ग, सामाजिक संगठन और समाचार-पत्र मिलकर सार्वजनिक जीवन को प्रभावित कर रहे थे। यही वह पृष्ठभूमि थी जिसमें वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस ने राजनीतिक विचारों के प्रसार और सार्वजनिक मत के निर्माण में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभानी शुरू की।

वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस और राजनीतिक चेतना—वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस की विशेषता यह थी कि वह अपने पाठकों की भाषा और अनुभवों के निकट था। स्थानीय भाषाओं में लिखे गए लेख और समाचार लोगों के लिए अधिक सहज और समझने योग्य थे।⁹ इसी कारण समाचार-पत्रों में व्यक्त विचारों और टिप्पणियों का प्रभाव भी अधिक गहरा होता था। इन पत्रों के माध्यम से पाठकों को केवल घटनाओं की जानकारी ही नहीं मिलती थी, बल्कि उन्हें उन घटनाओं के सामाजिक और राजनीतिक अर्थ को समझने का अवसर भी मिलता था।

इन समाचार-पत्रों में प्रकाशित लेखों, संपादकीय टिप्पणियों और समाचारों के माध्यम से औपनिवेशिक शासन की नीतियों पर समय-समय पर आलोचनात्मक दृष्टि प्रस्तुत की जाती थी।¹⁰ कर व्यवस्था, प्रशासनिक निर्णयों और शासन की विभिन्न नीतियों से जुड़े मुद्दों पर चर्चा होने लगी। इस प्रकार समाचार-पत्रों ने पाठकों के बीच राजनीतिक प्रश्नों के प्रति जागरूकता उत्पन्न करने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। जब लोग प्रशासनिक नीतियों और



उनके प्रभावों के बारे में पढ़ते थे, तो धीरे-धीरे उनके भीतर राजनीतिक परिस्थितियों को समझने की प्रवृत्ति विकसित होने लगी।

इसके अतिरिक्त समाचार-पत्रों ने सामाजिक और राजनीतिक घटनाओं को व्यापक संदर्भ में प्रस्तुत करने का कार्य भी किया। विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में हो रही गतिविधियों, सार्वजनिक सभाओं और सामाजिक आंदोलनों की खबरें नियमित रूप से प्रकाशित होती थीं। इससे पाठकों को यह जानकारी मिलती थी कि समाज के अन्य हिस्सों में भी लोग समान प्रकार के प्रश्नों और समस्याओं पर विचार कर रहे हैं। इस प्रकार समाचार-पत्रों ने विभिन्न क्षेत्रों के लोगों के बीच एक प्रकार का बौद्धिक और राजनीतिक संबंध स्थापित किया।

राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन से संबंधित घटनाओं के प्रकाशन ने भी राजनीतिक चेतना को प्रभावित किया। जब राजनीतिक सभाओं, आंदोलनों और विरोध प्रदर्शनों की खबरें समाचार-पत्रों में प्रकाशित होती थीं, तो पाठकों को यह अनुभव होने लगता था कि वे केवल स्थानीय घटनाओं के दर्शक नहीं हैं, बल्कि एक व्यापक राष्ट्रीय प्रक्रिया का हिस्सा हैं। इस प्रकार समाचार-पत्रों ने राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन के विचारों को समाज के विभिन्न वर्गों तक पहुँचाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई।¹¹

धीरे-धीरे यह भी स्पष्ट होने लगा कि प्रेस केवल सूचना देने का माध्यम नहीं था, बल्कि वह विचारों के निर्माण और प्रसार का भी एक महत्वपूर्ण साधन बन चुका था। समाचार-पत्रों के माध्यम से विभिन्न मुद्दों पर बहस और चर्चा होने लगी, जिसने सार्वजनिक जीवन में राजनीतिक चेतना को मजबूत किया। इस प्रकार वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस ने न केवल राजनीतिक जानकारी के प्रसार में योगदान दिया, बल्कि उसने समाज के भीतर एक ऐसी राजनीतिक समझ के विकास में भी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई जिसने आगे चलकर राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन को व्यापक आधार प्रदान किया।

भाषा और राजनीति—इस काल में हिंदी भाषा के स्वरूप में भी महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन दिखाई देते हैं। उन्नीसवीं सदी के उत्तरार्ध में हिंदी के मानकीकरण की प्रक्रिया तेज़ होने लगी थी।¹² पहले जहाँ साहित्य और लेखन में ब्रजभाषा का प्रभाव अधिक था, वहीं धीरे-धीरे पत्रकारिता और गद्य लेखन में खड़ी बोली हिंदी का प्रयोग बढ़ने लगा। समाचार-पत्रों, पत्रिकाओं और अन्य मुद्रित सामग्री में खड़ी बोली के उपयोग ने हिंदी को एक आधुनिक और व्यापक संप्रेषण की भाषा के रूप में स्थापित करने में सहायता की। इस परिवर्तन ने हिंदी को सार्वजनिक जीवन और राजनीतिक चर्चा के लिए अधिक उपयुक्त बना दिया।

भाषा के इस परिवर्तन का संबंध उस समय उभर रहे नए सामाजिक वर्गों से भी था। आधुनिक शिक्षा प्राप्त करने वाला शिक्षित मध्यवर्ग प्रशासन, शिक्षा और अन्य पेशेवर क्षेत्रों में सक्रिय हो रहा था।¹³ इस वर्ग को ऐसे माध्यम की आवश्यकता थी जिसके द्वारा वह अपने विचारों को व्यापक समाज तक पहुँचा सके। पत्रकारिता ने इस आवश्यकता को पूरा किया और हिंदी भाषा को इस प्रक्रिया में एक महत्वपूर्ण स्थान मिला। परिणामस्वरूप हिंदी धीरे-धीरे सार्वजनिक बहस, सामाजिक सुधार और राजनीतिक चर्चा की भाषा बनती चली गई।

इसी के साथ उर्दू पत्रकारिता भी उत्तर भारत में प्रभावशाली बनी हुई थी। उर्दू भाषा में प्रकाशित समाचार-पत्रों और पत्रिकाओं ने भी सामाजिक और राजनीतिक विचारों के प्रसार में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई।¹⁴ इस प्रकार हिंदी और उर्दू दोनों भाषाओं की पत्रकारिता ने मिलकर सार्वजनिक जीवन को प्रभावित किया और विभिन्न समुदायों के बीच विचारों के आदान-प्रदान को संभव बनाया।

समाचार-पत्रों में प्रकाशित लेखों और टिप्पणियों के माध्यम से भाषा, संस्कृति और समाज से जुड़े प्रश्नों पर भी चर्चा होने लगी। कई बार भाषा का प्रश्न सांस्कृतिक पहचान से भी जुड़ जाता था। हिंदी और उर्दू के प्रयोग को लेकर होने वाली बहस केवल भाषाई नहीं थी, बल्कि उनके पीछे सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक और कभी-कभी राजनीतिक दृष्टिकोण भी निहित रहते थे। इस कारण भाषा का मुद्दा धीरे-धीरे सार्वजनिक जीवन में एक महत्वपूर्ण विषय बन गया।

इसके अतिरिक्त भाषा के माध्यम से राष्ट्रवाद की अवधारणा को भी व्यक्त किया जाने लगा। समाचार-पत्रों और पत्रिकाओं में प्रकाशित लेखों ने भाषा, संस्कृति और राष्ट्रीय पहचान के बीच संबंध को स्पष्ट करने का प्रयास किया। कई लेखकों और पत्रकारों ने यह तर्क प्रस्तुत किया कि क्षेत्रीय भाषाएँ समाज को जागरूक बनाने और राष्ट्रीय चेतना को मजबूत करने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा सकती हैं।

औपनिवेशिक शासन और प्रेस पर नियंत्रण—ब्रिटिश प्रशासन ने समय-समय पर ऐसे कानून और नीतियाँ लागू कीं जिनका उद्देश्य समाचार-पत्रों की स्वतंत्रता को सीमित करना था।¹⁵ इन कानूनों के माध्यम से सरकार को यह अधिकार प्राप्त हो जाता था कि वह किसी भी ऐसे प्रकाशन के विरुद्ध कार्रवाई कर सके जिसे वह शासन के लिए हानिकारक या उत्तेजक मानती थी। कई बार समाचार-पत्रों को चेतावनी दी जाती थी, उन पर जुर्माना लगाया जाता था या उनके प्रकाशन पर अस्थायी रूप से प्रतिबंध भी लगाया जाता था। इन उपायों का उद्देश्य स्पष्ट रूप से यह था कि पत्रकारों और संपादकों को शासन की आलोचना करने से रोका जा सके।



प्रेस पर नियंत्रण स्थापित करने के लिए सेंसरशिप की नीति भी अपनाई गई। प्रशासनिक अधिकारी समाचार-पत्रों की सामग्री पर निगरानी रखते थे और यदि किसी लेख या समाचार को शासन के विरुद्ध माना जाता था, तो उसके प्रकाशन पर आपत्ति जताई जाती थी। इस प्रकार प्रेस की स्वतंत्रता पर एक प्रकार का दबाव बना रहता था। कई बार संपादकों को यह सावधानी बरतनी पड़ती थी कि वे किस प्रकार के शब्दों और विचारों का उपयोग कर रहे हैं।

वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस एक्ट, 1878 औपनिवेशिक शासन द्वारा भारतीय भाषाओं में प्रकाशित समाचार-पत्रों को नियंत्रित करने के उद्देश्य से बनाया गया एक महत्वपूर्ण कानून था।¹⁶ उन्नीसवीं सदी के उत्तरार्ध में हिंदी, उर्दू और अन्य क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं के समाचार-पत्रों के माध्यम से सामाजिक और राजनीतिक प्रश्नों पर चर्चा बढ़ने लगी थी, जिससे ब्रिटिश सरकार को यह आशंका होने लगी कि इन पत्रों के द्वारा शासन के विरुद्ध असंतोष फैल सकता है। इस कानून के तहत प्रशासन को यह अधिकार प्राप्त था कि यदि किसी समाचार-पत्र की सामग्री को सरकार के लिए हानिकारक या उत्तेजक माना जाए तो उसके विरुद्ध कार्रवाई की जा सकती है। कई मामलों में संपादकों और प्रकाशकों से सुरक्षा राशि जमा कराने की भी व्यवस्था की गई थी, जिससे नियमों के उल्लंघन की स्थिति में जब्त किया जा सकता था। इस कानून का प्रभाव मुख्यतः भारतीय भाषाओं के समाचार-पत्रों पर पड़ा, जबकि अंग्रेजी भाषा के पत्र अपेक्षाकृत इससे मुक्त रहे। परिणामस्वरूप पत्रकारों और संपादकों पर एक प्रकार का दबाव बना रहा, जिसके कारण कई बार वे अपने विचारों को सीधे व्यक्त करने के बजाय संकेतों और सावधानीपूर्ण भाषा का प्रयोग करने लगे। फिर भी अनेक समाचार-पत्रों ने सीमित परिस्थितियों के भीतर रहते हुए सामाजिक और राजनीतिक मुद्दों पर चर्चा जारी रखी। इस प्रकार वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस एक्ट उस समय के औपनिवेशिक शासन और भारतीय प्रेस के बीच तनावपूर्ण संबंधों को स्पष्ट रूप से दर्शाता है तथा यह भी दिखाता है कि क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं की पत्रकारिता उस समय समाज में राजनीतिक जागरूकता के प्रसार का एक महत्वपूर्ण माध्यम बन चुकी थी।

1908 और 1910 के प्रेस संबंधी कानून औपनिवेशिक सरकार द्वारा समाचार-पत्रों पर नियंत्रण स्थापित करने के लिए बनाए गए थे। बीसवीं सदी की शुरुआत में राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन के बढ़ते प्रभाव के कारण कई समाचार-पत्रों में सरकार की नीतियों की आलोचना और राष्ट्रवादी विचारों का प्रसार होने लगा था। इसी पृष्ठभूमि में 1908 के कानून के अंतर्गत सरकार को यह अधिकार दिया गया कि यदि किसी समाचार-पत्र में शासन के विरुद्ध या हिंसा को उकसाने वाली सामग्री प्रकाशित होती है, तो उसके विरुद्ध कार्रवाई की जा सकती है और उस प्रकाशन को जब्त किया जा सकता है। इसके बाद 1910 का प्रेस एक्ट लागू किया गया, जिसके तहत समाचार-पत्रों के संपादकों और प्रकाशकों से सरकार के पास सुरक्षा राशि जमा कराने की व्यवस्था की गई। यदि किसी पत्र में सरकार विरोधी सामग्री पाई जाती थी, तो यह राशि जब्त की जा सकती थी और उस समाचार-पत्र का प्रकाशन भी रोका जा सकता था। इन कानूनों के माध्यम से औपनिवेशिक शासन ने प्रेस की स्वतंत्रता को सीमित करने का प्रयास किया, हालांकि इसके बावजूद कई समाचार-पत्रों ने सावधानीपूर्वक अपने विचार व्यक्त करना जारी रखा।¹⁷

हालाँकि इन प्रतिबंधों के बावजूद समाचार-पत्रों की गतिविधियाँ पूरी तरह से रुक नहीं सकीं। अनेक संपादकों और पत्रकारों ने अपने विचारों को व्यक्त करने के लिए नए और सावधान तरीके अपनाए। कई बार लेखों में प्रत्यक्ष आलोचना के स्थान पर संकेतों, रूपकों और प्रतीकों का प्रयोग किया जाता था। इस प्रकार वे अपने पाठकों तक संदेश पहुँचाने में सफल हो जाते थे, जबकि औपचारिक रूप से वे प्रत्यक्ष विरोध से बचने का प्रयास करते थे।

इसके अतिरिक्त समाचार-पत्रों में प्रकाशित संपादकीय लेखों और टिप्पणियों के माध्यम से सामाजिक और राजनीतिक मुद्दों पर चर्चा जारी रही। प्रशासनिक नीतियों, कर व्यवस्था और सार्वजनिक समस्याओं पर लेख लिखे जाते रहे, जिससे पाठकों के बीच इन विषयों के प्रति जागरूकता बनी रही। इस प्रकार प्रेस ने सीमित परिस्थितियों के भीतर भी सार्वजनिक बहस को जीवित रखने का कार्य किया।

राजनीति, समाज और प्रेस का संबंध— समाचार-पत्रों में प्रकाशित लेखों, टिप्पणियों और संपादकीयों के माध्यम से विभिन्न विषयों पर निरंतर चर्चा होती थी। कर व्यवस्था, प्रशासनिक नीतियाँ, सामाजिक सुधार, शिक्षा और सार्वजनिक जीवन से जुड़े अन्य प्रश्नों पर विचार प्रस्तुत किए जाते थे।¹⁸ इन चर्चाओं का प्रभाव यह हुआ कि पाठकों के बीच धीरे-धीरे राजनीतिक विषयों के प्रति रुचि और जागरूकता बढ़ने लगी। पहले जहाँ राजनीति का विषय सीमित वर्गों तक ही सीमित रहता था, वहीं अब समाचार-पत्रों के माध्यम से यह विषय व्यापक समाज तक पहुँचने लगा।

प्रेस के माध्यम से राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन से संबंधित विचार भी धीरे-धीरे स्थानीय समाज तक पहुँचने लगे। विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में होने वाली राजनीतिक सभाओं, आंदोलनों और संगठनों की गतिविधियों की जानकारी समाचार-पत्रों में प्रकाशित होती थी।¹⁹ इससे पाठकों को यह अनुभव होने लगा कि देश के अलग-अलग भागों में रहने वाले लोग समान प्रकार की समस्याओं और प्रश्नों पर विचार कर रहे हैं। इस प्रक्रिया ने लोगों के बीच एक व्यापक राष्ट्रीय चेतना के निर्माण में योगदान दिया।



इसके साथ ही प्रेस ने समाज के विभिन्न वर्गों के बीच संवाद स्थापित करने में भी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई। समाचार-पत्रों में प्रकाशित लेखों और पत्रों के माध्यम से पाठक अपनी राय व्यक्त कर सकते थे और विभिन्न विषयों पर चर्चा में भाग ले सकते थे। इस प्रकार प्रेस ने एक ऐसे सार्वजनिक मंच का निर्माण किया जहाँ समाज के विभिन्न वर्गों के लोग विचारों का आदान-प्रदान कर सकते थे।²⁰

प्रिंट संस्कृति के प्रसार ने इस प्रक्रिया को और अधिक सशक्त बनाया। पत्र-पत्रिकाओं, पुस्तकों और अन्य मुद्रित सामग्री के माध्यम से विचारों का प्रसार पहले की तुलना में अधिक व्यापक स्तर पर होने लगा। इससे सामाजिक और बौद्धिक गतिविधियों को नई दिशा मिली। साहित्यिक लेखन, सामाजिक आलोचना और राजनीतिक टिप्पणी के माध्यम से अनेक नए विचार समाज के सामने आने लगे।

निष्कर्ष— 1870 से 1920 के बीच उत्तर प्रदेश में वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस का विकास भारतीय सार्वजनिक जीवन के इतिहास का एक महत्वपूर्ण अध्याय प्रस्तुत करता है। इस अवधि में समाचार-पत्रों और पत्रिकाओं ने केवल सूचना देने का कार्य नहीं किया, बल्कि उन्होंने सामाजिक और राजनीतिक चेतना के निर्माण में सक्रिय भूमिका निभाई। हिंदी और उर्दू जैसी क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं में प्रकाशित होने वाले समाचार-पत्रों ने उन विचारों और मुद्दों को समाज के व्यापक वर्गों तक पहुँचाया जो पहले सीमित शिक्षित वर्ग तक ही सीमित रहते थे। इस प्रकार वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस ने समाज के भीतर राजनीतिक जागरूकता के प्रसार में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया।

उत्तर प्रदेश में पत्रकारिता का विकास उस समय के व्यापक सामाजिक परिवर्तनों से जुड़ा हुआ था। आधुनिक शिक्षा के प्रसार, नए शहरी मध्यवर्ग के उदय और प्रिंट तकनीक के विस्तार ने समाचार-पत्रों के लिए एक अनुकूल वातावरण तैयार किया। इन परिस्थितियों में समाचार-पत्र केवल घटनाओं का विवरण देने तक सीमित नहीं रहे, बल्कि वे सामाजिक और राजनीतिक प्रश्नों पर विचार व्यक्त करने के मंच बन गए। प्रशासनिक नीतियों, कर व्यवस्था, शिक्षा और सामाजिक सुधार जैसे विषयों पर प्रकाशित लेखों ने पाठकों को समकालीन परिस्थितियों को समझने का अवसर प्रदान किया।

वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस का एक महत्वपूर्ण पहलू यह था कि उसने राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन से जुड़े विचारों को स्थानीय समाज तक पहुँचाने में सहायता की। विभिन्न राजनीतिक सभाओं, आंदोलनों और संगठनों की गतिविधियों से संबंधित समाचारों के प्रकाशन ने लोगों के बीच यह भावना विकसित की कि वे एक व्यापक राष्ट्रीय प्रक्रिया का हिस्सा हैं। इस प्रकार प्रेस ने क्षेत्रीय समाज और उभरते हुए राष्ट्रवादी आंदोलन के बीच एक सेतु का कार्य किया। धीरे-धीरे यह प्रक्रिया राष्ट्रीय चेतना के निर्माण में सहायक सिद्ध हुई।

इसके साथ ही प्रेस ने एक ऐसे सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के निर्माण में भी योगदान दिया जहाँ सामाजिक और राजनीतिक मुद्दों पर विचार-विमर्श संभव हो सका। समाचार-पत्रों में प्रकाशित लेखों, टिप्पणियों और पाठकों के पत्रों ने संवाद की एक ऐसी प्रक्रिया को जन्म दिया जिसमें विभिन्न सामाजिक वर्गों के लोग भाग ले सकते थे। इस प्रकार प्रिंट संस्कृति ने समाज के भीतर विचारों के आदान-प्रदान और सार्वजनिक बहस की परंपरा को मजबूत किया।

हालाँकि औपनिवेशिक शासन ने प्रेस की बढ़ती प्रभावशीलता को देखते हुए उस पर नियंत्रण स्थापित करने का प्रयास भी किया। सेंसरशिप, दंडात्मक कानूनों और अन्य प्रशासनिक उपायों के माध्यम से समाचार-पत्रों की स्वतंत्रता को सीमित करने की कोशिश की गई।

यह कहना गलत नहीं होगा कि वर्नाक्यूलर प्रेस ने उत्तर प्रदेश में भारतीय राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन को सशक्त बनाने के मकसद से एक स्वर्णिम अध्याय लिखा।

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दिल्ली की महिला सूफी संत

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सारांश: दिल्ली की महिला सूफी संत नामक यह शोध, मध्यकालीन दिल्ली की सूफी परंपरा में महिलाओं की भूमिका को समझने का एक प्रयास है। मध्यकाल के दौरान दिल्ली भी आध्यात्मिकता, मुख्यतः चिश्ती सिलसिले की सूफी परंपरा का प्रमुख केंद्र थी। लेकिन मध्यकालीन समाज पितृसत्तात्मक था जहां महिलाओं की भूमिका घरेलू दायरों तक ही सीमित थी। इतिहास लेखन में भी अधिकतर पुरुष सूफी संतों, खानकाहों व दरगाहों पर ही अधिक ध्यान केंद्रित किया गया है जबकि सूफी परंपरा से जुड़ी महिलाओं की उपस्थिति और योगदान को अपेक्षित महत्व नहीं मिला। इस शोध का उद्देश्य दिल्ली की दो प्रमुख सूफी महिलाओं – बीबी जुलेखा, जो कि महान सूफी संत निजामुद्दीन औलिया की मां थी और बीबी फातिमा बिन सम की आध्यात्मिक, सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक भूमिका का अध्ययन करना है। राबिया अल-बसरी (8वीं सदी, बसरा-इराक) सूफी परंपरा की सबसे प्रारंभिक और प्रसिद्ध महिला सूफी संत मानी जाती हैं। शास्त्रीय सूफी ग्रंथों में राबिया का जिक्र व्यापक रूप से प्राप्त होता है, उन्हें एक स्वतंत्र व प्रतिष्ठित व्यक्तित्व के रूप में दिखाया गया है लेकिन दिल्ली की सूफी महिलाओं का विवरण उतना संगठित या स्वतंत्र रूप में उपलब्ध नहीं है और उनका जिक्र अधिकतर पुरुष-केंद्रित स्रोतों में मिलता है। जिसके परिणाम स्वरूप उनकी पहचान आंशिक और अप्रत्यक्ष रूप में उभरकर सामने आती है। यह शोध प्राथमिक स्रोतों, सूफी ग्रंथ जैसे तजक़िरा व मल्फुज़ात तथा द्वितीयक स्रोत, जैसे आधुनिक इतिहासकारों द्वारा प्रतिपादित किए गए शोध ग्रंथों के माध्यम से यह स्पष्ट करने का प्रयास करेगा कि पितृसत्तात्मक समाज की सीमाओं में रहते हुए भी इस महिलाओं ने किस प्रकार अपनी अलग पहचान बनाई। इसके साथ दृ साथ संबंधित दरगाहों और स्थलों का दिल्ली में क्षेत्रीय अध्ययन तथा स्थानीय परंपराओं और मौखिक स्रोतों का अवलोकन करना भी इस शोध का हिस्सा है।

कुजीभूत शब्द : सूफीवाद, महिला सूफी संत, बीबी फातिमा बिन सम, बीबी जुलेखा, चिश्ती सिलसिला

परिचय—

सूफी केंद्र के रूप में दिल्ली— तसव्वुफ नाम हैं, उन रास्तों का जो ले जाते हैं उस मंजिल तक जिसे कुरआन 'तजक़िया-ए-नफ़स' कहता है और हदीस 'अहसान' कहता है। इन रास्तों पर चलने वाले को मुर्शिद की रहनुमाई मिलती है जिसके हाथ में मोहब्बत-ए-मुस्तफा की क्षमा और खौफ ए खुदा की असा होती है-फरीदुद्दीन अत्तर (तजक़िरात-उल-औलिया)

सूफीवाद इस्लाम धर्म की वह रहस्यवादी धारा है जिसमें प्रेम सहिष्णुता और भाईचारे को अधिक महत्व दिया गया। मध्यकालीन भारत में इस रहस्यवादी परंपरा का विस्तार मुस्लिम साम्राज्य के विस्तार के साथ हुआ।¹ बारहवीं-चौदहवीं शताब्दी के दौरान दिल्ली चिश्ती सिलसिले की प्रमुख केंद्र बनी।² जिसकी स्थापना आबू-इशाक-शमी द्वारा 10वीं शताब्दी के दौरान अफगानिस्तान के 'चिश्त' नामक शहर में की। भारत में इस सिलसिले की नींव बारहवीं शताब्दी में ख्वाजा मुइनुद्दीन चिश्ती(1142-1236ई) द्वारा राजस्थान के अजमेर शहर में रखी गई, उन्होंने अजमेर में खानकाह स्थापित की जहाँ सामाजिक समानता, सेवा और प्रेम का संदेश दिया। अजमेर से ही सूफीवाद उत्तर भारत में फैल। मुइनुद्दीन चिश्ती के शिष्य ख्वाजा कुतुबुद्दीन बख्तियार काकी (1173-1235ई) ने इस परंपरा को दिल्ली में स्थापित किया। उनके समय में 'फ़क़' (आध्यात्मिक दरिद्रता) को आध्यात्मिक आदर्श के रूप में स्थापित किया गया जिसमें राजनीतिक सत्ता से दूरी बनाना, उपहार व जागीर अस्वीकार करना और सादगीपूर्ण जीवन जीना अनिवार्य था। तेरहवीं शताब्दी में बाबा फरीदुद्दीन-गंज-ए-शकर (1188-1280ई) के समयकाल में चिश्ती सिलसिले के केंद्र दिल्ली से हटकर अजोधन (वर्तमान पाकिस्तान) में चला गया क्योंकि वे साधना के लिए आध्यात्मिक एकांत चाहते थे। बाबा फरीद ने अजोधन में खानकाहों को स्थापित कर सूफीवाद की विचारधारा को वहां के आम लोगों तक पहुंचाया। इसी क्रम में बाबा फरीद की माता बीबी मरियम का उल्लेख चिश्ती तजक़िरा साहित्य में विशेष रूप से मिलता है। सियार-अल-औलिया जैसे ग्रंथों में उन्हें संयमी, धार्मिक प्रवृत्ति व आध्यात्मिक संस्कार देने वाली माता के रूप में दिखाया गया है। वे बचपन से ही अपने बेटे को नमाज़, रोज़ा आदि के लिए प्रेरित करती थी। ये सभी विवरण हाजियोग्राफिकल परंपरा पर आधारित है। यह आधुनिक स्रोतों की तरह प्रत्यक्ष प्रमाण नहीं देते लेकिन फिर भी इन बातों से ये पता चलता है कि सूफी परंपरा में महिलाओं की भूमिका आध्यात्मिक संस्कार, नैतिक अनुशासन और धार्मिक प्रशिक्षण के रूप में महत्वपूर्ण थी।³ बाबा फरीद के प्रमुख शिष्य निजामुद्दीन औलिया ने 14वीं शताब्दी में दिल्ली को पुनः चिश्ती सिलसिले का केंद्र बनाया और ग्यासपुर में अपनी खानकाह स्थापित की। निजामुद्दीन औलिया



के समय में दिल्ली सूफी परंपरा में केवल पुरुष संतों का ही नेतृत्व नहीं रहा है, बल्कि आध्यात्मिक परिवेश में महिलाओं की भी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका थी उनकी वालिदा (माता) बीबी जुलेखा ने कठिन आर्थिक परिस्थितियों में भी उसका पालन पोषण किया और उन्होंने बचपन से ही उन्हें धार्मिक अनुशासन व ईश्वर की भक्ति के प्रति संवेदनशील बनाया।

उनके व्यक्तित्व निर्माण का प्रमुख आधार उनकी माता ही रही है। इस समय में दिल्ली में एक और महिला सूफीवादी परंपरा में सक्रिय थीं, जिनका नाम बीबी फातिमा सम था। इन्हें दिल्ली की राबिया भी कहा जाता था। निजामुद्दीन औलिया उनके प्रति अधिक सम्मान रखते थे, लेकिन पुरुष केंद्रित इतिहास लेखन में इन महिलाओं की उपस्थिति को अपेक्षित महत्त्व नहीं दिया गया। जबकि पुरुष संतों के व्यक्तित्व निर्माण का श्रेय महिलाओं को ही दिया जाता है। फिर भी इन महिलाओं के बारे में बहुत कम व्यवस्थित व क्रमबद्ध अध्ययन उपलब्ध हैं। इन्हें केवल पुरुष संतों के माध्यम से ही दिखाया गया न कि स्वतंत्र पहचान दी गई। इस शोध का उद्देश्य दिल्ली की प्रमुख महिला सूफी संतों की धार्मिक, सामाजिक व आध्यात्मिक भूमिका को उजागर करना है तथा उन महिला संतों को स्वतंत्र पहचान देने का एक छोटा सा प्रयास है जिनका जिक्र अक्सर पुरुष संतों के संदर्भ में ही किया जाता है।

