

ISSN 0974-1100

पूर्वदेवा

सामाजिक विज्ञान शोध पत्रिका

P Ū R V A D E V Ā - A Social Science Research Journal

Peer Reviewed Bilingual International Research Journal

The Journal indexed in the UGC-CARE list.

वर्ष 31 * अंक : 124

जनवरी-मार्च, 2026

प्रधान सम्पादक

डॉ. हरिमोहन धवन



मध्यप्रदेश दलित साहित्य अकादमी प्रकाशन

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प्रकाशक
पी.सी. बैरवा



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परामर्श मण्डल

डॉ. प्रकाश बरतुनिया

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प्रतिष्ठित गांधीवादी विद्वान व वरिष्ठ उपाध्यक्ष, सुलभ अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सामाजिक सेवा संगठन, नईदिल्ली

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प्रधान सम्पादक

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आचार्य, राजनीति विज्ञान व पूर्व प्राचार्य, उच्च शिक्षा विभाग, (म.प्र.)

प्रकाशक : पी. सी. बैरवा

स्वात्वाधिकारी : मध्यप्रदेश दलित साहित्य अकादमी,

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इस अंक का मूल्य रूपये 150/-

वित्तीय सहयोग

भारतीय सामाजिक विज्ञान अनुसंधान परिषद, नईदिल्ली

सम्पादन व प्रकाशन सर्वथा अवैतनिक एवं अव्यवसायिक

पूर्वदेवा
सामाजिक विज्ञान शोध पत्रिका

वर्ष 31 अंक 124

जनवरी—मार्च, 2026

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‘पूर्वदेवा’ में प्रकाशित लेख एवं उनमें व्यक्त विचार लेखकों के निजी विचार हैं।
सम्पादक व प्रकाशक का उनसे सहमत होना आवश्यक नहीं है।

छठी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व बौद्ध धर्म और नगरीकरण के अन्तर्सम्बन्धों का विवेचनात्मक अध्ययन

अमिता कुमारी

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सारांश

छठी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व का समय न केवल भारत में बल्कि विश्व इतिहास में भी परिवर्तनों का दौर था। ये नवीन बदलाव प्राचीन और परम्परागत मान्यताओं पर प्रश्न चिन्ह लगा रहे थे और नवीन मतों का प्रचार कर रहे थे। इस काल में यूनान में पाइथागोरस, ईरान में जरथुस्ट तथा चीन में कन्फ्यूशियस जैसे विचारक हुए जो इसी बौद्धिक शृंखला का हिस्सा थे। प्राचीन भारत में उदित हुए नवीन मतों के उद्भव के कारणों को इस समय की आर्थिक, राजनीतिक और सामाजिक परिस्थितियों में खोजा जा सकता है। दरअसल इस काल में आर्थिक संवृद्धि, राज्य निर्माण, नगरीकरण और बौद्धिक परिवर्तन की प्रक्रिया साथ-साथ चलते हुए एक दूसरे के विकास में सहायक बनी।

इसी विकास प्रक्रिया का हिस्सा था—इस समय उदित हुआ बौद्ध मत ऐसे कौन से कारण थे जिन्होंने बौद्ध मत को स्वीकृति प्रदान की? क्या तत्कालीन समाज में प्रचलित वैदिक यज्ञ और कर्मकाण्ड इतने क टदायक हो गए थे कि न केवल सामान्य जन-गण बल्कि क्षत्रिय और ब्राह्मण वर्ग के लोग भी इस नवीन मत की ओर तेजी से अग्रसर हुए। बौद्ध धर्म के उद्भव और विकास के कारणों को इस समय की आर्थिक परिस्थितियों में हुए परिवर्तनों में खोजा जा सकता है। उदाहरणार्थ बौद्ध धर्म ने नगरों में ऋण-व्यवस्था को प्रोत्साहन दिया, यज्ञों में पशु-हत्या की निंदा की, भिक्षुओं के विनय सम्बन्धी नियमों के अन्तर्गत सूती और ऊनी वस्त्र पहनने की स्वीकृति दी। इस प्रकार बौद्ध धर्म को तत्कालीन नगरीय आवश्यकताओं के परिप्रेक्ष्य में देखा जा सकता है तथा ऐसे ही फिर क्या हम बौद्ध धर्म को तत्कालीन नवोदित नगरीकरण हेतु भी एक उत्प्रेरक के रूप में देख सकते हैं? ऐसे ही तत्कालीन कृषि अधिशेष बौद्ध धर्म एवं नगरीकरण से सम्बन्धों का प्रश्न भी विचारनीय है। इन्हीं अंतर्सम्बन्धों का विश्लेषण इस शोध-पत्र में प्रस्तुत किया जा रहा है।

मूल शब्द : बौद्ध मत, नगरीकरण, महापरिनिर्वाण, धर्मचक्र प्रवर्तन, उत्पादन-अधिशेष, राजतन्त्र, गणतन्त्र

भूमिका

जब हम भारतीय सन्दर्भ में छठी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व का अध्ययन करते हैं तो हमें ज्ञात होता है कि यही वह समय है जब हमें भारतीय इतिहास के सभी पक्षों का विवरण अधिक प्रमाणिकता और स्पष्टता के साथ उपलब्ध होने लगता है। इस समय राजनीतिक तौर पर दो प्रकार के राज्य अस्तित्व में थे—राजतन्त्र और गणतन्त्र। राजतन्त्र गंगा के मैदान में केन्द्रित थे। वहीं गणराज्य इन राज्यों की ऊपरी परिधि के चारों ओर हिमालय की तलहटी में तथा इनमें से कुछ दक्षिण में और कुछ आधुनिक पंजाब के अन्तर्गत उत्तर-पश्चिम भारत में बसे हुए थे।¹

इस समय के साहित्य में हमें 16 महाजनपदों का विवरण मिलता है जो इस प्रकार हैं—अंग, मगध, काशी, कौशल, वत्स, शूरसेन, पांचाल, कुरु, मत्स्य, चेदि, अवन्ति, गंधार, कम्बोज, अश्मक, वज्जि और मल्ल इत्यादि। इन सोलह महाजनपदों के अतिरिक्त उत्तर भारत में कुछ गणराज्य भी विद्यमान थे। इन्हीं गणराज्यों में से एक था शाक्य गणराज्य, जिसमें इस समय के प्रमुख विचारक महात्मा गौतम बुद्ध का जन्म हुआ था। जहां एक ओर सोलह महाजनपद साम्राज्य विस्तार की दौड़ में लगे थे वहीं दूसरी ओर गणराज्य भी अपने मूल्यों, परम्पराओं को बचाने का निरन्तर प्रयास कर रहे थे।

जहां अंतिम दौड़ में राजनीतिक तौर पर राजतन्त्रों का प्रभुत्व रहा वहीं गणराज्य भी संघ संस्थाओं के रूप में अपने मूल्यों को बचाने में कामयाब रहे। राजतन्त्रों की अपेक्षा गणराज्य व्यक्तिवादी और स्वतन्त्र मत के कम विरोधी थे और रुढ़िवादी विचारों को सहन करने के लिए तैयार नहीं थे।² वास्तव में चाहे राजतन्त्र व्यवस्था हो या संघ संस्थाएँ दोनों के विकास में इस समय हुए कृषि परिवर्तनों की भूमिका महत्वपूर्ण रही। इस कृषि परिवर्तन में लोहे की भूमिका सबसे महत्वपूर्ण है जिसने उत्पादन में अधिशेष की मात्रा को बढ़ाया और इसी अधिशेष की मात्रा ने नगरीकरण को सम्भव बनाया। असल में मध्य गंगा कछारी क्षेत्र में जंगलों की सफाई किए बिना कृषि में इतने अधिशेष की मात्रा को प्राप्त करना सम्भव नहीं था। यह एक भारी वर्षा का क्षेत्र है। यह है ठीक है कि आग की सहायता से जंगलों को साफ किया जा सकता है किन्तु जमीन से जड़ों को निकालने के लिए सख्त औजारों की आवश्यकता थी और लोहे के प्रयोग से यह कार्य आसानी से किया जा सकता है। छोटे भूखण्ड पर फावड़े और कुदाल की सहायता से खेती की जा सकती है। किन्तु बड़े क्षेत्र पर यह सम्भव प्रतीत नहीं होता। कृषि क्षेत्र में लोहे के प्रयोग के साक्ष्य हमें पुरातात्विक खुदाई से भी प्राप्त होते हैं। हमें लोहे के दो फाल प्राप्त हुए हैं— एक कौशांबी से तथा दूसरा वैशाली से प्राप्त फाल उत्तरी काले पालीशदार भांड वाले चरण का है।

इसी तरह उत्पादन के कार्यों में इस्तेमाल होने वाले कुछ अन्य उपकरण भी मिले हैं, जैसे—सकोटर कुल्हाड़ी। इसी तरह कौशांबी की खुदाई में कुल्हाड़ी, बसूला (तक्षणी) चाकू, छुरी, कांटे, हंसिया आदि अनेक लोहे के उपकरण मिले जो उत्तरी काले पॉलिशदार भांड के आरंभिक चरण के हैं इसी प्रकार लोहे की वस्तु की वस्तुएं हमें कौशांबी, प्रहलादपुर, बनारस और मासोना (पूर्वी उत्तर-प्रदेश) और चिरांद, पटना, वैशाली, सोनपुर, चंपा में प्राप्त हुई हैं।

लौह अयस्क की भरपूर उपलब्धता और उसके निर्माण की प्रौद्योगिकी में सुधार इत्यादि कारकों ने कृषि तथा हस्तशिल्प उत्पादन में विशेष भूमिका अदा की है। दरअसल इस काल में

लोहे के अत्यधिक प्रयोग के कारणों को जानना अति आवश्यक है। इसके लिए हमें इस बात को समझना होगा कि ताम्र अयस्क में काम करने की अपेक्षा लौह अयस्क में काम करना अधिक लाभकारी था। उदाहरण के लिए यदि लोहार अपनी सम्पूर्ण कला, शक्ति, समय खर्च करने के पश्चात् भी 100 किलोग्राम ताम्र अयस्क से केवल एक किलोग्राम तांबा प्राप्त में करता है वही इतनी ही ऊर्जा, समय देने पर वह 100 किलोग्राम लोह अयस्क से 60–70 किलोग्राम लोहा प्राप्त कर सकता है। अतः यह स्वाभाविक ही है जब एक बार लौह अयस्क की तकनीक पर विजय प्राप्त कर ली गई तो निर्वाह योग्य कृषि का स्थान अधिशेष वाली कृषि प्रणालियों ने ले लिया। इस तरह कृषि योग्य भूमि की पर्याप्त उपलब्धता और लौह तकनीक के प्रयोग ने कृषि अधिशेष की मात्रा को बढ़ाया और इसी बढ़ाते अधिशेष की मात्रा व भोजन की उपलब्धता ने अन्य आर्थिक गतिविधियों के अतिरिक्त लोगों के लग सकने की सम्भावना को मजबूत बनाया। इस तरह विभिन्न क्षेत्रों के परस्पर सहयोग तथा विशिष्टता के परिणामस्वरूप प्राचीन भारत में द्वितीय नगरीकरण की प्रक्रिया प्रारम्भ हो सकी।³

असल में नगरीकरण के लिए किसी एक कारण का जिम्मेदार नहीं ठहराया जा सकता यदि किसानों ने लौह तकनीक की सहायता से उत्पादन में बढ़त प्राप्त की तो इस अधिशेष को बाजार तक पहुंचाने में राजनैतिक शक्ति, नियम और व्यापारी वर्ग की भूमिका को भी नकारा नहीं जा सकता है। इसी परिपेक्ष्य में नगरीकरण के कुछ महत्वपूर्ण लक्षण अग्रलिखित प्रकार से हैं –

- भौगोलिक स्थिति • अधिशेष • जनसंख्या का बढ़ना • बाजार और व्यापार • श्रेणी की विशेषता
- खरीददार • सामाजिक स्तरीकरण • प्रशासन • भू-स्वामी • सुरक्षा • शिक्षा • धर्म • तीर्थयात्रा इत्यादि।⁴

नगरीकरण के इन कारणों में से धर्म की भूमिका का हम इस शोध-पत्र में अध्ययन करेंगे। नगरों में रहने वाले अधिकतम लोग के परम्परागत परिवेश से दूर हो जाते हैं और इस कारण अपने मूल्यों, मान्यताओं एवं विश्वासों को उतना समय नहीं दे पाते। वहीं दूसरी ओर सामाजिक और आर्थिक कारणों से अन्य वर्गों के साथ सामंजस्य स्थापित करना उनके लिए अपरिहार्य हो जाता है। इस नवीन भौतिक परिवेश में उपजे इन प्रश्नों के लिए परंपरागत नियम उचित समाधान नहीं दे पाते।

नवीन समस्याओं के लिए नवीन समाधान की आवश्यकता होती है जो तात्कालिक परिस्थितियों के साथ सामंजस्य स्थापित कर अधिक संतुलित एवं लाभकारी हल प्रदान कर सके। सम्भवतः इसी कारण इस समय उदित हुए बौद्ध मत को नगरों में भरपूर समर्थन मिला क्योंकि वह इस समय की आवश्यकताओं के अनुरूप संतुलन बनाने में सफल रहा।⁵ इस समय उदित हुए मतों की संख्या बौद्ध मत के अनुसार बासठ या तिरेसठ थी जबकि बौद्ध मत के समकालीन एक अन्य मत जैन मत के अनुसार इन मतों की समस्या तीन सौ तिरेसठ थी।⁶

इन समस्त मतों में नगरीय आबादी का सर्वाधिक समर्थन बौद्धों को प्राप्त हुआ जिसका विश्लेषण करते हुएट्रेवर लिंग बताते हैं—“गंगा घाटी में कृषि के विकास ने सघन आबादी और नगरीकरण को जन्म दिया और बदले में नगरीकरण ने सामाजिक स्तर पर व्यक्तिवाद को तथा राजनीतिक स्तर पर निरंकुश राजतन्त्र को जन्म दिया। व्यक्तिवाद और राजतन्त्रवाद के विकास ने व्यक्ति की नैतिक एवं आध्यात्मिक सोच को अस्त-व्यस्त कर डाला। इस दुविधा ने मानवीय

परिस्थितियों के प्रति असंतोष पैदा किया और बुद्ध के लिए व्यक्तिगत दुख की यह बात ही उनके मानवीय दशा के विश्लेषण का आरंभिक बिंदु बनी।⁷ परन्तु उक्त सम्बन्धों का विश्लेषण करने से पूर्व बौद्ध मत की स्थापना से सम्बन्धित गतिविधियों को ध्यान में रखना अत्यंत आवश्यक है।