मध्यकालीन इस्लामी समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति—इस्लाम की उदय के दौरान अरब समाज कठोर पितृसत्तात्मक था। जहाँ सामाजिक संरचना पुरुषों के नियंत्रण में थी। मध्यकाल में इस सामाजिक संरचना में थोड़ा परिवर्तन आया। महिलाओं को कुरान आयतों में पुरुष व महिला दोनों को कुछ समान अधिकार दिए थे जैसे विरासत, मेंहर (निकाह के दौरान पति की तरफ से पत्नी को दी जाने वाली संपत्ति) विवाह में सहमती आदि।⁴ सूफीवाद के आने के बाद से महिलाओं की स्थिति में और परिवर्तन आया। सूफी खानकाहों में उन्हें गुरु, मार्गदर्शिका, संत व का दर्जा प्राप्त होने लगा। एनीमेरी शीमेल ने अपनी पुस्तक “मिस्टिकल डायमेशन ऑफ इस्लाम” में बताती है कि “आत्मा का ना तो कोई लिंग है और न ही कोई जाति” इसमें प्रमुख उदाहरण के रूप में हम राबिया अल अदविया (717–801 ई) को देख सकते हैं। राबिया बिन इस्माइल अल अदविया का जन्म आठवीं शताब्दी में दक्षिणी इराक के बसरा शहर में एक गरीब व धार्मिक परिवार में हुआ था। बचपन में ही उनके माता-पिता का देहांत हो गया था। प्रसिद्ध कथाओं के अनुसार पता चलता है कि उन्हें लुटेरों ने बाजार में गुलाम के रूप में बेच दिया था, जो उनसे कठोर श्रम करवाते थे। राबिया दिनभर काम करती थी और रात भर इबादत करती थी। तेरहवीं सदी के सूफी कवी फरीदुद्दीन अत्तर ने अपनी कृति “तज्कीरात-उल-औलिया” में राबिया के बारे में लिखते हैं कि “वह अपने जमाने की इकलौती थी, शर्म और हया में सबसे आगे, इबादत में डूबी हुई, हक की मोहब्बत में बेखुद, अपने दौर की एक अजीबोगरीब हस्ती थी”। रिजवी ने अपनी पुस्तक ‘हिस्टरी ऑफ सूफिज्म इन इंडिया’ में बताते हैं कि राबिया पहली महिला थीं जिन्होंने सूफीवाद की दिशा को ईश्वर के भय से मुक्त करके इश्क-ए-हकीकी (ईश्वरीय प्रेम) की ओर अग्रसर किया। उनका प्रसिद्ध कथन “मैंने खुदा की इबादत उसके डर से नहीं की, न ही जन्नत के लालच में की, बल्कि मैंने उससे सिर्फ इसलिए प्रेम किया कि वह मेरे प्यार का हकदार है”। को सूफी दर्शन की आधार माना जाता है। राबिया के इन्हीं सिद्धांतों का असर आगे चलकर दिल्ली के सूफी केंद्रों में भी दिखाई देता है। जैसे उन्होंने बसरा में आध्यात्मिक मार्ग प्रशस्त किया, उसी तरह दिल्ली की महिला सूफी संतों ने भी इस परंपरा को आगे बढ़ाया।⁵ सूफीवाद ने महिलाओं को आध्यात्मिक क्षेत्र में वह सम्मान व अधिकार दिया जो समाज उन्हें नहीं देना चाहता था।

दिल्ली की प्रमुख महिला सूफी संत—दिल्ली की सूफी परंपरा का अध्ययन अक्सर पुरुष सूफी संतों के संदर्भ में ही किया जाता है। लेकिन इस आध्यात्मिक परिवेश में महिलाएं भी सक्रिय थीं। जिन्हें या तो अनदेखा कर दिया गया या उन पर सीमित चर्चा की गई। क्योंकि उनकी सार्वजनिक उपस्थिति को सीमित दायरे में ही रखा जाता था। आध्यात्म की इस परंपरा ने स्त्रियों को ऐसा स्तर प्रदान किया जहाँ वे अपने विचारों व मान्यताओं उसको सबके सामने रख सकती थीं। एनीमेरी शीमेल बताती हैं कि सूफीवाद में औरतों की भूमिका दो तरह से दिखाई देती है, कुछ महिलाएं मां के रूप में अपने बच्चों को सही आध्यात्मिक मार्ग दिखाती हैं जैसे बीबी जुलेखा, जिन्होंने अपन पुत्र निजामुद्दीन औलिया को सही मार्ग दिखाया जिससे आगे चले वे महान संत के रूप में प्रसिद्ध हुए। उनकी माता को उनके नाम से ही जाना जाता है। कुछ महिलाएं स्वयं संत बनकर भक्ति व साधना में लीन रहीं। जैसे बीबी फातिमा, राबिया दोनों स्वतंत्र रूप से जानी जाती हैं। सभी महिला संत इस बात का उदाहरण हैं कि स्त्रियों की भूमिका केवल परिवार तक ही सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि वह आध्यात्मिक मार्ग से ऊंचा दर्जा हासिल कर सकती है। इसी क्रम में सूफी विचारधारा ने ऐसा आधार प्रदान किया जिसके माध्यम से महिलाएं अपने आप को स्वतंत्र रूप से स्थापित कर सकती हैं।

बीबी जुलेखा— जिन्हें ‘माई साहिबा’ के नाम से भी जाना जाता है। उनके पिता खवाजा अरब मध्य एशिया के बुखारा (वर्तमान उज्बेकिस्तान) के निवासी थे। मंगोल आक्रमणों के बाद व भारत की बदायूं (उत्तर प्रदेश) में बस गए। बीबी जुलेखा का विवाह खवाजा अली के पुत्र खवाजा सैयद अहमद से हुआ। इनकी दो संतानें थी पुत्री जैनब, जिन्हें बीबी जन्नत के नाम से भी जाना जाता है और पुत्र मुहम्मद जो आगे चलकर निजामुद्दीन औलिया के नाम से



प्रसिद्ध हुए। पति की मृत्यु के बाद वह अपने बच्चों के साथ दिल्ली आकर बस गई और अत्यधिक आर्थिक तंगी के बाद भी उन्होंने अपने बच्चों को बेहतर शिक्षा-दीक्षा दी। मैं अपने बच्चों के लिए केवल माँ ही नहीं थी बल्कि उनकी आध्यात्मिक गुरु भी थीं। निजामुद्दीन के मन में बचपन से ही ईश्वर के प्रति प्रेम और मानवता की सेवा जैसे भावों को जागृत करती थी।

जुलेखा ने स्वयं का जीवन ईश्वर की भक्ति में समर्पित कर दिया। सादगीपूर्ण जीवन व आत्मसंयम उनकी प्रमुख पहचान थी।

कठिन परिस्थितियों में रहकर भी उन्होंने ईश्वर की आस्था पर ध्यान केन्द्रित रखा। उनके इन्हीं आदर्श विचारों ने निजामुद्दीन के व्यक्तित्व का निर्माण किया और यह उनका महत्वपूर्ण आध्यात्मिक योगदान था। उन्होंने अपने पुत्र को आध्यात्मिकता के उस मार्ग पर जाने के लिए प्रेरित किया जहाँ सभी सांसारिक दुख निरर्थक हो जाते हैं। प्रारंभिक लोककथाओं से पता चलता है कि जब उनके परिवार के पास कुछ खाने को नहीं होता था तो वह अपने पुत्र से कहती थी कि 'हम अल्लाह की मेहमान हैं'। बीबी जुलेखा ने अपने पुत्र को बाबा फरीद का शिष्य बनने के लिए भी प्रोत्साहित किया लेकिन वो न स्वयं किसी की शिष्या थी और न ही कोई उनका शिष्य था। उन्होंने अन्य पुरुष संतों की तरह खुद की कोई खानकाह भी स्थापित नहीं की थी। उनके कठिन समय में बीबी फातिमा शाम उनकी सहायता करती थी। (खान, 2017)।

पारंपरिक सूफी ग्रंथों के अनुसार यह माना जाता है कि उनकी मृत्यु लगभग 1250 ईस्वी के आसपास हुई। उन्हें दक्षिण दिल्ली के आदचीनी में उसी जगह दफनाया गया जहाँ वो साधना व इबादत करती थी। उनकी बेटी बीबी जन्नत को भी उनके पास दफनाया गया। उनकी दरगाह को माई साहिबा की दरगाह के नाम से भी जाना जाता है, जो आज भी एक महत्वपूर्ण तीर्थस्थल है जहाँ विभिन्न समुदायों के लिए लोग बड़ी संख्या में आते हैं और फतिहा (प्रार्थना) और दुआ करते हैं। दरगाह के अंदर अनुष्ठानों का संचालन पुरुष खादिमो द्वारा किया जाता है। उर्स (वार्षिक पुण्यतिथि) के अवसर पर गुस्ल-ए-मज्जर (मज्जर को पवित्र करना) तथा चढ़ावा आदि चढ़ाया जाता है और तबरूक (प्रसाद वितरण) का भी आयोजन किया जाता है, जिसे बरकत और करामात का प्रतीक माना जाता है। बीबी जुलेखा का जीवन ये प्रमाणित करता है कि सूफी परम्परा में महिलाओं का योगदान महत्वपूर्ण था। उन्होंने केवल महान संत को जन्म ही नहीं दिया बल्कि अन्य महिलाओं के लिए प्रेरणा का आधार बना। उनकी दरगाह महिलाओं के लिए आस्था और सशक्तिकरण का एक महत्वपूर्ण केंद्र है (कक्कड़, 2006)। उन्होंने बीबी फातिमा, बीबी जमाल खातून, जहाँआरा बेगम जैसी अन्य महिलाओं को भी प्रेरित किया और आध्यात्मिक क्षेत्र में ऊँचा दर्जा हासिल किया।

बीबी फातिमा बिन सम—बीबी फातिमा सम दिल्ली की एक महान महिला सूफी संत थी। इन्हें दिल्ली की राबिया भी कहा जाता था, क्योंकि उन्होंने भी राबिया बसरी की तरह तपस्या व प्रेम के मार्ग को अपनाया और गृहस्थ जीवन से मुक्त होकर आध्यात्मिक की राह पर चलीं। उनके जन्म स्थान, वर्ष आदि की कोई सटीक जानकारी नहीं मिलती है। फातिमा के बारे में जानने के लिए स्वतंत्र स्रोतों का अभाव है। पुरुष सूफी संतों द्वारा कही गयी मौखिक कथाओं और संस्मरणों के माध्यम से ही उनके बारे में पता चलता है। निजामुद्दीन औलिया के प्रसिद्ध मालफुजात 'फवाद-उल-फुआद' में उन्हें एक कवियित्री के रूप में दिखाया गया है।⁶ औलिया कहते हैं कि वह हर अवसर पर तुरंत कविता लिखा करती थी उनकी प्रसिद्ध पंक्ति—

"हम इश्क तलब कुन ,फिर जान ख्वाई, हर दो तलबी वालफ मस्सा नसबद"

तू प्रेम चाहता है और प्राण भी चाहता है? दोनों को एक साथ पाना आसान नहीं है। शेख ने ये भी बताया कि बाबा फरीद फातिमा के आध्यात्मिक गुरु थे और उनका सम्मान करते थे। उनकी तपस्या भक्ति व आध्यात्मिक उपलब्धि की प्रशंसा करते थे। बाबा उन्हें पुरुष के समान मानते थे, जिन्हें महिला के रूप में भेजा गया था (खान 2017)।

खैर-अल-मजलिस (नसीरुद्दीन, चिराग देहलवी के कथन) में उनकी कठोर साधना का वर्णन किया गया है, जिसमें उनके 40 दिन के निर्जला उपवास के बारे में बताया गया है⁷ कि जब उन्हें मृत्यु का आभास हुआ तो उन्होंने 40 दिन तक लगातार बिना भोजन पानी के इबादत की ओर 40 वें दिन उन्होंने शरीर त्याग दिया। एक सूफी अपने



बीबी जुलेखा दरगाह



हज़रत बीबी फातिमा, दरगाह



हर पल का उपयोग इबादत में करता है। औलिया फातिमा के प्रति अत्यधिक सम्मान रखते थे। वे अक्सर उनकी कब्र पर जाया करते थे और अपने शिष्यों को भी सजदा करने और चढ़ावा चढ़ाने का आदेश देते थे।

बीबी फातिमा की दरगाह दिल्ली के काका नगर में स्थित है जिसे आज के समय में भी पवित्र स्थल माना जाता है और यह खासकर महिला श्रद्धालुओं के लिए श्रद्धा का प्रमुख केंद्र है। वह उनकी आशा और आध्यात्मिक शक्ति का प्रतीक बनी हुई है। लोक मान्यताओं के अनुसार महिलाएं वहाँ संतान प्राप्ति, स्वास्थ्य आदि के लिए मन्नत मांगती हैं। चिश्ती परंपरा में उनका स्मरण इस बात को प्रमाणित करता है कि आध्यात्म की राह पर चलने के लिए, लिंग कोई बाधा नहीं है। आध्यात्मिक तौर पर फातिमा उस दौर की एकमात्र ऐसी महिला थीं जिन्हें पुरुष संतों ने अपने बराबर माना और उन्हें मर्द व शेर जैसी उपाधियां दी।⁸

निष्कर्ष— महिला सूफियों पर स्रोतों के अभाव से यह पता चलता है कि उनके आध्यात्मिक अधिकार और सामाजिक सीमाएं हमेशा से ही असंतुलित रहें हैं उन्हें धार्मिक जीवन में भाग लेने का अधिकार तो था लेकिन सामाजिक रूढ़िवादी सीमाओं ने हमेशा से उन्हें बांध कर रखा पुरुष संतों की तरह उन्होंने भी गहरी आध्यात्मिक साधना की लेकिन खानकाहों में उनके रहने, सार्वजनिक प्रवचन देने, या अनुयायियों को मार्गदर्शन देने आदि की स्वतंत्रता सीमित थी। सार्वजनिक भागीदारी अक्सर पुरुष— केंद्रित हुआ करती थी जबकि महिलाएं भी अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती थी। दिल्ली की महिला सूफी संतों ने यह साबित किया कि महिलाएं भी आध्यात्मिक परंपरा में पुरुषों के बराबर भूमिका निभा सकती हैं। बीबी जुलेखा व बीबी फातिमा जैसी महिलाओं ने अपनी तपस्या, संघर्ष व भक्तिपूर्ण जीवन के माध्यम से समाज में अपनी जगह बनाई। जिनकी दरगाहों पर पुरुष स्वयं सिर झुकाते हैं। खानकाहों व दरगाहों के माध्यम से समाज की सेवा, गरीबों की मदद, शिक्षा आदि में अपना महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिया। इन महिलाओं का जीवन यह स्पष्ट करता है कि महिला संत केवल धार्मिक अनुष्ठान तक ही सीमित नहीं हैं बल्कि वे समाज में सकारात्मक बदलाव भी ला सकती हैं। इन महिला संतों ने अपने आदर्शपूर्ण जीवन के उदाहरण से भविष्य की महिलाओं के लिए मार्ग प्रशस्त किया। वर्तमान समय में भी इन महिला सूफी संतों की दरगाह महत्वपूर्ण स्थल हैं। महिला श्रद्धालु इन दरगाहों से भावनात्मक रूप से जुड़ी होती हैं। उनकी अनेकों मान्यताएँ होती हैं जो यहाँ पूजा अर्चना करने से पूरी होती हैं। साथ ही यह सामाजिक सेवा, सामुदायिक जुड़ाव और आध्यात्मिक शिक्षा का केंद्र भी हैं ये शिक्षाएं समाज में समानता, करुणा और आध्यात्मिक साधना को बनाए रखने में सहायक हैं।

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The Role of Karna in Kurukshetra Mahabharata War

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Abstract: *This article examines the figure of Karna in the Mahabharata by placing him within the intersecting frameworks of social exclusion, political participation and ethical conflict. Rather than approaching Karna as only a tragic hero or a morally compromised ally, the study argues that his character exposes deeper tensions within the epic's social and moral structure. His role in the Kurukshetra War is analysed not simply in terms of battlefield performance, but as shaped by his marginal position and the need for recognition that informs many of his decisions.*

The article draws on existing scholarship to highlight how caste-based discrimination plays a crucial role in shaping Karna's identity. Despite his abilities and lineage, his exclusion from the Kshatriya order points to the rigidity of the social hierarchy. This exclusion, in turn, influences both his rivalry with the Pandavas and his alignment with Duryodhana. His loyalty is read not as blind allegiance but as a response to the only moment of acceptance he receives which complicates any straightforward reading of dharma.

By bringing together questions of identity, warfare and ethics, the article shows that Karna cannot be placed within fixed moral categories. His character unsettles clear distinctions between justice and injustice, forcing a closer look at how moral decisions are shaped within unequal social conditions. In doing so, the study positions Karna as central to understanding the continuing relevance of the Mahabharata.

Key Word : Mahabharata, Kurukshetra War, Political Participation, Ethical Conflict, dharma

Introduction- The Mahabharata is one of the most important epics of ancient India. It goes beyond the story of a great war and gives insight into how people lived, thought and made decisions in that time. At the centre of the epic is the Kurukshetra War, where power, duty and human emotions often come into conflict. Among the many characters involved in this struggle, Karna stands out as one of the most complex and unforgettable figures.

A closer look at Karna's life shows how deeply it is shaped by the society he belonged to. The social system of that period was rigid and a person's birth often determined their position and respect. Even though Karna was a highly skilled warrior, he was repeatedly denied recognition. Such experiences did not only affect him emotionally but also influenced the choices he made later in life. His relationship with Duryodhana was based on acceptance and trust, which explains why his loyalty remained firm even in the most challenging moments.

Karna's importance in the war is not limited to his strength on the battlefield. His life reflects a deeper struggle for dignity and belonging. It also highlights how difficult it can be to balance personal values with loyalty toward others. Even today, his character feels relevant, as similar conflicts continue to exist in society. Because of this, Karna's role in the Kurukshetra War goes beyond the events of the battle and helps us understand broader social and moral questions.

Social Identity and Historical Context- Karna's importance in the Mahabharata begins with the complexity of his social identity. His life is shaped by a clear contradiction between his birth and his upbringing. Although he was born to Kunti and is believed to be the son of the sun god, he was abandoned at birth and raised in the home of a charioteer. Because of this, society did not recognize him as a Kshatriya, even though he possessed the qualities of a great warrior.

This situation reflects the rigid nature of the varna system in ancient Indian society, where a person's status depended more on birth than on ability.¹ Karna's life includes several moments where he is insulted or rejected in public because of his assumed low status, even when his skills are clearly visible.² These incidents are not just personal struggles but they show how deeply rooted social



hierarchies were at that time and how difficult it was for someone to gain recognition without the right lineage.

At the same time, Karna's bond with Duryodhana adds another layer to his story. By making Karna the king of Anga, Duryodhana openly supports him and challenges the existing social order.³ This act suggests that political power could sometimes be used to question rigid traditions. However, even after gaining this position, Karna continues to struggle with his identity. The tension between who he truly is and how society sees him remains unresolved and it influences many of his decisions throughout the epic.

Political and Military Role in the War-From a historical point of view, Karna's role in the Kurukshetra War becomes important not just because of his skill as a warrior but also because of the impact he had on the overall direction of the war. One interesting aspect is his late entry into the battlefield was that Karna chose not to fight under Bhishma, which shows that there were clear tensions and disagreements within the Kaurava side itself.⁴ This suggests that the war was not completely united, but made up of individuals with their own loyalties, egos and personal reasons.

By the time Karna finally takes command, after the fall of leaders like Bhishma and Drona, the Kaurava army is already in a weak position. This puts him under great pressure, as he has to lead a struggling force. Even then, his presence gives new strength to Duryodhana's side and helps extend the war further than expected. This clearly shows that Karna was not just another warrior but someone who played a key role in keeping the Kaurava resistance alive.⁵

His battles with the Pandavas, especially his final duel with Arjuna, are among the most intense moments in the epic.⁶ This fight is not only about victory or defeat but also about personal rivalry, respect and long-standing emotional conflict. In many ways, it brings together deeper issues like social rejection, ambition and the need for recognition. Because of this, Karna's role in the war goes beyond strategy or combat i.e. his story reflects a much larger struggle for identity and acceptance within society.

The Historical Meaning of Karna's Death- Karna's death in the Kurukshetra War is one of the most powerful and debated moments in the Mahabharata. It brings out the tension between moral values and the harsh reality of war. In his final battle, Karna's chariot wheel gets stuck, leaving him in a helpless position. At that moment, Arjuna kills him on the advice of Krishna.⁷ This act has often been questioned because it goes against the expected rules of fair combat.⁸

According to the idea of dharma-yuddha, wars were supposed to follow certain ethical limits. However, this incident shows that such rules were not always followed in practice. When the pressure of winning becomes too great, even strong moral principles can be set aside. In this case, the need to defeat Karna seems to have become more important than maintaining fairness in battle.

This moment also shows how complex the idea of justice is in the epic. Those who are seen as defenders of righteousness are not always perfect in their actions. Karna's death, therefore, is not just about the fall of a great warrior, but also about the difficult choices people make in extreme situations. It suggests that in times of conflict, the line between right and wrong is not always clear and decisions are often shaped by necessity rather than ideal values.

Ethics, Loyalty and Dharma- One of the most striking aspects of Karna's character in the Mahabharata is his deep loyalty to Duryodhana.⁹ This loyalty shows how personal relationships can sometimes become more important than moral judgment. Even after Karna comes to know that he is the eldest son of Kunti and is actually related to the Pandavas, he does not change sides. Instead, he chooses to stand with Duryodhana and this decision carries both emotional and ethical weight.

It would be too simple to see this as just stubbornness. Karna's choice is closely tied to his past. When society rejected him because of his birth, it was Duryodhana who gave him respect and recognition. Because of this, Karna's loyalty is not just political but it comes from a sense of gratitude and personal bond.¹⁰ In the context of ancient systems, such relationships often shaped alliances and loyalty like this was highly valued.



At the same time, this decision makes his position more complicated. By supporting Duryodhana, Karna ends up fighting for a side that is often seen as unjust. This creates a conflict between his personal duty and the larger idea of what is right. His story shows that dharma in the Mahabharata is not always clear or fixed. Instead, it changes depending on a person's situation, relationships and experiences. Karna's life reminds us that real decisions are rarely simple and they are often shaped by emotions, responsibilities and difficult choices.

Karna and Social Conflict- Karna's story in the Mahabharata remains important even today because it reflects the social conflicts of a deeply hierarchical society. His life shows how caste-based discrimination worked in practice, where a person could be judged more by their birth than by their abilities.¹¹ Despite his talent and strength, Karna was often denied respect which highlights the unfair nature of such a system. Through his struggles, the epic raises important questions about whether such social divisions were just or sustainable.

At the same time, Karna's rise in status through his friendship with Duryodhana shows that these social boundaries were not completely fixed.¹² By supporting Karna and making him a king, Duryodhana challenges the rigid structure of society to some extent. This suggests that power and position could sometimes be gained through political support rather than birth alone.

However, Karna's situation never fully changes. Even after gaining status, he continues to face the effects of being seen as socially inferior. This makes his character especially meaningful, as it shows both the possibility of rising above one's position and the limits placed by society.¹³ His life reflects the difficulty of moving within a system that is not truly equal. Because of this, Karna becomes more than just a figure in the story. He represents larger issues of identity, power and exclusion that were part of that historical context and still feel relevant today.

Conclusion- Karna's role in the Kurukshetra War is historically significant because it brings together multiple dimensions of the Mahabharata, including social hierarchy, political conflict and ethical uncertainty, into a single, deeply complex figure. His life illustrates how individual actions are shaped by broader structural forces, while his participation in the war demonstrates the impact that personal motivations can have on large-scale historical events. As a military leader, he played a crucial role in sustaining the Kaurava resistance and influencing the course of the conflict, while his personal struggles reflected the deeper tensions within the society depicted in the epic. His unwavering loyalty to Duryodhana, despite knowing the moral ambiguities involved, highlights the importance of relationships and obligations in shaping historical decisions. At the same time, his tragic death reveals the limitations of ethical ideals in the face of political necessity, showing how the pursuit of victory can lead to the erosion of moral principles. Karna cannot be easily categorized as a hero or a villain, as his character exists within a space of contradiction and complexity. Instead, he stands as a figure through whom the Mahabharata explores its most profound questions about justice, identity and human choice. His story continues to hold relevance because it reflects enduring concerns about inequality, moral conflict and the search for dignity within a structured yet contested social world.

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Gandhi and Ambedkar: A Study of Their Views on Caste

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Abstract: *The caste system has long been a central feature of Indian society and has deeply affected social relations and opportunities. It created a rigid division among people and led to inequality, particularly for those placed at the lower levels of the hierarchy. During the national movement, the issue of caste attracted serious attention, and many leaders tried to address it. Among them, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar were the most prominent. Both were concerned about the condition of the depressed classes, but their ideas were different in many ways. Gandhi believed that caste could be reformed through moral values and social awareness, and he strongly opposed untouchability. He worked for the upliftment of the so-called Harijans and emphasized unity in society. In contrast, Ambedkar viewed caste as a system based on inequality and injustice, which could not be reformed and therefore must be abolished completely. He focused on legal rights, education, and political power for the oppressed classes.*

Key Word : Caste System, Inequality, Social Awareness, Legal Rights, Moral, Education

Introduction- The caste system has been one of the most enduring and complex features of Indian society, shaping social hierarchy, economic relations, and cultural practices for centuries. Its influence goes beyond social classification, affecting everyday interactions and determining access to power, privilege, and resources. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, caste became a key topic of discussion among social reformers, political leaders, and thinkers, especially during colonial times and the rise of nationalism. It was in this heated historical context that Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar shared their views, offering two of the most influential but contrasting interpretations of caste and its future in India. Gandhi approached the issue of caste through the lens of Indian tradition, trying to reconcile traditional social structures with changing ethical standards. While he condemned untouchability as a serious moral wrong, he did not initially call for completely abolishing the caste system. Instead, he sought to reinterpret the concept of varna as a functional and non-hierarchical division of labor, which he believed could promote social harmony if it were free of oppressive elements. His work on caste was closely linked to his broader vision of moral renewal, self-discipline, and national unity. Ambedkar, on the other hand, viewed caste as a system of deep-seated inequality that could not be fixed through reforms. Drawing from personal experiences and thorough scholarly research, he revealed how caste served as a tool of social exclusion, backed by religious authority and maintained through strict social practices. For Ambedkar, caste conflicted fundamentally with the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which he saw as essential to any democratic society. His critique was both social and political, highlighting the need for legal rights, representation, and protection for marginalized groups. The intellectual clash between Gandhi and Ambedkar marks a crucial moment in the history of modern India, showcasing deeper conflicts between reformist and radical approaches to social change. Their differing views still shape current discussions on caste, social justice, and democracy. A close look at their ideas not only sheds light on the historical context in which they worked but also offers valuable insights into the ongoing challenges of creating a fair society.

Gandhi's Views On Caste- Gandhi had a lot to say about caste. He thought about it a lot. His ideas changed over time. He wanted to make things better from within the society. He tried to balance traditions with what is fair and right for people. Gandhi believed in a difference between varna and jati. He thought varna was a way to divide work in society. It was not about being better or worse than others. Each person had a job to do. That was it. Gandhi said this was an idea because it helped people work together. Over time this idea got messed up and turned into the caste system we know today.