बौद्ध मत के संस्थापक

बौद्ध मत के संस्थापक गौतम बुद्ध का जन्म शाक्य वंश के कबायली कुलीन परिवार में हुआ। वर्तमान में यह स्थान नेपाल में है। सम्भवतः अपने वर्तमान जीवन में पूर्ण संतुष्टि प्राप्त न होने के कारण उन्होंने ज्ञान प्राप्ति की आशा में 29 वर्ष की आयु में ग्रहत्याग कर दिया। ज्ञान प्राप्ति की इस यात्रा में गौतम सिद्धार्थ कई वर्षों तक निरंतर भटकते रहे किंतु उन्हें उनके प्रश्नों के संतोषजनक उत्तर प्राप्त नहीं हुए। अंत में उन्होंने अपने ही बल पर आगे बढ़ने का निर्णय लिया। मोक्ष प्राप्ति का मार्ग प्राप्त न होने तक वह अपने स्थान पर नहीं हिलेंगे, इस संकल्प के साथ वे एक पीपल के वृक्ष के नीचे ध्यान लगा कर बैठ गए और अंततः वह अपने उद्देश्य में सफल रहे। ज्ञान प्राप्ति के पश्चात उन्होंने अपने विचारों का प्रचार लोगों को इस दुःखमय जीवन से मुक्ति दिलाने के लिए किया।⁸

बौद्ध मत और नगरीकरण के अंतर्संबंधों का विश्लेषण

मैक्स वेबर सम्भवतः वे पहले विद्वान हैं जिन्होंने यह विचार प्रकट किया है कि बौद्ध मत नगरीय सभ्यता की देन है जो स्वयं को समय के साथ नगरों के विकास, नगरीय राजतंत्र और अभिजात्य वर्ग की व्युत्पत्ति के रूप में अभिव्यक्त करता है।⁹ वही नगरों में रहने वाले जनो हेतु भी जहां एक ओर वैदिक कर्मकांड, यज्ञ, पशु हत्या एक बोझ जान पड़ते थे वहीं दूसरी ओर ऋण व्यवस्था जो वैदिक धर्म के अनुसार उचित नहीं मानी जाती है, उसकी उन्हें नितांत आवश्यकता थी।

ऐसे समय पर नगर वासियों को भी वैदिक धर्म के विकल्प के तौर पर बौद्ध धर्म अति आकर सरल लगा। वहीं दूसरी ओर अपने शैशव काल में बौद्ध मत को भी समर्थन की आवश्यकता थी। इस तरह बौद्ध धर्म और नगरीकरण दोनों ने एक दूसरे की आवश्यकताओं को पूरा किया। जिसकी पुष्टि हमें बौद्ध साहित्य में नगरीय संस्कृति की चर्चाओं से होती है। गौतम बुद्ध और संघ के प्रति सम्मान के रूप में दान वाली विहार की प्रथम घटना का वर्णन मगध शासक बिंबिसार के माध्यम से मिलता है। विहार दान की इस घटना ने एक परम्परा को जन्म दिया जिसके माध्यम से भिक्षुओं के एक स्थान पर रहकर अध्ययन—अध्यापन, शिक्षण—प्रशिक्षण वाली विहारीय व्यवस्था का सूत्रपात हो सका।¹⁰

असल में नगरों के विकास में धर्म एक महत्वपूर्ण कारण रहा है। इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं है कि धार्मिक विचारों से गांव में धार्मिक संस्थाओं का उदय हुआ। लेकिन अधिक महत्वपूर्ण धार्मिक स्थान आमतौर पर शहरों में केंद्रित रहे जो राज्य के नगरों में धार्मिक एकता को व्यक्त करता है। जहां विभिन्न वर्गों के लोग एकत्रित होते हैं, जिसके फलस्वरूप इन विभिन्न वर्गों के बीच जो सामाजिक बन्धन थे वे निरंतर ढीले होते रहते हैं।

इस तरह धर्म न केवल कुछ शहरों, केन्द्रों के उद्भव का कारण बना बल्कि इसने शहरी परम्परा का विस्तार भी निरन्तर किया क्योंकि बौद्ध अनुयायी, भिक्षु निरन्तर प्रचार के उद्देश्य से

भ्रमण करते रहते थे। इस तरह बौद्ध मत ने नगरीकरण की संस्कृति और संवृद्धि में अपना योगदान दिया वहीं दूसरी ओर नगरीकरण ने भी बौद्ध उपासकों, भिक्षु के रूप में बौद्ध मत को निरन्तर समर्थन प्रदान किया।¹¹ स्पष्ट रूप से आरम्भिक दिनों का बौद्ध मत धनी और प्रभावशाली लोगों के दान और उदारता पर अत्यधिक निर्भर था। बौद्ध धर्म नगरों और धनी लोगों पर अपनी निर्भरता कई तरह से प्रतिबिम्बित करता है। पाली-त्रिपिटक ऐसे उदाहरणों से भरा पड़ा है जहाँ नगरीय तड़क-भड़क और ऐश्वर्य की प्रशंसा की गई है।

इनमें विशेष रूप से बौद्ध संघ को दान देने की चर्चा है उदाहरण के लिए बौद्ध साहित्य में अनाथपिंडक को उसके द्वारा दिए गए महान दान के कारण ही स्मरण किया जाता है जिसने राजकुमार जेटा से बांस के जंगल को खरीदा और श्रावस्ती में गौतम बुद्ध के लिए एक मठ का निर्माण किया। यद्यपि सैद्धांतिक तौर पर बौद्ध मत सांसारिक सुखों को छोड़ने की शिक्षा देता है। तथापि दूसरी ओर समाज के धन संपन्न वर्ग के भरपूर समर्थन से संघ में भिक्षु ऐश्वर्य का जीवन जी रहे थे। इसकी पुष्टि एक नौजवान युवक की कहानी से होती है जिसमें वह यह सोचकर भिक्षु बन जाता है कि कम से कम उसे अच्छा भोजन तो समय से प्राप्त होगा।¹²

बौद्ध जातक चुल्लसेढी कथा से ज्ञात होता है कि छठी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व में एक मरे हुए चूहे की कीमत भी मुद्रा के माध्यम से मापी जाती थी, उदाहरण के लिए एक तरुण को एक मरा हुआ चूहा मिला और इस मारे हुए चूहे को उसने एक काकणी (3 कर्षापण का आठवां हिस्सा) में बेचा।¹³ ऐसे समय में संघ की सुविधाएं निश्चित, ही आकर्षण का बिन्दु रही होगी। बौद्ध साहित्य, पाणिनि की अष्टाध्यायी से हमें छठी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व के समृद्ध नगरों का पता चलता है जिसमें चंपा, राजगृह, वैशाली, वाराणसी, साकेत, कौशांबी, मथुरा, उज्जयिनी, तक्षशिला इत्यादि इनमें प्रमुख हैं। विभिन्न प्रकार के उद्योग-धन्धे, फल-फूल रहे थे। इन नगरों में विभिन्न व्यवसाय वाले लोग प्रायः अलग-अलग मुहल्लो में रहते थे। विभिन्न व्यवसाय कर्ता के लिए अलग-अलग नामों का प्रयोग किया जाता था जैसे धातु का काम करने वालों के लिए 'कम्मर' शब्द मिलता है। कम्मर भी कई वर्गों में विभक्त थे। कुछ लोग कृषि में काम आने वाले उपकरणों जैसे हल, गंडासे, फावड़ा, हंसिया का कार्य करते थे। जबकि कुछ लड़ाई में काम आने वाले औजारों का उत्पादन करते थे।¹⁴

इसी प्रकार हम जब बौद्ध भिक्षुओं और उपासकों के लिए निर्धारित आचार-संहिता पर विचार करते हैं तो पाते हैं संघ के नियम, व्यक्तिगत आचरण छठी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व में हुए भौतिक वातावरण से प्रभावित थे। इस आचार संहिता में भिक्षुओं के वेश, भोजन, मकान तथा यौन-व्यवहार पर सीमाएँ निर्धारित की गई थी। यहां तक कि भिक्षुओं के वस्त्रों हेतु भी गौतम बुद्ध विस्तृत नियम निर्धारित करते हैं। ये नियम बुनाई, कटाई तथा रंगाई के क्षेत्र में हुए विकास के अनुसार थे। उदाहरण के लिए, विनय-पिटक, सूती, ऊनी वस्त्रों सहित चार प्रकार के वस्त्रों तथा रंगाई से निर्मित दस प्रकार के रंगों की चर्चा करता है। वस्त्रों का महत्व इस बात से पता चलता है कि विनय पिटक का एक पूरा अध्याय ही वस्त्रों पर चर्चा करता है। सभी धान के खेतों की क्यारियों की तरह भिक्षुओं के वस्त्र में अनेक टुकड़े होते हैं जिनमें छोटे-छोटे कपड़ों के टुकड़ों को जोड़ा गया होता है।

दरअसल भिक्षुओं के वस्त्रों को निर्धारित करने वाले नियम उन नवीन तरह के वस्त्रों और

चमड़े की वस्तुओं के प्रयोग के विरुद्ध एक प्रतिक्रिया है। वे बौद्ध भिक्षुओं के लिए तीन प्रकार के वस्त्रों की संस्तुति करते हैं। जो एक साधारण निर्धन व्यक्ति द्वारा पहने जाते हैं। एक भिक्षु की आवश्यकताओं को भी साधारण निर्धन परिवार के अनुसार ही सीमित होना चाहिए। इसलिए भिक्षुओं की व्यक्तिगत संपत्ति वस्त्र, कटोरा, शय्य तथा औषधि तक सीमित थी। वहीं परिवार, संपत्ति और राजा द्वारा शासित सामाजिक व्यवस्था के विरुद्ध किए गए अपराधों के लिए भिक्षुओं को दंडित किया जाता है अतः ऐसे लोग जो सामाजिक कर्तव्यों से अथवा सामाजिक आदर्शों को तोड़ने के लिए दिए गए दण्ड से मुक्त होना चाहते हैं ऐसे लोगों को संघ में प्रवेश की अनुमति नहीं थी। उदाहरण के लिए दासों, लुटेरों, चोरों, सैनिकों, अपराधियों, माता-पिता के हत्यारों तथा बीस वर्ष से कम आयु के लोगों के लिए संघ में कोई स्थान नहीं था।¹⁵

वस्तुतः बौद्ध धर्म में नगरीय केन्द्रों की महत्ता को इस तथ्य से समझा जा सकता है कि दरअसल जब हम बौद्ध साहित्य का अध्ययन करते हैं तो हमें ज्ञात होता है बौद्ध साहित्य में ग्रामीण केन्द्रों की अपेक्षा नगरीय केन्द्रों की आवृत्ति अधिक हुई है। गौतम बुद्ध ने अपने अधिकतम उपदेश नगरों में दिए उदाहरण-स्वरूप विनय और सूतपिटक में एकत्रित किए गए उन 1009 नामों में जहां सुत का उपदेश दिया गया है उनका विवरण इस प्रकार है-

तालिका -1

बस्ती	आवृत्ति	प्रतिशत
श्रावस्ती	593	58.77
राजग्रह	140	13.87
कपिलवस्तु	056	05.55
वैशाली	038	03.76
कौशाम्बी	015	01.46
अन्य शहर और नगर	167	16.57

जैसे की तालिका-1 को देखने से स्पष्ट होता है कि अकेले पांच नगरों में ही 83.43 प्रतिशत सूत्रों का उपदेश दिया गया है जबकि शेष 16.57 प्रतिशत, 167 स्थानों पर उपदिष्ट हुए जिसमें ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के साथ अन्य नगर भी शामिल है। इसे हमारे अगली तालिका और भी अधिक प्रभावी तरीके से व्यक्त करती है जहां ग्रामीण बस्तियों की तुलना में नगरीय बस्तियों का सन्दर्भ अधिक दिखाया गया है-

तालिका-2

बस्ती के प्रकार	आवृत्ति	प्रतिशत
नगरीय	4257	95.37
ग्रामीण	0208	04.67
योग	4465	100

हम तालिका-1 में वर्णित स्थानों का विस्तार से अध्ययन करते हैं तो हमें ज्ञात होता है ये सभी स्थल छठी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व में महत्वपूर्ण नगरीय केन्द्र थे।¹⁶ इन नगरीय केन्द्रों में गतिविधियों का क्रम ारुविवरण इस प्रकार है—

श्रावस्ती

जिसकी पहचान साहेत-माहेत से की गई है यह उत्तर प्रदेश के गोंडा और बहराइच जिले के बीच की सीमा के पास ताप्ती नदी के पास था तथा सभी महत्वपूर्ण मार्गों से जुड़ा हुआ था। इस शहर की तीन दिशाओं में उत्तर, दक्षिण और पूर्व में तीन द्वार थे। बुद्ध काल में श्रावस्ती एक महत्वपूर्ण व्यापारिक केन्द्र था। साथ ही यह भी एक तथ्य है कि यह नगर बौद्ध संघ के सबसे बड़े दानकर्ता अनाथपिण्डक का आवास भी था जो शहर में व्यापारिक पूंजी के संचय का संकेत देता है।¹⁷ गौतम बुद्ध ने अपने बहुत से महत्वपूर्ण उपदेश श्रावस्ती में दिए। असल में जब गौतम बुद्ध के उपदेशों और ठहरने के स्थान का अध्ययन करते हैं तो ज्ञात होता है कि उन्होंने वर्षाकाल के दौरान जिस एक स्थान पर सबसे अधिक समय बिताया वह स्थान था श्रावस्ती। गौतम बुद्ध ने यहां पच्चीस वर्षावास बीताए जिसमें जेतवन में 19 तथा अन्य 6 पुब्बाराम में थे।¹⁸ यहां सबसे अधिक समय व्यतीत करने के दो प्रमुख कारण थे। बुद्धकाल में बड़े नगरों में एक श्रावस्ती थी और दूसरा यह नगर आजीविको के केन्द्र के रूप में प्रसिद्ध था। अतः जनमानस को बौद्ध मत की ओर आकर्षित करने के लिए गौतम बुद्ध को यहां कई उपदेश देने पड़े और इसी कारण गौतम बुद्ध के सबसे अधिक वर्षावास यहां पर व्यतीत हुए।¹⁹

राजग्रह

पटना नगर से लगभग सौ किलोमीटर दक्षिण-पूर्व में राजगीर नामक प्रसिद्ध बौद्ध स्थल रहा है। बौद्ध, जैन और चीनी यात्री युवान-च्वांग के अनुसार इस नगर के चारों ओर कुश नामक घास का बहुतायत होने के कारण स्थान को कुशाग्रपुर भी कहते थे। ऐतिहासिक दृष्टि से बुद्ध काल में मगध राज्य शक्ति व सम्पन्नता की बुलन्दियों को छू रहा था और मगध की राजधानी राजग्रह राजनीतिक और धार्मिक केन्द्र के रूप में प्रसिद्धि प्राप्त कर रही थी। सारनाथ में धर्मचक्र-प्रवर्तन के बाद भगवान बुद्ध का आगमन राजगीर में ही हुआ था।²⁰ वास्तव में बौद्ध संघ की प्रारम्भिक संख्या वृद्धि, समृद्धि तथा प्रसार का श्रेय राजगृह को दिया जाता है। क्योंकि एक तो मगध के बौद्ध उपासकों और भिक्षुओं में समाज के सभी वर्गों यथा श्रेष्ठियों, राजपरिवारों, ब्राह्मणों एवं निम्न वर्गों का प्रतिनिधित्व तो था ही, विभिन्न सम्प्रदाय वादियों जैसे आजीवकों, निग्रन्थो, वेलटिठपुत्तियों आदि उपासकों का भी प्रतिनिधित्व था। बौद्ध परम्परा के अनुसार गौतम बुद्ध ने अपना दूसरा, तीसरा, चौथा, सत्रहवा और उन्नीसवा वर्षावास यहीं व्यतीत किया। गौतम बुद्ध के महापरिनिर्वाण तक यहां अठारह बड़े मठों की स्थापना हो चुकी थी। प्राचीन पालि साहित्य में वर्णित राजग्रह में भिक्षु-भिक्षुणियों की संख्या का ब्यौरा तालिका 3 में दिया जा रहा है—

तालिका 3 : भिक्षु-भिक्षुणियों की संख्या का ब्यौरा

राजगृह नगर	संख्या
भिक्षु	40
भिक्षुणी	13
उपासक	16
उपासिका	5

असल में भिक्षु, भिक्षुणी, उपासक व उपासिकाओं की संख्या दृष्टि से मगध के लोगों का कोशल के पश्चात दूसरा स्थान है।²¹ गौतम बुद्ध के राजगीर के प्रति लगाव को इन पंक्तियों में वर्णित किया है—

“राजगृह आनन्दप्रद है, चौर-प्रपात आनन्दप्रद है,
वैभार के किनारे की सप्तवर्ण गुफा आनन्दप्रद है,
ऋषिगिरी के किनारे कालशिला आनन्दप्रद है,
सीतावनसर्प-शैण्डिक- प्राग्भार आनन्दप्रद है,
तपोदाराम आनन्दप्रद है, वेणुवन में कलन्दक
झील (तालाब) आनन्दप्रद है, जीवक का आम्रवन आनन्दप्रद है,
मर्दकुक्षि में मर्ग-दाव आनन्दप्रद है।”²²

वही राजगृह गौतम बुद्ध के चचेरे भाई देवदत्त द्वारा किए गए विद्रोह व घातक हमलों का घटना स्थल भी रहा। क्योंकि देवदत्त बुद्ध द्वारा अपने को उसका उत्तराधिकारी घोषित करवाना चाहता था किन्तु गौतम बुद्ध को यह स्वीकार्य नहीं था। गौतम बुद्ध के महापरिनिर्वाण के बाद मगध नरेश आजातशत्रु ने उनके धातु-अवशेषों में से प्राप्त अंश पर राजगृह में एक स्तूप का निर्माण कराया था। और प्रथम बौद्ध संगति के आयोजन का श्रेय भी राजगृह को दिया जाता है। जो महाकस्सप की अध्यक्षता में सम्पन्न हुई जिसमें धम्म और विनय का संगायन हुआ।²³

वैशाली

यह बौद्ध काल का महत्वपूर्ण नगर था जो वर्तमान समय में उत्तरी बिहार में मुजफरपुर से दक्षिण-पूर्व की ओर लगभग छत्तीस किलोमीटर दूर बसाढ नामक स्थान के आस-पास अवस्थित था। अपने ज्ञान प्राप्ति के पांच वर्ष पश्चात गौतम बुद्ध का यहां आगमन तब हुआ जब यहां भयंकर अकाल पड़ा था। उन्होंने वहां पहुंचकर रतन-सूत का पाठ किया जिससे अकाल की स्थिति में सुधार आया। बौद्ध दृष्टिकोण से इस नगर का अत्यधिक महत्व है। एक तो इस गण की कार्य प्रणाली से गौतम बुद्ध अत्यन्त प्रभावित थे। दूसरा यहां भिक्षुणि संघ की स्थापना हुई क्योंकि इससे पहले भी गौतम बुद्ध महिलाओं के संघ में प्रवेश का अनुरोध ठुकरा चुके थे।

वहीं दूसरी ओर वैशाली नगर की प्रसिद्ध नर्तकी आम्रपाली ने बौद्ध संघ की शरण लेकर अपना प्रसिद्ध आम्रवन बौद्ध संघ को भेंट कर दिया। यह घटना गौतम बुद्ध के 45 वें और अन्तिम वर्षावास की है। इसके पश्चात उन्होंने माघ पूर्णिमा के दिन वैशाली से कुशीनगर के लिए प्रस्थान किया और घोषणा की कि आज से तीन माह बाद वे निर्वाण प्राप्त करेंगे। इस प्रकार उन्होंने वैशाख पूर्णिमा के दिन महानिर्वाण प्राप्त किया और उनके निर्वाण के पश्चात प्राप्त अंश पर लिच्छवियों ने एक स्तूप का निर्माण किया। इस तरह गौतम बुद्ध के समय और उनके पश्चात

भी वैशाली बौद्धों हेतु एक महत्वपूर्ण नगर था। जिसकी पुष्टि यहां सम्पन्न हुई द्वितीय बौद्ध संगति से भी होती है।²⁴

कौशांबी

दीर्घनिकाय के महापरिनिर्वाणसुत तथा महासुदस्सन सुत में कौशांबी की गणना बुद्धकालीन छः नगरों में की गई है जो कि बौद्ध मत का प्रसिद्ध केंद्र था। यह प्रतिष्ठान से श्रावस्ती जाने वाले दक्षिणापथ मार्ग पर एक महत्वपूर्ण पड़ाव था। विनयपिटक में वर्णित विवरण से ज्ञात होता है कि कौशांबी से एक सड़क राजगह भी जाती थी। जीवक उज्जयिनी से लौटता हुआ कौशांबी होकर ही राजगह गया था। गौतम बुद्ध के समय में उनके साथ रहने वाले प्रसिद्ध व्यापारियों द्वारा यहां घोड़िताराम, कुक्कुटाराम और पावरिकग्ववन नमक विहार बनवाने का वर्णन भी पाली सहित्य में मिलता है।²⁵

कुशीनगर

पालि साहित्य के अध्ययन से इस स्थान की प्रसिद्धि का ज्ञान होता है। इस स्थान का भगवान बुद्ध से घनिष्ठ सम्बन्ध है क्योंकि इस स्थान पर उन्होंने अपने जीवन का अन्तिम उपदेश दिया। इस स्थान का वर्णन सुतनिपात की वत्थुगाथा में भी हुआ है। वर्तमान कुशीनगर को बौद्धकाल में कुशीनारा कहते थे। मल्ल गणराज्य दो भागों में विभक्त था जिसकी एक राजधानी कुशीनारा और दूसरी पावा थी। गौतम बुद्ध के परिनिर्वाण के पश्चात् कुशीनारा एक प्रसिद्ध बौद्ध तीर्थ स्थल में तब्दील हो गया। यही भगवान ने अंतिम वास किया था यहां शाल वृक्ष के नीचे उनका परिनिर्वाण हुआ। वर्तमान कसया के रूप में कुशीनगर की पहचान की गई है जो गोरखपुर से बत्तीस किलोमीटर दूर देवरिया जिले में अवस्थित है।²⁶

अवंति

यह पश्चिमी भारत का प्रमुख जनपद था। आधुनिक मालवा व मध्यप्रदेश के कुछ भागो से मिलकर अवंति नगर बना था। प्राचीन भारत में अवंति के दो भाग थे— उत्तरी अवंति जिसकी राजधानी उज्जैन थी और दक्षिण अवंति जिसकी राजधानी महिष्मती थी। अवंति बौद्ध धर्म का प्रसिद्ध केन्द्र था। अनेक बौद्ध थेर व थेरा यहां बौद्ध धर्म का प्रचार करने में व्यस्त थे। अवंति का पर्याप्त आर्थिक महत्व था क्योंकि कई व्यापारिक मार्ग इस प्रदेश से होकर गुजरते थे।

इसी तरह जब भी हम बोधिसत्त्वों के जन्म आवास का अध्ययन करते हैं तो हमें ज्ञात होता है कि वे उच्च वर्ग एवं नगरीय पृष्ठभूमि से अधिक प्रेरित हैं जिसका विवरण आगे तालिका 4 में दिया गया है।²⁷

तालिका 4 : बोधि सत्त्वों की व्यावसायिक पृष्ठभूमि

व्यवसाय	आवृत्ति	प्रतिशत
राजाराजकुमार	86	37.55
व्यवसायीधनी व्यवसायी	57	24.89
उच्च अधिकारी	54	23.58
निम्न व्यवसायी	32	13.98
योग	229	100.00

इसी तरह जब हम बोधिसत्त्वों के जन्मों का अध्ययन करते हैं,²⁸ तो पाते हैं कि 299 में से केवल 32 बार अर्थात् 14 प्रतिशत ने निम्न व्यवसायिक वर्ग में जन्म लिया। 86 प्रतिशत से अधिक या तो राजा, राजकुमार या उच्च अधिकारी थे। नगरीय संस्कृति को बढ़ावा देने में बौद्ध धर्म की भूमि भी महत्वपूर्ण रही है। दरअसल बौद्ध धर्म में अतिवाद की प्रवृत्ति को नकारा जाता है जिसकी झलक हमें लगभग बौद्ध साहित्य में देखने को मिलती है। बौद्ध धर्म में जन्म-आधारित, जाति-व्यवस्था को पूरी तरह खारिज करके संघ के द्वार सभी के लिए खोल दिए, किन्तु साथ ही इस बात को भी स्मरण रखा कि ऐसे लोग जिनकी अनुपस्थित समाज में असंतुलन उत्पन्न कर सकती है उनके संघ में प्रवेश पर प्रतिबन्ध था। उदाहरणार्थ सैनिक, दासों, राजकीय सेवक, पन्द्रह वर्ष से कम आयु के बालक-बालिकाओं के संघ में प्रवेश पर पाबन्दी थी। वहीं ऐसे लोग जो हिंसक गतिविधियों में लिप्त थे उनको भी संघ से बाहर ही रखा जाता था। नगरों में आर्थिक समृद्धि के लिए अनिवार्य अन्य कारकों जैसे शांति और अहिंसा को बनाए रखना। वस्तुओं के उचित मूल्य निर्धारण, व्यापार को बढ़ावा देने के लिए ब्याज पर पैसा देने की रीति को बढ़ावा देना। इत्यादि ऐसे उपदेश थे जिन्हें बौद्ध धर्म के द्वारा निरन्तर बढ़ावा दिया जाता है इस प्रकार हम देखते हैं कि बौद्ध धर्म और नगरीकरण के विकास की प्रक्रिया दोनों एक दूसरे के सहायक बने।

निष्कर्ष

उपरोक्त विश्लेषण से स्पष्ट है कि छठी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व का समय बहुमुखी बदलाव का दौर था। जहां एक ओरबोद्धिक तौर पर नवीन मत परम्परागत वैदिक धर्म को चुनौती दे रहे थे वहीं आर्थिक क्षेत्र में लौह तकनीक के फलस्वरूप निर्वाह कृषि अर्थव्यवस्था का स्थान दूसरी ओर अधिशेष उत्पादन में ले लिया। इसी अधिशेष की मात्रा ने विभिन्न व्यवसायों, व्यापारियों को फलने-फूलने का पर्याप्त अवसर दिया। विभिन्न कार्यों में रत वर्ग, यथा कुम्हार, ततुवाय, स्वर्णकार आदि अपने-अपने कार्यों में विशेषज्ञता प्राप्त कर श्रेणी, संगठनों के रूप में संगठित हो रहे थे।

शिल्पकार शस्त्र निर्माण में नए प्रयास कर रहे थे। उदाहरणार्थ मगध नरेश अजातशत्रु की सेना में महाशिलाकंटक तथा राठमूसल नामक नए उपकरण प्रयोग किए जा रहे थे। वहीं लौह तकनीक ने सैन्य व्यवस्था को तेजी से सुदृढ़ कर राज्य निर्माण की प्रक्रिया में अपना योगदान दिया। इस तरह तेजी से उभरते राजनैतिक, व्यापारिक नगरों में नवीन बौद्ध मत तेजी से स्वीकृत हुआ क्योंकि वैदिक परम्परा इन नगरीय संस्कृति की आवश्यकताओं को पूर्ण करने में असमर्थ थी। वहीं दूसरी ओर हम देखते हैं कि छठी शताब्दी ईसा पूर्व में बौद्ध भिक्षुओं और उपासकों के लिए निर्धारित नियम तत्कालीन भौतिक परिस्थितियों से प्रभावित थे, जैसे वस्तुओं के क्रय-विक्रय तथा वस्तुओं के उचित मूल्य के सम्बन्ध में व्यापारियों को उपदेश देना। व्यापार के विस्तार के समुद्री यात्रा को समर्थन देना इत्यादि। वहीं साथ ही अपने विकास की प्रारम्भिक अवस्था में बौद्ध मत को समर्थन की आवश्यकता थी और तत्कालीन नगरों में रहने वाली उच्च वर्ग से बौद्ध धर्म को भी पर्याप्त समर्थन मिला है, उदाहरणार्थ-दान विहार की प्रथम घटना मगध नरेश बिबिसार के सम्बन्ध में मिलती है। वहीं नगरीय संस्कृति भी वैदिक धर्म के विकल्प के तौर पर एक सरल धर्म चाहती थी। इस तरह दोनों एक दूसरे के पूरक बने जिसकी पुष्टि हमें बौद्ध साहित्य में नगरीय संस्कृति के विवरण से होती है।



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भारतीय साहित्य एवं पुरातत्व में लिंगोपासना : गढ़वाल मण्डल के विशेष संदर्भ में

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प्रतिमा शब्द का शाब्दिक अर्थ प्रतिरूप होता है, जिसका प्रयोग केवल उन्हीं प्रतिरूपों के लिए किया जाता है, जो किसी न किसी धर्म अथवा दर्शन से सम्बंधित होते हैं। प्रतिमा निर्माण उपनिषदों की देन है, जिसमें उपासना हेतु ध्यानस्थ होने के साधन के रूप में प्रतिमा या प्रतिरूप को स्वीकार किया गया है। इस प्रकार यह कहा जा सकता है कि प्रतिमा का उद्भव उपासना पद्धति के गर्भ से हुआ है। भारतीय आध्यात्मिक संस्कृति में चिरन्तनकाल से मानव में अदृश्य शक्ति के प्रति आत्मसमर्पण की भावना से किसी न किसी प्रकार से किसी पदार्थ को उस अदृश्य शक्ति की प्रतिकृति मानकर अपनी भक्ति के भाव पुष्प अर्पित किए हैं। इसी के फलस्वरूप भारतीय संस्कृति में देवोपासना की समृद्ध-परंपरा विकसित हुई तथा इसी देवोपासना के प्रभावमण्डल में विभिन्न सम्प्रदायों शैव, वैष्णव, सौर, गाणपत्य आदि का उद्भव हुआ। इन सभी सम्प्रदायों में शैव सम्प्रदाय जिनके उपास्य देव शिव हैं सर्वाधिक प्राचीनतम सम्प्रदाय है। शैव सम्प्रदाय की दो लोकप्रिय शाखाएँ हैं जिनमें एक वेदान्तिक शैव एवं दूसरा आगमिक शैव सम्प्रदाय है। दोनों सम्प्रदायों की परम्पराएँ एक दूसरे से विभिन्न हैं वेदान्तिक शैव सम्प्रदाय की परम्पराएँ वेदों एवं उपनिषदों के आधार पर पुष्पित होती हैं। वेदान्तिक शैव सम्प्रदाय का विकास उत्तर-भारतीय संस्कृति में दृष्टिगोचर होता है, जबकि आगमिक शैव परम्परा दक्षिण भारतीय द्रविड संस्कृति में प्रतिष्ठित है। इन शैव सम्प्रदायों में अनादि देव शिव के विविध स्वरूपों का अंकन प्राप्त होता है। शिव के इन विविध स्वरूपों का वर्गीकरण दो भागों में किया गया है, जिनमें एक वर्ग शिव के प्रतीक स्वरूप लिंग प्रतिमाओं का है तथा दूसरा वर्ग शिव के मानवीय रूप प्रतिमाओं का है। शिव के इन स्वरूपों में उनका प्रतीक शिवलिंग शैव धर्म में काफी लोकप्रिय है। शिवलिंग में प्रयुक्त लिंग शब्द का अर्थ चिन्ह या प्रतीक है। इस प्रकार शिवलिंग का शाब्दिक अर्थ शिव का प्रतीक है। लिंग पूजा की शिव से साम्यता की पुष्टि साहित्यिक साक्ष्यों से भी प्राप्त होती है। वैदिक सभ्यता में लिंगपूजा का स्पष्ट प्रामाणिक साक्ष्य प्राप्त नहीं होता है, जिसका कारण वैदिक सभ्यता में आर्यसमाज का प्रभुत्व हो सकता है क्योंकि आर्य लिंगपूजक