Gandhi was much against the idea of untouchability. He thought it was very wrong and not what Hinduism is about. He called it a sin. Said it was a bad thing for Hindu society. Gandhi worked hard to stop untouchability. He talked about it in public. Did things to help people who were treated unfairly. He even lived with them for a while. He called them Harijans which means children of God to show that they are like everyone else. Gandhi did not think we should get rid of caste. He thought that if people could choose their jobs without being forced it could work. He wanted to make the system better, not throw it away.. Some people, like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar did not agree with him. They thought caste was unfair no matter what. As Gandhi got older his ideas changed a bit. He started to think that all people are equal and that we should not be limited by the job our families do. He still liked the ideas behind varna. He wanted a more fair society. We need to understand that Gandhi's ideas about caste are part of what he believed in: being a person getting along with others and not fighting. He helped people think about caste and how it affects us.. We can still learn from what he did and what he did not do. Gandhi's views on caste are important to think about. Gandhi's views on caste are still talked about today. Gandhi's views on caste are a part of who he was. Gandhi's views on caste are something we can learn from.

Ambedkar's Critique Of Caste- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's criticism of the caste system is a thorough and insightful examination of social inequality in modern India. What sets him apart from other reformers is that he didn't try to change or reinterpret the caste system - instead, he saw it as a deeply rooted system of oppression that couldn't be made to fit with ideas of justice, democracy, or basic human respect. His thoughts on the matter weren't just based on research, but also on his own personal experiences as a member of a community that was considered "untouchable". This unique perspective gave his arguments a lot of depth and emotional power. At the core of Ambedkar's criticism was a simple yet powerful idea: that the caste system is based on a hierarchy of inequality, where each group feels better than the ones below it, but worse than the ones above. This setup, he believed, stops people from coming together to fight against their common struggles, which in turn keeps the system alive. In his famous book, *Annihilation of Caste* Ambedkar strongly disagreed with the notion that caste is just a way to divide work; instead, he saw it as a way to divide people, based on the jobs they were born into and the social rules that kept them apart. Ambedkar was very critical of how religion is used to support the caste system.

He believed that Hindu scriptures, such as the Manusmriti, are used to justify the differences between castes and the unfair treatment of certain groups. In his view, these texts make it difficult to criticize or change the caste system because they give it a sacred status. As a result, Ambedkar thought that in order to truly challenge the caste system, people had to be willing to question the religious ideas that support it. He felt that the caste system is deeply rooted in Hinduism and that real social change would require a rejection of the religious beliefs that make the caste system seem acceptable. By challenging these beliefs, Ambedkar hoped to create a more equal society where people are not judged by their caste. Ambedkar's thoughts were really focused on one key thing: how caste and democracy just can't work together. He believed that democracy is more than just a way of governing - it's a way of living together, based on being free, equal, and treating each other like brothers and sisters. But caste gets in the way of all that by separating people and putting them in a hierarchy. This breaks society into small, isolated groups, makes it hard for people to respect each other, and stops individuals from going after their dreams. Ambedkar had a really strong reaction to the caste system. He wanted to get rid of it completely, saying that just making a few changes wouldn't be enough. He combined criticizing the social issues with taking political action, pushing for laws to protect the oppressed, better education, and a voice in politics for those who were marginalized. He was instrumental in creating parts of the constitution that aimed to make sure everyone was equal and that the rights of people on the outskirts of society were protected. His approach was all about making big changes, not just small tweaks. He believed that the only way to really make a difference was to tear down the existing system and build something new. This is why his ideas were so radical and transformative. By fighting for the rights of the oppressed, he helped to



shape a more just and equal society. Ambedkar's decision to become a Buddhist later in life was a big change from the Hinduism he grew up with, which was based on a caste system. He wanted to show that there were other ways to think about ethics and society. His thoughts on caste are still important today, and they help us understand and fight against unfair systems in Indian society.

Differences in Approaches and Methods- The difference between Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on the question of caste is very clear when we look at their approaches and methods of change. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar were both very concerned about the people who were oppressed. They had different strategies. Mahatma Gandhi's method was based on making people feel guilty and changing their values. He thought that if people's hearts changed then bad things like untouchability would go away. Mahatma Gandhi's approach was to appeal to people's conscience and make them feel responsible. He started programs like cleaning up the streets, eating with people from castes and helping the so-called "Harijans". Mahatma Gandhi saw society as a whole. Wanted everyone to work together in harmony. He was afraid that if they made changes too quickly it would hurt the bigger fight for India's freedom. Mahatma Gandhi's method was based on non-violence and truth. He used these principles in his social and political work. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had an approach. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar thought that just talking about morality would not be enough to change a system like caste.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar believed that they needed to change the laws and give people power. For Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the problem of caste was connected to who had power and who was represented. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said that the people who were oppressed needed to have a say in politics and be able to make their decisions. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar wanted voting groups for the Depressed Classes and he helped create laws like reservations. Another big difference between Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was their views on tradition. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to change Hindu society from the inside by keeping the parts and getting rid of the bad. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar thought that the caste system was a part of Hindu tradition so he wanted to make changes. So Mahatma Gandhi's method was about slowly changing people's values while Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's strategy was about making changes through laws and politics. The different approaches of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar are still important today when we talk about how to deal with inequalities.

Philosophical Foundations- The way Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar thought that caste was very different. This was because they had ideas about the world. These ideas affected how they saw society and what they thought a perfect society should be like. To really understand what they said about caste we need to look at the ideas and principles that shaped their thoughts. Mahatma Gandhi's ideas were based on a way of thinking that included ethical thoughts. He was influenced by Hindu, Jain and Christian ideas. For him non-violence and truth were very important. He believed that these ideas were true for everyone. Gandhi thought of society as a community where everyone had a role to play. He believed in the idea of varna. He wanted to make it better by interpreting it in an ethical way. He did not want to get rid of ideas but he wanted to make them better by using ethical principles. For Gandhi, making society better was connected to being a person and growing spiritually.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's way of thinking was different. He was influenced by ideas, rational thinking and the idea that everyone is equal. He liked the ideas of the Enlightenment, liberal constitutionalism and social democracy. He believed in using reason and protecting rights. Ambedkar did not accept ideas if they were not fair. He was critical of ideas that supported hierarchy. He believed that social rules should be judged on whether they were fair, not on how old they were. He wanted to build a society based on ideas, where everyone is free, equal and treated like brothers and sisters. So while Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts focused on making ideas better through spiritual growth Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's thoughts focused on changing society by questioning old ideas and making new rules. This shows a difference in how they thought about caste and social change. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had ideas about how to make society better. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar were two people, with philosophical foundations.



Points of Convergence- Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had some big differences, but they also shared some common concerns. They both thought that the way people were treated unfairly because of their social status was very wrong. Even though they had different ideas about how to fix this problem, they both knew that something needed to be done to help those who were being left behind. They saw that people were being treated badly and wanted to change this. Gandhi and Ambedkar's views on this issue show that they had some similarities, even if they didn't always agree on everything. They both wanted to make things fairer for everyone, especially those who were being treated unfairly. This is an important area where they found some common ground, despite their other differences. One major thing that Gandhi and Ambedkar agreed on was helping the people they called the "Depressed Classes". Gandhi's fight against people being treated as untouchables and Ambedkar's lifelong battle for the rights of those who were oppressed brought a lot of attention to this issue in the country. Both of them, in their own ways, tried to give back dignity and self-respect to communities that were excluded and humiliated. Gandhi thought that the people who were treating others badly needed to change their ways, while Ambedkar wanted to empower the people who were being oppressed. Even though they had different approaches, they both helped make the issue of caste a big part of public conversations. We can see that Gandhi and Ambedkar shared a common view on the need for social change to happen at the same time as political change. For Gandhi, being free from colonial rule wasn't enough if India's own social problems weren't fixed. Ambedkar felt the same way, saying that having a democratic government wasn't enough if people weren't equal socially and economically. So, both leaders didn't think that just being free from political rule would fix the big problems in Indian society. They wanted to see real change that would make people's lives better. This shows that they both believed in making society better, not just changing the government. Furthermore, both Gandhi and Ambedkar, despite their differences, played crucial roles in shaping the ethical and institutional foundations of modern India. Their interventions influenced public opinion, legislative developments, and constitutional principles aimed at securing justice and equality. So, even though they took very different paths, they both cared deeply about people being treated with respect and creating a better society, which is a key area where their ideas come together, even if it's not always obvious.

Conclusion- Even today, Gandhi and Ambedkar's ideas refuse to fade away. The caste question still hangs heavy over India—sometimes hidden, sometimes glaringly obvious. Despite laws and constitutional promises, people still run into discrimination just because of their caste. Social relationships, access to jobs or education, and a sense of exclusion—these issues haven't disappeared. So, the conversations both Gandhi and Ambedkar started are far from over. Gandhi's take on the problem leans hard on inner transformation. He put a lot of faith in the power of conscience—he believed that if individuals learned to see each other as equals, real change could take root. Sure, laws are important, but he kept saying that rules alone can't wipe out prejudice; people have to actually want to change. Even today, as you watch casual caste biases playing out over dinner tables or in neighborhood gossip, you get why Gandhi focused so much on reshaping hearts and minds. His belief in dignity and shared humanity still offers a powerful way to push for unity in India's patchwork of communities. But that's only part of the story. Ambedkar picked up the fight from a different angle altogether.

He didn't just ask people to be nice—he wanted the system itself torn down and rebuilt. For Ambedkar, equality wasn't just about feelings or attitudes; it needed hard rules and real protections. Reservations, anti-discrimination laws, civil rights—these weren't theoretical concepts for him, they were necessary shields for those kept at the margins. Today, as debates over fair access to education and politics rumble on, you can see Ambedkar's stamp everywhere. He made it clear: justice isn't just about changing minds, it's about changing the machinery of society. What makes their legacy so relevant today is how their visions connect—and clash. Gandhi spotlights the ethical relationships that hold society together, the need for empathy and understanding. Ambedkar insists on tearing down the actual barriers that lock people out. And while their methods—one moral, one institutional—were



different, you can't really solve the caste problem with just one approach. India's experience keeps proving that you need both: the urge to treat each other better, and systems built to guarantee real fairness. Bringing it all together, Gandhi and Ambedkar charted two different paths for changing India, but those paths often run side by side. Gandhi's reformer spirit wanted people to see each other as family; Ambedkar wanted the laws and power structures rewritten so everyone belonged. Their arguments weren't just history lessons. They keep showing up in today's debates, reminding us that fighting caste isn't a chapter to close, it's ongoing. If anything, a close look at their work shows you can't lean entirely on moral reform or legal change alone. Tackling caste needs both: a shift in how people think, plus hard-won institutions that back up those changes. In the end, Gandhi and Ambedkar matter not just for how they disagreed, but for how both can still help India face its stubborn inequalities head-on.

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Architecture of Delhi sultanate: Slave and Khilji dynasties.

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Abstract: *The architecture of the Delhi Sultanate marks a crucial phase in the formation and consolidation of Indo-Islamic architectural traditions in North India. This paper examines the architectural contributions of the Slave (Mamluk) and Khilji dynasties, with particular attention to how early Islamic rulers employed monumental construction as a means of asserting political authority, religious legitimacy, and imperial presence within a newly conquered socio-cultural landscape. Beginning with Qutb-ud-Din Aibak, the construction of mosques, minarets, tombs, and gateways assumed a central role in expressing sovereignty and embedding Islamic power within the urban fabric of North India. Through a comparative analysis of key monuments—such as the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, Qutub Minar, Iltutmish's Tomb, and the Alai Darwaza—this study explores structural innovations, material usage, spatial organization, and decorative strategies adopted during this formative period. The Slave dynasty relied heavily on indigenous construction techniques and the reuse of architectural spolia from pre-existing structures, adapting them into Islamic architectural forms while negotiating restrictions on figural representation. This process of adaptation, transformation, and selective continuity is especially evident in early Sultanate monuments, where local craftsmanship and Islamic expertise intersected. Under Alauddin Khilji, architectural practice witnessed significant technical refinement, particularly through the systematic use of true arches and domes, marking a departure from earlier trabeated traditions and signalling increased structural confidence and imperial ambition. Drawing upon architectural remains, epigraphic evidence, and secondary scholarship, this paper highlights both continuity and transformation in architectural traditions across the two dynasties. It argues that the architectural experiments undertaken during the Slave and Khilji periods not only articulated political power and religious ideology but also established enduring architectural precedents that profoundly shaped later Sultanate and Mughal architecture..*

Key Word : Delhi sultanate, Indo-Islamic architecture, Slave dynasty, Khilji dynasty

Introduction- The Delhi Sultanate was established by Qutb al-Din Aibak in 1206, following the death of his master, Muhammad of Ghor, on whose behalf Aibak had been governing Delhi. This marked a turning point in the architectural history of the Indian subcontinent, particularly in the northern regions, as it transformed the earlier socio-political order and ushered in a new political and cultural milieu that left a lasting imprint on architectural development.

The architecture of the Delhi Sultanate not only represented political authority but also articulated new religious, aesthetic, and technical ideals within the Indian context. It reflects a process of negotiation, adaptation, and assimilation across cultural boundaries. Historians such as Percy Brown have described the Sultanate period as the beginning of Indo-Islamic architecture, emphasizing it as a gradual amalgamation of Islamic structural techniques and indigenous craftsmanship. Similarly, Satish Chandra has argued that political consolidation under the Sultanate acted as a catalyst for the development of monumental architecture, particularly in Delhi as the imperial capital.¹ In contrast, George Michell contends that this architectural tradition was not simply imposed upon the local population but rather emerged from intercultural exchanges that characterized the empire, as evidenced by the use of local materials, motifs, and craft traditions. Monuments such as the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque and the Qutub Minar, constructed during the early Sultanate period under the Slave (Mamluk) dynasty, exemplify these dynamics. They demonstrate two key tendencies: experimentation in construction techniques and the use of spolia—materials reused from earlier Hindu and Jain temples. In these examples, the reuse of spolia can be interpreted not merely as an act of destruction



but as part of a broader process of cultural transformation and symbolic appropriation, reflecting both political assertion and the emergence of a new architectural idiom.

Architecture during the Khilji period, especially under Alauddin Khilji (r. 1296–1316 CE), witnessed a marked advancement in both structural sophistication and artistic refinement. One of the earliest and most significant examples of this development is the Alai Darwaza, constructed under his patronage. This monument is among the first in India to consistently employ the true arch and true dome, reflecting strong influences from Persian and Central Asian architectural traditions. Many of the technical innovations introduced during the Sultanate period proved fundamental to the later development of Mughal architecture. More broadly, the architecture of the Delhi Sultanate represents a phase of active experimentation, characterized by the adaptation of local building practices and their integration with established Islamic architectural concepts. Furthermore, an analysis of this period allows for a deeper understanding of how architecture functioned as a medium for the expression of political authority and cultural identity. It served not only as a tool for consolidating power but also as a means of articulating artistic innovation within the evolving context of South Asian society.

Methodology: The fieldwork for this study was conducted between 12th and 18th February 2026 at the Qutub Minar complex, including the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque. During this period, systematic on-site observations were carried out to document architectural features and patterns of visitor engagement. Primary data were collected through direct observation, including recording visitor numbers at different times of the day (morning to evening), visual documentation through photography, and detailed examination of architectural elements from multiple vantage points. Particular attention was given to structural features, decorative elements, and spatial organization of the mosque and minar. Secondary data were obtained

from existing scholarly literature, including books, journal articles, and prior research on Delhi Sultanate architecture. These sources were used to contextualize and support the field observations. The study thus adopts a combined methodological approach, integrating both primary field-based observations and secondary textual analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the site.

1 Establishment of Delhi Sultanate- The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate at the beginning of the thirteenth century marks a significant turning point in the political and cultural history of northern India. The Sultanate was closely linked to the Ghurid conquests led by Mu'izz al-Din Muhammad Ghuri, who brought large parts of northern India under his control and laid the foundation for sustained Turkish expansion in the region, particularly after his victory over Prithviraj Chauhan at the Second Battle of Tarain in 1192 CE. Historians such as Satish Chandra and K. A. Nizami has emphasized conquest as a major factor in the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. However, it was equally a product of consolidation under Qutb-ud-din Aibak, who emerged as the first Sultan of Delhi and the founder of the Slave (Mamluk) dynasty. Aibak had served as Ghuri's loyal slave and military general until the latter's death in 1206. According to Irfan Habib, the early Sultanate represented the transplantation of a Central Asian military-administrative system into the Indian milieu. This is particularly evident in the iqta system, which restructured patterns of revenue assignment and land control. Habib further argues that the foundation of the Sultanate must be situated within the broader context of Islamic state formation, wherein political legitimacy was articulated through practices such as the khutba (Friday sermon) and the minting of coins in the name of the sovereign. Thus, the Delhi Sultanate should not be viewed merely as a regime change. Rather, it represented the emergence of a new political order characterized by centralized military authority, a Persianized court culture, and a complex interaction with pre-existing subcontinental traditions. These developments, in turn, had a profound influence on the architectural and cultural expressions of the Slave and Khilji dynasties.

1.1 Architecture of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque: The Qutb complex comprises numerous architectural monuments constructed by rulers belonging to different dynasties. The earliest construction activity within this complex was undertaken by Qutb-ud-din Aibak, who built the



Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque (meaning “Might of Islam”). Inscriptions found within the mosque and the complex refer to it as a jami masjid (congregational mosque), indicating its primary function as a space for the Friday noon prayer (Figure 1). As a congregational mosque, it also served an important socio-political function: it acted as a site of assembly where communication among people could take place, thereby reinforcing the authority of the newly established ruling power. The first phase of this mosque, constructed under Aibak, is particularly notable for its extensive reuse of materials (spolia) from earlier Hindu and Jain temples. Architectural elements such as pillars, floral motifs, bells and chains (Figure 2), as well as sculptural fragments including the bodies of Hindu deities (Figure 3), were incorporated into the structure. Floral motifs, which were commonly used in pre-Islamic Indian architecture, were retained and adapted within the new context. Many of the pillars, brought from dismantled temples, still display anthropomorphic figures such as Ganesha, Krishna, and Jain Tirthankaras; however, their faces and noses were often defaced, while the rest of the sculptural forms remain visible.

Other ornamental details, such as jewellery and drapery on the sculptural figures, remain clearly visible despite the defacement of faces. The mosque originally featured a screen of five arches (maqṣūra), with the central arch rising to approximately 48 feet in height and about 21 feet in width, while the four flanking arches were comparatively smaller, each measuring around 28 feet in height. Qur’anic verses were engraved in relief using both Kufic and Naskh scripts, reflecting broader Iranian epigraphic conventions adapted within the Indian context. The mosque was organized around a central open courtyard, enclosed on three sides by cloistered colonnades, while the prayer hall occupied the western side. Each side was marked by a prominent central arched entrance (Asher, 2017). The eastern and northern sides of the mosque contain significant Qur’anic inscriptions in Naskh script. The eastern entrance, in particular, includes verses that distinguish between non-Muslims outside the mosque and the Muslim community within, thereby reinforcing both religious identity and spatial demarcation. The southern arch of Qutb-ud-din Aibak’s original mosque emphasizes themes of faith and devotion. The large central arch, situated near the Iron Pillar of Delhi, was especially monumental and symbolically glorified the space as a site of worship (Welch, 2002). Furthermore, the construction of the mosque relied heavily on local craftsmen, whose skills and established artistic traditions played a crucial role in shaping its architectural form. This collaboration further underscores the syncretic and adaptive nature of early Sultanate architecture.

1.2 Qutub Minar: The Qutub Minar was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993. Standing at a height of approximately 72.5 meters, it is one of the tallest minarets in the world. The structure was constructed primarily using red sandstone, with later additions incorporating white marble. A comparable architectural example can be found in Afghanistan, known as the Minaret of Jam. The design and architectural features of this minaret—particularly its multi-storeyed composition and intricate inscriptional work—are believed to have influenced the construction of the Qutub Minar. The foundation of the minaret was laid in 1199 CE by Qutb al-Din Aibak, who completed the base and the first storey. Subsequent storeys were added by his successors. The third storey of the tower was constructed using a combination of grey and rich red sandstone.

The introduction of grey stone is generally associated with the period of Iltutmish, as it is not observed in the earlier phase of construction under Qutb al-Din Aibak. The two uppermost storeys are primarily composed of red sandstone interspersed with marble. The use of marble in the minaret is attributed to the renovations carried out during the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq. According to Sunil Kumar (2010), the first storey of the Qutub Minar contains six distinct inscriptional bands. Each band features verses from the Qur’an, rendered in varying thematic contexts. The majority of these inscriptions are executed in the Naskh script and consist of Qur’anic quotations as well as historical references. For instance, the lower band of the second storey includes the inscription “Abu’l Muzaffar Iltutmish al-Sultan,” while the upper band contains Qur’anic verses. These inscriptions not only invoke divine guidance but also articulate vivid imagery of paradise promised to the faithful, thereby



reinforcing the ideological and symbolic significance of the monument. In addition, the minar contains short Nāgarī inscriptions. Their presence has led some scholars to suggest the incorporation of local artistic traditions, and in earlier interpretations, even to speculate about a possible pre-Islamic or Hindu association of the site. However, such claims remain debated and should be approached with caution within the broader historiographical context. During the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq, the fourth storey was damaged by lightning. He subsequently undertook repairs, rebuilding the damaged section with white marble and adding the fifth storey, thereby giving the minar much of its present form.

1.3 Tomb of Iltutmish: The tomb of Iltutmish, commissioned by Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 1211–1236) for himself in 1235 CE, is a square structure measuring approximately 13×13 metres in plan. The building rises to about 9 metres in its present condition (Figure 2). Its walls, nearly 2 metres thick, are constructed of light brown sandstone, reflecting both structural solidity and aesthetic refinement. Scholars have identified evidence suggesting a two-part structural conception: the extant forecourt (sometimes described as a jagamohana) and a now-lost superstructure, often interpreted as a shikhara or deul, of which only the foundational remains survive. The superstructure appears to have collapsed sometime after the sixteenth century, possibly due to foundational weaknesses or seismic activity (Figure 7). While there remains some debate as to whether the structure was ever fully completed, there is broad scholarly consensus that it deteriorated gradually over time rather than collapsing in a single event. A notable architectural feature of the tomb is the use of squinch arches—devices employed to transition from a square chamber to a circular or polygonal base capable of supporting a dome. The incorporation of squinches distinguishes the tomb within the corpus of early Indo-Islamic architecture, demonstrating an important stage in the adaptation of West Asian architectural techniques to the Indian context. These structural elements not only fulfill an engineering function but also contribute to the aesthetic articulation of the interior space. Along the western wall of the tomb, one can observe the use of multifoil arches—an architectural feature more commonly associated with mosque construction—which have been incorporated here within a funerary context (Figure 8).

2 Alai Darwaza- The Alai Darwaza is located at the south-western corner of the extension to the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque originally associated with Iltutmish. It was constructed in 1311 CE under the patronage of Alauddin Khilji. The ruler had envisioned the construction of four monumental gateways—one on the north, two on the east, and one on the south—but only the southern gateway was completed. This surviving structure came to be known as the Alai Darwaza (Figure 9). The monument exemplifies the remarkable craftsmanship of both Turkish and indigenous artisans. Architecturally, it is a square structure measuring approximately 10.5 metres on each internal side, with walls about 3.4 metres thick. The gateway is faced with red sandstone and white marble, and both its interior and exterior surfaces are richly decorated with inscriptions.

The inscriptions display a variety of religious themes. The southern wall emphasizes moral reciprocity—the idea that virtuous actions lead to reward, while wrongdoing invites divine punishment. It also juxtaposes themes relating to believers and non-believers. The eastern façade highlights themes of pilgrimage, the benefits of prayer, and engagement with non-believers, while the western wall focuses on devotion to God. In addition, one of the exterior walls includes a well-known Hadith. Inside the Alai Darwaza, the inscriptional programme begins on the northern wall, which opens into the mosque, and continues across the western, southern, and eastern walls (Figure 10A, B). Two prominent Qur’anic passages dominate the decorative scheme: nine verses from Chapter 48 encircle the upper sections of the walls, while twelve verses from Chapter 17 run along the lower registers.

The dome, rising to a height of approximately 47 feet, is regarded as the first successful true dome constructed in India, marking a significant advancement over earlier experimental forms. The overall proportions and visual harmony of the structure are notably refined. Its recessed arches, often in an elegant horseshoe form, support a simple yet effective spherical dome above the square



chamber. At the transitional zones between the walls and the dome, a series of squinches—composed of pointed arches recessed one within another—are employed in the upper corners. These not only facilitate the structural transition from square to circular form but also enhance the aesthetic sophistication.

The structure employs a sophisticated system of transition, whereby the square base is transformed into an octagon and subsequently into the circular form of the dome. This transition is achieved through an interlocking sixteen-sided zone, created by the use of brackets at each angle of the octagon. Through the application of complex geometric principles, the load of the dome is efficiently distributed—from the circular dome to the sixteen-sided transitional shaft, then to the octagonal base, and finally onto the four walls of the square chamber. The main structure of the Alai Darwaza consists of a single hall measuring approximately 35.5 feet internally and 56.5 feet externally. Perforated lattice window screens (jali) are set within recessed openings on either side of the entrance, as well as in the arched windows flanking the main entrances on the south, east, and west façades of the gateway. These screens are crafted from finely worked marble and red sandstone, featuring intricate interwoven floral tendrils, geometric patterns (including hexagonal and star-shaped designs), and repeating star motifs. Functionally, the jali screens facilitate ventilation and regulate light within the interior space, while simultaneously serving as important decorative elements that enhance the aesthetic appeal of the monument (Figure 11).

2.1 Alai Madrasa: The madrasa was constructed by Alauddin Khilji around 1315 CE. It is located to the south-west of the Qutub Minar and the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque. The structure is laid out in an L-shaped plan and is attached to the tomb of Alauddin Khilji (Figure 12). The madrasa functioned primarily as a centre for Islamic learning, where subjects such as the Qur'an, astronomy, the four traditions of Hadith, and mathematics were taught. However, according to references in malfuzat (contemporary anecdotal literature), the madrasa also served as a resting place for pilgrims, who used the space for temporary accommodation. Architecturally, the madrasa is arranged in an L-shape around a quadrangular courtyard, which was originally accessed through a gateway on the northern side; only the remains of this gateway survive today. The western wing of the madrasa comprises seven small rooms and two domed chambers (Figure 13). Beneath these are high, corbelled arched openings that contribute to the structural and visual character of the building. The domes of these chambers are supported by pendentives, marking one of the earliest known uses of this architectural device in India. This reflects an important stage in the development of Indo-Islamic architecture, where new structural techniques were being introduced and adapted.

Due to the limited availability of detailed research and surviving evidence, our understanding of the madrasa remains incomplete, leaving several aspects of its function and architectural evolution open to further scholarly investigation, as much of the monument was destroyed over a period of time.

2.2 Alai Minar: Alauddin Khilji envisioned the construction of a monumental tower, intended to be twice the height of the Qutub Minar. This ambitious project, known as the Alai Minar, was never completed. While the original plan is believed to have aimed at a height of nearly 500 feet, only the first storey—approximately 25 metres (about 87 feet) high—was constructed. The surviving structure consists primarily of a massive rubble masonry core, with walls measuring about 5.8 metres in thickness. The design includes a central core and appears to have incorporated ramps rather than conventional staircases. Windows were placed at regular intervals along the structure, likely to facilitate light and ventilation along the gradual ascent of the ramp (Figure 14).

Conclusion- The architectural foundations of the Slave (Mamluk) and Khilji periods represent the formative phase of Indo-Islamic architecture in India. This development should not be understood as a simple evolution of Persian or Central Asian forms; rather, it reflects a dialectical relationship between Islamic architectural idioms and pre-existing Indian building traditions. The Slave dynasty (1206–1290), under rulers such as Qutb al-Din Aibak and Iltutmish, played a crucial role in shaping the early architectural vocabulary of the Delhi Sultanate. As noted by Percy Brown, early monuments such as the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque and the Qutub Minar represent a transitional



phase, wherein new Islamic spatial concepts were realized through materials often derived from spolia—reused elements from earlier temple structures. This phase is characterized by the continued use of indigenous construction techniques, including the trabeate system, corbelled arches, and intricately carved pillars, all of which reflect local craftsmanship. At the same time, Islamic architectural elements such as the true arch and dome were gradually introduced. For Brown, this period marks one of structural experimentation, during which both aesthetic and technological adaptations were still evolving.

The Qutb complex may also be understood as a site for the consolidation of political power and the assertion of an Islamic imperial identity. However, historians such as Catherine B. Asher and George Michell emphasize that its construction cannot be reduced to the mere imitation of foreign models. Rather, they highlight the sophisticated use of arabesque and geometric ornamentation, along with Iranian-inspired decorative forms, particularly evident in monuments such as the tomb of Iltutmish. These elements reflect a creative synthesis rather than simple replication. The Khilji dynasty (1290–1320), especially under Alauddin Khilji, represents a pivotal stage in the evolution of Sultanate architecture. If the Slave (Mamluk) period was marked by experimentation, the Khilji phase appears more assured and refined in its architectural expression. This development is most clearly exemplified in the Alai Darwaza (1311 CE), often cited by scholars such as Asher as one of the earliest successful examples of the true arch and true dome in India.