नहीं थे। परन्तु ऋग्वेद¹ में उल्लेखित 'शिशुदेवा' शब्द के आधार पर यह कहा जा सकता है कि वैदिक काल में लिंगपूजा समाज के उस वर्ग में प्रचलित रही होगी जिसका वैदिक समाज में प्रभुत्व नहीं था। इस प्रकार ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि वैदिक काल में वैदिक सभ्यता का प्रतिनिधत्व करने वाले प्रभुत्वशाली वर्ग में लिंगपूजा का प्रचलन नहीं था, परन्तु वैदिक काल के किसी विशेष वर्ग में लिंग पूजा प्रचलित थी जिन्हें 'शिशुदेवा' शब्द से संबोधित किया गया है। श्वेताश्वरोपनिषद्² में उल्लेखित 'ईशान शिव प्रत्येक योनि पर प्रतिष्ठित है लिंग पूजा का एक महत्वपूर्ण साहित्यिक साक्ष्य है। रूद्र जो शिव का वैदिक रूप है को ऋग्वेद में अग्नि का प्रतीक कहा गया है। बलदेव उपाध्याय अपनी पुस्तक 'आर्य-संस्कृति के मूलाधार' में रूद्र को अग्नि के प्रतीक रूप में स्थापित करते हुए कहते हैं कि अग्नि शिखा ऊपर की ओर उठती है, जिसकी साम्यता रूद्र के उर्ध्वलिंग से की जा सकती है और शिवलिंग का ज्योतिर्लिंग संबोधन भी लिंगोपासना का संबंध शिव से स्थापित करता है।³

महाभारत में शिवलिंगोपासना का स्पष्ट प्रमाण मिलना प्रारम्भ हो जाता है। इसमें उल्लेखित किरातार्जुनियम् आख्यान में अर्जुन द्वारा शिव से पाशुपत अस्त्र प्राप्त करने के लिए वन में लिंग की स्थापना करके तप करने का उल्लेख प्राप्त होता है।⁴ महाभारत में ही एक स्थान पर महामुनिश्वर उपमन्यु द्वारा कृष्ण की पत्नी जाम्बवती को श्रेष्ठ एवं सुंदर स्वरूप का पुत्र प्राप्त करने के लिए शिव की आराधना लिंग रूप में करने का सुझाव देने का उल्लेख प्राप्त होता है।⁵

पौराणिक पृष्ठभूमि में लिंगोपासना का विशद वर्णन प्राप्त होता है। शिव पुराण⁶ में शिवलिंग को 'अग्निस्तंभ' कहा गया है। स्कंद पुराण⁷ में आकाश की तुलना शिवलिंग से की गई है।

पौराणिक ग्रंथों में शिवलिंग की उत्पत्ति से सम्बंधित अनेक कथानक प्राप्त होते हैं। लिंग पुराण⁸ में वर्णित कथानक के अनुसार सृष्टि के अंत होने पर सभी चर-अचर नष्ट हो गए। सृष्टि की इस शून्यता से ब्रह्मा व्यथित होकर धरणिधर देव विष्णु के पास गए। परन्तु विष्णुलोक में जाने पर ब्रह्मा ने देखा कि इन सबसे विरक्त होकर योगात्मा विष्णु क्षीरसागर में शयन कर रहे हैं। कमलनयन विष्णु को इस प्रकार शयन में देखकर ब्रह्मा क्रोधित हो गए तथा उनकी निद्रा भंग करने हेतु उन पर प्रहार किए। ब्रह्मा के इस प्रहार से विष्णु की निद्रा भंग हो गई। जागृत अवस्था में होने पर विष्णु ब्रह्मा से बोले कि हे पुत्र, हे देवों के अग्रणी, मैं आपका स्वागत करता हूँ। परन्तु ब्रह्मा अपने लिए पुत्र संबोधन सुनकर उत्तेजित हो गए। ब्रह्मा ने विष्णु से कहा कि आपने मुझे पुत्र कहकर संबोधित किया है जबकि मैं सृष्टिकर्ता और संहारकर्ता होने के कारण आपसे श्रेष्ठ हूँ। ब्रह्मा के इस वचन को सुनकर विष्णु ने ब्रह्मा से कहा कि आप स्वयं को जगत का कर्ता, भर्ता और संहारकर्ता समझते हैं। परन्तु सत्य यह है कि आप मेरे शरीर से उत्पन्न हुए हैं। विष्णु के इस प्रकार कहने पर दोनों देवों के मध्य अपनी-अपनी श्रेष्ठता स्थापित करने हेतु संघर्ष प्रारम्भ हो गया। तब दोनों देवों के मध्य उत्पन्न विवाद का अंत करने के लिए एक देदीप्यमान अग्निस्तंभ प्रकट हुआ जो हजारों ज्वालाओं से युक्त था। क्षय और वृद्धि से रहित इस लिंगाकृति का न आदि था न अंत। इस प्रकार आदि और अंत से रहित लिंगाकृति को देखकर ब्रह्मा और विष्णु अचंभित हो गए। दोनों देव अपनी जिज्ञासा शांत करने हेतु लिंग रूपी इस दिव्य अग्निस्तंभ के आदि और अंत की खोज में चल पड़े। ब्रह्मा विराट् हंस का रूप धारण कर आकाश की ओर गमन किए तथा विष्णु वराह रूप धारण कर पाताल की ओर गए। इस प्रकार हजारों

वर्ष तक गमन करने के बाद भी दोनों देव लिंग के आदि और अंत का पता नहीं कर सके। लिंग के अभेद्य स्वरूप से दोनों भयभीत हो गए। तब शूलपाणि शिव उनके समक्ष प्रकट हुए। ब्रह्मा और विष्णु ने शिव के इस स्वरूप के आगे नतमस्तक होकर उनकी स्तुति की। ब्रह्मा, विष्णु की स्तुति से प्रसन्न होकर शिव ने दोनों को जब, हे श्रेष्ठ देव कहकर संबोधित किया तब उनकी इस ऊँची आवाज से 'ऊँ' शब्द का नाद हुआ। इस नाद से उत्पन्न 'ऊँ' ध्वनि का 'अ' लिंग के दायी ओर और 'उ' बायीं ओर तथा मध्य में 'म' अंकित हो गया। ब्रह्मा ने जब लिंग की स्तुति की तब शिव उस दिव्य ज्योतिर्मय लिंग से नाद का रूप धारण कर स्थिर हो गए इस प्रकार ब्रह्मा और विष्णु के मध्य उत्पन्न विवाद का अंत करने के लिए शिव हजारों ज्वालाओं से युक्त सूर्य के समान तेजोमय लिंगाकृति के रूप में प्रकट हुए।

शिवलिंग उत्पत्ति का इसी के समान कथानक ब्रह्माण्ड पुराण⁹, शिव पुराण¹⁰ स्कंद पुराण¹¹ में भी वर्णित है।

लिंग के भेद

लिंग को मुख्यतः दो वर्गों में विभक्त किया गया है— (1) चल लिंग (जंगम), (2) अचल लिंग (स्थावर)

1. चल लिंग

शिवलिंग के चल प्रकार को जंगम लिंग भी कहते हैं। निर्माण पदार्थों के आधार पर इन चल लिंगों को विभिन्न वर्गों में विभक्त किया गया है, जो निम्न प्रकार से हैं— (1) मृण्मय लिंग, (2) लोहज लिंग, (3) रत्नज लिंग, (4) दारुज लिंग, (5) शैलज लिंग, (6) क्षणिक लिंग।

2. अचल लिंग

शिवलिंग के अचल प्रकार को स्थावर लिंग के नाम से भी जानते हैं। लिंग के इस प्रकार को संरचना के आधार पर विभिन्न वर्गों में विभक्त किया गया है। गोपीनाथ राव ने इन अचल लिंगों के नौ प्रकारों का वर्णन किया है, जो इस प्रकार हैं— (1) स्वयंभू लिंग, (2) पूर्वलिंग, (3) द्वैत लिंग, (4) गाणपत्य लिंग, (5) असुर लिंग, (6) सुर लिंग, (7) आर्ष लिंग, (8) राक्षस लिंग, (9) मानुष लिंग।¹²

इन अचल लिंगों में स्वयंभू लिंग को उत्तम कोटि का द्वैत और गाणपत्य लिंग को उत्तमामध्यमकोटि का सुर, असुर और आर्ष प्रकार के अचल लिंग को उत्तम कोटि में सबसे निम्न प्रकार में तथा मानुषलिंग को निम्न कोटि में मध्यम प्रकार का माना गया है।

अचल प्रकार के लिंगों में सबसे अधिक मानुषलिंग प्रचलित है। मानुषलिंगों का निर्माण देवायतन के द्वारा उसकी ऊँचाई, देवायतन के एक पार्श्व की लम्बाई या हस्त की लम्बाई के आधार पर की जाती है। मानुषलिंगों की संरचना तीन भागों में विभक्त होती है, जिसमें सबसे निचले वर्गाकार भाग को ब्रह्म भाग, मध्य भाग को विष्णु भाग जो अष्टकोणीय होता है तथा ऊपरी वृत्ताकार भाग को रुद्रभाग कहते हैं। शिवलिंग के रुद्रभाग पर संरचित क्षैतिज रेखा को पार्श्वसूत्र एवं उर्ध्व रेखा को ब्रह्मसूत्र कहा जाता है।

मानुषलिंगों के ऊपर उत्कीर्ण आकृतियों के आधार पर इसे निम्न भागों में बाँटा गया है जो इस प्रकार हैं— (1) साधारण लिंग, (2) अष्टोत्तर लिंग, (3) सहस्र लिंग, (4) धारा लिंग, (5) मुखलिंग।

इन मानुष लिंगों में सबसे विशिष्ट स्वरूप वाला लिंग मुखलिंग है। लिंग के इस प्रकार में रूद्रभाग पर एक, दो, तीन या चार की संख्या में शिव मुखाकृति का अंकन किया जाता है। शिवलिंग के रूद्रभाग पर अंकित शिव मुखाकृतियाँ शिव के विविध स्वरूपों का प्रतिनिधित्व करती हैं।

रूद्रभाग पर पूर्व दिशा में अंकित मुखाकृति तत्पुरुष, पश्चिम में सद्योजात, उत्तर में वामदेव, दक्षिण में अघोर तथा लिंग के शिरोभाग को प्रतीकात्मक रूप से ईशान मुख के रूप में अभिहित किया गया है। शिव के सद्योजात मुख को पृथ्वी का प्रतीक, वामदेव को जल का प्रतीक, अघोर मुख को तेज का प्रतीक एवं तत्पुरुष को वायु का प्रतीक तथा ईशान को आकाश का प्रतीक कहा गया है।

शिव के इन पाँचों मुखों में ईशान या सदाशिव मुख द्विनेत्र तथा अन्य चारों मुख त्रिनेत्रधारी होते हैं। पूर्व दिशा में विद्यमान शिव के मुख को महोवमुख, दक्षिण दिशा में भैरव मुख (अघोर), पश्चिम दिशा में विद्यमान मुख नंदीमुख, उत्तर दिशा के मुख को उमामुख तथा पाँचवे मुख को सदाशिव मुख कहते हैं।¹³

प्रतिमा लक्षण

शिवलिंग प्रतिमा के मूर्त्तन विधान का शिल्पग्रंथों एवं पुराणों में विस्तृत वर्णन प्राप्त होता है। विष्णुधर्मोत्तर पुराण¹⁴ में शिवलिंग को तीन भागों में विभक्त किया गया है। ये तीन भाग भोग पीठ (रूद्रभाग), भद्र पीठ (विष्णु भाग) तथा ब्रह्मपीठ (ब्रह्म भाग) हैं। इन तीन भागों में रूद्रभाग का स्वरूप वृत्ताकार, विष्णुभाग का स्वरूप अष्टकोणीय जबकि ब्रह्मभाग का स्वरूप वर्गाकार होना चाहिए। मत्स्य पुराण¹⁵ में वर्णित शिवलिंग प्रतिमा निर्माण विधान के अनुसार शिवलिंग प्रतिमा श्वेत रंग एवं चिकनी सतह से युक्त निर्मित करनी चाहिए। देवालय में स्थापना हेतु निर्मित शिवलिंग का परिमाण मंदिर के परिमाण के अनुसार रखने का विधान है। शिवलिंग निर्माण के लिए सर्वप्रथम चौकोर एवं समतल गर्त्त में ब्रह्मसूत्र स्थापित करना चाहिए। ब्रह्मसूत्र के बायीं ओर अर्चा या लिंग की स्थापना करनी चाहिए। पूर्वोत्तर या दक्षिणपूर्व की ओर पूर्वद्वार बनाना चाहिए। पूर्व में स्थित इस द्वार को महेन्द्रद्वार कहते हैं। पूर्वद्वार को इक्कीस भागों में विभक्त कर मध्यम भाग में ब्रह्मसूत्र की कल्पना करनी चाहिए। इसके अर्द्धभाग को तीन भागों में विभक्त कर उत्तर की ओर तथा दक्षिण की ओर एक भाग छोड़कर ब्रह्म स्थान की कल्पना करनी चाहिए। इस अर्द्धभाग में लिंग की स्थापना प्रशस्त मानी गई है। अर्द्धभाग को पाँच भागों में विभक्त किया जाता है जिसके तीन भाग ज्येष्ठ भाग कहे जाते हैं। भीतरी भाग को 9 भागों में विभक्त करते हैं, जिसके पंचम भाग को मध्य भाग कहते हैं। इस प्रकार नौ भागों में विभक्त गर्भ गृह में तीन भाग ज्येष्ठ भाग, उसके बाद तीन भाग मध्यम भाग और अंतिम तीन भाग कनिष्ठ कहा जाता है। नाभि यानि रूद्रभाग के आधे भाग के बराबर आठ भाग करके फिर उसके तीन भागों को छोड़कर चौकोर विषकम्भ निर्मित करना चाहिए। लिंग के मध्यभाग में आठ कोण निर्मित करना चाहिए। तदन्तर बचे हुए भाग को दो कोणों से लांछित करना चाहिए। इसी प्रकार ऊपर का भाग भी आठ कोणों वाला निर्मित करना चाहिए। लिंग में महेश्वर भाग को उर्ध्व वृत्ताकार निर्मित करना चाहिए। मध्यम भाग जिसे वैष्णव भाग कहते हैं, इसे अष्टकोणीय निर्मित करना चाहिए तथा वैष्णव भाग के नीचे स्थित ब्रह्म भाग को वर्गाकार निर्मित करना चाहिए। वहीं गर्भमान के

परिणाम से निर्मित लिंग को चार भागों में विभक्त कर विष्कम्भ की कल्पना करनी चाहिए। देवायतन को सूत्र द्वारा नापकर उसे तीन भागों में विभक्त करना चाहिए। इसमें नीचे का भाग चार कोणोंवाला और मध्य भाग आठकोणों से युक्त निर्मित करना चाहिए। सबसे ऊपर के भाग पूज्य भाग या नाभिभाग कहा जाता है। इस प्रकार से निर्मित शिवलिंग के लम्बाई का विस्तार चौकोर स्वरूप का होना चाहिए। आठ कोण वाले भाग के अर्द्धभाग को छोड़कर शेष को वृत्ताकार निर्मित करना चाहिए। लिंग के शिरोभाग को मूलभाग से बिल्कुल सीधा निर्मित करना चाहिए।

देवतामूर्तिप्रकरण¹⁶ के अनुसार शिवलिंग प्रतिमा निर्माण के लिए अष्टधातु का प्रयोग किया जा सकता है। ये अष्टधातु स्वर्ण, चाँदी, ताँबा, काँसा, पीतल, राँगा, सीसा और लोहा है। धातु से निर्मित शिवलिंग प्रतिमा की ऊँचाई एक से आठ अँगुल तक का होना चाहिए। एक से आठ अँगुल ऊँचाई के लिंगों को अलग-अलग नाम से अभिहित किया गया है। एक अँगुल के लिंग को 'मनोहर', दो अँगुल ऊँचाई के लिंग को श्रीमुख, तीन अँगुल ऊँचाई के शिवलिंग को रुद्रतेज, चार अँगुल ऊँचाई के शिवलिंग को महोत्सव, पाँच अँगुल ऊँचाई के शिवलिंग को आनंद, छः अँगुल ऊँचाई के शिवलिंग को सुवस्त्राख्य, सात अँगुल ऊँचाई के शिवलिंग को स्त्रीपूज और आठ अँगुल ऊँचाई के निर्मित शिवलिंग को नंदीर्वद्धन कहते हैं। शिवलिंग प्रतिमा के पीठिका के निर्माण में मिश्र धातु का प्रयोग नहीं होना चाहिए। जिस धातु का शिवलिंग हो उसी धातु की जलहरी भी बनानी चाहिए। अष्टधातु के अलावा अन्य धातु के लिंग भी यदि निर्मित करनी हो तो उसे भी अष्टधातु के अनुसार ही निर्मित करनी चाहिए। वहीं काष्ठ निर्मित लिंग को कभी भी सोलह अँगुल से कम ऊँचाई का निर्मित नहीं करना चाहिए। काष्ठ निर्मित लिंग को एक-एक अँगुल बढ़ाते हुए छह हाथ तक बढ़ाया जा सकता है अथवा सोलह अँगुल में आठ बार सोलह-सोलह अँगुल की वृद्धि करते हुए एक सौ अट्ठाईस अँगुल ऊँचाई तक निर्मित किया जा सकता है। इस प्रकार निर्मित नौ लिंगों को अलग-अलग नाम से अभिहित किया गया है। पहले सोलह अँगुल ऊँचे शिवलिंग को मकरेन्दु, दूसरे बत्तीस अँगुल के लिंग का नाम मांगल्य, तीसरे अड़तालीस अँगुल ऊँचे लिंग को पुष्प, चौथे चौसठ अँगुल ऊँचाई के लिंग को सिद्धार्थक, अस्सी अँगुल ऊँचाई के लिंग को दण्ड, छठे छियान्चे अँगुल ऊँचाई के लिंग को प्रौरव, सातवें एक सौ बारह अँगुल ऊँचाई के लिंग को काम्य और आठवें एक सौ अट्ठाईस अँगुल ऊँचाई के लिंग को पुष्पक और नवें एक सौ चौवालीस अँगुल ऊँचाई के लिंग को फलोद्भव कहते हैं। काष्ठ निर्मित शिवलिंग हेतु श्रीपर्णा, शीशम, अशोक, शिरीष, चंदन, नीम, रक्तचंदन, वीर्यक, कर्पूर देवदारु, पारिजात, चंपक, महुआ और अगर वृक्ष के काष्ठ का प्रयोग करना चाहिए। पाषाण निर्मित लिंग एक से नौ हाथ की ऊँचाई तक का निर्मित करना चाहिए। एक हाथ से कम ऊँचाई का पाषाण लिंग निर्मित नहीं करना चाहिए। एक-एक हाथ की वृद्धि करते हुए तैंतीस प्रकार के लिंग निर्मित किये जाने के विधान का वर्णन है। पाषाण निर्मित इन तैंतीस प्रकार के लिंगों का नाम श्रीभव, उद्भव, मयहृत, पाशहन्ता, महातेज, परापर, महेश्वर, शेखर, शिव, शांत, मनोहलादकर, रुद्रतेज, सदात्मज्ञ, वामदेव, अघोर, ईश्वर, तत्पुरुष, ईरान, मृत्युंजय, विजयक्रमात, किरणाक्ष, महोरास्त्र, श्रीकंठ, मुनिवर्द्धन, पुण्डरीक, सुवक्त्र, उमातेज, विश्वेश्वर त्रिनेत्र, त्र्यम्बक और महाकाल हैं। देवालय में स्थापना के उद्देश्य से निर्मित लिंग गर्भगृह के परिमाण के अनुसार निर्मित करना

चाहिए। चार हाथ के गर्भगृह में एक हाथ ऊँचाई के शिवलिंग की स्थापना करनी चाहिए। अर्थात् लिंग की ऊँचाई गर्भमान के आकार का एक चौथाई होना चाहिए। वहीं पाँच हाथ या पैंतालीस हाथ गर्भमान वाले देवालय में पाँचवें भाग के लिंग की स्थापना करना चाहिए। छः हाथ से चौवन हाथ के गर्भमान वाले देवालय में गर्भमान के छठें भाग के बराबर की ऊँचाई का शिवलिंग निर्मित करना चाहिए। नवें भाग के पाँचवें भाग का लिंग मध्यम मान का जबकि गर्भमान के अर्द्धभाग के लिंग को कनिष्ठ मान का कहा जाता है। यदि शिवलिंग धातु, रत्न, शंभुबाण लिंग, काष्ठ लिंग, मुख लिंग या पार्थिक लिंग हो तो गर्भगृह के मान को कम या अधिक करके निर्मित किया जा सकता है।

लिंग विस्तार के मान को व्यास के नवें भाग के मान के बराबर करना चाहिए। इस प्रकार विभाजित नवें भाग के साढ़े आठ भाग ब्रह्म भाग, मध्य के आठ भाग विष्णु भाग और साढ़े सात भाग महेश्वर भाग रखना चाहिए। शिवलिंग का रूद्रभाग वृत्ताकार, विष्णु भाग अष्टकोणीय तथा ब्रह्म भाग वर्गाकार निर्मित करना चाहिए। नागर शैली में निर्मित शिवलिंग को ज्येष्ठ भाग, मध्य भाग और कनिष्ठ भाग में निर्मित करना चाहिए। इस शैली में लिंग निर्मित करने के लिए शिवलिंग की कुल लम्बाई को सोलह भागों में विभाजित करना चाहिए। इस प्रकार विभाजित भाग वाले शिवलिंग में पाँच भाग के विस्तार वाले लिंग को ज्येष्ठ लिंग चार भाग विस्तार वाले लिंग को सार्द्धकर्मक कहा जाता है। शिवलिंग की ऊँचाई को आठ से गुणा करके प्राप्त गुणनफल में सत्ताईस से भाग देने पर प्राप्त शेषफल यदि एक है, तो उसे अश्विनी नक्षत्र, दो शेषफल रहे तो भरणी नक्षत्र, तीन शेषफल रहे तो कृत्तिका नक्षत्र और चार शेषफल रहे तो रोहिणी नक्षत्र से युक्त शिवलिंग कहा जाता है।

पीठिका लक्षण

शिवलिंग को जिस आधार पर स्थापित किया जाता है उस आधार भाग को पीठिका या योनिपीठ कहा जाता है। शिल्पग्रंथों एवं पुराणों में पीठिका के लक्षणों का विस्तृत वर्णन प्राप्त होता है। देवतामूर्तिप्रकरण¹⁷ में उल्लेखित लक्षणों के अनुसार पीठिका की लम्बाई और चौड़ाई का विस्तार लिंग की लम्बाई के अनुसार प्रदर्शित करना चाहिए। पीठिका का निम्न भाग ब्रह्मा का भाग एवं उदर भाग विष्णु का भाग प्रदर्शित करना चाहिए। पीठिका का आकार योनि के आकार का होना चाहिए। शिवलिंग और पीठिका को एक ही धातु या पाषाण का प्रदर्शित करना चाहिए। इस पर शास्त्रीय मत भिन्नता भी देखने को मिलती है। कुछ शास्त्रकारों के मतानुसार प्रस्तर एवं काष्ठ के लिंग हेतु पकी हुई ईंट की पीठिका भी प्रदर्शित की जानी चाहिए। यदि देवायतन पूर्व या पश्चिम द्वार से युक्त हो तो प्रणाल यानि पीठिका की नलिका उत्तर दिशा में निर्मित करनी चाहिए।

पीठिका को स्थण्डिला, वापी, यक्षी, वैरी, मंडला, पूर्णचन्द्रा, वज्र, पद्या, अर्द्धचन्द्रा एवं त्रिकोणा आदि पीठिका के दस नामों का उल्लेख प्राप्त होता है।

स्थण्डिला, वापी एवं यक्षी को एक मेखला, दो मेखला या तीन मेखला वाली और समचौरस पीठिका से युक्त प्रदर्शित करना चाहिए। गोलाकार मंडल एवं अधिक मेखला से युक्त पीठ मंडला के नाम से जानी जाती है। छह कोण तथा मध्य में तीन मेखला युक्त पीठ वज्रा है

सोलह कोण तथा नीचे से छोटी पीठिका पद्या है। जबकि डोरी लगे धनुष के सदृश वाली पीठ अर्द्धचंद्रा के नाम से जानी जाती है। त्रिकोणो से युक्त पीठ त्रिकोणा है।

साहित्यिक साक्ष्यों के साथ-साथ पुरातात्विक साक्ष्यों से भी भारतीय संस्कृति में लिंगोपासना के स्पष्ट प्रामाणिक साक्ष्य प्राप्त होते हैं। लिंगोपासना का प्रथम प्रामाणिक साक्ष्य सैधव-सभ्यता के पुरावशेषों से प्राप्त होता है। सैधव-सभ्यता से प्राप्त इन पुरातात्विक अवशेषों से एक और तथ्य प्रकाश में आता है, वह यह है कि प्रतिमा पूजा से पूर्व प्रतीक पूजा का प्रचलन था। इन्हीं प्रतीकों में से एक बहुप्रचलित प्रतीक शिवलिंग है। सैधव-सभ्यता से बहुल संख्या में प्राप्त लिंगाकृति की साम्यता समकालीन हिंदू धर्म में प्रचलित शिवलिंगोपासना में प्रदर्शित होती है।¹⁸

आर.जी. भण्डारकर के मतानुसार कुषाणों से पूर्व लिंगोपासना प्रचलित नहीं थी। इस तथ्य की प्रामाणिकता कुषाण-शासक विमकैडफिसेज की मुद्राओं पर शिव के मानव रूप के अंकन से होती है।¹⁹ वहीं जितेन्द्रनाथ बनर्जी ने ई. सम्वत् के पूर्व की मुद्राओं एवं मूर्तियों के आधार पर यह प्रमाणित करने का प्रयत्न किया है कि शिव की पूजा रूप प्रतिमा और लिंग प्रतिमा दोनों ही स्वरूपों में की जाती थी। ई. सम्वत् की मुद्राओं पर अंकित शिव की त्रिमुख आकृति और लिंग का चित्रण इसका प्रामाणिक साक्ष्य है।²⁰ सर्वप्रथम शिवलिंग का स्पष्ट प्राचीनतम साक्ष्य आंध्रप्रदेश के गुड्डीमल्लम से प्राप्त शिवलिंग है, जिसका निर्माण काल ई.पू. द्वितीयशती का है।

गुप्तकाल आते-आते अपने कालक्रमिक विकास में लिंग प्रतिमाओं का शिश्नाकार स्वरूप जो विशेषतः कुषाणकालीन लिंग प्रतिमाओं की विशेषता रही है, समाप्त हो गई। गुप्तशासकों के काल में निर्मित लिंग स्वरूप प्रतिमाओं में करमदण्डा से प्राप्त कुमारगुप्त के शासनकाल की शिवलिंग प्रतिमा इसका उत्कृष्ट प्रमाण है।²¹

हिमालय के आनन में बसा गढ़वाल हिमालय युग-युगान्तर से शिव क्षेत्र के नाम से संबोधित होते रहा है। पौराणिक कथानकों में वर्णित शिव के विविध लीला स्वरूपों के साक्षी हिमालय की इस पावन भूमि में शिव स्वरूपों का मूर्त्तन यहाँ की मूर्तिकला का लोकप्रिय विषय रहा है। इस क्षेत्र में शिव स्वरूपों के निरूपण में उनके रूप प्रतिमाओं की अपेक्षा प्रतीक स्वरूप लिंग प्रतिमाओं का शिल्पांकन प्रभूत संख्या में दृष्टिगोचर होता है। बहुल संख्या में लिंग स्वरूपों के रूपायन से इस क्षेत्र की भूमि का कण-कण शिवमय प्रतीत होता है। इस क्षेत्र से प्राप्त होने वाली शिवलिंग प्रतिमाएँ अन्य क्षेत्रों के समान ही अपने दो मुख्य स्वरूपों निष्कल एवं सकल लिंग प्रतिमाओं के रूप में विद्यमान है। इस क्षेत्र की मूर्तिकला में निष्कल लिंगों का शिल्पांकन सबसे अधिक संख्या में किया गया है। वहीं सकल लिंग स्वरूप प्रतिमाओं की संख्या निष्कल लिंगों की तुलना में कम होते हुए भी यहाँ के मूर्तिकला के विशिष्ट स्वरूपों में सम्मिलित हैं।²²