The increasing use of the true arch and dome, along with red sandstone inlaid with white marble, and a heightened emphasis on proportion and intricate calligraphy, reflects both technical mastery and a clearer articulation of architectural principles. At the same time, architecture during this period also functioned as a medium of imperial expression. This is evident in the enlarged scale of Alauddin Khilji's building projects, including the ambitious—though unfinished—Alai Minar, which, as noted by Sunil Kumar, conveys an architecture of centralized authority and conquest. From a broader historiographical perspective, the architecture of the Slave and Khilji periods challenges simplistic binaries such as “foreign” versus “indigenous.” Instead, it reveals a dynamic process of cultural interaction and adaptation. Ebba Koch argues that early Sultanate architecture should be understood as a form of cross-cultural exchange, in which local craftsmen interpreted and translated Islamic architectural forms through their own traditions of craftsmanship. The result was not a mere replication of external models, but the emergence of a distinct architectural idiom, later developed further under the Tughlaqs and ultimately refined in Mughal architecture. In conclusion, the architectural traditions of the Slave and Khilji periods constitute the formative phase of Indo-Islamic architecture in India.

List of Figures



(Figure1: Qibla screen of quwwat-ul-Islam mosque)



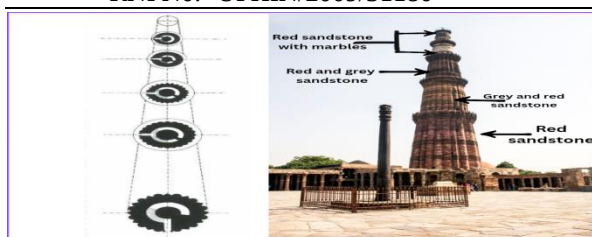
(Figure3: idols of Hindu god Ganesha dancing goddess and tirthankaras)



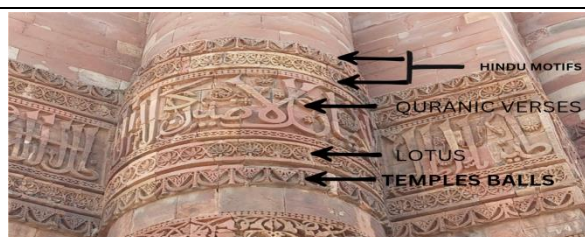
(Figure2: ornaments such as a floral motifs, bells, chains)



(Figure4: minaret of Jam, Afghanistan and Qutub Minar, Delhi)



(Figure5: Structure of the minaret and materials were used)



(Figure6:) First band of Architecture with ornaments



(Figure7: South entrance exterior wall and interior walls)



(Figure8: Mehrib and ornaments such as kalasha)



(Figure9: Alai darwaza)



(Figure10A: Southern entrance and northern entrance)



(Figure10B: Western entrance and eastern entrance)



(Figure11: Latticework window on the both sides interior and exterior walls with Quranic inscriptions)



(Figure12: Tomb of Alauddin Khilji as a central chamber)



(Figure13: northwest rooms of Alai madrasa)



(Figure14: Unfinished Alai Minar)



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USA vs BRICS: Cooperation and Conflict within Strategic Geography and the Emerging Multipolar Global Order

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Abstract: *From the late twentieth century onwards, changes in global power did not happen suddenly but unfolded over a longer period of time. Instead of one country rising sharply above others, influence has gradually spread across several states. The relationship between the United States and the BRICS countries, from before 2000 up to 2025, reflects deeper structural shifts in the global system. These developments can be understood more clearly through data trends, maps, and comparative indicators. At the same time, the United States continues to hold a strong position in military strength, financial networks, and major global institutions. Meanwhile, BRICS countries now account for a larger share of global output, especially when measured in purchasing power, than the G7 combined. This change has reshaped global influence, but it has not completely replaced earlier power arrangements. Older systems still continue to function alongside newer and emerging ones. As a result, the present system reflects a mix of cooperation as well as competition. Different alliances, competing standards, and parallel networks now exist at the same time, without any single framework fully controlling the system. India's role in this changing environment shows how shifts in power influence its economy, foreign policy decisions, and broader global position. In today's world, the global order depends less on fixed alliances and more on flexible arrangements, where economic and strategic ties help limit conflict even though geography still shapes competition.*

Key Word : global power, USA vs BRICS, Geograph, foreign policy, G7 countries

Introduction- In the early 2000s, the global system seemed to be dominated by the USA.¹ Its economy, military, and global institutions were all in line. However, at the same time, subtle structural changes in global influence were already underway. The rapidly growing countries, called the BRICS in broad terms, started to increasingly participate in global production, trade works, and capital movements.² By 2020, their combined economic influence surpassed one-third of global output, measured in real purchasing power, not just nominal GDP, and surpassed the established G7 countries. This change is not just about numbers; power is now being exercised through different means, which are hidden in supply chains, regional arrangements, and cyber transactions, far removed from flags planted on land or ships at sea.³

The impacts of changing power are experienced across nations, not just through rankings. When threats are widespread, banking systems break, climates get hotter, treaties stretch across maps,

The impacts of changing power are experienced across nations, not just through rankings. When threats are widespread, banking systems break, climates get hotter, treaties stretch across maps, but cooperation remains unabated amidst these challenges. Yet, the race for technology and infrastructure has increased. Geographic areas like seas between India and the Pacific dots, hubs of the desert in West Asia, areas across Africa have tangles of cash flow, rule fights, and earth dug up. Only one country has different movement, and that is India, which works smartly by allying with BRICS friends while locked tight with the U.S. and EU, demonstrating the tangled paths that emerge when no singular peak exists, aside from an alliance and dependence on no country.

Early Seeds of Change Before 2000: Just before the late nineties, the power balance of the world changed dramatically in favor of one country – the United States of America. Almost one-third of the total products and services produced worldwide were from this country. The international trade was dominated by the US dollar. Almost 70% of the total reserves were held in US dollars. It dominated the international standards by controlling organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO.⁴ With the boundaries between countries becoming blurred, the economies were more integrated



than ever before. By 2000, trade had risen to more than \$6 trillion from just \$3.5 trillion in 1990.⁵ This growth did not only strengthen the existing ones; space had been created for others too. In these networks of international trade, other economies gradually entered the international production networks.

At first, China changed its economic strategy, just like it moved forward in global trade. At this point, India released some control over business, starting in 1991, and this caused a move in global flows to new routes.⁶ The U.S. remained the strongest, and changes began to appear gradually, building up over the years. Near the end of the century, familiar patterns stood tall, but whippers began to appear about balance to come. The growth remained constant at six percent after the rules changed in India, and this caused a flow to move forward without any halt. As China became more linked with foreign countries and organizations, space began to appear for New Delhi to move forward, not just in trade, but with more freedom.

Globalization and BRICS Expansion in the Early 2000s: In the early 2000s, money began moving between countries more quickly than at any time before. It was not just increased business links that helped, but machines' contributions to changing production methods played a big part as well. Trade expansion did not creep up steadily, instead it almost tripled between 2008 and \$15 trillion, with little fanfare. What fueled this change? The supply routes, which carried pieces of goods across landmasses like gears, grew steadily each season⁷. At this time, China emerged as a clear player, not through strength, but through its steady pace, changing plants into industrial engines.⁸ A part of its export share grew rapidly, increasing each three months without pause. Each year, its growth remained at ten percent, steady but not loud, always progressing. Over there, India took a different route, exchanging factories for ideas, software, support work, and more. This change added seven or eight percent each year, give or take. The local craving for new things gave it a boost, accompanied by smart minds finally getting space to flourish.

Then imagine, BRICS started to stand out as a reflection of a change in the tides of economics on the continents. Though initially created to describe market trends, this concept represented a growing influence of emerging economies on global growth, not traditional ones.⁹ By the end of the 2000s, their production weighed heavily on global totals, as did trade between them. This represented a change in momentum. However, old powers remained stagnant, not reflecting where true weight was. Power slowly diminished, but American troops overseas kept old sway alive along with financial influence. Emerging powers moved closer, growing influence as old leaders decreased. India progressed through patience, not spurts. Each step was quiet, consistent. Alliances formed beyond traditional Western leaders to emerging groups. This influence expanded because of these connections, reaching quietly across shifting landscapes.

Crisis Changes Institutions Multipolar Power Emerges 2008–2016: Just when the money problems erupted in 2008, weaknesses in the structures of the rich countries became obvious, but at the same time, the new countries moved forward into larger markets.¹⁰ Global trade declined substantially, with one in every nine dollars being erased in 2009, as the stable countries stumbled in the midst of the chaos. Yet, the less stable regions swayed but did not snap, and production began to move forward in the world soon after. In 2015, the purchasing power of the BRICS countries represented about one-fourth of the world's economic production. This represented just how far they had moved forward from previous years.

One change followed another as countries continued to reorganize their approaches to international issues, especially after the G20 emerged as the dominant voice in global economic meetings between the rich and emerging economies.¹¹ Concurrently, BRICS countries have been busy developing their own system, launching the New Development Bank, which seeks to create new avenues for economic development while at the same time eliminating their overreliance on western systems.¹² The process has not been about destroying what has already been established but rather a process of evolution, which allows new systems to co-exist with old ones. Although power was partly secured through its alliance with the United States, as evidenced by the dollar's global dominance and



control of international financial transactions, going it alone has not been easy, especially with the passing of time. This space was filled by India, which has come to attract more focus through its impressive economic performance and consistent participation in global meetings, thus raising its status as a major contributor to global discourse on the management of global systems.

Multipolarity and Changing World Powers 2016–2025: But today, power is not passing through the hands of only one or two countries.⁽¹³⁾ The bloc of BRICS countries had already generated more than a third of global economic activity by 2023, if measured by real purchasing ability, rather than the nominal figures that still favor the older club. This is because emerging economies are only getting harder to ignore. However, developed countries are still at an advantage in financial and technological matters. As for trade, commodities originating from BRICS countries are occupying a larger space, as trade between developing regions is growing steadily, indicating that new connections are emerging.

Now things twist in different ways, economic relations between countries are more knotted, unclear. With tension mounting between America and China, import taxes, export bans, and increased scrutiny of investments are no longer measures; they're instruments of a larger conflict.¹⁴ Computer processors, digital systems, signals, these areas of space are now flashpoints of conflict; they're a reminder that new ideas are shifting the world. With leaders preparing for surprises, trade routes are bending in new ways, sacrificing speed for security.

Where risks spread fast, like changing weather, disease, or shaky finances, cooperation stays around even when there is competition. Not all areas are equally important; the Indo-Pacific region has many ships and soldiers, West Asia has energy supplies, Africa has interest through its minerals and new economic opportunities.¹⁵ India has power as well as strain, with an economy of about 3.5 trillion dollars, ranking high globally, but depending on foreign oil for most of its demand indicates cracks during international disturbances. Yet, an increase in buyers at home, better digital skills, and better international links widen its presence globally.

Strategic Geography Networks Connecting: Money flows to where location is of little consequence to connection. Ships transport nearly all commodities that people trade across the seas; a single logjam causes shockwaves inland. Power is lodged in movement, not control of the land.¹⁶ Price changes start far away, prompted by oil shipments from prosperous shores. Money jumps from shore to shore, carrying markets along for the ride. A logjam anywhere pulls silently on distant workforces and store rooms. Strong connection fosters teamwork; threat passes through those channels too. What connects also reveals.

No place is at peace, cooperation blends with pressure, often within the same borders.¹⁷ While countries press up against one another for domination, they collaborate to arrest decay. This uneasy marriage persists because connection is too entrenched to walk away from. Detachments prompt fresh problems, ones that being alone would never address.¹⁸

India in a world of data and shifting power: A peek at the contemporary world reveals a nation poised on a tightrope, hopes in one hand and restraints in the other. A nation shaped not only by events in its own sphere but also by events in the world beyond its borders. Growth rates average between 6 and 7 percent annually, putting it ahead of many other, larger countries. Because of its constant move forward, others now pay ahead of many other, larger countries.¹⁹ Because of its constant move forward, others now pay heed, and discussions on different continents now increasingly include an Indian viewpoint. The evidence of this is seen in the attendance at international gatherings like the BRICS and G20 summits.²⁰ The relationships between the nation and Western countries, however, reveal a nation in constant flux, capable of moving through different relationships without being bound by any specific form.

Still growing, India's economy is sending mixed signals. With a population of more than a billion four hundred million people, huge population equals huge buying potential, but also puts pressure on roads, rails, and cities. Not confined to traditional methods, online advancements provide businesses with new avenues to pursue. As fuel sources are imported from abroad, tremors felt in



important sectors are global in origin. Trade links with others provide entry, but also put slips into daily routines. Not committed to one side, India likes loose alliances that are as changeable as the wind, keeps options unencumbered. Moving freely becomes a way to avoid heavy external demands. Choices are not based on obligation - but on what is currently working.

Conclusion- The shift in global power before 2000 has been a slow process, rough around the edges, shaped by uneven growth, shifting policies, and control over strategic territory. Washington remains strong but now has to push through tighter races and more complex issues that were missing in earlier eras. Emerging at the same time are the BRICS countries, accumulating power not through surges but through steady climbs in what they produce and trade across borders. What brings them together is not harmony but stretches of harmony stitched together with tensions, pulled by shared needs but opposing interests. These are deep connections, yet they are still ones that hold back how freely any individual player can act on their own.

Nowhere is change more evident than in how India deals with increasing pressures without compromising its goals in business and politics. What if we were to look at our current era not as a broken system falling apart, but as many forces learning to move in rhythm – pulling one step forward, holding still another step forward, responding every step of the way – as new patterns of global balance begin to emerge.

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Abstract: *Medieval India witnessed significant cultural convergence, resulting in the development of syncretic traditions, particularly during the Mughal period. This process was also visible in the field of medicine, where multiple medical systems coexisted, interacted, and adapted to new social and political contexts. Among these, Ayurveda and Unani medicine occupied prominent positions. Ayurveda, rooted in long-standing indigenous traditions and based on the balance of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, existed alongside Unani medicine, which entered the subcontinent through Persian and Central Asian influences and was structured around the theory of four humors—Dam, Balgham, Safra, and Sauda. Despite differences in their theoretical foundations, both systems emphasized maintaining bodily equilibrium through natural remedies, regulated diet, lifestyle practices, and preventive care. During the Mughal era, Unani medicine received substantial imperial patronage, with court physicians, royal hospitals, and the translation of medical texts from Arabic and Sanskrit contributing to its growing prestige, particularly in urban and courtly settings. At the same time, Ayurveda continued to be widely practiced by Vaidyas among the general population, especially in rural regions, religious institutions, and local healing networks. Importantly, this period also witnessed the knowledge exchange between practitioners of the two medical traditions. Shared use of medicinal plants, overlapping therapeutic techniques, and the circulation of medical knowledge through translations and commentaries facilitated interaction rather than rigid separation. Drawing on contemporary sources and secondary scholarship, this study argues that the relationship between Ayurveda and Unani medicine in medieval India was shaped not only by epistemological exchange but also by structures of political patronage, social hierarchy, and sustained cultural contact under Mughal rule.*

Key Word Unani Medicine, Ayurveda, Medieval India, Medical Pluralism, Socio-cultural Interaction

Introduction¹- Medical practices in India have developed over centuries into diverse systems of healing that coexist and interact with one another. Unlike many regions where a single dominant medical tradition emerged, India has historically accommodated multiple systems simultaneously. Among these, Ayurveda and Unani medicine have played a significant role in shaping the healthcare landscape.

Ayurveda, one of the oldest medical traditions, is rooted in ancient Indian knowledge systems and emphasizes maintaining balance between the three doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—for overall well-being (Sharma, Charaka Samhita). It focuses not only on curing disease but also on prevention through lifestyle regulation, diet, and harmony between body and mind.

Unani medicine, on the other hand, originated from ancient Greek medical thought and was later developed by Arab and Persian scholars before being introduced to India during the medieval period. It is based on the theory of four humors²—Dam, Balgham, Safra, and Sauda—and similarly stresses balance, natural remedies, and environmental influences on health.

The coexistence of these systems in medieval India created opportunities for interaction and exchange. Rather than replacing Ayurveda, Unani medicine integrated into existing structures, particularly in urban and courtly settings under state patronage. At the societal level, people adopted a pragmatic approach, choosing treatments based on accessibility, affordability, and effectiveness. This flexible attitude enabled both systems to function simultaneously with minimal conflict.

Historical Background And Development-The development of Ayurveda and Unani medicine must be understood within the broader context of cultural exchange and intellectual evolution. Ayurveda has ancient origins and is deeply embedded in Indian philosophical and medical



traditions. Classical texts such as the Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita outline its theoretical foundations, diagnostic methods, and therapeutic practices. The system emphasizes balance among bodily elements and integrates physical, mental, and environmental aspects of health.

Over time, Ayurveda evolved into a structured and widely practiced system, particularly in rural India where local practitioners relied on indigenous knowledge and medicinal plants. Its continuity was ensured through textual traditions as well as oral transmission across generations.

Unani medicine followed a different trajectory. Rooted in Greek medicine and further developed in the Islamic world, it was introduced into India during the medieval period through Persian and Central Asian influences. With the support of ruling elites, especially during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods, Unani gained prominence in urban centers. The establishment of hospitals and patronage of Hakims strengthened its institutional presence.

Despite differences in origin and theory, both systems shared similarities in their reliance on natural remedies, dietary regulation, and the concept of bodily balance. Their coexistence in India did not lead to immediate integration but allowed gradual interaction through practice, observation, and limited knowledge exchange.

Interaction During Medieval India-The medieval period in India is widely recognized as an era of significant cultural interaction, during which diverse traditions, ideas, and practices came into closer contact. This environment also shaped the medical field, where Ayurveda and Unani medicine coexisted within the same social framework. Rather than direct conflict, their relationship was characterized by gradual interaction and functional coexistence.

Unani medicine was introduced to India primarily through scholars, physicians, and administrators from Persia and Central Asia. With the patronage of ruling elites, especially during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods, it gained prominence in urban centers and royal courts. Medical institutions and learning centers were established, contributing to its structured development and wider acceptance among certain sections of society. Practitioners known as Hakims played a crucial role in disseminating Unani knowledge and practices.

At the same time, Ayurveda continued to remain deeply rooted in local communities. It retained its importance particularly in rural areas, where Vaidyas provided healthcare based on traditional knowledge passed down through generations. Its accessibility, cultural familiarity, and reliance on locally available resources ensured its continued relevance despite the growing presence of Unani medicine.

The interaction between these two systems was largely informal and evolved through everyday encounters rather than organized efforts. Practitioners occasionally observed each other's methods and adopted practices that appeared effective. For instance, certain medicinal plants commonly used in Ayurveda were gradually incorporated into Unani³ treatments after their therapeutic value became evident. Similarly, shared emphasis on maintaining bodily balance and regulating diet and lifestyle created conceptual parallels that facilitated mutual understanding.

Translation of medical texts also contributed to this exchange of knowledge. Although not widespread or systematic, the translation of works between languages such as Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic enabled the circulation of medical ideas across cultural boundaries. This process did not result in full integration but enhanced awareness and selective adaptation of concepts.

It is also important to note that the spatial distribution of these systems influenced the nature of their interaction. While Unani medicine was more prominent in urban and courtly settings, Ayurveda remained dominant in rural and community-based contexts. This relative separation reduced direct competition and allowed both traditions to develop independently while still maintaining a degree of interaction.

Overall, the medieval period created conditions that supported coexistence and limited exchange between Ayurveda and Unani medicine. Although their interaction remained subtle and largely unstructured, it contributed to the emergence of a more diverse and adaptable medical culture in India.



Role Of Society- Conceptual similarity made it easier. The role of society was central to the development and interaction of Ayurveda and Unani medicine in medieval India. The coexistence of these systems was not solely determined by political patronage or scholarly exchange, but also by the attitudes, needs, and practices of the general population. Society acted as a connecting force that allowed both traditions to function simultaneously and, at times, influence one another.

One of the most important aspects of this interaction was the pragmatic approach adopted by people toward healthcare. Individuals were not rigidly bound to a single system of medicine; instead, they chose treatments based on availability, affordability, and perceived effectiveness. In rural areas, where Vaidyas were more accessible, Ayurvedic treatment was commonly preferred. In contrast, urban populations, where Hakims were more prevalent and supported by institutional structures, often relied on Unani medicine. This flexibility reduced potential conflict and enabled both systems to gain widespread acceptance.

Cultural differences between the two traditions did exist, as Ayurveda was closely associated with indigenous Indian practices while Unani was linked to Persian and Islamic intellectual traditions. However, these distinctions did not create significant barriers in everyday life. Health concerns often took precedence over cultural affiliations, leading people to adopt whichever treatment appeared most beneficial. This practical mindset reflects a broader pattern of social inclusivity during the period.

Another significant factor was the mode of transmission of medical knowledge. Knowledge was preserved and disseminated not only through classical texts but also through oral traditions and community-based practices. Vaidyas and Hakims were respected figures who played important roles beyond treatment, offering guidance on diet, lifestyle, and general well-being. The trust placed in these practitioners helped sustain both systems across generations and ensured their continued relevance.

The social structure of medieval India also shaped the distribution of these medical systems. Ayurveda maintained a strong presence in rural areas due to its reliance on locally available herbs and its integration with traditional ways of life. Unani medicine, supported by state patronage and institutional development, became more prominent in urban centers and administrative hubs. This division of spheres allowed both systems to coexist without direct rivalry while still addressing the healthcare needs of different segments of society.

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES⁴-Ayurveda and Unani medicine, despite originating from different intellectual traditions, share certain fundamental similarities in their understanding of health and disease. Both systems are based on the principle that maintaining internal balance is essential for well-being. In Ayurveda, this balance is explained through the equilibrium of the three doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—while in Unani medicine it is understood through the harmony of the four humors—Dam, Balgham, Safra, and Sauda.

The diagnostic approaches in both systems rely primarily on careful observation and clinical experience rather than advanced technological tools. Practitioners assess a patient's condition through methods such as pulse examination, physical inspection, and evaluation of lifestyle and behavioral patterns. This holistic approach enables physicians to understand not only the symptoms but also the underlying causes of illness.

Treatment in both traditions emphasizes natural and holistic methods. Ayurveda employs herbal medicines, detoxification techniques such as Panchakarma, and lifestyle modifications aimed at restoring balance within the body (Murthy). Similarly, Unani medicine utilizes herbal formulations, dietary regulation, and therapeutic procedures designed to correct humoral imbalance. In both cases, the focus is on addressing the root cause of disease rather than merely alleviating symptoms.

Another important similarity lies in the emphasis on preventive healthcare. Both systems stress the importance of maintaining a proper diet, following daily and seasonal routines, and living in harmony with the environment. This preventive approach reflects a broader understanding of health as a dynamic state influenced by multiple internal and external factors.



Despite these similarities, the two systems retained their distinct theoretical frameworks and methods of practice. There was no formal integration of their principles; instead, each continued to function independently while occasionally adopting practical elements from the other through observation and experience. This limited but meaningful exchange contributed to a more flexible and adaptive healthcare environment.

Impact Of Their Interaction- The interaction between Ayurveda and Unani medicine in medieval India had a notable impact on the development of healthcare practices. Although this interaction was largely informal, it contributed to the emergence of a more flexible and diverse medical environment in which multiple systems could coexist and serve different sections of society.

One of the most significant outcomes of this interaction was the expansion of therapeutic options available to patients. The simultaneous presence of both systems allowed individuals to choose treatments according to their needs, accessibility, and personal preferences. This plurality increased the likelihood of effective treatment, as patients were not limited to a single medical tradition but could shift between systems when necessary .

Another important effect was the gradual exchange of practical knowledge, particularly in the use of medicinal plants and natural remedies. Since both Ayurveda and Unani relied heavily on herbal resources, there were instances where knowledge of certain drugs and their applications circulated across traditions. This exchange did not alter the core theoretical structures of either system but influenced their practical applications and broadened the range of available treatments .

The interaction also contributed to a shift in how health and disease were perceived. While the two systems were based on different explanatory models, both emphasized the importance of maintaining internal balance. This conceptual similarity made it easier for people to understand and accept multiple approaches to healing. As a result, a more inclusive and pluralistic understanding of healthcare developed within society .

Furthermore, the coexistence of these systems encouraged adaptability among practitioners. Vaidyas and Hakims, through observation and experience, occasionally incorporated useful techniques from each other's practices. Although such exchanges were neither systematic nor formally documented, they played a role in enhancing the effectiveness of treatments and expanding medical knowledge.

However, it is important to recognize the limitations of this interaction. The absence of formal mechanisms for collaboration and scientific validation restricted the depth of knowledge exchange. Most interactions remained localized and practice-based, without leading to a structured synthesis of the two systems. Additionally, the division between rural (Ayurveda-dominated) and urban (Unani-dominated) spheres limited the extent of direct engagement .

Critical Analysis- The interaction between Ayurveda and Unani medicine in medieval India cannot be understood as either complete integration or total isolation. Instead, it represents a complex process of coexistence marked by selective exchange, practical adaptation, and structural limitations. A critical evaluation of this relationship highlights both its strengths and its constraints within the broader socio-historical context.

One of the most notable strengths of this interaction was the ability of both systems to coexist without significant conflict. In many historical settings, the introduction of a new knowledge system often leads to the decline of existing traditions. However, Ayurveda continued to flourish even after the arrival of Unani medicine, indicating a high degree of social flexibility and cultural accommodation . This suggests that medieval Indian society was capable of sustaining multiple epistemological frameworks simultaneously.

Another important aspect was the emergence of a pluralistic approach to healthcare. People were not rigidly bound to a single system but were open to exploring different forms of treatment based on their effectiveness. This openness facilitated the circulation of medical knowledge and encouraged a broader understanding of health and disease across traditions . Such pluralism contributed to the resilience and adaptability of both systems over time.



At the same time, the interaction remained largely informal and limited in scope. There was no institutional framework or organized effort to systematically integrate the knowledge of the two systems. Most exchanges occurred at the level of individual practitioners through observation and experience rather than through structured collaboration or scholarly synthesis. As a result, many potentially valuable insights may not have been fully developed or documented.

Another limitation was the absence of scientific validation in the modern sense. Both Ayurveda and Unani were based on traditional theories and experiential knowledge, which, although effective in many cases, did not follow standardized methods of testing or verification. This lack of empirical validation restricted the ability to critically compare and integrate their practices within a unified framework.

Additionally, the interaction was shaped by a degree of spatial and social separation. Ayurveda remained dominant in rural areas and among local communities, while Unani medicine was more prevalent in urban centers and courtly environments. This division reduced direct competition but also limited opportunities for deeper engagement and exchange between the two systems.

Despite these constraints, both systems demonstrated considerable adaptability. Unani medicine adjusted to Indian conditions by incorporating local resources, while Ayurveda continued to evolve in response to changing social and cultural dynamics. This adaptability ensured their continued relevance and survival over time.

Conclusion- The exchange between the Unani and Ayurvedic medicine systems in medieval India is an important chapter in the history of traditional healthcare in the country. Even though these two systems have dissimilar ancestries and philosophies, they managed to share the same social milieu without major confrontations. This, in fact, points to the adaptable and inclusive character of the Indian community at that period. Rather than displacing one another, these two methods kept on evolving in their own ways, while at the same time, they were very quietly influencing each other. Society was the most notable factor in this matter. People did not strictly adhere to one system only as they considered factors like availability, affordability, and their own experience when they made their medical choices. This pragmatic stance helped both Unani and Ayurveda to be accepted by various groups of people. This also made it possible for knowledge to cross boundaries, although this communication was not always formal or systematic.

The medieval period was an ideal circumstance for this type of cultural interaction. It was a time when different cultures and traditions were exchanging their values and beliefs. The coexistence of Vaidyas and Hakims in society meant that people were exposed to different healing techniques. This eventually led to the evolution of a complex and versatile healthcare system. The exchange, though it only resulted in partial integration, still contributed to a wider comprehension of health and illness. However, by doing so, it is also okay to admit that the interaction was not without its imperfection. Due to the absence of scientific tools and a collaborative framework, many chances to deepen the exchange may have been missed. Nonetheless, simply the existence of the two systems up to the present day and their lively practice are a testimony to their power and pliability. Nowadays, there is an increasing curiosity about traditional medicines and their place in modern healthcare. The past exchange between Unani and Ayurveda can be likened to teaching coexistence, adaptability, and the necessity of a balanced health approach. Given adequate research and facilities, these systems have the potential to be a significant resource for healthcare in the future..

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Arrival Of Mahatma Gandhi In India; Studying A Historical Process

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Abstract: *Mahatma Gandhi's return to India in January 1915 is widely recognised as a defining moment in the history of the Indian national movement. Yet much of the existing scholarship treats this event as an immediate turning point, paying limited attention to the formative years in which Gandhi gradually shaped his political ideas and practices within the Indian context. This study seeks to examine Gandhi's arrival in India as a historical process rather than a sudden transformation, focusing on how his early experiences, localised struggles, and ethical framework contributed to his emergence as a national leader.*

The primary objective of this research is to analyse the political, social, and ideological conditions that influenced Gandhi's early political practice between 1915 and 1918. It aims to explore how Gandhi adapted the ideas of satyagraha, non-violence, and moral discipline developed in South Africa to the complex realities of colonial India. The study also seeks to assess the significance of his early movements in shaping Gandhian methods and establishing his moral authority among the marginalised groups.

Methodologically, the research adopts a historical-analytical approach based on close reading of primary sources, including Gandhi's writings, speeches, letters, books such as Hind Swaraj, Towards New Education and Panchayat Raj, newspapers like Young Indian and Harijan. are associated with him, and the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. These are supplemented by critical engagement with secondary scholarship, particularly the works of Bipin Chandra and Sekhar Bandyopadhyay. The study also draws upon selected government reports.

The anticipated outcome of this research is a more nuanced understanding of Gandhi's early political role, demonstrating that his leadership was the product of sustained experimentation, adaptation, and engagement with Indian society. By foregrounding this formative phase, the study contributes to a deeper and more balanced interpretation of the origins of Gandhian mass politics

Key Word: Mahatma Gandhi, Indian national movement, Gandhian methods

Introduction- *"I worship God as Truth only. I have not found Him, but I am seeking after Him...as long as I have not realized his Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must meanwhile be my beacon, my shield."*¹

The early twentieth century was a period marked by conflict, imperial control and widespread suffering. It was in this setting that Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a political leader whose approach differed in important ways from prevailing forms of politics. At a time when force and coercion were commonly used in political struggles, Gandhi placed emphasis on ethical conduct, moral responsibility and human dignity. As Bipan Chandra points out, Gandhi played a key role in reshaping Indian nationalism by giving it a broader social base and a stronger ethical orientation, thereby influencing both its methods and objectives.

Gandhi often reflected on the kind of legacy he wished to leave behind. His well-known statement, "my life is my message," highlights his belief that ideas gain meaning only when they are put into practice. This is clearly visible in his autobiography, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, where he describes his continuous efforts to align his actions with his beliefs. In this work, he places particular emphasis on self-discipline, honesty and what he saw as moral experimentation.

His ideas did not remain fixed over time. Instead, they developed gradually through reflection and engagement with changing circumstances. As Sekhar Bandyopadhyay notes, Gandhi's politics were closely tied to an ethical outlook that stressed moral change alongside political action. Although



he engaged with intellectual debates, his main concern was how these ideas could be applied in addressing social injustice and everyday problems.

One of Gandhi's most important contributions was the development and use of nonviolent resistance, or satyagraha, as a method of political struggle. Rather than accepting injustice or turning to violence, he proposed a different path based on persuasion, participation and disciplined civil disobedience. This approach challenged colonial authority in India and later influenced movements for justice in other parts of the world. As many historians have noted, Gandhi's leadership marked a shift from limited, elite politics to a wider form of mass participation in the freedom struggle.

Gandhi's speeches and writings, particularly in journals such as *Young India* and *Harijan*, further reflect his consistent commitment to truth (satya) and nonviolence (ahimsa). For him, these were not only moral values but also practical tools for political action. Through them, he tried to promote a political culture based on accountability, restraint and collective responsibility.

Overall, Gandhi's life shows how political action can be shaped by ethical principles. His example suggests that individual integrity, when combined with collective participation, can challenge established systems of power. Even today, in a world facing complex political and moral questions, his ideas continue to remain relevant in discussions on justice and governance.

Early Life and Formative Years- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in 1869 in Porbandar, a coastal town in western India, into a Vaishya (Bania) family associated with administration and trade. His father, Karamchand Gandhi, served as a diwan in a number of princely states, which placed the family within important regional political networks. Gandhi's early upbringing took place in a religiously diverse environment shaped by Vaishnavism as well as Jain influences, particularly through his mother. These influences appear to have played a role in shaping his early ideas about nonviolence, tolerance and ethical conduct.

In many ways, his childhood followed the social norms of the time, including his marriage to Kasturba at a young age. During his adolescence, he went through a phase of experimentation, including trying practices such as meat-eating, which he later reflected upon in his autobiography as a period of moral uncertainty. In 1888, Gandhi travelled to London to study law at the Inner Temple. His time there exposed him not only to Western intellectual traditions but also led him to engage more closely with religious texts such as the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible.²

Historians such as Bipan Chandra and Sekhar Bandyopadhyay have pointed out that these early influences, along with his later experiences in South Africa, were important in shaping Gandhi's political and ethical outlook. In particular, they contributed to the development of his ideas on truth and nonviolence, which later became central to his thought.

Gandhi in South Africa: Gandhi's years in South Africa (1893–1914) can be seen as an important phase in the development of his political and moral ideas. Soon after his arrival, he came into direct contact with the racial discrimination that was deeply embedded in colonial society. A well-known incident took place at Pietermaritzburg, where he was removed from a first-class railway compartment despite holding a valid ticket. Gandhi later described this experience as a turning point in his life. Instead of withdrawing, he began to think in terms of resisting injustice through organised and collective action.

Over time, Gandhi emerged as a leading figure within the Indian community in South Africa. In 1894, he founded the Natal Indian Congress to represent their concerns, particularly against discriminatory laws that restricted voting rights and freedom of movement. As Sekhar Bandyopadhyay suggests, this period marked a shift in Gandhi's role—from a relatively cautious professional to someone more actively involved in political and community-based struggles.

During the Boer War and later conflicts, Gandhi also organised the Indian Ambulance Corps. This reflected his belief in service and humanitarian work, even in situations shaped by violence. At the same time, he began to develop what would later become his most important contribution: satyagraha.



This method of resistance, first clearly articulated in Johannesburg in 1906, was based on truth, moral persuasion and disciplined non-cooperation with unjust laws. It encouraged people to resist without resorting to violence, even if that meant accepting suffering.

As Bipan Chandra has pointed out, these early experiments had a wider impact by introducing new methods of political action that combined mass participation with ethical principles. Gandhi's approach gradually moved beyond petitions and legal appeals towards more direct forms of civil disobedience, showing an increasing confidence in nonviolent resistance as a practical strategy.

In this sense, South Africa can be understood as a kind of testing ground for Gandhi's ideas. It was here that he experimented with different forms of resistance and refined the methods he would later use in India. These experiences played a significant role in shaping his long-term commitment to nonviolence, justice and the ethical dimension of politics.

Return to India and Leadership in the Indian National Movement- Gandhi returned to India in 1915, reportedly at the request of C. F. Andrews and following the advice of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. By this time, he was already known for his work in South Africa as a political organiser. After his return, he was received by leaders of the Indian National Congress and, in the initial phase, remained closely associated with Gokhale.³ Gokhale's moderate and constitutional approach appears to have had an important influence on Gandhi's early political thinking. Rather than entering active politics immediately, Gandhi spent some time observing Indian conditions and trying to understand the social and political situation more closely.

Over time, however, his approach began to take a different direction. He gradually brought together ethical ideas such as satya (truth) and ahimsa (nonviolence) with wider forms of public participation. By around 1920, Gandhi had emerged as a central figure within the Congress and played a leading role in launching the Non-Cooperation Movement. This marked a shift in the nature of the freedom struggle, which now began to involve larger sections of society. The developments of this period eventually led to the Congress's demand for Purna Swaraj (complete independence) in 1930, reflecting a significant change in the direction of Indian nationalism.

Champaran Satyagraha: The Champaran Satyagraha of 1917 gave Gandhi his first real opportunity to apply these ideas in India. In Champaran, peasants were facing serious hardship under what came to be known as the tinkathia system, which required them to grow indigo on a fixed portion of their land. This often left them in a condition of economic distress. Gandhi was invited to the region by Raj Kumar Shukla, and after arriving there, he began to collect information about the situation by speaking directly with the peasants, even though local authorities tried to prevent such activities.

In spite of official resistance, Gandhi chose not to withdraw and instead continued his inquiry, combining it with a method of peaceful protest. His refusal to obey government orders, while still maintaining a nonviolent stance, attracted wider public attention. Eventually, the colonial administration set up an inquiry committee to examine the issue. This led to the Champaran Agrarian Act of 1918, which ended the tinkathia system and provided some relief to the peasants.

The movement is often seen as an important turning point, as it marked Gandhi's emergence as a leader capable of mobilising people at the local level. It also showed, perhaps for the first time in India, that nonviolent resistance could produce tangible political results.

Kheda Satyagraha : In 1918, the district of Kheda in Gujarat faced serious difficulties due to floods and crop failure, which worsened the condition of the peasantry. Even under these circumstances, the colonial government continued to demand land revenue, placing an additional burden on the peasants. Many of them were therefore unable to meet these demands and began to seek some form of relief.

Gandhi became involved in the situation and moved to Nadiad, from where he began organising support for the peasants. Leaders such as Vallabhbhai Patel also played an important role in mobilising people at the local level. The movement was based on the idea of non-cooperation, with



peasants being encouraged to refuse payment of revenue if their crops had failed. This required a certain degree of collective discipline, as they faced the risk of property confiscation.

Alongside this, there were attempts to socially isolate revenue officials, which added pressure on the administration. The struggle continued for several months, during which the government initially remained firm in its position. However, over time, some concessions were made. By mid-1918, the authorities agreed to suspend revenue collection in cases of genuine hardship and also relaxed certain conditions of payment.

Vallabhbhai Patel's role in negotiating with officials was particularly significant, as he helped secure these concessions and strengthened the organisation of the movement. The Kheda Satyagraha thus demonstrated how nonviolent resistance, when supported by collective action, could compel the government to respond to local grievances.⁴

Ahmedabad Satyagraha : In Ahmedabad, Gandhi became involved in a dispute between textile mill workers and the mill owners over issues of wages and working conditions. The workers were facing economic difficulties and demanded an increase in wages, while the employers were unwilling to accept these demands. Gandhi intervened in the conflict and encouraged the workers to organise themselves and adopt a nonviolent approach.

As the dispute continued, Gandhi decided to undertake a fast, which he saw as a way of appealing to the conscience of both sides and maintaining discipline among the workers. His fast drew public attention to the issue and placed moral pressure on the mill owners. At the same time, it helped sustain unity among the workers during the course of the strike.

After a period of negotiation, the mill owners agreed to a settlement that included a wage increase of around 35 percent. This was seen as a significant outcome for the workers.

The Ahmedabad Mill Strike is often regarded as an important example of Gandhi's method of satyagraha in an industrial context. It showed how nonviolent techniques, including fasting, could be used to address labour disputes and bring about negotiated settlements.⁵

Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience: *"Satyagraha is like a Banyan tree with innumerable branches. Civil disobedience is one such branch, satya (truth) and ahimsa (nonviolence) together make the parent trunk from which all innumerable branches shoot out...We must fearlessly spread the doctrine of satya and ahimsa and then, and not till then, shall we be able to undertake mass satyagraha."*⁶

Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movements: In the years following the First World War, Indian politics began to change in noticeable ways, with a greater emphasis on mass participation and growing opposition to colonial rule. Gandhi understood that Hindu-Muslim unity would be important for strengthening the national movement, and it was in this context that he chose to support the Khilafat issue, which had become a matter of concern for many Indian Muslims. The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the weakening of the Turkish Caliph, who was regarded by many as a spiritual authority, led to widespread discontent. Gandhi appears to have seen in this situation an opportunity to bring different communities together in a common political struggle.

By working with leaders such as the Ali brothers, Gandhi linked the Khilafat cause with the broader nationalist movement. For a brief period, this resulted in a degree of Hindu-Muslim cooperation that had not been seen earlier, with joint protests and shared political activity. At the same time, some contemporary thinkers, including Rabindranath Tagore, expressed reservations about connecting Indian nationalism with a religious issue that originated outside India. Even so, the alliance did help to widen the base of the anti-colonial movement, at least temporarily.

Around the same time, Gandhi began to develop the idea of Non-Cooperation more clearly. This was partly based on his earlier argument in *Hind Swaraj* (1909), where he suggested that British rule in India depended on the cooperation of Indians themselves. Events such as the Rowlatt Act of 1919 and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre had a deep impact on public opinion and seem to have convinced Gandhi that continued cooperation with the colonial state could not be justified. He therefore called for a broader movement based on nonviolent resistance.



The Non-Cooperation Movement, launched in 1920, encouraged people to withdraw from colonial institutions by boycotting government schools, law courts and foreign goods, while also promoting swadeshi and national education. The response was significant, with participation from students, peasants, workers and sections of the middle class. This phase also marked the transformation of the Indian National Congress into a more mass-based organisation. The coming together of the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements created a strong, though short-lived, sense of unity against British rule.

However, the movement was not without its limitations. In some places, communal tensions began to reappear, and incidents of violence created challenges for its continuation. The most notable of these was the Chauri Chaura incident in 1922, after which Gandhi decided to suspend the movement. This decision reflected his insistence that political struggle must remain within the bounds of nonviolence.

Gandhi Spinning Yarn- As part of the wider Non-Cooperation Movement, Gandhi also emphasised the idea of swadeshi, encouraging people to boycott foreign goods, especially those imported from Britain. A key aspect of this was the promotion of khadi, or homespun cloth, which came to represent self-reliance as well as resistance to colonial economic control. Gandhi appealed to people across different sections of society to take part in spinning khadi, even if only for a short time each day, as a way of expressing their participation in the movement.

This approach was aimed not only at economic boycott but also at weakening the broader structure of colonial rule. The call for non-cooperation gradually attracted support from various social groups, including students, workers and sections of the middle class. At the same time, the movement also faced repression from the colonial government. Gandhi was arrested on 10 March 1922 and charged with sedition, receiving a prison sentence of six years.

His arrest had an impact on the direction of the movement. In his absence, differences within the Indian National Congress became more visible, particularly over the question of whether to participate in legislative councils. Some leaders favoured council entry, while others continued to support boycott. Meanwhile, developments outside India also affected the situation. The decline of the Khilafat movement, especially after the reforms introduced by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, led to a weakening of the earlier alliance between nationalist and Muslim political groups.

Gandhi was released from prison in February 1924, after serving about two years due to health reasons. His return came at a time when the movement had lost some of its earlier momentum, but his commitment to nonviolent methods remained unchanged and continued to shape the direction of the national struggle.

Salt Satyagraha (Dandi march): On 31 December 1929, the Indian National Congress held its session in Lahore, where the demand for complete independence was formally asserted. The Congress also decided to observe 26 January 1930 as Independence Day, and this call was taken up in different parts of the country. These developments marked a shift in the nationalist movement, preparing the ground for a new phase of political action.

In March 1930, Gandhi launched a fresh campaign of satyagraha, this time focusing on the issue of the salt tax. Salt was an essential commodity, yet its production and sale were tightly controlled by the colonial government. Indians were not allowed to produce their own salt and had to purchase it at a taxed rate, which affected poorer sections of society more severely.

To challenge this system, Gandhi began a march from the Sabarmati Ashram to the coastal village of Dandi, covering a distance of over 300 kilometres. The march gradually drew attention and participation from people along the route. When Gandhi reached the coast, he symbolically broke the salt law by picking up a small amount of salt, thereby openly defying the government's monopoly.⁷

This act marked the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement and encouraged similar acts of protest in different regions. It showed how a simple, everyday issue could be used to mobilise people and question the authority of colonial laws.



World War II and “Quit India” movement- During the Second World War, Gandhi took a clear position against giving unconditional support to the British war effort. He argued that a country which was itself under colonial rule could not be expected to fight for the freedom of others. At the same time, Gandhi did not support the ideologies of Nazism or Fascism and was critical of both. His position, however, was not shared by everyone in India. Some leaders, including Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad, adopted a more cautious approach, and many Indians continued to serve in the British Indian Army.

As the war went on, Gandhi’s demand for independence became more urgent. This led to the launch of what came to be known as the Quit India Movement in 1942. In August of that year, at a meeting in Bombay (Mumbai), he called upon Indians to begin a mass struggle and gave the well-known slogan “Do or Die.” The colonial government reacted quickly by arresting Gandhi and most of the Congress leadership in an attempt to control the situation.

Even so, protests broke out in different parts of the country. There were strikes, demonstrations and, in some cases, attempts to disrupt communication and administrative systems. Although the movement faced strong repression, it is often seen as one of the most intense phases of the freedom struggle. It reflected a growing sense among Indians that colonial rule could no longer continue for long.

Impact and Legacy- As the civil disobedience movements expanded and drew in people from different sections of society, Gandhi also turned his attention to other issues that affected everyday life in important ways.

Gandhi’s Legacy in Society: Gandhi’s views on society were closely linked to ideas of equality and moral reform. He spoke strongly against the caste system and the practice of untouchability, which he described as a “blot” on Indian society. Through his efforts for the uplift of those he referred to as “Harijans,” he tried to draw attention to their condition and argue for greater dignity and social acceptance.

Gandhi also encouraged the participation of women in public life. He criticised practices such as purdah and child marriage, which he saw as limiting women’s role in society. In this sense, his approach combined social reform with ethical concerns, as he believed that lasting political change required changes within society as well.

Gandhi’s Legacy in Economy: Gandhi’s ideas on the economy were closely connected to his belief in swadeshi and self-reliance. He was critical of forms of industrialisation that, in his view, led to exploitation and inequality. Instead, he placed importance on small-scale and cottage industries, especially spinning and weaving khadi, which he saw not only as economic activities but also as symbols of independence.

He also developed the idea of “trusteeship,” according to which those with wealth should use it in a responsible way for the benefit of society rather than for personal gain alone. In this respect, Gandhi’s thinking differed from Marxist socialism. Rather than emphasising conflict between classes, he argued for a more cooperative relationship between labour and capital, based on nonviolence and a sense of moral responsibility.

Gandhi’s Legacy in Panchayati Raj and Governance: Gandhi’s ideas about governance were based on the principle of decentralisation. He believed that villages should be largely self-sufficient and capable of managing their own affairs at the local level. In his view, each village could function as a small unit with a degree of autonomy, rather than depending entirely on a central authority.

These ideas later influenced certain aspects of independent India’s political framework, including the Directive Principles of State Policy and the development of the Panchayati Raj system, which was formally strengthened through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.⁸ Overall, Gandhi’s vision placed importance on local participation and decision-making in public life.

Gandhi’s Legacy in Religion and Secularism: Gandhi’s outlook was deeply influenced by spirituality, but it was not limited to any single religion. He believed that all religions shared certain



common values and therefore stressed the idea of unity among them. His idea of Ram Rajya was not meant to suggest a religious or theocratic state; rather, he used it to describe a society based on justice, ethical conduct and fairness.⁹

He placed strong emphasis on values such as truth (satya), nonviolence (ahimsa) and service to others. At the same time, Gandhi's understanding of secularism rested on the principle of equal respect for all religions. In a society marked by religious diversity, he consistently argued for harmony and mutual understanding.

Gandhi's Legacy in Education: Gandhi's idea of Nai Talim, or Basic Education, focused on the overall development of the individual, including intellectual, physical and moral aspects. He believed that education should not be limited to book learning alone. Instead, it should include productive manual work as part of the learning process, which in turn would help develop a sense of self-reliance and respect for labour.

For Gandhi, education was closely linked to the broader goal of nation-building. He saw it as a way to cultivate values such as cooperation, social responsibility and ethical behaviour among individuals, which he believed were essential for building a stable and just society.

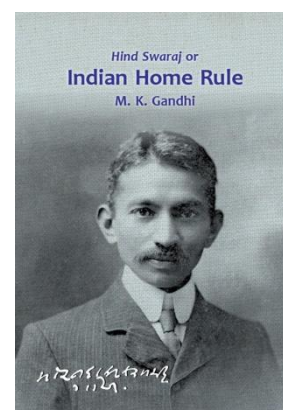
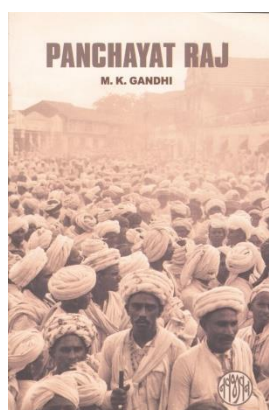
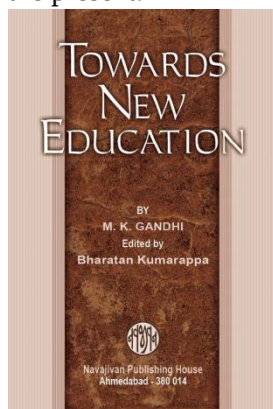
Gandhi in the Modern Era: In many ways, present-day India has moved away from Gandhi's idea of a village-based economy, particularly with the growth of industrialisation and the effects of globalisation. Even so, several of his political ideas, such as democracy, secularism and nonviolence, continue to remain important within the Indian system.

Some of his concerns, especially those related to cleanliness and civic responsibility, can also be seen in more recent initiatives like the Swachh Bharat Mission. At the same time, Gandhi continues to hold a significant place in public memory and is widely regarded as the "Father of the Nation," a title bequeathed upon him by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose¹⁰ reflecting the lasting influence of his ideas and example.

Conclusion- In conclusion, the rise of Mahatma Gandhi highlights the importance of moral conviction and the role of ethical ideas in political life. His approach to politics differed from many of his contemporaries, as he consistently tried to link political action with principles such as truth and nonviolence. From his experiences in South Africa to his leadership in India's freedom struggle, Gandhi's methods evolved through practice and reflection rather than remaining fixed.

His concept of satyagraha, based on nonviolent resistance and moral persuasion, offered an alternative way of confronting injustice. While not without its limitations, this approach influenced both the Indian national movement and similar struggles in other parts of the world. Gandhi's emphasis on social reform, community participation and ethical responsibility also shaped debates beyond the question of political independence.

Even today, his ideas continue to be discussed in relation to issues such as conflict, justice and governance. Although the context has changed, Gandhi's attempt to bring together ethics and politics remains an important point of reference for understanding both his time and the challenges of the present.





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The Ganga Aarti of Banaras: The Past and The Present

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Abstract: *The Ganga Aarti performed on the river ghats of Varanasi has become one of the most visible and widely recognised religious rituals in present-day India. Although the river Ganga itself has received extensive scholarly attention as a sacred, historical and ecological symbol, far less focus has been placed on the Aarti as a ritual practice that has gradually evolved over time. This paper addresses this gap by examining the Ganga Aarti as a living tradition shaped by both continuity and change.*

The study traces the development of the Aarti from early devotional expressions to its contemporary form as an organised and publicly staged ceremony. The same can be traced in textual traditions from (1500 BCE to early medieval period) and local worship traditions. It explores how religious authority, institutional management, tourism, heritage promotion and urban governance interact in shaping the present character of the ritual. Particular attention is given to the everyday experiences of local participants such as priests, boatmen, vendors and residents. The same will highlight how they understand and negotiate the Aarti as an act of devotion as well as a means of livelihood.

Methodologically, the research combines historical analysis with ethnographic observations. The study refers to Puranic literature, colonial-era accounts, secondary writings and fieldwork interactions. I have attempted a comparative study of Ganga Aarti with those performed on other river ghats.

The paper argues that the Ganga Aarti should not be viewed merely as a modern spectacle created for visitors. Rather, it represents a dynamic religious practice in which sacred meaning, sensory experience and public visibility are closely intertwined. By foregrounding historical processes and local perspectives, this study contributes to broader discussions on ritual transformation, living heritage and the ways religious traditions adapt to contemporary social and urban realities while retaining their essential significance.

Key Word: Ganga Aarti, living tradition, dynamism of the ritual, sensory experience, ceremony

Introduction- Aarti, derived from the Sanskrit term *ārātrika*, refers to the offering of light before a deity, often accompanied by bells, chants and devotional music. In the context of the river Ganga, this act takes on a deeper meaning, reflecting a long-standing relationship between people and a river regarded as sacred.¹ In Hindu traditions, light is associated with the removal of darkness and the presence of divine power. When this ritual is directed towards the Ganga, it becomes the Ganga Aarti.² It is both an offering of devotion and a recognition of the Ganga as a life-giving and purifying force. In Varanasi, this ritual has developed into one of the most prominent forms of collective worship at the riverfront, where each evening priests gather on raised platforms, light multi-tiered lamps and perform the ceremony in a coordinated manner. The combination of movement, sound, incense and light creates an atmosphere that many people experience as deeply engaging and immersive.

Each evening, a diverse group gathers at the ghats, including local residents, pilgrims and visitors from outside India. While some come with devotional intent and others out of curiosity, many gradually become involved in the atmosphere of the ritual. Devotees seated along the ghats participate through prayer and offerings, while others observe from boats, creating a situation where the difference between observing and participating is not always clearly defined. At the same time, the present form of the Ganga Aarti differs from earlier practices, which were more dispersed and informal, with individuals or small groups offering prayers and lamps at various points along the



riverbank. Over time, these scattered acts of devotion developed into the organised and synchronised ceremony seen today, showing how such practices have adjusted over time without losing their basic meaning.³

The Ganga Aarti cannot be understood simply as either traditional or modern on to older meanings. The present form of the ritual has been influenced by factors such as tourism, media attention and institutional involvement, yet its devotional core remains rooted in reverence for the sacred river.⁴ Seen in this way, the Ganga Aarti can be understood as a changing tradition in which older symbolic meanings continue to exist alongside newer forms of organisation and participation, showing how such practices continue to remain meaningful even as their surroundings change.

The Sacred River and the Religious Imagination

The importance of the Ganga as a sacred river forms the basis for rituals such as the Ganga Aarti. In Hindu belief, the river is not seen simply as a physical water body but as a divine presence whose waters are thought to purify and free individuals from the cycle of rebirth.⁵ Narratives about the descent of the Ganga from heaven describe it as linking the divine, the human world and the realm of ancestors. According to these narratives, King Bhagiratha brought the river to earth to redeem his ancestors.⁶ This story continues to influence how devotees see the Ganga as a source of renewal and spiritual transformation. Over time, these narratives have shaped the understanding of the river as more than a geographical feature. It is seen as a sacred medium through which divine grace enters everyday life.⁷ This symbolic understanding provides the background for practices such as ritual bathing, offering lamps and performing ancestral rites along the river.

However, the meaning of the Ganga is not limited to texts and myths, as it is experienced by devotees as a living and responsive presence. Pilgrims come to Varanasi to bathe in the river, perform rituals for the deceased and seek spiritual merit, often describing these acts as direct encounters with the sacred. Touching the water, immersing oneself or releasing lamps into the river becomes a way of forming a personal connection with the divine. These practices suggest that religious belief is expressed not only through ideas but also through physical and sensory engagement with the environment. Unlike temple deities, which require ritual consecration, the Ganga is believed to be inherently sacred, meaning that its divine presence exists independently of human action. Rituals along the riverbank are therefore understood less as creating sacredness and more as acknowledging what is already believed to exist. In this context, the Ganga Aarti can be seen as a collective act of reverence, publicly celebrating the sacred nature of the river through light, sound and prayer.

The importance of the Ganga is also closely connected to everyday life in northern India where the river plays both a spiritual and practical role. It supports agriculture, sustains pilgrimage networks and provides the setting for important life-cycle rituals such as birth, marriage and death. In Varanasi in particular, the river acts as the central axis around which daily religious practices are organised, with people beginning their day with ritual bathing and often ending it by attending the evening Aarti. Through such repeated interactions, the river becomes part of both personal memory and collective identity. In this way, the Ganga exists simultaneously as myth, physical landscape and lived experience, showing how ideas about the sacred continue to influence social and cultural life over time.

The Ganga has a special place in India's religious life and is often seen as more than just a river as it connects myth, ritual and sacred space.⁸ At the same time, river worship is found across different parts of India. Rivers like the Yamuna, Godavari and Narmada also have their own traditions and are important within their regions. However, their significance usually remains more local while the Ganga is recognised across a much wider area. Because of this, the Ganga Aarti in Varanasi is not viewed simply as a local ritual but carries a broader symbolic meaning.