गढ़वाल हिमालय क्षेत्र से प्राप्त शिवलिंग प्रतिमाओं का विवरण निम्न प्रकार से है—

साधारण लिंग प्रतिमा

इस स्वरूप का पहला शिवलिंग देहरादून जिले के लाखामण्डल स्थित शिवमंदिर से प्राप्त हुआ है। यह शिवलिंग मंदिर के प्रवेश द्वार के वाम पार्श्व में स्थित मंदिर प्रांगण में संग्रहित है। धूसर वर्ण के पाषाण से निर्मित इस शिवलिंग के दो भाग रूद्रभाग और विष्णुभाग दृश्यमान है, जिसके आधार पर यह कहा जा सकता है कि यह शिवलिंग विष्णुधर्मोत्तर पुराण में दिए गए

लक्षणों के अनुरूप तीन विभागों ब्रह्म भाग, विष्णु भाग और रुद्रभाग में विभक्त है। इस शिवलिंग में ब्रह्म भाग योनिपीठ के नीचे स्थित है। शिवलिंग में दृश्यमान विष्णुभाग अष्टकोणीय निर्मित है तथा रुद्रभाग वृत्ताकार निर्मित है जिसका शीर्षभाग उभरा हुआ प्रदर्शित किया गया है। इस शिवलिंग के रुद्रभाग पर शीर्ष से थोड़ा नीचे ब्रह्मसूत्र एवं पार्श्व सूत्र का अंकन किया गया है। इस शिवलिंग का निर्माण भूमि से ऊँचाई पर उठे आयताकार योनिपीठ पर किया गया है। (चित्र संख्या – 1)

इस स्वरूप का पाँचवाँ शिवलिंग देहरादून जिले के लाखामण्डल स्थित शिवमंदिर के अर्द्धमंडप में प्रवेश द्वार के बायीं ओर रखा गया है। यह शिवलिंग योनिपीठ पर स्थापित नहीं है। इस शिवलिंग के तीनों भाग ब्रह्म भाग, विष्णु भाग तथा रुद्र भाग दृश्यमान है। इस प्रकार इन तीनों भागों का दृश्यमान होना यह प्रदर्शित करता है कि यह शिवलिंग इस स्थान पर स्थापित नहीं था, इसे यहाँ संग्रहित किया गया है।

इस स्वरूप का दसवाँ शिवलिंग उत्तरकाशी जिले के बाड़ाहाट स्थित काशीविश्वनाथ मंदिर के गर्भगृह से प्राप्त हुआ है जो गर्भगृह में मुख्य शिवलिंग के रूप में स्थापित है। इस शिवलिंग का केवल रुद्रभाग दृश्यमान है, जो ब्रह्मसूत्र एवं पार्श्वसूत्र के अंकन से युक्त प्रदर्शित किया गया है। आयताकार योनिपीठ पर स्थापित यह शिवलिंग दक्षिण दिशा की ओर झुका हुआ प्रदर्शित किया गया है। (चित्र संख्या – 2)

इस स्वरूप का बारहवाँ शिवलिंग उत्तरकाशी जिले के देवल ग्राम से प्राप्त हुआ है। यह शिवलिंग योनिपीठ पर स्थापित नहीं है तथा इस शिवलिंग को आधार से शीर्षभाग तक एक समान बेलनाकार संरचना में प्रदर्शित किया गया है। गहरे धूसर वर्ण के पाषाण से निर्मित इस शिवलिंग पर अंकित ब्रह्मसूत्र और पार्श्व सूत्र का विशेष रूप में अंकन इस शिवलिंग को विशिष्ट स्वरूप प्रदान करते हैं। (चित्र संख्या – 3)

मानुष लिंग प्रतिमाएँ

इस वर्ग की शिवलिंग प्रतिमाओं के अन्तर्गत गढ़वाल हिमालय क्षेत्र से निम्न मानव लिंग स्वरूप प्रतिमाएँ प्राप्त होती हैं— (1) अष्टोत्तरशतलिंग, (2) सहस्र लिंग, (3) मुखलिंग।

मुखलिंग प्रतिमाएँ

शिव की मुखलिंग प्रतिमाओं को मुखों की संख्या के आधार पर अलग-अलग वर्गों में विभक्त किया गया है। जो निम्न प्रकार से हैं— (1) एकमुखी, (2) द्विमुखी, (3) त्रिमुखी, (4) चतुर्मुखी, (5) पंचमुखी

इन मुखलिंग प्रतिमाओं में गढ़वाल हिमालय में निम्न स्वरूप की मुखलिंग प्रतिमाएँ प्राप्त होती हैं—

(1) एकमुखी शिवलिंग प्रतिमाएँ

इस स्वरूप की प्रथम प्रतिमा देहरादून जिले के लाखामण्डल स्थित शिवमंदिर के गर्भगृह से प्राप्त हुई है, जो गर्भगृह में अन्य प्रतिमाओं के साथ संग्रहित है। इस प्रतिमा में शिवलिंग के दो भाग विष्णुभाग एवं रुद्रभाग स्पष्ट दिखाई दे रहा है। लिंग का विष्णुभाग अष्टकोणीय संरचना में प्रदर्शित है जबकि रुद्रभाग पर शिव की मुखकृति को प्रदर्शित किया गया है। गहरे

धूसर वर्ण की पाषाण निर्मित इस एकमुखी लिंग में शिव को जटामुकुट, कुंडल, हार आदि अलंकरणों से सुशोभित प्रदर्शित किया गया है। इस प्रतिमा में देवता को तनी हुई भौंह एवं फूले हुए नासापुट के माध्यम से रौद्र रूप में प्रदर्शित किया गया है, जो संभवतः शिव के अघोर रूप का परिचायक है। (चित्र संख्या -4)

इस स्वरूप की दूसरी प्रतिमा चमोली जिले के रूद्रनाथ मंदिर के गर्भगृह से प्राप्त हुई है। गर्भगृह में मुख्य प्रतिमा के रूप में स्थापित यह शिवलिंग वर्गाकार योनिपीठ में स्थापित है जो वाम पार्श्व में हल्का झुका हुआ प्रदर्शित है। इस प्रतिमा में शिवलिंग का दो भाग विष्णुभाग एवं रुद्र भाग दिखाई दे रहा है। लिंग का विष्णुभाग एवं रुद्रभाग दोनों वृत्ताकार संरचना में प्रदर्शित है परन्तु विष्णुभाग से रुद्रभाग की मोटाई कम होती हुई प्रदर्शित की गई है। लिंग में रुद्रभाग की लम्बाई विष्णुभाग से अधिक प्रदर्शित किया गया है। रुद्रभाग का शीर्ष उभरे हुए गोलाकार संरचना में प्रदर्शित है। इस लिंग के रुद्रभाग पर अंकित शिव की मुखाकृति को जटाजूट से सुशोभित प्रदर्शित किया गया है। अलंकरण विहीन इस प्रतिमा में देवता को तनी हुई भौंह, फूले नासिकापुट के माध्यम से रौद्र रूप में प्रदर्शित किया गया है जो शिव के अघोर रूप का परिचायक है इस लिंग प्रतिमा में देवता की मुखाकृति में मूँछों का अंकन प्रतिमा पर गांधार कला शैली के प्रभाव को प्रदर्शित करता है।

गहरे भूरे रंग के पाषाण से निर्मित यह प्रतिमा इस क्षेत्र की स्थानीय कलाकृति प्रतीत नहीं होती है क्योंकि गढ़वाल हिमालय ही नहीं सम्पूर्ण उत्तराखण्ड की पृष्ठभूमि में इस प्रकार के पाषाण की प्राप्ति नहीं होती है।

इस प्रकार के पाषाण की इस क्षेत्र में अनुपलब्धता और अंकन शैली के आधार पर यह प्रतिमा मध्य भारत की कलाकृति प्रतीत होती है। अंकन शैली के आधार पर यह लिंग प्रतिमा छठीं शताब्दी ई. की प्रतीत होती है। (चित्र संख्या - 5)

इस स्वरूप की तीसरी प्रतिमा चमोली जिले के मण्डल ग्राम स्थित अनुसूया देवी मंदिर से प्राप्त हुआ है। यह प्रतिमा मंदिर के मंडप द्वार के बाहर बायीं ओर रखी हुई है। वर्गाकार योनि पीठ में स्थापित इस लिंग का दो भाग विष्णु भाग एवं रुद्रभाग दिखाई दे रहा है इस लिंग का विष्णुभाग सामने से खण्डित अवस्था में है परन्तु इसके अधिशेष भाग के आधार पर इसकी संरचना चतुष्कोणीय प्रतीत होती हैं, तथा रुद्रभाग की संरचना वृत्ताकार प्रदर्शित है। जिस पर शिव की मुखाकृति का अंकन किया गया है। इस एकमुखी लिंग में शिव को जटामौली धारण किए हुए तथा अन्य अलंकरणों में कुंडल, हार आदि आभूषणों से अलंकृत प्रदर्शित किया गया है प्रतिमा में देवता के मुखमंडल पर मंदस्मित भाव का अंकन प्रतिमा को दिव्यता प्रदान कर रही है। इस लिंग प्रतिमा में देवता के मुखमंडल की सौम्यता उनके वामदेव रूप का परिचायक है। अंकन शैली के आधार पर यह प्रतिमा आठवीं शताब्दी ई. की प्रतीत होती है।

इस स्वरूप की चौथी प्रतिमा चमोली जिले के चंडिका मंदिर से प्राप्त हुई है। इस प्रतिमा में लिंग का विष्णुभाग एवं रुद्रभाग दृश्यमान है। जिसके रुद्रभाग पर शिव की मुखाकृति का अंकन है, जो खण्डित अवस्था में है। इस खण्डित प्रतिमा के अधिशेष भाग के रूप में गले में प्रदर्शित ग्रैवेयक आभूषण के आधार पर यह आठवीं शताब्दी ई. की प्रतीत होती है। प्रतिमा में योनिपीठ की स्थिति अस्पष्ट है।

इस स्वरूप की पाँचवी प्रतिमा पौड़ी जिले के रामपुर ग्राम से प्राप्त हुई है। इस प्रतिमा में विष्णु भाग और रुद्र भाग प्रदर्शित किया गया है। प्रतिमा में विष्णुभाग खण्डित अवस्था में है, जिसके कारण इसकी संरचना अस्पष्ट है। प्रतिमा के रुद्रभाग पर अंकित शिव की मुखाकृति में देवता को अर्द्धचंद्र से युक्त अलंकृत जटामुकुट तथा अन्य अलंकरणों में कुंडल, ग्रैवेयक आदि से सुशोभित प्रदर्शित किया गया है। प्रतिमा में देवता को तनी हुई भौंह, फूले हुए नासापुट के माध्यम से रौद्र रूप में प्रदर्शित किया गया है, जो संभवतः शिव के अघोर रूप का परिचायक है। प्रतिमा में देवता के गले को माँसल रेखांकन में प्रदर्शित किया गया है।

अंततः अलंकरण शैली एवं माँसल देहयष्टि के आधार पर यह प्रतिमा 9वीं-10वीं शताब्दी ई. की प्रतीत होती है।

इस स्वरूप की छठी प्रतिमा टिहरी जिले के लक्षमोली ग्राम से प्राप्त हुई है। वृत्ताकार योनिपीठ में स्थापित इस लिंग का केवल रुद्रभाग दृश्यमान है। जिस पर शिव की मुखाकृति को शिल्पांकित किया गया है। रुद्रभाग पर अंकित शिव की यह मुखाकृति खण्डित अवस्था में है।

इस स्वरूप की सातवीं प्रतिमा पौड़ी जिले के बिनसर महादेव मंदिर से प्राप्त हुई है। इस लिंग प्रतिमा में दृश्यमान रुद्रभाग खण्डित अवस्था में है। परन्तु इस पर अंकित शिव की मुखाकृति सुरक्षित एवं स्पष्ट है। इस लिंग प्रतिमा में देवता के जटा को कुण्डलीकार केश-विन्यास से युक्त जटामुकुट में प्रदर्शित किया गया है। प्रतिमा में त्रिनेत्रधारी देवता को तनी हुई भौंह, फूले हुए नासापुट तथा खुले मुख के माध्यम से रौद्ररूप में प्रदर्शित किया गया है, जो शिव के अघोर रूप का परिचायक है। प्रतिमा में देवता के कर्णपल्लव में सर्पकुण्डल प्रदर्शित किया गया है।

इस प्रकार अंकन शैली के आधार पर छठी-सातवीं शताब्दी ई. की निर्मित यह प्रतिमा गुप्त कला शैली के प्रभाव को उत्पन्न करती है।

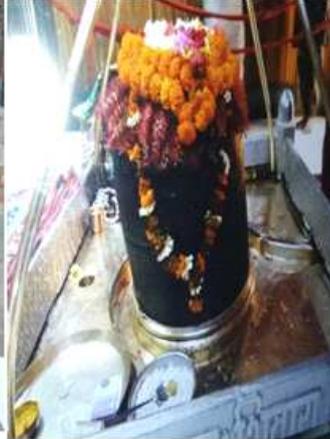
चतुर्मुखी शिवलिंग प्रतिमाएँ

इस स्वरूप की पहली प्रतिमा चमोली जिले के हाट ग्राम स्थित चंडिका मंदिर समूह से प्राप्त हुई है। वर्गाकार योनिपीठ में स्थापित इस प्रतिमा में शिवलिंग के दो भाग विष्णुभाग एवं रुद्रभाग दृश्यमान है इस लिंग के रुद्रभाग पर शिव के चतुर्मुखों का अंकन प्रदर्शित किया गया है। लिंग पर अंकित शिव की मुखाकृतियों में एक मुख लिंग पर सामने की ओर तथा एक-एक मुख लिंग के दोनों पार्श्वों में प्रदर्शित किया गया है। वही लिंग के पृष्ठभाग में अंकित मुखाकृति दृश्यमान नहीं है।

दुर्भाग्यवश इस लिंग पर अंकित शिव की चारों मुखाकृतियाँ खण्डित अवस्था में है। इन खण्डित मुखाकृतियों के अधिशेष भाग के आधार पर इस प्रतिमा में देवता जटाजूट, कुंडल, ग्रैवेयक आदि आभूषणों से अलंकृत प्रतीत होते हैं। अंकन शैली के आधार पर यह प्रतिमा 8वीं 9वीं शताब्दी ई. की प्रतीत होती है। इस प्रतिमा में देवता के चतुर्मुखों में शिव के सद्योजात, वामदेव, तत्पुरुष एवं अघोर रूप का अंकन है।



चित्र क्रं. - 1



चित्र क्रं. - 2



चित्र क्रं. - 3



चित्र क्रं. -4



चित्र क्रं. -5



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21 वीं सदी में संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद के विस्तार की आवश्यकता एवं भारत की स्थायी सदस्यता की दावेदारी एक विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन

तलत परविन

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धनबाद (झारखण्ड)-828301
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सारांश

संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के छः अंगों में से सबसे महत्वपूर्ण अंग सुरक्षा परिषद है जिसका उद्देश्य विश्व में शांति और सुरक्षा स्थापित करना तथा युद्ध-रहित विश्व का निर्माण करना है। सुरक्षा परिषद अपने इस उद्देश्य को पूरा करने में अहम भूमिका निभा रही है। हालाँकि यह भी सत्य है कि 1945 के बाद से वैश्विक परिदृश्य में महत्वपूर्ण बदलाव आए हैं लेकिन सुरक्षा परिषद में स्थापना के बाद से अब तक उसकी संरचना में परिवर्तन नहीं हुआ है, वह आज भी अपरिवर्तनीय बनी हुई है। इस शोध पत्र का उद्देश्य सुरक्षा परिषद के विस्तार की आवश्यकता और भारत के स्थायी सदस्यता के दावेदारी पर जोर देना है। यह पत्र वैश्विक शक्ति संरचना में परिवर्तन, विकासशील देशों की प्रतिनिधित्व की माँग, संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ में भारत का योगदान, सुरक्षा परिषद की स्थायी सदस्यता हेतु भारत की दावेदारी और उससे सम्बंधित चुनौतियाँ तथालाभ पर विचार करता है। भारत ने संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के उद्देश्यों को पूरा करने में हमेशा उसका सहयोग किया है यह सुरक्षा परिषद की स्थायी सदस्यता हेतु लगातार प्रयासरत है, भारत का सुरक्षा परिषद के अस्थायी सदस्य के रूप में आठवाँ कार्यकाल 2021-2022 में रहा। भारत सहित विश्व के कई अन्य देश भी भारत को सुरक्षा परिषद में स्थायी सदस्यता देने की हिमायती हैं।

मूल शब्द— सुरक्षा परिषद, भारत, स्थायी सदस्यता, संरचना, परिवर्तन, दावेदारी, अंतरराष्ट्रीय

प्रस्तावना

द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध ने पूरी दुनियाँ को प्रभावित किया, इस युद्ध की विनाशक्ता की छाप पूरे विश्व पर पड़ी। युद्ध के बाद विश्व में शांति और सुरक्षा स्थापित करने हेतु प्रयास किया गया जिसके परिणाम स्वरूप संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ का गठन हुआ। संयुक्त राष्ट्र घोषणा पत्र के अध्याय

5, 6 तथा 7, 8 के अन्तर्गत अनुच्छेद 23-54 तक सुरक्षा परिषद के गठन, कार्य और शक्तियों का उल्लेख है। सुरक्षा परिषद में पाँच स्थायी सदस्य—संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका, रूस, चीन, फ्रांस और यूनाइटेड किंगडम और दस अस्थायी सदस्य हैं, अर्थात् कुल मिला कर इसमें 15 सदस्य होते हैं, प्रत्येक सदस्य का एक वोट होता है, निर्णय के लिए 15 में से 9 सदस्यों के द्वारा सकारात्मक मतदान करना आवश्यक होता है, 9 वोट निर्णय के पक्ष में होने जरूरी होते हैं और 5 स्थायी सदस्यों की सहमती भी जरूरी होती है, यदि कोई स्थायी सदस्य किसी निर्णय से सहमत नहीं है तो वह नकारात्मक मतदान करके अपनी वीटो के अधिकार का उपयोग कर सकता है। सुरक्षा परिषद के कार्य एवं अधिकार उसके उद्देश्यों और सिद्धांतों के अनुकूल अंतर्राष्ट्रीय शांति और सुरक्षा बनाए रखना, झगड़ों को निपटाना, समझौते की शर्तों के उपयोग का सुझाव देना, शस्त्रीकरण का नियमन करने की प्रणाली स्थापित करने के लिए योजना बनाना, आक्रमण को रोकने या बन्द करने के लिए शस्त्र के अतिरिक्त आर्थिक सहायता पर रोक तथा अन्य प्रतिबंधों के लिए सदस्यों से अनुरोध करना इत्यादि है। द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध की समाप्ति के बाद शीत युद्ध ने जन्म ले लिया था और एक बार फिर से विश्व दो गुटों में बंट गया था। लेकिन संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद ने उस समय महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई और कई सारी समस्याओं का हल चर्चा के माध्यम से निकला और युद्ध जैसी स्थिति को सकारात्मक पहल से हल किया। वर्ष 1991 ई. में शीत युद्ध समाप्त हुआ और विश्व में तृतीय विश्व युद्ध की संभावना भी खत्म हुई, सुरक्षा परिषद अपने उद्देश्यों में सफल रही और आज तक वह अपने उद्देश्यों और सिद्धांतों के तहत अहम भूमिका निभा रही है, भारत देश ने भी शांति और सुरक्षा को बनाए रखने में हमेशा उसका सहयोग किया है।¹

साहित्य समिक्षा

हेरिक(2024)² 'द यू.एन सिक्वोरिटी काउंसिल एंड द मेंटेनेन्स ऑफ पीस इन ए चेंजिंग वर्ल्ड', इस पुस्तक में संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद—बढ़ते तनाव, वैश्विक ध्रुवीकरण तथा अंतर्राष्ट्रीय कानून, राजनीतिक व्यवस्था के सिद्धांतों के बारे में उल्लेख मिलता है। **ट्राहन(2020)**³ 'एक्जिस्टिंग लीगल एलिमेंट्स टू सिक्वोरिटी काउंसिल वीटो पावर इन द फेस ऑफ एट्रोसिटी क्राइम्स,' में अत्याचार सम्बंधी अपराधों के दौरान संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद के स्थायी सदस्यों द्वारा वीटो के प्रयोग पर कानूनी सीमाओं के अस्तित्व के तीन स्वतंत्र आधारों की रूपरेखा का उल्लेख मिलता है। **मेलोन और उगार्टे(2015)**⁴ 'द यू.एन सेक्वोरिटी काउंसिल इन द ट्वंटी फिफ्थ सेंचुरी', में शीत युद्ध की वास्तविकताओं से दो दशकों तक जूझने के बाद संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद को अब महाशक्तियों के बीच प्रतिद्वंद्विता चुनौतियों का सामना आदि का उल्लेख मिलता है। **बुचर्ड(2022)**⁵ 'द रिस्पॉसिबिलिटी टू प्रोटेक्ट एंड द फेलियर्स ऑफ यूनाइटेड नेशंस सिक्वोरिटी काउंसिल', इस में संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद की कानूनी जिम्मेदारियाँ जैसे—सुरक्षा परिषद की सुरक्षा की जिम्मेदारी, अंतर्राष्ट्रीय शांति और सुरक्षा बनाए रखने की जिम्मेदारी इत्यादि का उल्लेख मिलता है। **डब्लू और स्टोगर (2022)**⁶ 'द यू.एन सेक्वोरिटी काउंसिल एंड इंटर नेशनल लॉ', इस पुस्तक में संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद की शक्तियों और अंतर्राष्ट्रीय कानून में व्यापक भूमिका जो एक बहुत ही विवादास्पद मुद्दा है उसका वर्णन किया गया है। **खन्ना(2014)**⁷ 'अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संबंध,' में प्रथम विश्व युद्ध तथा शीत युद्ध का वर्णन मिलता है।

भारद्वाज (2021)⁸ 'भारत की विदेश नीति,' में भारत का अन्य देशों के साथ सम्बंध, भारत का वैश्विक स्तर पर शांति और भाईचारे का प्रयास आदि का वर्णन मिलता है। **खत्री,(2022)⁹** 'अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय राजनीति एवं समकालीन राजनीतिक मुद्दे' में समकालीन राजनीतिक मुद्दे, संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ, आतंकवाद, नस्लवाद, जैव विविधता, पर्यावरण आदि का उल्लेख मिलता है।

अध्ययन के उद्देश्य

- प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र का उद्देश्य सुरक्षा परिषद के विस्तार की आवश्यकता तथा सुरक्षा परिषद में भारत के स्थायी सदस्यता के दावेदारी का उल्लेख करना।
- सुरक्षा परिषद के स्थायी सदस्यता के रूप में भारत की चुनौतियाँ तथा स्थायी सदस्यता प्राप्ति से भारत को लाभ का वर्णन करना।

अध्ययन प्रविधि

प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में द्वितीयक अनुसंधान आँकड़ों का प्रयोग किया गया है, जिसमें मुख्य रूप से संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ, सुरक्षा परिषद, अंतर्राष्ट्रीय कानून, भारत की विदेश नीति, सुरक्षा परिषद में विस्तार से सम्बंधित पुस्तकें, लेख, समाचार पत्र, पत्रिकाएँ, वेबसाइट आदि का प्रयोग किया गया है। इस शोध के लिए वर्णात्मक अध्ययन पद्धति को अपनाया गया है।

वैश्विक शक्ति संरचना में परिवर्तन

द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध के बाद से अब तक वैश्विक संरचना में काफी बदलाव आया है। आज के समय में वैश्विक राजनीति बहुध्रुवीय हो गई है, जिसमें भारत, चीन, ब्राजील और दक्षिण अफ्रीका जैसी उभरती अर्थव्यवस्थाएँ अहम् भूमिका निभा रहे हैं, ये सभी देश न सिर्फ आर्थिक रूप से बल्कि राजनीतिक एवं सैन्य रूप से भी मजबूत स्थिति में आ गए हैं, उनकी आबादी, क्षेत्र और आर्थिक विकास दर उन्हें वैश्विक मंच पर महत्वपूर्ण खिलाड़ी बनाती है उन देशों की वैश्विक शांति, सुरक्षा और विकास के मामले में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान रही है जिसे अनदेखा करना अनुचित है। उदाहरण के लिए भारत संयुक्त राष्ट्र शांति सैनिकों का सबसे बड़ा योगदानकर्ता रहा है और वैश्विक सुरक्षा के लिए उसकी भूमिका निर्विवाद है। दूसरा उदाहरण ब्राजील है ब्राजील की बढ़ती आर्थिक शक्ति ने इसे एक प्रमुख वैश्विक शक्ति बना दिया है। सुरक्षा परिषद के विस्तार के बिना उन देशों की आवाज को अनसुना किया जा रहा है जो सुरक्षा परिषद की वैधता को कमजोर करता है। देखा जाए तो सुरक्षा परिषद में उन सभी देशों की अनुपस्थिति से न सिर्फ वैश्विक शक्ति के संतुलन में असंतुलन पैदा होता है बल्कि इससे परिषद की वैधता पर भी सवाल उठने लग जाते हैं अतः इस पर विचार करना और उन देशों को भी उतना ही महत्व देना जरूरी है जितना महत्व P5 देशों को दिया जा रहा है।

विकास शील देशों का प्रतिनिधित्व

देखा जाए तो सुरक्षा परिषद मुख्य रूप से द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध के विजयी राष्ट्रों की संरचना को दर्शाती है। यह संरचना विकासशील देशों की वास्तविकताओं और अकांक्षाओं का प्रतिनिधित्व नहीं करती। इसमें एशिया, अफ्रीका, लैटिन अमेरिका के देशों का पर्याप्त प्रतिनिधित्व नहीं है जबकि ये देश वैश्विक जनसंख्या और विकास के महत्वपूर्ण भागीदार हैं विशेष रूप से अफ्रीका जो अक्सर सुरक्षा परिषद के एजेंडा का केन्द्र होता है, के पास सुरक्षा परिषद में कोई स्थायी

सदस्यता नहीं है। यह प्रतिनिधित्व में असमानता को दर्शाता है और वैश्विक शासन प्रणाली की न्यायसंगतता पर सवाल भी उठाता है अतः सुरक्षा परिषद के विस्तार से विकासशील देशों की भी आवाजों को सुनने का अवसर मिलेगा और परिषद की निर्णय प्रक्रिया को अधिक समावेशी बनाया जा सकेगा।¹⁰

वीटो शक्ति पर पुनर्विचार

वर्तमान परिस्थितियों को देखते हुए वीटो शक्ति पर पुनर्विचार की जरूरत है। वीटो शक्ति सुरक्षा परिषद के सबसे ज्यादा विवादास्पद पहलुओं में से एक है। P5 देशों के पास यह शक्ति है जो उन्हें किसी भी प्रस्ताव को रोकने की अनुमति देती है भले ही उसे अन्य देशों का समर्थन प्राप्त हो। यह प्रणाली निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रिया को बाधित कर सकती है और परिषद की प्रभावशीलता को कमजोर कर सकती है। कई अवसरों पर P5 सदस्य अपने राष्ट्रीय हितों के आधार पर वीटो का उपयोग करते हैं न कि वैश्विक शांति और सुरक्षा के हित में।¹¹

वैश्विक शांति को बनाए रखने सम्बंधी चुनौतियाँ

दुनियाँ के देश जैसे-जैसे विकास कर रहे हैं वैसे-वैसे वैश्विक शांति बनाए रखना पिछले दशकों की तुलना में और भी जटिल होता चला जा रहा है। वैश्विक स्तर के मुद्दे जैसे-आतंकवाद, साइबर हमले, जलवायु परिवर्तन, महामारी और अन्य असमान खतरों ने वैश्विक सुरक्षा परिदृश्य को जटिल बना दिया है। इन खतरों का सामना करने के लिए एक बहुआयामी दृष्टिकोण की आवश्यकता होती है, जिसमें विभिन्न क्षेत्रों और संस्कृतियों के दृष्टिकोण शामिल हैं। सुरक्षा परिषद का विस्तार इसे अधिक प्रतिनिधि और प्रभावी बनाने की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम होगा। इसमें नई स्थायी और अस्थायी सीटों को जोड़ कर सुरक्षा परिषद को विस्तृत और समावेशी बनाया जा सकेगा जो वैश्विक मुद्दों पर बहस के लिए व्यापक मंच प्रदान करेगा तथा अन्य देश भी खुल कर अपनी राय रख सकेंगे।

सुरक्षा परिषद के विस्तार के फायदे

- निर्णय प्रक्रिया में सुधार-सुरक्षा परिषद में और सदस्यों के जुड़ने से निर्णय निर्माण प्रक्रिया में अधिक सुधार हो सकेगा, वैश्विक मुद्दों पर निर्णय लेने में तेजी आएगी।
- न्यायसंगतता और वैधता में बढ़ोतरी-सुरक्षा परिषद के विस्तार से वैश्विक शक्ति के वितरण को अधिक न्यायसंगत तरीके से प्रतिबिंबित किया जा सकता है।
- वैश्विक शांति और सुरक्षा को बढ़ावा-सुरक्षा परिषद के विस्तार से वैश्विक शांति और सुरक्षा को बनाए रखने में मदद मिलेगी। परिषद विभिन्न खतरों का सामना करने के लिए अधिक शक्तिशाली साधनों के साथ काम करेगी।
- बहुपक्षवाद को समर्थन-इस प्रकार के विस्तार से बहुपक्षवाद को बढ़ावा मिलेगा, जिससे वैश्विक शासन प्रणाली में सहयोग और संवाद को भी बल मिलेगा।

परिषद के विस्तार सम्बंधी बाधाएँ

- संरचनात्मक और प्रक्रियात्मक सुधार-सदस्यों के विस्तार हेतु सुरक्षा परिषद की संरचना और प्रक्रिया में सुधार की आवश्यकता होगी, जिससे परिषद की कार्यप्रणाली में बदलाव की जरूरत पड़ सकती है जो सरल प्रक्रिया नहीं है।