While the Ganga holds significance across many regions in India, the form and meaning of rituals associated with it vary from place to place. The importance of the Ganga Aarti in Varanasi becomes more noticeable when we compare it with places like Haridwar and Rishikesh. Aarti is performed at all these locations, but the one in Varanasi feels different because of what the city



represents. It has long been associated with ideas of death, salvation and learning which gives the ritual a deeper meaning. Haridwar is more closely linked with pilgrimage and ritual bathing, while Rishikesh is often seen as calmer and more centred on spiritual retreat. Varanasi, on the other hand, brings many aspects of religious life together in one place. The ghats are used not just the worship but also for everyday activities and even funeral rites. Because of this, the Aarti here is not just a ritual to watch. It reflects the larger identity of the city and its connection with moksha. This is what makes the Varanasi Aarti stand out from similar ceremonies elsewhere.

Historical Transformation of the Ganga Aarti- The Ganga Aarti in its present organised and coordinated form was not always like this. Earlier forms of worship along the ghats were simpler and less structured.⁹ Devotional practices were spread across different parts of the ghats and usually took place in small, localised settings. Individual pilgrims or small groups would gather along the riverbank to offer lamps, recite prayers or perform simple rituals, especially at dusk. These practices were shaped more by personal devotion than by any fixed structure and the offering of light symbolised reverence, gratitude and the desire for spiritual purification. Instead of forming a single collective event, these practices were part of everyday religious life along the riverfront. Rituals took place continuously, shaped by the presence of pilgrims, priests and local residents. The Ganga remained the central focus and worship developed around it without any formal coordination.

Historical accounts of Varanasi also indicate that ritual activity was closely woven into daily life rather than confined to a specific ceremony. Pilgrims bathed in the river at dawn, offered prayers during the day, and carried out small acts of worship in the evening, usually on their own or with family. Colonial-era travel writings describe the ghats as lively spaces where priests, pilgrims, boatmen and vendors all contributed to a vibrant religious environment.¹⁰ Devotional singing, prayer and ritual offerings took place at different locations, resulting in a continuous flow of activity rather than one organised ritual. While offering lamps in the evening was already a common practice, it remained spontaneous and scattered, lacking the synchronised and choreographed form seen today.

The shift from these dispersed practices to the organised Ganga Aarti took place gradually during the 20th century.¹¹ This shift was influenced by several factors, including the growth of pilgrimage networks, better transport and the rising importance of Varanasi as a major religious destination. As larger numbers of people began to gather at the ghats, priestly groups started coordinating evening worship to accommodate these crowds. Raised platforms were introduced to make the ritual visible to larger audiences, including those watching from boats. Over time, the performance also became more synchronised, with priests using similar gestures and ritual objects such as multi-tiered lamps, incense and conch shells. The introduction of a fixed daily schedule, usually at sunset, further stabilised the ceremony as a regular public event. Despite these changes in organisation and scale, the core meaning of the ritual remained the same. The offering of light continued to express devotion to the sacred river and gratitude for its spiritual and material significance.

The historical development of the Ganga Aarti suggests that religious traditions tend to change gradually rather than through sudden shifts. What began as scattered, individual acts of devotion slowly became a coordinated public ceremony capable of accommodating large gatherings. At the same time, the ritual has continued to maintain links with earlier practices by preserving its central symbolism. The Ganga Aarti today therefore reflects both change and continuity, combining older devotional meanings with newer forms of organisation shaped by changing social and cultural conditions in Varanasi.

Tourism, Media and Public Visibility- In recent decades, the Ganga Aarti has been increasingly shaped by the growth of pilgrimage tourism and the wider circulation of its images through media.¹² Varanasi has long been an important pilgrimage centre, attracting devotees who come to bathe in the Ganga and perform religious rites. Improvements in transport, the expansion of tourism and the rise of digital media have all contributed to an increase in the number of people attending the evening Aarti. Along with pilgrims, many domestic and international visitors now come



specifically to witness the ceremony, often seeing it as a key part of experiencing the spiritual character of the city. Because of this, the Ganga Aarti has become one of the most recognisable public rituals associated with Varanasi, frequently presented as a symbol of its religious identity.

One reason the ritual has become so widely known is its strong visual appeal. The movement of lamps and their reflection on the river create a visually striking scene that is easily captured in photographs and videos. These images circulate widely through travel media, documentaries and social platforms, influencing how the ritual is understood beyond its immediate setting. For many people, especially those encountering Varanasi through digital content, the Ganga Aarti becomes a defining image of the city. The increasing number of visitors has also led to changes in how the ceremony is organised. Sound systems allow chants to be heard across large crowds, while lighting improves visibility after sunset and designated spaces help manage the movement of people. Boats lined along the river provide additional viewpoints, allowing more people to participate in the experience without overcrowding the ghats.

These organisational changes do not mean that the ritual has become only a spectacle for visitors. Many visitors who arrive as observers gradually become involved in the ritual atmosphere, joining in prayer, chanting or offering lamps to the river. In such situations, the difference between spectator and participant becomes less clear. The growing visibility of the Ganga Aarti has also contributed to its recognition as an important element of cultural heritage. Government initiatives and urban development projects often promote the ceremony as a key feature of Varanasi's identity, linking it to heritage conservation and tourism.¹³ Even within this broader public and global context, however, the Aarti continues to function as an act of devotion directed toward the sacred river. It remains a ritual that balances religious meaning with public visibility, suggesting that traditional practices can take on new roles without necessarily losing their spiritual meaning.

Community Participation and the Ritual Economy

The Ganga Aarti is sustained not only by the priests who perform it but also by a wider network of local participants whose work shapes the atmosphere of the ghats. The ceremony takes place within a broader social setting where many people contribute both to its organisation and to how it is experienced by those who attend. Boatmen ferry visitors across the river, allowing them to view the ritual from the water and extending its reach. Vendors sell flowers, lamps and incense used in offerings, while photographers capture moments for pilgrims and tourists who wish to preserve their experience. Small stalls provide items needed for worship and these activities create a lively environment where devotion, commerce and everyday interaction come together. This setting can be understood as a kind of ritual economy, where religious practice and everyday livelihood are closely connected.

For many people living near the ghats, the Aarti is an important source of income that shapes daily routines. Boatmen, for example, prepare their boats before sunset in anticipation of visitors and often see themselves not just as service providers but also as guides who introduce people to the meaning of the ritual and the history of the city.¹⁴ Similarly, women vendors selling flowers and lamps play a key role in enabling participation by providing the materials needed for offerings. Many of them describe their work as a form of service connected to the sacred river, rather than purely as a business activity. Other workers, including guides, shopkeepers and food vendors, also contribute to this environment, supporting both the practical and social aspects of the gathering.¹⁵ Although these occupations often depend on fluctuating visitor numbers and informal arrangements, they help sustain the conditions in which the ritual can take place.

The relationship between devotion and livelihood in the Ganga Aarti is not simply one of conflict but also of mutual support. While religious practices are sometimes seen as separate from economic activity, in this case they are closely connected. The presence of vendors and service providers does not take away from the sacred character of the ceremony. Instead, it makes participation easier by providing access to offerings, transport and information. Through these interactions, the Ganga becomes not only a sacred presence but also a source of everyday survival for



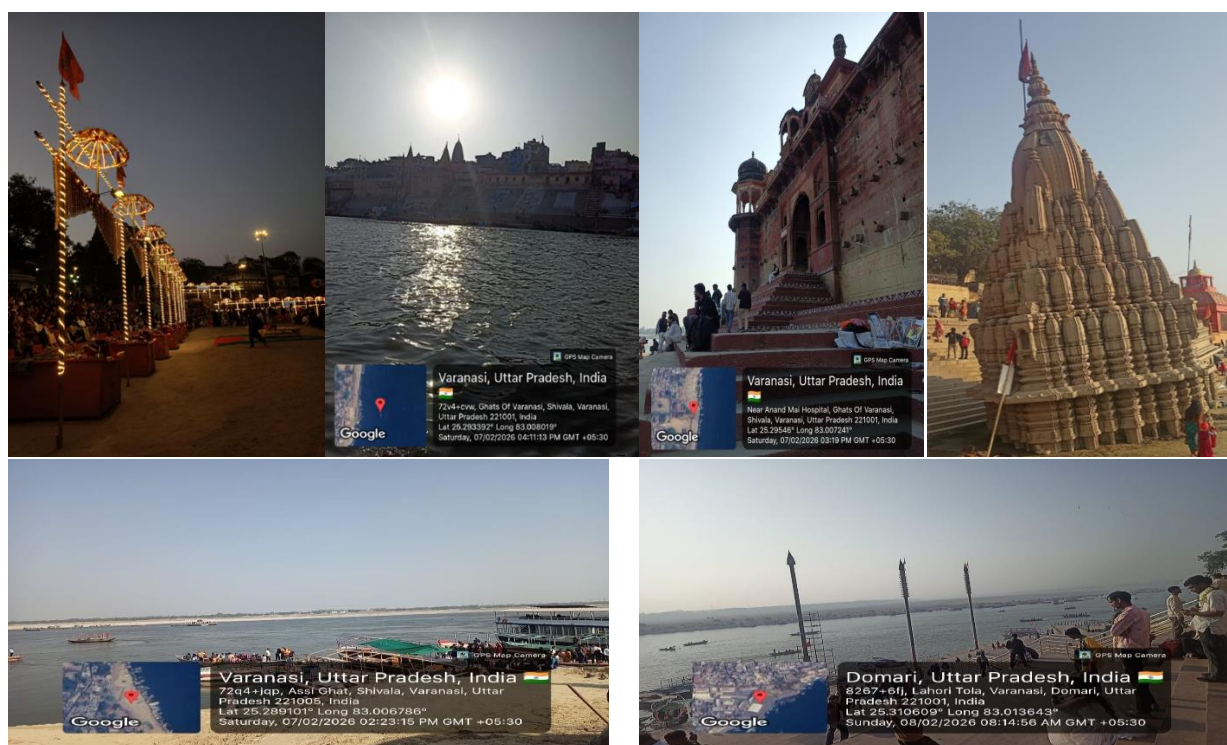
local communities. The Aarti reflects a situation in which ritual practice, community life and economic activity remain closely connected within the cultural setting of Varanasi.¹⁶

Conclusion-The Ganga Aarti of Varanasi shows that religious traditions do not survive by remaining unchanged. Instead, they continue by adjusting to changing social and cultural conditions while still retaining their core meaning. Although it is often described as an ancient ritual, its present form has developed through a long process shaped by social, cultural and institutional influences. The growth of pilgrimage, the expansion of tourism, the role of media and the involvement of administrative systems in managing the ghats have all contributed to the form the ceremony takes today. These changes have introduced new forms of organisation and visibility, making the ritual more accessible to large audiences. Yet, at its core, the Aarti still expresses devotion to the sacred river, preserving the central act of offering light as a symbol of reverence.

When viewed more broadly, the Ganga Aarti cannot be understood as either a performance for tourists or a fixed tradition from the past. Instead, it is a living practice sustained by the interaction of different groups such as priests, boatmen, vendors, pilgrims and visitors who together create the ritual environment each evening. The ceremony reflects not only religious belief but also the social and economic networks that support it. Its significance is also closely tied to the physical setting of Varanasi, where the ghats and the flowing river form a sacred landscape that shapes both experience and meaning. The visibility of the ritual through tourism and media has expanded its audience, allowing it to function both as a devotional act and as a cultural symbol of the city without losing its spiritual depth.

What keeps the Ganga Aarti meaningful is its ability to hold together continuity and change. While its organisation and scale have evolved, its symbolic meaning remains rooted in long-standing beliefs about the sacred nature of the Ganga. Each evening, as lamps are raised and prayers are offered, the ritual renews a connection between past traditions and present realities. In this way, it shows how religious practices remain meaningful over time by adapting to changing contexts while preserving their essential significance.

Appendix





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Marrige In Ancient India

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Abstract: *This project provides a detailed analysis of how the institution of marriage evolved in ancient India over time through a study of Vedic literature. An overview of the current research on marriage in ancient India will give a framework for studying marriage from the perspective of the Vedic period and provide an indication of where the study of marriage and its evolution in ancient India can be expanded. Vedic period within the context on broader historical developments and examine the meaning and significance of marriage today in relation to those past developments as expressed through ritual behaviour.*

"Marriage is defined as a social contract and formal union of two people that provides for the establishment of a family, community, and society. Each of these three elements/levels of marriage can be further defined by how they relate to one another, but it is the individual or couple's value (or lack thereof) placed on marriage which ultimately defines the scope of what constitutes a marriage."

In addition to this, the definition of marriage can be expanded to include not just the economic and legal ramifications of marriage, but also the emotional and spiritual bond between the couple and others. Marriage has, therefore, always been an all-encompassing institution and as such any historical or contemporary understanding of marriage includes consideration for how the definition of marriage has changed/evolved to reflect society's changing values towards marriage.

Marriage, Relationship and Family; There is much debate regarding the meaning of and the value attached to marriage, relationships and families. Marriage has been defined differently over the years, and so too have relationships and families. The definition of marriage has evolved from "a legal contract between a man and woman to financially support each other for the rest of their lives" (Katz 2012, p. 55) to "a commitment of two people to love, care for and support one another for life" (ibid, 56) and then to a social contract and formal union.

Vedic Period, Ancient India, Institution of Marriage, Ritual Behaviour, Vedic Literature, Historical Development, Social Contract, Family Structure, Spiritual Bond, Legal and Economic Aspects, Evolution of Marriage, Marriage, Relationship, and Family.

Key Word: Ancient India relationship, Family, Indian Civilization, Religious, Social, Cultural

Introduction- Marriage in ancient India is often described as a fixed and highly structured institution, mainly based on later religious and legal texts that present it as sacred, patriarchal, and unchanging. However, such descriptions do not fully capture the dynamic and evolving nature of marriage, especially in the earlier periods of Indian history. In reality, marriage practices in ancient India developed gradually, influenced by changing social, economic, and cultural conditions rather than being rigidly defined from the beginning. Marriage has been one of the most enduring institutions in the history of Indian civilization, encompassing religious, social, and cultural dimensions. Marriage is envisaged as a focal point of a person's social existence, a point in and around which are woven concerns of power, status and wellbeing, both material and spiritual.¹ In ancient India, marriage was regarded primarily as a sacred sacrament (samskara), deeply rooted in philosophical and theological frameworks, rather than merely a civil contract.² It was considered a vital rite of passage necessary for every individual to fulfill one's potential and responsibilities to self, family, ancestors, and society. It is one of the sixteen Sanskar that an individual is expected to undergo in order to attain moksha ("liberation"). Vedic fire-deity Agni serves as witness to the marriage yajna ("ritual") alongside family members. Ancient texts such as Tatarian Brahmana and Avesta state the unmarried individual as unholy. During the early Vedic period, as reflected in texts



like the Rig Veda and the Atharva Veda, marriage appears to have been more flexible and less strictly regulated. It was not only a religious union but also a social arrangement shaped by mutual consent, family involvement, and community norms. Women, in particular, seem to have enjoyed a relatively higher degree of agency compared to what is suggested in later prescriptive texts. They participated in rituals, had a voice in choosing partners in certain cases, and were regarded as important contributors to household and social life.

The primary purposes of Hindu marriage were traditionally defined as:

- Progeny (prana): Especially begetting sons, who were considered essential for performing memorial rites (sraddha) and ensuring the continuation of the patrilineal line.
- Companionship in the performance of Dharma (sahatvam): Meaning the mutual fulfilment of social and religious duties.
- Sexual pleasure (Rati) and happiness (Anandan).

I. Promiscuity -In the late 19th and early 20s many anthropologists such as Mc Lennan and Morgan argued that primitive societies began with sexual promiscuity and only later developed Institution such as marriage, monogamy and family. On the other hand Westermarck in his book History of Human Marriage ” says that “the inherent instinct of jealousy observed among male quadrupeds, is cited as rendering the theory of promiscuous relations in a state of nature very unlikely”. It is suggested that there has probably been no stage in the social history of mankind where marriage has not existed³. A.S Altekar in his work The position of Women in Hindu Civilization argues that the early Indian societies never passed through a stage of unrestricted promiscuity. He insists that the sacramental ideal of marriage is very old in India, found in texts such Rig Veda and Atharva ved. According to Mahabharata, it was Shewtaketu who replaced promiscuity with regular marriage.

II. Marriage in the Early Vedic Period (c. 1500–1000 BCE)- In the Rigveda (Mandala 10.85 – Vivaha Sukta) and Atharva Veda (Vivaha Prakaranam) marriage was viewed as an indissoluble sacrament based on the spiritual unification of the couple through magic mantras. Nelakshi Sengupta, in her work Evolution of Hindu Marriage with special reference to rituals (c.1000B.C - A.D 500), states that Rig Veda wives held a position of high respect and dignity. The wife was considered the mistress (Samragani) of the home and shared the religious duties and rites with her husband.⁴ On the other hand Prerana Roy in her article Daughter, Bride and Wives, argues that the Rig Veda demonstrates an ideological focus on the idealization of women as icons of virtue, particularly by stressing the virginity of the bride.

In Rig Veda and Atharva Veda there is no mention of child marriage, indicating that marriage involved persons of full physical development (mature age). This view is largely supported by a large number of historians as there is a mention of consummation just after the marriage. (Rig Veda X85). Monogamy was generally the rule and ideal, although polygamy was sometimes practiced by kings or chiefs. Bride price or dowry was largely unheard of in Rig Vedic society. The practice of Svayamvara (where the bride chose her spouse) may have existed, particularly in Kshatriya society. 3.Paul B.C, The development of marriage in Ancient India, 27.

The rituals were comparatively simple. Key elements included:

- Panigrahana - the taking of the bride's hand by the groom, symbolizing a solemn contract.
- Sacred Fire (Agni) - The ceremony was performed in the presence of fire as a witness.
- Vahatu - The carrying away of the bride in a chariot to her new home.

Neither the Rg-Veda nor Atharva-Veda mention Sampradana (giving away/bestowal of the girl). The idea was that the husband received the girl as a gift from the gods. It was often believed in Vedic societies that newly married couples are in a state of danger, being particularly exposed to other persons magical arts or evil looks or to the attacks of evil spirits.⁵ Therefore mantras were uttered to keep away evil spirits and prevent accidents on the journey to the husband's house.

III. Transition in the Later Vedic and Early Dharma Perio- Following the Vedic period, marriage rituals became more complex and systematized in the Grhyasutras, dictated by a priestly



order. In the words of Kumkum Roy the phrase marked the “brahmanisation of marriage⁶”. Many rituals were amplified or newly introduced, sometimes integrating non-Aryan customs :

- Kanyadana (Bestowal of the Bride): This ceremony, in which the father gives away the girl, became an essential feature in the later period, linked to the deterioration of the position of women who began to be viewed as property.
- Saptapadi (Seven Steps): Taking seven steps together, usually around the fire, became an essential part of the ceremony. The marriage is considered complete and irrevocable after the seventh step.

Other Rituals: These included Lajahoma (sacrifice of fried grains, symbolizing fertility), Aśmarohana (treading on a stone, symbolizing firmness), the ceremonial bath (snaṇa), and mutual showering of wet rice grains (ādrākṣataropana).

IV. Decline in Status and Age of Marriage- The position of women deteriorated significantly during the Dharmasutra period. The ideal of spiritual union was increasingly replaced by the idea of transference of ownership.

The age of marriage was gradually lowered, and pre-puberty or child marriage became common or advocated in the Smritis. Earlier the Vedic period girls like boys used to undergo the upanayana ceremony, over the period of time it was completely given up and marriage was prescribed as a substitute for upanayana for girls⁷. There was a huge movement to lower the age at which girls can marry, with girls marrying before or soon after puberty to preserve their purity.⁸ Manu, in the Smritis, advised a man aged thirty to marry a girl of eight. Women were increasingly restricted from spiritual rituals and education.

The decline is often seen as an attempt to control and preserve the mental and physical pureness of girls. In her 1993 article “Conceptualising Brahmanical Patriarchy in Early India”, Uma Chakravarti discusses the three levels at which the mechanism of control over women’s sexuality operated within the Brahmanical framework. This control was exercised through three devices: ideology, force and legal sanction.

A.S Altekar highlights the popularity of Buddhism, intensified patriarchal control, expanding Caste system and the malleable nature of young girls as the reason for the historical rise in prepubescent marriages.

The Human Story of Marriage in Ancient India- To understand marriage in ancient India, you have to forget the quiet, air-conditioned halls of modern weddings. Instead, imagine the scent of sandalwood and ghee smoke rising from a sacred fire under a starlit sky. Imagine a life where your survival, your identity, and your purpose were woven into a tapestry of family, community, and cosmic order. Marriage wasn’t just a union between two people; it was the axle upon which the wheel of life itself turned. In the earliest period, during the Vedic age (roughly 1500 to 500 BCE), marriage was a profound and solemn affair. The hymns of the Rigveda describe it as a sacred bond, a partnership forged in the presence of the gods. The bride and groom would walk seven steps around a consecrated fire, each step representing a promise: for food, for strength, for prosperity, for wisdom, and for a lifelong companionship. The famous prayer from that time wasn’t about subservience, but about a shared path: “I am the verse, you are the melody. I am the sky, you are the earth... Let us unite and walk together.” In this ideal, marriage was a yajna, a sacred ritual—a partnership of two individuals to build a household, which was considered the primary unit of society and the foundation for spiritual growth. But this ideal existed alongside a complex human reality. Society was structured around the varna system, and marriage became a crucial tool for preserving social boundaries. The preservation of lineage, or kula, and the purity of bloodlines became paramount. This is where the figure of the pativrata, the devoted wife, emerges. Her role was revered, but it came with immense responsibility. She was the grāhīni, the mistress of the household, without whom a man was considered incomplete. Her power lay in her ability to manage the domestic sphere—the economic, social, and spiritual center of life. Yet, her world was largely circumscribed by it.



As time moved into the era of the Dharmashastras (law books, c. 500 BCE onwards), the rules became more codified and, in many ways, more rigid. The great texts like the Manusmriti outlined eight distinct forms of marriage. They ranged from the lofty Brahma—where a learned man was invited and a daughter was gifted, adorned with jewels—to the deeply troubling Asura—a marriage based on the purchase of the bride, and the Paisacha—which was essentially abduction. This legal framework reveals a society grappling with diverse regional customs, trying to impose a hierarchical order. The ideal remained the Brahma form, a union of equals within the same social class, blessed by family.

Yet, the human heart has never been fully contained by law. Epic literature, like the Mahabharata, offers a beautiful counter-narrative. The story of Savitri, who uses her intellect and devotion to outsmart Yama, the god of death, to win back her husband Satyavan, shows a woman of immense agency and strength. Similarly, the Gandharva form of marriage—a union by mutual consent and love, without the need for family or ritual—was acknowledged, even if it wasn't the social ideal. It was a quiet admission that the spark of love and personal choice was a powerful, undeniable force.

Throughout all these shifts, the purpose of marriage remained multi-layered. It was for dharma (duty and righteousness), for praja (progeny, particularly sons to continue the lineage), and for rati (pleasure). It was a microcosm of the cosmic order. To be married was to be a full participant in society. Marriage was seen as the essential gateway to the second stage of life—that of the householder—which was considered the most important of all, as it supported all other stages.

In human terms, ancient Indian marriage was a grand, evolving experiment. It was a beautiful, complicated, and often contradictory institution. It enshrined a powerful ideal of partnership and spiritual unity, while simultaneously creating strict social hierarchies, particularly regarding gender and caste. It gave us the profound concept of companionship for a shared life, alongside practices that, from a modern perspective, limited individual freedom. Its history is not a single, simple story, but a rich tapestry of sacred ideals, evolving social codes, and the timeless, resilient human desire for love, belonging, and purpose.

The Sacred Thread: Connecting Ancient and Modern Marriage in India If you have ever stood at an Indian wedding whether in a bustling city banquet hall or a quiet village courtyard you have witnessed a ghost. It is the ghost of an ancient past, alive in every ritual, every promise, and every unspoken expectation. The marriage of today in India is not a break from history; it is a conversation with it. Sometimes it is a loving dialogue, other times a heated argument But the thread connecting the Vedic fire to the modern mandap has never truly been severed. Walk into any contemporary Indian wedding, and you will see the same seven steps, the saptapadi, that couples took three thousand years ago. The fire, the Agni, still stands as the eternal witness. The garlands, the sacred thread, the chanting of Sanskrit verses that few fully understand but everyone feels—these are not mere traditions. They are anchors. They whisper to the couple and their families: you are part of something larger than yourselves. You are part of a chain of ancestors and descendants, of duty and continuity. This continuity is perhaps the most visible correlation between ancient and modern marriage: the persistence of ritual as a source of meaning and social legitimacy.

But beneath the surface of these shared rituals, the tectonic plates of Indian society have shifted dramatically. In ancient times, marriage was predominantly a family transaction. The kula, or lineage, was everything. A marriage was arranged to secure alliances, preserve caste purity, and ensure the continuation of the family name. The individual's preference, especially the woman's, was rarely the central concern. The Manusmriti famously declared that a father who failed to marry off his daughter at the appropriate time was blameworthy. It was a duty, not a choice. Fast forward to today, and the landscape is almost unrecognizable—yet strangely familiar. Arranged marriage has not disappeared; it has evolved. The village matchmaker has been replaced by algorithms on matrimonial websites. The negotiation of horoscopes and family backgrounds now happens alongside WhatsApp chats and coffee dates. What remains is the profound involvement of family. The modern Indian



couple often finds themselves in a delicate dance: wanting the blessing and support of their families while also craving the agency to choose their own partner. This tension—between collective duty and individual desire—is the central drama of modern Indian marriage, and it is a direct inheritance from the ancient worldview where the self was always embedded in the web of community.

Perhaps the most radical transformation lies in the role of women. In ancient India, the pativrata ideal—the devoted wife whose dharma was to serve her husband—was held up as the highest aspiration. While texts acknowledged the sahadharmini, the co-partner in religious duties, a woman's identity was largely defined through her husband. Her independence, her ambitions, her voice were expected to merge into his.

Today, that model is being rewritten, often with great struggle and courage. The modern Indian wife is frequently educated, employed, and fiercely independent. She walks the seven steps not to surrender her identity but to forge a partnership of equals. Yet, she still carries the weight of expectation. The pressure to balance a career with household duties, the unspoken assumption that she will adapt to her husband's family, the lingering echoes of the pativrata ideal—these are the invisible chains that history has not yet fully loosened. The correlation here is one of friction: the ancient ideal of wifely devotion rubs against the modern reality of female ambition, creating both conflict and a slow, painful redefinition of what partnership means. Love, too, has undergone a transformation. In ancient times, love was seen as something that ideally grew after marriage, within the safe container of duty and family. The Gandharva marriage—love marriage—was acknowledged but considered risky, a potential threat to social order. Today, love is celebrated as the very foundation of marriage. Bollywood has romanticized it, families have reluctantly accepted it, and courts have legally affirmed it. Yet, the shadow of the past remains. Love marriages across caste or community lines can still spark intense familial opposition, sometimes even violence. The ancient concern for lineage and social boundaries has not vanished; it has simply gone underground, resurfacing in moments of crisis.

The Eight Forms of Marriage: A Spectrum of Choice and Compulsion Imagine, for a moment, that you are a young woman in ancient India. Your entire future—your safety, your dignity, your happiness—hinges on one event: your marriage. The law books of the time, particularly the Manusmriti, describe not one but eight distinct forms of marriage. They are not simply different customs; they represent a moral spectrum, ranging from the sacred and exalted to the deeply troubling. Each form tells a human story.

1. Brahma: The Gift of a Daughter- This was considered the highest, most virtuous form. Picture a learned man, well-versed in the Vedas, being invited by a family. The father, having found no flaw in the groom, adorns his daughter with jewels and gifts her to him. There was no exchange of money, no coercion. It was a pure transaction of respect. This was the ideal—a union of families based on character, learning, and mutual consent.

2. Daiva: The Sacrificial Offering- The daughter is gifted to a priest as a form of gratitude during a religious sacrifice. The word Daiva means "related to the gods." While still considered meritorious, it had a subtle undertone of practicality. The daughter was given as dakshina (honorarium), suggesting that her marriage, while sacred, served a transactional purpose within a ritual context.

3. Arsha: The Cow and Bull Exchange- This form involved a groom paying a nominal price—specifically a cow and a bull—to the bride's father. It was named after the rishis (sages) who practiced it. While it was seen as lawful, it carried a faint shadow of commerce. The lawgivers were careful to call it a "token" rather than a sale, trying to distinguish it from more materialistic forms.

4. Prajapatya: The Discharge of Duty- In this form, the father gave away his daughter without receiving anything, but with a specific blessing: "May both of you perform your duties together." This marriage was less about romantic love and more about the sacred duty of producing offspring and maintaining the household. It was marriage as social responsibility.

5. Gandharva: The Marriage of Love- This was the marriage of mutual consent and desire, without the involvement of family or elaborate ritual. Named after the celestial musicians who were



free spirits, it was essentially a love marriage. Think of the stories of Shakuntala and King Dushyanta. Society acknowledged its existence but viewed it with suspicion, fearing that passion alone was a fragile foundation for the duties of family life.

6. Asura: The Marriage of Purchase-This form was unequivocally condemned. Here, the groom paid a price directly to the bride's father, treating the daughter as a commodity to be bought. It reflected a worldview where women were assets and marriage was a financial transaction. The texts were clear: this was a low, corrupt form born of greed.

7. Rakshasa: The Marriage of Abduction-This form involved the forcible abduction of the bride after killing or defeating her family. It reflected the harsh realities of tribal warfare and conquest. While a few Kshatriya (warrior) traditions considered it a grim form of valor, the law books placed it far down the moral order, recognizing the violence and trauma it inflicted

8. Paisacha: The Demonic Marriage-This was the lowest, most despised form. It involved seducing or taking advantage of a woman who was asleep, intoxicated, or unconscious. The very name, meaning "of the demons," indicates utter condemnation. This was not marriage in any ethical sense but an act of violation masquerading as a union.

In human terms, these eight forms reveal a society trying to reconcile idealism with human imperfection. They show us that ancient India had a word for love marriage (Gandharva) and a clear moral revulsion for greed (Asura) and violence (Paisacha). The existence of this spectrum tells us that our ancestors, like us, understood that marriage could be many things: a sacred bond, a family alliance, a transaction, an act of love, or a tragedy of power. It reminds us that the struggle to make marriage both meaningful and just is not a modern invention—it is as old as civilization itself.

Position of women-

The Vedic Age: A Time of Relative Freedom:In the earliest period, the Vedic age, women occupied a space that would surprise many today. They composed hymns. Names like Ghosha, Lopamudra, and Maitreyi appear as brahmavadinis—women who pursued Vedic learning and philosophical debate with their husbands. Maitreyi, famously, chose knowledge over material wealth, asking her husband Yajnavalkya to teach her the path to immortality rather than worldly possessions. Women participated in rituals, attended assemblies, and married relatively late. Marriage itself was described as a partnership, a sahadharma—co-journeymen on the path of duty. There was dignity in this vision.

The Ideal of the Pativrata: Power Through Devotion: As society became more codified, a powerful ideal emerged: the pativrata, the devoted wife. On one hand, this ideal granted women immense moral authority. The pativrata was considered so spiritually potent that she could bless her husband with long life, even challenge the gods. Stories like that of Savitri, who outwitted Yama, the god of death, to reclaim her husband, celebrated feminine strength, intelligence, and loyalty. The wife was the grahni the mistress of the household—the heart of the domestic sphere, without which no man was complete. Her role was sacred.

The Growing Constraints: Codification and Control: But this reverence came at a cost. The same texts that celebrated the pativrata also began to circumscribe her world. The Manusmriti, written in the early centuries of the Common Era, contained verses that would echo through centuries: "In childhood, a woman must be under her father; in youth, under her husband; in old age, under her son. A woman must never be independent " The ideal of protection became a rationale for control. Child marriage began to replace the educated, mature woman of Vedic times. A woman's primary purpose was defined increasingly as bearing sons to continue the lineage. Her access to education and public life narrowed.

A Life of Contradictions-For the average woman, life was a series of contradictions. She was worshipped as a goddess during festivals but had no voice in choosing her husband. She managed the family's resources, often with great skill, yet had no legal right to inherit property independently in many periods. She was the symbol of the family's honor, her purity fiercely guarded, yet her own desires were often secondary to duty.



The Village at the Altar: Family and Society in Ancient Marriage: In ancient India, a marriage was never just about two people. To understand it, imagine a wedding where the entire village breathes alongside the bride and groom—because, in a very real sense, everyone had a stake in this union. The family was the heart of the matter. A young man or woman did not marry for themselves alone; they married to fulfil pitirini—the debt owed to their ancestors. To continue the lineage, to ensure there would be hands to offer rice balls for the departed souls, was a sacred obligation. Parents bore the weight of this responsibility heavily. A father who failed to arrange his daughter's marriage at the appropriate time was considered neglectful, even sinful. The choice of a spouse was therefore too important to be left to youthful impulse. Elders consulted horoscopes, investigated family backgrounds, and negotiated alliances with the same gravity as treaties between kingdoms. Marriage was a family transaction, and the new couple entered not just a relationship but a pre-existing web of kinship, duty, and expectation.

Beyond the family stood society, with its rigid structures of varna (caste) and gotra (clan). These were not mere labels but the very scaffolding of identity. Marrying within one's caste preserved social order; marrying outside it threatened to blur sacred boundaries. Society watched, judged, and enforced these norms through collective pressure. The village council, the elders, the priests—all acted as guardians of tradition.

Yet, within this collective embrace, there was also a profound sense of belonging. To be married was to be a full participant in society. The householder's life, grihastha ashrama, was considered the most important stage of existence because it supported all others. A man was incomplete without a wife; a woman found her identity as the grhini, the mistress of the household. Marriage was the ritual that transformed individuals into responsible members of the community.

Conclusion- In tracing the arc of marriage in ancient India—from its Vedic origins as a sacred partnership of equals to the rigid codifications of the Dharma shastras that sought to control it—we uncover a profound and enduring human story, one that reveals marriage to have always been far more than a private bond between two individuals. It was, and in many ways continues to be, a complex institution where the sacred fire of ritual met the earthly imperatives of family, caste, and lineage; where the ideal of the sahadharmini, the spiritual co-partner, coexisted uneasily with the restrictive realities of Stidham and wifely subservience; where the spectrum of eight marriage forms—from the exalted Brahma to the condemned Paisacha—exposed a society grappling with the full range of human motivation, from love and duty to greed and violence. The echoes of this ancient past reverberate powerfully in modern India, where the same seven steps are taken under the same sacred fire, yet now walked by women who refuse to surrender their independence and couples who negotiate the ancient weight of family expectation against the modern yearning for choice and love. The role of family and society, once the unquestioned arbiters of matrimonial alliances, remains a formidable presence, though now often challenged by individual aspiration and legal reform. Ultimately, the journey of marriage in India—from the Vedic altars to contemporary banquet halls—is not a story of simple progress or decline but of a continuous, often messy, negotiation between continuity and change, between the collective and the self, between the ancient belief that marriage is a duty owed to ancestors and the modern conviction that it must also be a space for companionship, equality, and personal fulfilment. It is this enduring tension, this living dialogue between the past and the present, that makes the institution of marriage in India not merely a tradition to be followed, but a deeply human story still being written in the lives of those who, with every ceremony, every compromise, and every quiet act of courage, choose to honour the old while daring to redefine it for themselves.

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Prehistoric culture in India

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Abstract: *All the prehistoric cultural process of humans in the resinal is significant, as individual man continuously devolved intopresented it self the sole creator and owner. Prehistory, the time before written record and thus knowledge of it is based predominantly on archaeology collected in the form of stone artefacts, rock art, fossilis remains or settlement patterns. The present research primarily aims at understanding cultural and technological evolution of prehistoric communities in India and mapping the all important next stage in developed of human.This study looks at the major phases of prehistoric culture in India: Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic. It spotlight their unique characterist. The Palaeolithic times marks the earliest stage of human existence. People used simple stone tools and lived a nomadic lifestyle totally based on hunting and gathering. In the Mesolithic period, technology advanced with the introduction of microlithic tools, improved hunting methods, and a gradual converting according situations to changing environmental. conditions. The Neolithic period brought significant changes to human life . It included the domestication of plants and animals, dawnof agriculture, and the establishment of permanent establishments . , the study to throw light opinion of important archaeological sites that offer with in depth knowledge information about prehistoric culture. Early humans' artistic and symbolic expression are portart rock paintings of the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, which depict hunting painting in bhimbedka , animals, and social activities. Similar evidence of early farming techniques and the emergence of permanent village. life can be found at the Mehrgarh site. Ov, sites shows that these early societies set the stage for later cultural and social developments in the region and emphasizes the importance of archlogocal discoveries in reconstructing prehistoric culture in India.*

Key Word: **Cultura, archaeolog, prehistoric, human, Palaeolithic, Mesolithic**

Introduction- To understand tha the earliest phases of human history in the Indian regional, it is possible important to study prehistoric Indian culture. The lengthy period of human importance prior to the increase of writing systems is referr to the prehistory, and as such, it cannot be reconstructed using written records. Instead, in order to understand the way of life and culture of prehistoric communities, historians and archaeologists rely on tangible remnants like stone tools, fossils, pottery, and rock art. These archaeological finds aid researchers in tracking the slow development of human civilization in the area and offer important insights into the social, technological, and economic advancements of early human societies. The Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic periods are the three main stages of prehistoric Indian culture. Each of these stages reflects a different stage in early humans' technological and cultural development. The use of rudimentary stone tools and a nomadic lifestyle centered on hunting and gathering are characteristics of the Paleolithic era, also known as the Old Stone Age. Early humans adapted to various environmental conditions and relied heavily on natural resources during this time. Important details about early human activity and the growth of the stone tool industries in the Indian subcontinent can be found in archaeological evidence from locations like Attirampakkam and Soan Valley. The Neolithic period marks a pivotal shift on human history, often referred to as a major cultural revolution. During this era, early communities started to embrace agriculture and domestic animals, paving the way for permanent settlements and the rise of village life. The creation of polished stone tools, pottery, and new social structures signified a crucial step in cultural progress. Archaeological finds at sites like Mehrgarh and Burzahom offer vital insights into early farming practices, animal domestication, and the formation of complex social systems.



Another key aspect of prehistoric culture in India is its rich regional diversity. Various geographical areas cultivated unique cultural traditions shaped by their environmental conditions and available resources. For instance, the prehistoric cultures in central India are closely linked to rock shelters and hunting practices, while the north-western region reveals early signs of agricultural communities. Also, southern India showcases distinct archaeological patterns tied to stone tool industries and settlement designs. This regional variation Low dash the dynamic interplay between human societies and their natural surroundings in prehistoric times.

prehistoric culture in India is crucial for piecing together the origins of human society and grasping the lengthy journey of cultural evolution that at the end led to the appearance of early societies. By delving into archaeological evidence from various regions and time periods, we can trace the gradual shift from simple hunting-gathering groups to more intricate agricultural societies. This research seeks to explore the major phases, cultural traits, and regional differences of prehistoric culture in India, intent to provide a well-squared understanding of the early chapters of human history in the subcontinent.

Tool Making and Technology in the Paleolithic Period in India- The Paleolithic period, often called the Old Stone Age, marks the very beginning of human technological progress in the Indian subcontinent. During this time, our early forefathers relied on stone tools for their survival, as these tools were crucial for hunting, processing food, cutting wood, and carrying out various everyday tasks. By studying Paleolithic tools, we gain important insights into the technological skills, adaptive strategies, and mental growth of prehistoric communities. Archaeological findings from various sites across India show that early humans slowly honed their tool-making techniques and created a mosaic array of stone implements designed for different uses.

The earliest signs of stone tool technology in India date back to the Lower Paleolithic phase. This era is marked by large, roughly shaped tools like hand-axes, cleavers, and choppers, primarily crafted from durable stones such as quartzite, basalt, and sandstone. These tools were made using a method called sharpening, where one stone is struck against another to chip off sharp-edged flakes. One of the key Lower Paleolithic excavations sites in India is Attirampakkam in Tamil Nadu, where archaeologists have displayed some of the oldest Acheulean tools in South Asia. Similarly, the Son Valley in now Pakistan has produced a wealth of stone tools that highlight the evolution of early human technology.

As we move into the Middle Paleolithic period, tool-making techniques became more gracefully and refined. Rather than creating large, heavy tools, early humans started to craft smaller, more specialized implements like scrapers, borers, and points. These tools were often made using prepared core techniques, which enabled equipment to create sharper and more effective edges. The advancements in tool technology show that prehistoric societies were increasing their skills in shaping stone and changing to their environments. (Chakrabarti, India: An Archaeological History,

Cave Paintings in the Paleolithic Period in India- Cave paintings are a precious collection of art for anyone looking to understand the cultural and artistic lives of prehistoric humans in India. These ancient artworks offer an interesting glimpse into the beliefs, daily routine, and environments of early human society during the Paleolithic period. Since these early people don't have a writing knowledge, the visual stories engraved in caves and rock shelters became a vital means of communication and expression. Archaeologists dive into these paintings to uncover the social and cultural dynamics of our ancient forefathers. One of the most stunning pieces of prehistoric cave art in India can be found in the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters in Madhya Pradesh. This site stands out as a key archaeological gem in South Asia, boasting hundreds of rock shelters beautified with paintings that span various prehistoric eras. Some of these artworks are thought to date back to the Upper Paleolithic period, making them some of the earliest forms of artistic expression in the Indian subcontinent. The rock shelters at Bhimbetka were brought to light and thoroughly studied by the Indian archaeologist V.S. Wakankar, who was instrumental in shining a spotlight on this significant site. The cave paintings primarily showcase scenes from the everyday lives of prehistoric societies.



Many of the artworks depict animals like , deer, wild boars, elephants, and tigers, which were crucial food sources for early humans. Hunting scenes are also prevalent, illustrating of hunters wielding spears and bows to often depicted as a group of stylized human figures chasing large prey evolved from simple individual cave painting to complex narrative driven scenes . images not only highlight the survival strategies of prehistoric .

Beyond hunting, some paintings feature figures engaged in dancing, rituals, and other social gatherings. These pictures hint at the idea that prehistoric societies had developed certain social practices and cultural expressions. (Upinder Singh, Ancient India,) .

Domestication in the Mesolithic Period in India- The Mesolithic period in India marks a enchanging turning point in our prehistoric journey as it showcases the gradual transition from a lifestyle centere around hunting and gathering to the early days of domestication & food production. Spanning roughly from 10,000 BCE to 6000 BCE, this era is notable for its significant shifts in how people lived, the technologies they developed, and their settlement habits. One of the standout advancement during this time was the of animal domestication, which had a deep impact on the economic and social dynamics of Mesolithic societies .

Throughout the Mesolithic period, people still relied heavily on hunting, fishing, and foraging for wild plants to meet their needs. However, archaeological advice that they began to forge closer bonds with certain animals, marking the dawn of domestication. The dog was likely among the first animals to be domesticate , evolving from wolves that over along period of time became part of human societies. These early dogs were invaluable for hunting, protecting and helping humans track game, making them cherished companions for Mesolithic people.

Excavations at sites like Bagor in Rajasthan have unearthed crucial evidence of early animal domestication in India. The remains of domesticated animals, such as cattle and sheep, indicate that these communities were starting to manage and control specific species.define that Mesolithic people were experiment with new methods of food assest and animal resource management. Additional the site reveals signs of semi-permanent habitation, highlighting a shift from a fully nomadic existence to more stable living arrangements.

Another significant site linked to Mesolithic culture is Longhand in Gujarat. The archaeological remains found here point to the presence of early domesticated animals and further illustrate the evolving relationship between humans and their environment during this transformative period (Misra, Prehistoric Human Colonization),

Development of Agriculture in the Neolithic Period in India- Mesolithic period in India marks a interesting turning point in our prehistoric journey, as it showcases the gradual transition from a lifestyle centered around hunting and gathering to the early days of domestication and food production. Cross roughly from 10,000 BCE to 6000 BCE, this era is notable for its significant shifts in how people source their food, the technological advancements they made, and the way they settled down. One of the standout developments of this time was the onset of animal domestication, which had a profound impact on the economic and social fabric of Mesolithic societies People during period of time , still relied heavily on hunting, fishing, and hunting for wild plants to meet their needs. However, archaeological findings suggest that they began to forge closer bonds with certain animals, marking the dawn of domestication. The dog was likely among the first animals to be domesticated, evolving from wolves that gradually became part of human settlements. These early dogs were invaluable for hunting, guarding camps, and helping humans track prey, making them cherished companions for Mesolithic people.

Excavations at sites like Bagor in Rajasthan have unearthed crucial evidence of early animal domestication in India. The remains of domesticated animals, such as cattle and sheep, indicate that these communities were starting to manage and control specific species. This suggests that Mesolithic people were experimenting with new methods of food acquisition and animal resource management. Additionally, the site reveals signs of semi-settled living, highlighting a shift from a fully nomadic existence to more stable settlement patterns. Another key site linked to Mesolithic culture is Langhnaj

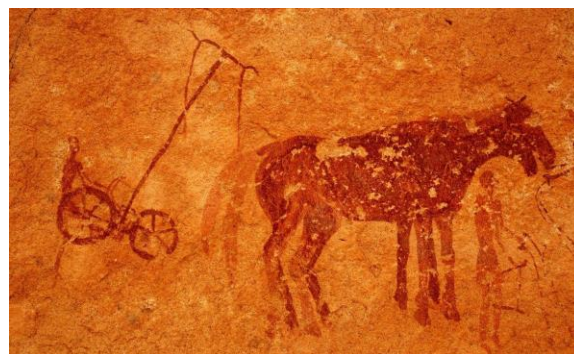
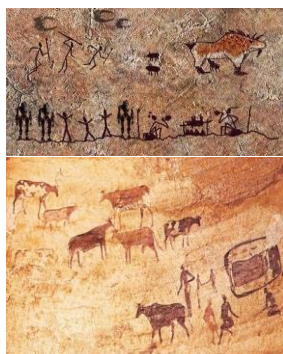


in Gujarat. The archaeological remains found here point to the presence of early domesticated animals and further illustrate the evolving relationship between humans and their environment during this transformative period (Allchin & Allchin, Rise of Civilization),

Conclusion- diving into the study of prehistoric culture in India really sheds light on the early stages of human development and how society gradually evolved in the Indian subcontinent. Since this era predates the invention of writing, our grasp of prehistoric life mainly hinges on archaeological finds like stone tools, rock art, fossils, and remnants of ancient settlements. These artifacts help historians and archaeologists piece together the economic activities, technological advancements, and cultural expressions of our early human ancestors.

Examine the three key phases of prehistory—Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic— reveals how human life transform over thousands of years. The Palaeolithic era showcases a straight. forward lifestyle centered around hunting and gathering, utilizing basic stone tools. The Mesolithic period brought about significant technological advancements, including microlithic tools, and demonstrated a growing adaptability to environmental changes. Finally, the Neolithic period represented a major shift with the rise of agriculture, the domestication of animals, and the establishment of the permanent settlements. Archaeological sites like the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters are vital for understanding prehistoric culture in India. These locations offer invaluable insights into early artistic expression, social interactions, and the dawn of food production. Additionally, the rich diversity of prehistoric cultures across the Indian subcontinent illustrates how human societies adapted to various ecological and geographical settings.

In summary, studying prehistoric culture sport light the lengthy journey of human adaptation, innovation, and cultural growth. These early societies laid the groundwork for future historical civilizations, making research into prehistory a crucial aspect of grasping the broader narrative of human history in India.



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The role of peasant movements and the Congress (INC) in land reforms in post-independence Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract: *Land reforms in post Independence India was aimed to eliminate rural inequalities and provide land ownership to farmers. Uttar Pradesh a major agricultural state, a key centre to these reforms. The paper aims to analyse the land reform process in the context of Uttar Pradesh, understanding the policy role of Indian National Congress and the pressure and participation of peasant movements. Following independence, Congress rule in India implemented significant initiatives such as abolition of zamindari, land ceilings and tenancy reforms, all aimed at providing land ownership to peasants and eliminating rural inequalities and socially sound society. However, effective implementation of these policies faced numerous obstacles, including administrative weaknesses, political pressures and misuse of law by landlords. Farmers movement played a crucial role, not only exerting pressure on the government but also raising awareness among peasants about their rights. This research is based primarily on secondary sources, utilizing research works by modern historians, academic articles and published studies related to land reforms and peasants movements.*

Key Word: Land reforms, Farmers Movement, Indian National Congress,

Introduction- India's economy was deeply rooted in agriculture and was the main source of its economy as there was absence of large scale industries at the time of independence. Even today most people depended on farming for their livelihood. Following independence there was hardly any presence of heavy industries, which meant that the country faced significant challenges in building up of a strong economic base. According to Census of India data 1951, around 83 percent of the country population were lived in rural areas, which indicates that nearly 70- 75 percent of the people were directly or indirectly depended on agriculture for their livelihood.

Despite its agricultural centrality, there was the problem of low productivity, structural imbalance marked by high population pressure on land, social inequalities, unequal land ownership patterns and furthered with limited industrial explosion. And these problems were more significantly due to the British administration. The Zamindari, Ryotwari and Mahalwari system introduced under the British land revenue policies strengthened unequal land ownership pattern and put greater pressure on peasants, push them into debt and poverty, further worsen by the commercialization of agriculture (Chandra, 2000). As a result most farmers become landless or marginal farmers and agriculture production remained poor due to unavailability of technical advancement and age old primitive tools used for agriculture.

Under these circumstances, land reforms i.e Redistribution of Land, were seen as a comprehensive means of social justice and rebuilding rural economy but not only limited to the redistribution of land only. These reforms aimed to dismantle the exploitative structures of the colonial period unequal legacies, grant land ownership to the farmers who worked on it, and establish equality in rural society. In this context land reforms are a prerequisite for technological improvements in agriculture is significant (Singh, 1993), which we can clearly saw throughout the outcomes of the green revolution started in the 1960s. The states where land reforms were successful marked a growth in agricultural productivity and which were not, they were lagged behind.

Land reforms were not simply policies introduced in post Independence India but they were shaped by a long history of peasant struggles, farmers movements and political mobilization particularly with the support or the leaders the Indian National Congress.

Peasants movements and the foundation of INC in 1885 : After the Revolt of 1857 there were widespread peasants unrests recurring in India, as peasants increasingly resisted oppressive policies



and exploitative agrarian system whether it was indigenous exploiter by landlord and colonial authorities. Peasants movements such as Indigo Revolt (1859-60), the Deccan Riots (1875) and many more demonstrated that peasants were no longer passive victims but are active agents of resistance (Chandra, 2000). Peasants protests after 1857 often represented an unconscious and unplanned response of the rural population to their oppressive social and economic conditions. Rather than being fully organized or ideologically driven, these movements emerged from immediate grievances such as high revenue demands, exploitation by landlords and loss of their traditional rights. Gradually they had developed an awareness of their customary and legal rights, in many instances, they displayed remarkable courage and a willingness to make sacrifices in their struggle against injustice. However these movements had certain limitations as there was lack of an adequate understanding of the broader nature of colonialism. They often targeted local oppressors without fully recognizing the systematic character of colonial rule. Moreover, they lacked a clear and positive vision of an alternative social order that could unite different sections of society into a wider regional and All India level (Chandra, 2000).

This gap was gradually filled with the emergence of political organization with the establishment of Indian National Congress in 1885, which marked a major turning point in Indian political history. The early role of the Congress was crucial in shaping an economic critique of colonial rule. One of the significant contribution of the early nationalist presented in the Congress was the formulation of the theory of Drain of wealth, most prominently articulated by Dadabhai Naoroji. He argued that British policies were systematically transferring Indian's wealth to Britain without sufficient returns in back, leading to widespread poverty and underdevelopment in India (Naoroji, 1901). This critique was further developed by leaders like R.C Dutt, who highlighted how heavy land demands and exploitative agrarian policies burdened Indian peasants and led to recurring famines (Dutt, 1902). The promotion of the national unity was a major objective of the Congress. In its initial phase, the Congress was largely an organization dominated by the educated elites, including lawyers, professionals and middleclass intellectuals. Its methods were moderate in nature, focusing on petitions, resolution and constitutional reforms rather than mass mobilization. As a result, in the late nineteenth century its reach remained limited, and it did not involved directly with the peasants discontent.

However, the character of the Congress underwent a significant change in the early twentieth century. With the Supervision of Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress adopted new methods of struggle such as Satyagraha and non-cooperation existed with peasants movements in 1920s, which emphasized direct participation of the masses. This marked a shift from an elite dominated organization to a mass mobilized movement, which was supported by all sections of society. Large number of peasants, workers, women's and other sections of society were mobilized and became an active participants in the national movement for freedom. This transition was crucial in transforming the freedom struggle into a truly mass movement (Chandra, 2000).

Role of INC and impact of peasants movements in post colonial land reforms : Uttar Pradesh

1. Policy Role of the Congress : The main credit for implementing land reforms in Uttar Pradesh after independence goes to the Congress (INC) government, which implemented comprehensive policy initiatives aimed at eliminating exploitative land systems inherited from the colonial period and empowering farmers. During the independence movement itself, the Congress had made it clear that land should be owned by those who tilled it, and land reforms were implemented after independence with this ideology in mind (Chandra, 2000). The most significant step taken in Uttar Pradesh during Congress rule was the abolition of zamindari. The Zamindari Abolition Act, enacted in 1950, aimed to eliminate the role of intermediaries and grant direct land ownership to farmers. Additionally, land ceiling laws placed limits on the landholdings of large landowners, so that the surplus land could be redistributed among landless farmers. Similarly, tenancy reforms attempted to protect tenant farmers and grant them ownership rights (Thorner, 1962). The primary objective of these policies was not merely land redistribution but also to eliminate the deep economic and social



inequalities prevalent in rural society. The Congress believed that unless farmers gained ownership of land, they would not be economically self-reliant and agricultural development would not be possible. Thus, land reforms were seen as an important means of establishing social justice and rebuilding the rural economy (Guha, 2007). In the context of Uttar Pradesh, the contribution of Chaudhary Charan Singh is particularly noteworthy, who played a significant role in placing the interests of farmers at the centre of political discourse. He strongly supported the abolition of zamindari and the empowerment of small and medium farmers, arguing that the role of small farmers was central to the Indian agricultural structure (Singh, 1981). However, the Congress government faced numerous political and administrative challenges in implementing these reforms. Large landowners, who were politically influential at the local level, opposed these reforms and attempted to retain land under their control by exploiting loopholes in the laws. In many cases, land was distributed among relatives or fictitious transfers were made, limiting the effectiveness of land ceiling laws (Thorner, 1962). From a political perspective, Paul Brass's analysis is crucial in understanding the social structure and balance of power in Uttar Pradesh. He argued that the elites who dominated state politics, particularly large landowners and influential castes, influenced the implementation of policies and, at times, shaped them to suit their own interests (Brass, 1997). Additionally, administrative weakness, corruption, and a lack of will also hindered the effective implementation of the reforms. As a result, the intended results of land reforms were not achieved uniformly across all regions, and rural inequality was not fully eliminated (Chandra, 2000). It is thus clear that the process of land reforms in Uttar Pradesh was not the result of mere policy initiatives, but rather the outcome of political power structures, social inequalities, and conflicts between various interest groups. While the Congress party provided the necessary legislative framework for these reforms, continued social and political pressure remained necessary to ensure their effective implementation.

2. Impact and Contribution of Peasant Movements: The process of land reforms in Uttar Pradesh cannot be considered solely the result of government policies; rather, it was rooted in a long and organized mass struggle. Particularly during the colonial period, movements like the Awadh Peasant Movement and the Eka Movement played a crucial role in organizing peasants and mobilizing widespread opposition to landlord exploitation. These movements generated a new political consciousness among peasants and highlighted the need for change in land relations (Dhanagare, 1983).

The most important role of these peasant movements was in pressuring the government. This pressure continued even after independence, forcing the Indian National Congress to take steps such as abolition of zamindari, land ceiling laws, and tenancy reforms (Chandra, 2000). Thus, land reforms were not merely administrative decisions, but rather the result of the demands of mass movements. In addition, peasant movements served to spread widespread awareness in rural areas. During the colonial period, peasants were unaware of their rights and were forced to bear the burden of excessive rents and debt. Through movements, they were made aware of their rights and inspired to organize and oppose exploitation. In this context, the role of the Kisan Sabha was also significant, providing an organized platform for farmers (Dhanagare, 1983). Although the focus of this study is Uttar Pradesh, the influence of some national-level movements can also be seen. For example, the Tebhaga movement and the Telangana rebellion brought the issue of farmers' rights to prominence across the country and created a broad ideological environment in favor of land reforms (Dhanagare, 1983). Another important contribution of the farmers' movements was that they laid the social and ideological foundation for land reforms. As peasants were subjected to exorbitant rents, illegal levies, and arbitrary evictions under the dominance of taluqdars and zamindars, which made their economic condition extremely precarious. These struggles were not merely against immediate economic hardships but were rooted in the structural inequality of land ownership. The concentration of land in the hands of a few landlords deprived the majority of cultivators of security and incentives to invest in agriculture. As a result, agricultural productivity remained low and rural distress intensified. Thus, these movements made it clear that unequal distribution of land not only exacerbates social injustice



but also hinders agricultural development, as it creates exploitation, insecurity, and lack of motivation among the actual tillers of the land. These movements also had a significant impact from a political perspective. The power structure in Uttar Pradesh politics was deeply intertwined with land relations, and peasant movements challenged this structure (Brass, 1997). This helped weaken the dominance of landlords and create a favourable environment for land reforms. However, these movements also had limitations. Peasants were not equally organized in all areas, and in many places, the movements remained weak due to a lack of resources and leadership (Thorner, 1962). According to subaltern scholars, peasant movements possessed their own political consciousness and were not solely dependent on Congress leadership. They argue that Congress's role was often limited or negligible because it primarily represented the interests of the elite. According to this view, the source of real change was the peasants' own struggles, not just the policies formulated by Congress (Guha, 1983).

3.The Interrelationship Between Movements and the Congress : To understand the process of land reforms in Uttar Pradesh, an analysis of the relationship between peasant movements and the Indian National Congress (INC) is crucial. While peasant movements strengthened the demand for land reforms at the grassroots level, the Congress provided constitutional and legal form to these demands. Peasant movements active since the colonial period prioritized peasant rights, especially the demand for land ownership and reduction in rent, which the Congress incorporated into its political agenda (Chandra, 2000). After independence, the Congress government attempted to implement these demands through laws such as the abolition of zamindari, land ceilings, and tenancy reforms. Thus, this relationship reflects a kind of mutual interaction, where movements inspire policies and political parties institutionalize them (Dhanagare, 1983). However, the implementation of these reforms also faced several obstacles, due to administrative weakness, bureaucratic inertia and the large landowners taking advantage of loopholes in the laws, the expectations of the peasant movements were often not fully realised (Thorner, 1962; Paul Brass, 1997).

Conclusion - In sum, land reforms in post-independence India were not merely administrative or policy-driven measures, but the result of a long historical process shaped by peasant struggles and political mobilization. From the nineteenth century onwards, peasant movements played a crucial role in exposing the exploitative nature of colonial agrarian structures and asserting their rights, even though they were often limited in scope and organization.

The emergence and evolution of the Indian National Congress further transformed these scattered resistances into a more coherent national movement. While initially dominated by elite interests, the Congress gradually expanded its social base, especially under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, integrating peasants into the larger struggle for independence. The economic critique of colonialism, particularly through the drain of wealth theory, helped in linking agrarian distress with imperial policies. After independence, the Congress sought to translate these ideological commitments into concrete policies such as zamindari abolition and land reforms. Despite facing legal, administrative, and political challenges, measures like the Ninth Schedule reflected the state's determination to protect these reforms. Therefore, land reforms must be seen as the outcome of both sustained peasant resistance and the evolving role of the Congress in shaping a vision of social justice and rural transformation.

Thus, the history of land reforms reflects not only state policy but also the continuous interaction between popular movements and political institutions..

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बदलते वैश्विक परिवेश में संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के समक्ष विद्यमान चुनौतियाँ : एक विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन

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सारांश: बदलते वैश्विक परिदृश्य में संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की भूमिका, प्रासंगिकता और प्रभावशीलता पर नए सिरे से विचार करने की आवश्यकता उत्पन्न हुई है। प्रस्तुत अध्ययन का उद्देश्य उन प्रमुख चुनौतियों का विश्लेषण करना है, जिनका सामना संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ वर्तमान अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यवस्था में कर रहा है। द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध के उपरांत स्थापित यह संस्था वैश्विक शांति, सुरक्षा, मानवाधिकार संरक्षण तथा सतत विकास को बढ़ावा देने के लिए एक केंद्रीय मंच के रूप में कार्य करती रही है, किंतु 21वीं सदी के जटिल और बहुआयामी परिवर्तनों ने इसके कार्यक्षेत्र को अधिक चुनौतीपूर्ण बना दिया है। सुरक्षा परिषद की संरचना और वीटो प्रणाली संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की कार्यप्रणाली में एक प्रमुख बाधा के रूप में उभरती है, जो कई बार महत्वपूर्ण वैश्विक मुद्दों पर प्रभावी निर्णय लेने में अवरोध उत्पन्न करती है। क्षेत्रीय संघर्ष, अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवाद, और शांति स्थापना अभियानों की सीमाएं भी संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की क्षमता को चुनौती देती हैं। यह भी स्पष्ट हुआ कि जलवायु परिवर्तन, वैश्विक स्वास्थ्य संकट जैसे कोविड-19, तथा मानवाधिकार उल्लंघन और शरणार्थी समस्या जैसे मुद्दे संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के लिए नई और जटिल चुनौतियाँ प्रस्तुत कर रहे हैं। इन समस्याओं के समाधान हेतु वैश्विक सहयोग, संसाधनों का न्यायसंगत वितरण, और प्रभावी नीति-निर्माण की आवश्यकता है, जो वर्तमान में कई बाधाओं से घिरा हुआ है। प्रस्तुत शोध लेख इंगित करता है कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की प्रासंगिकता आज भी बनी हुई है, किंतु इसकी संरचनात्मक और कार्यात्मक सीमाओं को दूर किए बिना यह संस्था भविष्य की चुनौतियों का प्रभावी ढंग से सामना नहीं कर सकती। अतः सुरक्षा परिषद में सुधार, पारदर्शिता में वृद्धि, तथा सदस्य देशों के बीच सहयोग को सुदृढ़ करना अनिवार्य है, ताकि संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ वैश्विक शासन की एक सशक्त और प्रभावी संस्था के रूप में अपनी भूमिका निभा सके।

कुजीभूत शब्द : वैश्विक परिदृश्य, संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ, वैश्विक शांति, सुरक्षा, मानवाधिकार, अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवाद

परिचय— द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध की विभीषिका ने मानव सभ्यता को यह सिखाया कि यदि वैश्विक स्तर पर सहयोग, संवाद और संस्थागत व्यवस्था का निर्माण नहीं किया गया, तो विश्व शांति स्थायी रूप से स्थापित नहीं की जा सकती। इसी ऐतिहासिक आवश्यकता के परिणामस्वरूप 1945 में संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की स्थापना हुई। इसका मूल उद्देश्य अंतरराष्ट्रीय शांति और सुरक्षा बनाए रखना, राष्ट्रों के बीच मैत्रीपूर्ण संबंधों को प्रोत्साहित करना, मानवाधिकारों की रक्षा करना तथा आर्थिक-सामाजिक विकास को गति देना था। प्रारंभिक दशकों में संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ ने उपनिवेशवाद के अंत, शांति स्थापना अभियानों और अंतरराष्ट्रीय सहयोग को बढ़ावा देने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई।

हालांकि, 21वीं सदी में वैश्विक व्यवस्था में तीव्र परिवर्तन देखने को मिल रहा है। वैश्वीकरण, तकनीकी क्रांति, आर्थिक असमानताएँ, पर्यावरणीय संकट, और उभरती भू-राजनीतिक प्रतिस्पर्धा ने अंतरराष्ट्रीय संबंधों को अधिक जटिल बना दिया है। इस परिवर्तित परिदृश्य में संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की भूमिका और उसकी प्रभावशीलता पर गंभीर प्रश्न उठने लगे हैं। एक ओर यह संस्था वैश्विक शासन का केंद्रीय मंच बनी हुई है, वहीं दूसरी ओर इसकी संरचनात्मक सीमाएँ और कार्यप्रणाली की जटिलताएँ इसे नई चुनौतियों के समक्ष कमजोर भी बनाती हैं।

शीत युद्ध के समाप्त होने के पश्चात कुछ समय तक विश्व व्यवस्था पर संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका का वर्चस्व रहा, जिसे एकध्रुवीय व्यवस्था के रूप में देखा गया। किंतु वर्तमान समय में चीन, रूस तथा भारत जैसे देशों के उभार ने वैश्विक शक्ति संतुलन को बहुध्रुवीय बना दिया है। इस बहुध्रुवीय व्यवस्था में विभिन्न राष्ट्रों के हितों, विचारधाराओं और रणनीतिक प्राथमिकताओं के बीच टकराव बढ़ गया है, जिससे अंतरराष्ट्रीय सहमति बनाना कठिन हो गया है। इसका सीधा प्रभाव संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की निर्णय-निर्माण प्रक्रिया पर पड़ता है, विशेषकर सुरक्षा परिषद के स्तर पर, जहाँ स्थायी सदस्यों के बीच मतभेद अक्सर निर्णयों को अवरुद्ध कर देते हैं।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र की संरचना, विशेषकर इसकी सुरक्षा परिषद, आज के वैश्विक यथार्थ को पूरी तरह प्रतिबिंबित नहीं करती। स्थायी सदस्यों को प्राप्त वीटो शक्ति, जो प्रारंभ में शक्ति संतुलन बनाए रखने के लिए दी गई थी, आज कई बार राजनीतिक हितों की पूर्ति का साधन बन जाती है। इसके परिणामस्वरूप महत्वपूर्ण अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्दों पर प्रभावी और त्वरित निर्णय लेना कठिन हो जाता है। विकासशील और उभरते राष्ट्र, विशेषकर भारत, लंबे समय से सुरक्षा परिषद में स्थायी सदस्यता की मांग कर रहे हैं, जिससे यह संस्था अधिक प्रतिनिधिक और लोकतांत्रिक बन सके। संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के लिए एक गंभीर चुनौती है। मध्य-पूर्व, अफ्रीका, और यूरोप के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में जारी संघर्षों ने यह स्पष्ट कर दिया है कि पारंपरिक शांति स्थापना तंत्र अब पर्याप्त नहीं रह गया है। उदाहरण के लिए,



रूस-यूक्रेन युद्ध ने वैश्विक शांति और सुरक्षा के समक्ष एक नई चुनौती प्रस्तुत की है, जिसमें संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की भूमिका सीमित दिखाई देती है। इस प्रकार के संघर्षों में महाशक्तियों के प्रत्यक्ष या अप्रत्यक्ष हस्तक्षेप के कारण समाधान और अधिक जटिल हो जाता है।

वर्तमान वैश्विक परिदृश्य में गैर-पारंपरिक सुरक्षा चुनौतियाँ भी तेजी से उभर रही हैं। जलवायु परिवर्तन, जैव विविधता का ह्रास, प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का क्षरण, और पर्यावरणीय आपदाएँ मानव अस्तित्व के लिए गंभीर खतरा बन चुकी हैं। यद्यपि संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के अंतर्गत विभिन्न अंतरराष्ट्रीय समझौते और सम्मेलन आयोजित किए जाते रहे हैं, फिर भी विकसित और विकासशील देशों के बीच जिम्मेदारियों को लेकर मतभेद इन प्रयासों को सीमित कर देते हैं।

इसी प्रकार, वैश्विक स्वास्थ्य संकटों ने भी संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ प्रणाली की कमजोरियों को उजागर किया है। कोविड-19 महामारी ने यह दिखाया कि वैश्विक स्तर पर समन्वय और संसाधनों का समान वितरण कितना आवश्यक है। स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की असमानता, वैक्सीन वितरण में विषमता और सूचना की पारदर्शिता के संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के प्रमुख उद्देश्यों में शामिल रहा है, किंतु वर्तमान समय में विभिन्न देशों में मानवाधिकार उल्लंघन की घटनाएँ लगातार सामने आ रही हैं। शरणार्थियों और विस्थापित लोगों की संख्या में वृद्धि, नस्लीय भेदभाव, लैंगिक असमानता और राजनीतिक दमन जैसी समस्याएँ संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के लिए गंभीर चुनौती बनी हुई हैं। इन मुद्दों पर प्रभावी हस्तक्षेप के लिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ को सदस्य देशों के सहयोग की आवश्यकता होती है, जो कई बार राजनीतिक कारणों से सीमित रह जाता है।

तकनीकी विकास और डिजिटल क्रांति ने जहाँ एक ओर विकास के नए अवसर प्रदान किए हैं, वहीं दूसरी ओर साइबर सुरक्षा, डेटा गोपनीयता और आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस जैसे नए जोखिम भी उत्पन्न किए हैं। इन उभरती चुनौतियों के लिए वैश्विक स्तर पर स्पष्ट नीतियों और नियमों का अभाव है, जिससे संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की भूमिका और अधिक महत्वपूर्ण हो जाती है।

इसके साथ ही, संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की वित्तीय और प्रशासनिक संरचना भी इसकी कार्यक्षमता को प्रभावित करती है। यह संस्था मुख्यतः सदस्य देशों के आर्थिक योगदान पर निर्भर करती है, और कई बार प्रमुख देशों द्वारा योगदान में देरी या कटौती के कारण इसके कार्यक्रम प्रभावित होते हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त, नौकरशाही प्रक्रियाएँ और संस्थागत जटिलताएँ भी इसके निर्णयों के क्रियान्वयन में बाधा उत्पन्न करती हैं।

इस प्रकार, बदलते वैश्विक परिवेश में संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के समक्ष विद्यमान चुनौतियाँ बहुआयामी और जटिल हैं। ये चुनौतियाँ न केवल इसकी संरचना और कार्यप्रणाली को प्रभावित करती हैं, बल्कि इसकी प्रासंगिकता पर भी प्रश्नचिह्न लगाती हैं। अतः यह आवश्यक हो जाता है कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ समयानुकूल सुधारों को अपनाए, अपनी संस्थागत क्षमता को सुदृढ़ करे, और सदस्य देशों के बीच सहयोग एवं विश्वास को बढ़ावा दे।

शोध के उद्देश्य—

1. संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के समक्ष वर्तमान प्रमुख चुनौतियों की पहचान करना।
2. बदलते वैश्विक परिदृश्य में इसकी भूमिका का मूल्यांकन करना।
3. संस्थागत सुधार की आवश्यकता को समझना।
4. भविष्य के लिए संभावित समाधान प्रस्तुत करना।

शोध पद्धति— यह अध्ययन मुख्यतः द्वितीयक स्रोतों पर आधारित है, जिनमें विभिन्न रिपोर्ट, शोध पत्र, अंतरराष्ट्रीय संगठनों के दस्तावेज और नीति विश्लेषण शामिल हैं। विश्लेषणात्मक और व्याख्यात्मक दृष्टिकोण का उपयोग किया गया है।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र की बहुआयामी चुनौतियाँ— 21वीं सदी में संयुक्त राष्ट्र को विविध प्रकार के जटिल और परस्पर जुड़े मुद्दों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है, जो बदलते वैश्विक परिदृश्य को दर्शाते हैं। इन विविध चुनौतियों के लिए मजबूत अंतरराष्ट्रीय सहयोग, कूटनीति और संयुक्त राष्ट्र के सिद्धांतों को बनाए रखने की प्रतिबद्धता आवश्यक है। हालांकि, संयुक्त राष्ट्र को अक्सर भू-राजनीतिक प्रतिद्वंद्विता, राष्ट्रीय संप्रभुता संबंधी चिंताओं और सदस्य देशों की भिन्न प्राथमिकताओं जैसी बाधाओं का सामना करना पड़ता है, जिससे इन मुद्दों के प्रभावी समाधान खोजना एक जटिल और निरंतर चलने वाली प्रक्रिया बन जाती है।

कुछ प्रमुख चुनौतियों में निम्नलिखित शामिल हैं

जलवायु परिवर्तन : आज का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दा जलवायु परिवर्तन है और यह एक नाजुक समय है। जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रभाव अभूतपूर्व हैं, जिनमें खाद्य उत्पादन को खतरे में डालने वाले बदलते मौसम के पैटर्न से लेकर बाढ़ के बढ़ते जलस्तर तक शामिल हैं। संयुक्त राष्ट्र 2015 के पेरिस समझौते और 1997 के क्योटो प्रोटोकॉल जैसी पहलों के माध्यम से जलवायु परिवर्तन से निपटने में सक्रिय रूप से शामिल रहा है। चुनौती सभी देशों को ग्रीनहाउस गैस उत्सर्जन को कम करने, जलवायु प्रभावों के अनुकूल होने और सतत विकास लक्ष्यों को पूरा करने के



लिए महत्वपूर्ण कदम उठाने के लिए राजी करने में निहित है। आर्थिक विकास और पर्यावरणीय स्थिरता के बीच संतुलन बनाए रखना एक जटिल कार्य बना हुआ है।

संघर्ष समाधान और शांतिरक्षा : संयुक्त राष्ट्र विश्व भर में संघर्ष समाधान और शांति स्थापना प्रयासों में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है। सीरिया, यमन, दक्षिण सूडान और यूक्रेन में चल रहे संघर्ष कुछ ऐसे उदाहरण हैं जिनमें संयुक्त राष्ट्र के हस्तक्षेप की आवश्यकता है। संगठन को शांति समझौतों पर बातचीत करने, मानवीय सहायता सुनिश्चित करने और संघर्ष के बाद के क्षेत्रों में स्थिरता बनाए रखने में चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ता है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र चार्टर के अनुसार, संगठन की स्थापना 'आने वाली पीढ़ियों को युद्ध की त्रासदी से बचाने' के लिए की गई थी। चार्टर पर आधिकारिक तौर पर 26 जून, 1945 को सैन फ्रांसिस्को में हस्ताक्षर किए गए थे, जो अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संगठनों पर संयुक्त राष्ट्र सम्मेलन के समापन का प्रतीक था। इसके बाद यह 24 अक्टूबर, 1945 को प्रभावी हुआ। सतत विकास लक्ष्यों को प्राप्त करने के लिए एक सर्वव्यापी मुद्दा विश्व शांति और सुरक्षा का रखरखाव है। सुरक्षा परिषद, महासभा, महासचिव, शांति स्थापना अभियान विभाग, क्षेत्रीय सहायता विभाग, राजनीतिक मामलों के विभाग और शांति निर्माण सहायता कार्यालय मुख्य रूप से संयुक्त राष्ट्र के वे कार्यालय हैं जो वैश्विक शांति और सुरक्षा को बढ़ावा देने और बनाए रखने में सक्रिय हैं।

महामारी और वैश्विक स्वास्थ्य : कोविड-19 महामारी ने वैश्विक स्वास्थ्य संकटों से निपटने में अंतरराष्ट्रीय सहयोग की आवश्यकता को रेखांकित किया है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (डब्ल्यूएचओ) के माध्यम से प्रतिक्रियाओं और टीकों के वितरण के समन्वय में केंद्रीय भूमिका निभाई है। हालांकि, टीकों की समान पहुंच, गलत सूचना और राजनीतिक तनाव ने इन प्रयासों को जटिल बना दिया है।

मानवाधिकार और मानवीय संकट : संयुक्त राष्ट्र को विश्वभर में मानवाधिकारों को बढ़ावा देने और उनकी रक्षा करने का दायित्व सौंपा गया है। सीरिया, म्यांमार और वेनेजुएला जैसे मानवीय संकट मानवाधिकारों को बनाए रखने के लिए महत्वपूर्ण चुनौतियाँ पेश करते हैं। संप्रभुता के सिद्धांतों और रक्षा करने के दायित्व के बीच संतुलन संयुक्त राष्ट्र प्रणाली के भीतर एक सतत बहस का विषय है।

प्रवासन और शरणार्थी : 21वीं सदी में जबरन पलायन और शरणार्थी संकट में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि देखी गई है। बड़े पैमाने पर जनसंख्या का जबरन पलायन एक वैश्विक आपदा है जिसके लिए विश्व नेताओं के मार्गदर्शन में अंतर्राष्ट्रीय समुदाय से समन्वित कार्रवाई की आवश्यकता है। रिकॉर्ड तोड़ संख्या में प्रवासी और शरणार्थी युद्ध, उत्पीड़न, गरीबी और अन्य गंभीर परिस्थितियों से बचने के लिए अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सीमाओं को पार कर रहे हैं। बड़े पैमाने पर जनसंख्या विस्थापन सामाजिक, आर्थिक और राजनीतिक परिदृश्य को ऐसे तरीकों से प्रभावित करता है जो केवल हताहतों तक ही सीमित नहीं हैं। संयुक्त राष्ट्र शरणार्थी उच्चायुक्त विस्थापित व्यक्तियों को संरक्षण और सहायता प्रदान करने के लिए काम करता है, लेकिन आब्रजन नीतियों, सीमा नियंत्रण और विदेशियों के प्रति नफरत से संबंधित मुद्दों ने इस चुनौती से निपटने के प्रयासों को जटिल बना दिया है।

आतंकवाद और अंतरराष्ट्रीय खतरे : आतंकवाद, संगठित अपराध और साइबर खतरे अंतरराष्ट्रीय चुनौतियाँ हैं जिनके लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय सहयोग आवश्यक है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र विभिन्न एजेंसियों और समझौतों के माध्यम से आतंकवाद का मुकाबला करने के लिए काम करता है, लेकिन इन खतरों की बदलती प्रकृति और विभिन्न राष्ट्रीय हितों के कारण कठिनाइयाँ उत्पन्न होती हैं।

परमाणु प्रसार और शस्त्र नियंत्रण : परमाणु हथियारों के प्रसार को रोकना और निरस्त्रीकरण को बढ़ावा देना संयुक्त राष्ट्र के महत्वपूर्ण लक्ष्य हैं। परमाणु प्रौद्योगिकी का प्रसार और अमेरिका, रूस और उत्तर कोरिया जैसे परमाणु हथियार संपन्न देशों के बीच तनाव अंतरराष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा के लिए लगातार चुनौतियाँ पेश करते हैं।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र के लिए संसाधन संबंधी बाधाएँ : संयुक्त राष्ट्र को वैश्विक चुनौतियों से प्रभावी ढंग से निपटने के प्रयासों में सीमित संसाधनों की समस्या का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। संसाधनों की इस कमी ने विश्व भर में शांति, सुरक्षा, मानवाधिकार और विकास को बढ़ावा देने के अपने मिशन को पूरा करने की उसकी क्षमता को बाधित किया है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ अपने विभिन्न कार्यक्रमों और पहलों के वित्तपोषण के लिए सदस्य देशों के योगदान पर बहुत अधिक निर्भर करता है। हालांकि, वित्तपोषण की कमी एक गंभीर समस्या रही है। सदस्य देश अक्सर अपनी वित्तीय प्रतिबद्धताओं को पूरी तरह और समय पर पूरा नहीं करते हैं, जिससे बजट घाटा होता है। यह कमी शांतिरक्षा अभियान, मानवीय सहायता और विकास परियोजनाओं सहित अपने आवश्यक कार्यों को पूरा करने की संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की क्षमता में बाधा डाल सकती है। संघर्ष प्रभावित क्षेत्रों में शांति और स्थिरता बनाए रखने के लिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ शांतिरक्षा मिशन महत्वपूर्ण हैं। हालांकि, इन अभियानों को अक्सर अपर्याप्त वित्तपोषण मिलता है, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप सैनिकों, उपकरणों और रसद सहायता के लिए अपर्याप्त संसाधन उपलब्ध होते हैं। इससे जमीनी स्तर पर शांतिरक्षकों की सुरक्षा और प्रभावशीलता खतरे में पड़ सकती है।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र के सदस्य देशों के बीच राजनीतिक विभाजन : संयुक्त राष्ट्र युद्ध को रोकने, संघर्ष में शामिल पक्षों को समझौता वार्ता में सहायता देने, शांति सैनिकों को भेजने और शांति को कायम रखने और विकसित करने के लिए अनुकूल परिस्थितियाँ बनाने का प्रयास करता है। प्रभावी होने के लिए, ये गतिविधियाँ एक-दूसरे की पूरक होनी चाहिए और अक्सर इनमें कुछ समानताएँ भी होनी चाहिए। संयुक्त राष्ट्र के सदस्य देशों के बीच राजनीतिक विभाजन वास्तव में एक महत्वपूर्ण चुनौती है जो वैश्विक मुद्दों की एक विस्तृत श्रृंखला पर सामूहिक कार्रवाई में बाधा डाल सकती है। इन विभाजनों के कई कारण हो सकते हैं, जिनमें भिन्न राष्ट्रीय हित, ऐतिहासिक संघर्ष, वैचारिक



मतभेद और शक्ति असंतुलन शामिल हैं। इन विभाजनों को दूर करना संयुक्त राष्ट्र के लिए विश्व स्तर पर शांति, सुरक्षा और सतत विकास को बढ़ावा देने के अपने जनादेश को प्रभावी ढंग से पूरा करने के लिए अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है। इसके लिए सदस्य देशों से यह प्रतिबद्धता आवश्यक है कि वे संकीर्ण राष्ट्रीय हितों के बजाय जनहित को प्राथमिकता दें और वैश्विक चुनौतियों के पारस्परिक रूप से स्वीकार्य समाधान खोजने के लिए मिलकर काम करें। बहुपक्षवाद और कूटनीति इन प्रयासों के केंद्र में रहने चाहिए, क्योंकि वे अधिक शांतिपूर्ण और समृद्ध विश्व के लिए सर्वोत्तम आशा प्रदान करते हैं।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुधार की आवश्यकता : बदलते वैश्विक परिदृश्य के अनुरूप ढलने और अंतरराष्ट्रीय शांति, सुरक्षा और विकास को बढ़ावा देने के अपने मिशन को प्रभावी ढंग से पूरा करने के लिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र में सुधार की आवश्यकता अत्यावश्यक है। यह सुधार संयुक्त राष्ट्र की वर्तमान और भविष्य की चुनौतियों से निपटने की क्षमता को बढ़ाने के साथ-साथ राष्ट्रों के बीच समानता, न्याय और सहयोग के सिद्धांतों को बनाए रखने के लिए किया जाना चाहिए। आज की दुनिया 1945 में संयुक्त राष्ट्र की स्थापना के समय से बहुत अलग है। नई वैश्विक शक्तियां उभरी हैं और भू-राजनीतिक परिदृश्य में नाटकीय परिवर्तन आया है। इन परिवर्तनों को प्रतिबिंबित करने और राष्ट्रों के बीच समान प्रतिनिधित्व सुनिश्चित करने के लिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र की निर्णय लेने वाली संरचनाओं, विशेष रूप से सुरक्षा परिषद में सुधार करना आवश्यक है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र संसाधनों का कुशल और पारदर्शी आवंटन सुनिश्चित करना भी अनिवार्य है। सुधार का ध्यान बजटीय प्रथाओं को अनुकूलित करने और अपव्यय को समाप्त करने पर केंद्रित होना चाहिए ताकि यह सुनिश्चित किया जा सके कि धन उन कार्यक्रमों की ओर निर्देशित हो जिनका वैश्विक विकास पर वास्तविक प्रभाव पड़ता है।

निष्कर्ष— बदलते वैश्विक परिवेश में संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की भूमिका पहले से अधिक महत्वपूर्ण हो गई है। हालांकि, इसकी वर्तमान संरचना और कार्यप्रणाली नई चुनौतियों का सामना करने में पूरी तरह सक्षम नहीं है। यदि संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ समयानुकूल सुधार करता है और सदस्य देशों के बीच सहयोग को बढ़ाता है, तो यह वैश्विक शांति, सुरक्षा और विकास के लिए एक प्रभावी मंच बना रह सकता है। अन्यथा, इसकी प्रासंगिकता धीरे-धीरे कम हो सकती है। अंत में, मैं यह कहना चाहूंगा कि 21वीं सदी में वैश्विक चुनौतियों का समाधान करने और अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यवस्था बनाए रखने के लिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र एक आवश्यक संगठन बना हुआ है। हालांकि, हमारे समय के जटिल और परस्पर जुड़े मुद्दों को प्रभावी ढंग से हल करने के लिए इसे विकसित, अनुकूलित और सुधारित होना आवश्यक है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की स्थायी प्रासंगिकता सहयोग को बढ़ावा देने, मानवाधिकारों की रक्षा करने और वैश्विक स्थिरता को प्रोत्साहित करने की इसकी क्षमता में निहित है, जो इसे अधिक शांतिपूर्ण और समृद्ध विश्व के लिए एक महत्वपूर्ण संस्था बनाती है।

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