- स्थायी सदस्यों द्वारा प्रतिरोध—सुरक्षा परिषद में पाँच स्थायी सदस्य वीटो शक्ति रखते हैं वे इसके विस्तार का विरोध कर सकते हैं क्योंकि इससे उनकी विशेष स्थिति कमजोर हो सकती है।
- नए स्थायी सदस्यों का चयन—सदस्यों के स्थायी सदस्यता हेतु चयन एक जटिल प्रक्रिया है विभिन्न देशों के दावों और क्षेत्रीय संतुलन को ध्यान में रखते हुए एक निर्णय पर पहुँचा कठिन हो सकता है।¹²

संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ में भारत का योगदान

भारत संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ का संस्थापक सदस्य देश है। भारत ने 50 अन्य देशों के साथ मिल कर 26 जून 1950 ई. में यू.एन के चार्टर पर हस्ताक्षर किए थे। भारतीय संविधान तथा विदेश नीति के लक्ष्य ने संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है जैसे—संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ शांति स्थापना में योगदान, संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की विविध गतिविधियों में प्रख्यात भारतीय का योगदान, संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के लक्ष्य उपनिवेशवाद और रंगभेद उन्मूलन में योगदान, मानवाधिकार घोषणा का क्रियान्वयन, पूर्ण प्रमाणु निःशस्त्रीकरण में योगदान, विकास एवं गरीबी उन्मूलन में योगदान, जलवायु परिवर्तन एवं आतंकवाद के रोकथाम में योगदान इत्यादि। भारत का यह मानना है की जब तक सुरक्षा परिषद पर महाशक्तियों का प्रभुत्व समाप्त नहीं होता है तब तक खाड़ी संकट जैसी समस्याएँ दुनियाँ के सामने उत्पन्न होती रहेंगी।

सुरक्षा परिषद में भारत की स्थायी सदस्यता की दावेदारी

भारत विश्व का सबसे बड़ा लोकतांत्रिक देश है तथा भारत में लगभग 1.25 बिलियन आबादी निवास करती है जो विश्व की कुल आबादी का 5 वाँ हिस्सा है। आज भारत उभरती हुई एक आर्थिक महाशक्ति है जो दुनियाँ की चौथी सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था है। कला, विज्ञान और कृषि में भारत ने अपना परचम लहराया है। दुनियाँ के लिए भारत एक बड़ा बाजार है। अर्थव्यवस्था के क्षेत्र में भारत के पास असीम संभावनाएँ हैं पिछले 75 वर्षों के इतिहास में भारत ने कभी किसी भी राष्ट्र पर पहले आक्रमण नहीं किया है, वह सदैव शांति का रास्ता अपना कर विवादों को सुलझाता रहा है। सुरक्षा परिषद का स्थायी सदस्य बनने के बाद भारत की शांति स्थापना के प्रयासों में और भी गति आएगी। भारत हमेशा से ही शांति का पक्षधर रहा है और विश्व में कई बार ऐसे संकट आए जब भारत ने संयुक्त राष्ट्र के आहवान पर अपनी सेना भेजी जिनमें—कांगो, सोमालिया, रवांडा, वियतनाम, लाओस, कंबोडिया, मोजांबिक, अंगोला, सिएरा लियोन, दक्षिण सूडान एवं इथोपिया शामिल रहे हैं। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है की भारत में पाँचों स्थायी सदस्यों की तुलना में जमीन पर तैनात सैनिकों की संख्या लगभग दो गुनी है। मई 1998 ई. में भारत को एक प्रमाणु हथियार सम्पन्न राज्य का दर्जा मिला जो एक स्थायी सदस्य के रूप में दावेदारी की महत्वपूर्ण आधार है क्योंकि सुरक्षा परिषद के स्थायी सदस्य प्रमाणु हथियार सम्पन्न देश है अब भारत भी इस कतार में शामिल हो गया है। भारत तीसरी दुनियाँ के देशों का निर्विवाद प्रतिनिधि है जो कि गुटनिपेक्ष आंदोलन में भारत की नेतृत्वकारी भूमिका से परिलक्षित होता है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ के गठन से लेकर अब तक भारत की भागीदारी हमेशा रही है। वर्ष 1954 में भारत की विजयलक्ष्मी पंडित महासभा की अध्यक्ष बनी। अंतर्राष्ट्रीय

न्यायालय के न्यायधीश के रूप में नगेन्द्र सिंह(1973–1988) अध्यक्ष पद पर (1985–1988 रहे), बी.एन.राव (1952–1953), आर.एस.पाठक (1089–1991) वर्तमान में भारत के दलवीर भंडारी अंतर्राष्ट्रीय न्यायालय में न्यायधीश के पद पर हैं। कोरिया समस्या के लिए गठित आयोग के अध्यक्ष भारत के के.पी.एस.मेनन थे। भारत संयुक्त राष्ट्र के प्रमुख अंगों के अलावा इसकी मुख्य एजेंसियों के माध्यम से विभिन्न कार्यों में संलग्न है।¹³

स्थायी सदस्यता सम्बंधी भारत के समक्ष चुनौतियाँ

- चीन का विरोध—चीन P5 में शामिल है वह भारत की स्थायी सदस्यता का विरोध करता रहा है।
- संयुक्त राष्ट्र चार्टर में संशोधन—भारत की सदस्यता के लिए चार्टर में संशोधन की जरूरत पड़ेगी इसके लिए सदस्यों के साथ-साथ दो तिहाई देशों के द्वारा पुष्टि करना आवश्यक है जो की काफी जटिल है।
- आर्थिक और सामाजिक चुनौतियाँ—भारत को वैश्विक भूख सूचकांक और मानव विकास सूचकांक जैसे कुछ वैश्विक संकेतकों में बेहतर प्रदर्शन करने की आवश्यकता है।
- वीटो पावर—भारत को स्थायी सदस्यता मिलने पर वीटो पावर मिलेगा या नहीं यह भी चुनौती है।
- अन्य दावेदार—भारत के अलावा जापान, जर्मनी, ब्राजील और अन्य देश भी स्थायी सदस्यता के लिए दावेदार हैं जिससे प्रतिस्पर्धा बढ़ जाती है।
- क्षेत्रीय प्रतिद्वंद्विता—ऐशिया में भारत का प्रतिद्वंद्वी जापान है और महाद्वीपीय प्रतिद्वंद्विता भी एक कारक है।
- कॉफी क्लब द्वारा विरोध—भारत के स्थायी सदस्यता का कुछ समूह विरोध कर रहे हैं जिसमें कॉफी क्लब भी शामिल है। इस समूह का मानना है कि स्थायी सीटों की संख्या में वृद्धि से असमानता बढ़ेगी और विशेषाधिकारों का विस्तार होगा।¹⁴

स्थायी सदस्यता प्राप्त करने से भारत को लाभ

- वैश्विक निर्णय लेने में अधिक प्रभाव—स्थायी सदस्यता भारत को वैश्विक मुद्दों पर निर्णय लेने में अधिक प्रभाव डालेगी जिससे यह सुनिश्चित होगा कि भारत के हितों को ध्यान में रखा जाए।
- सुरक्षा चिंताओं को प्रभावी ढंग से उठाना—स्थायी सदस्यता प्राप्त भारत को अपनी सुरक्षा चिंताओं को अधिक प्रभावी ढंग से उठाने और सम्बंधित खतरों का मुकाबला करने के लिए आवश्यक समर्थन प्राप्त करने में मदद मिलेगी।
- अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंच पर प्रतिष्ठा में वृद्धि—स्थायी सदस्यता भारत की अंतरराष्ट्रीय प्रतिष्ठा को बढ़ाएगी और इसे एक प्रमुख वैश्विक शक्ति के रूप में स्थापित करेगी।
- आर्थिक और सामाजिक विकास को बढ़ावा—स्थायी सदस्यता भारत को आर्थिक और सामाजिक विकास को बढ़ावा देने के लिए आवश्यक अंतर्राष्ट्रीय समर्थन और सहयोग प्राप्त करने में मदद करेगी।

- क्षेत्रीय और वैश्विक स्थिरता में योगदान—स्थायी सदस्यता भारत को क्षेत्रीय और वैश्विक स्थिरता में योगदान करने और शांति और सुरक्षा को बढ़ावा देने के लिए अधिक प्रभावी ढंग से काम करने में सक्षम बनाएगी।¹⁵

निष्कर्ष

परिवर्तन समाज का नियम है समय और परिस्थिति के अनुसार परिवर्तन जरूरी भी है। सुरक्षा परिषद में विस्तार और परिवर्तन न केवल समय की माँग है बल्कि इससे सुरक्षा परिषद की वैधता और न्यायसंगतता में भी वृद्धि होगी। आज की बहुध्रुवीय संसार में सुरक्षा परिषद की वर्तमान संरचना वैश्विक शक्ति के वास्तविक वितरण को प्रतिबिंबित नहीं करती है और इसमें व्यापक प्रतिनिधित्व की कमी है। विकासशील देशों के प्रतिनिधित्व से यह अधिक समावेशी और प्रतिनिधि संरचना अंतरराष्ट्रीय विवादों के समाधान में प्रभावी होगी। परिषद में भारत की स्थायी सदस्यता न केवल भारत के लिए उपयोगी होगी बल्कि अन्य देशों के लिए भी बेहतर साबित होगी। विश्व के सबसे बड़े लोकतंत्रिक देश भारत को सुरक्षा परिषद के स्थायी सदस्य के रूप में शामिल होने से लोकतंत्र को भी मजबूती मिलेगी। अतः परिषद में सुधार और विस्तार के साथ—साथ दावेदार सदस्यों को सुरक्षा परिषद में शामिल करने की भी आवश्यकता है।



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दलित मुसलमान : स्तरीकृत असमानता एवं सामाजिक वंचना का एक समाजशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण

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सारांश

यह शोध पत्र भारतीय मुस्लिम समाज में व्याप्त जातिगत असमानता और दलित मुसलमानों की सामाजिक वंचना का विश्लेषण करता है। यद्यपि इस्लाम में सैद्धांतिक रूप से समानता और जाति-विहीन समाज की बात करता है, लेकिन भारतीय मुसलमान समुदाय व्यवहारिक रूप में असमानता पर आधारित जाति जैसी व्यवस्था से ग्रसित है। मुस्लिम समाज में अशराफ, अजलाफ और अरजाल जैसे विभेदीकरण पाए जाते हैं। इस विभेदीकरण के आधार पर मुसलमानों में सामाजिक स्तरीकरण स्पष्ट रूप से दिखाई देता है। मुसलमानों में सामाजिक रूप से सबसे निम्न स्थान पर स्थापित समूह अरजाल समूह है, जिन्हें दलित मुसलमान कहा जाता है। यह समूह परंपरागत रूप से साफ-सफाई, दाह-संस्कार, कपड़ा धुलाई, पशु-पालन और दिहाड़ी मजदूरी जैसे पेशों से सम्बन्धित है, जिसके कारण इन्हें समाज में हेय दृष्टि से देखा जाता है। उच्च जातियों के मुसलमानों के द्वारा अरजाल मुसलमानों के साथ मस्जिदों, कब्रिस्तानों, शादी-विवाह और सार्वजनिक स्थानों इत्यादि पर इनके साथ जातिगत उत्पीड़न, अस्पृश्यता, भेदभाव और सामाजिक बहि कार जैसी अमानवीयता का सामना करना पड़ता है। इस अध्ययन में अली अनवर, एजाज अली, जायल ली और प्रशांत त्रिवेदी व अन्य जैसे विद्वानों के शोधों और आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण करने पर यह निष्कर्ष निकलता है कि दलित मुसलमानों की सामाजिक प्रस्थिति हिंदू दलितों से भी दयनीय है। दलित मुसलमानों को अनुसूचित जाति का दर्जा न मिलने के कारण वे अनुसूचित जाति आरक्षण तथा सरकारी कल्याणकारी योजनाओं से भी वंचित हैं। अतः मुख्यधारा के समाज की बराबरी करने के लिए इन्हें कानूनी मान्यता, सामाजिक स्वीकार्यता और अनुसूचित जाति आरक्षण अति-आवश्यक है।

मुख्य शब्द— मुसलमान, दलित मुसलमान, अशराफ, अजलाफ, अरजाल, स्तरीकरण, सामाजिक वंचना

प्रस्तावना

भारत में धर्म अस्थायी है, लेकिन जाति स्थायी है। यहाँ व्यक्ति अपना धर्म तो परिवर्तित कर सकता है, लेकिन अपनी जाति नहीं। इसीलिए जिन लोगों ने सिद्धांत: जाति विहीन समाज की कल्पना करने वाले इस्लाम, ईसाई या सिख धर्म को अपनाया उनमें भी आगे चलकर अलग-अलग जातियां तथा उपजातियां बन गयीं। मुस्लिम सामाजिक संरचना में सैद्धांतिक आधार पर किसी भी प्रकार का भेदभाव या उंच-नीच नहीं दिखाई देता है। लेकिन यथार्थ या व्यवहारिकता में देखें तो मुस्लिम समाज में सामाजिक स्तरीकरण के साथ-साथ भेदभाव मजबूती के साथ अस्तित्व में हैं। जब मुस्लिम सामाजिक संरचना का गहनता से अध्ययन किया जाता है तो, मुसलमानों के मध्य जो सम्बन्ध दिखाई देते हैं, वह वर्ग, जाति, प्रजाती, तथा लिंग के आधार पर होते हैं। भारत में जब इस्लाम या मुस्लिम समाज का विश्लेषण करते हैं तो वह अलग-अलग भागों में विभाजित दिखाई देता है। सन 1901 की जनगणना रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत में मुस्लिम समाज मुख्य रूप से तीन भागों में विभाजित था, जो अभी भी विद्यमान हैं। अशराफ, अजलाफ तथा अरजाल। 'अशराफ' श्रेणी में कुलीन तथा उच्च श्रेणी के लोग आते हैं। पहला वे जिनका रक्त विदेशी है, मतलब जो अरब, ईरान, तुर्की अथवा अफगानिस्तान से यहाँ आकर बसे। दूसरे वे सवर्ण हिन्दू, जो अपना धर्म परिवर्तन कर मुसलमान बन गये। अशराफ समूह में चार जातियां विद्यमान हैं— सय्यद, शेख, पठान, तथा मुगल। मुसलमानों की द्वितीय श्रेणी 'अजलाफ' के नाम से जानी जाती है। अजलाफ समूह में हिन्दू धर्म की निम्न जाति या शूद्र वर्ग से धर्म परिवर्तन करके मुसलमान बने लोग आते हैं। इसमें खेती करने वाले शेख, दर्जी, धुनकर, दफाली, तेली, अंसारी (जुलाहा), फकीर, हज्जाम, राईनी, मंसूरी, इराकी, घोसी, हलवाई, इदरिशी आदि आते हैं। मुसलमानों की तृतीय श्रेणी, 1901 की जनगणना रिपोर्ट के अनुसार— "मुसलमानों में एक तीसरा वर्ग भी है जिसे 'अरजाल' अथवा निकृष्ट वर्ग कहते हैं। इस वर्ग में आने वाली जातियाँ सबसे निचले स्थान पर विद्यमान हैं। दलित मुसलमान या अरजाल जातियों में निम्नलिखित जातियाँ सामने आयी : भठियारा, फकीर, शाह, डफाली, नट, हलालखोर, लालबेगी, बंजारा, रांकी, रंगरेज, जोगी, मोची, मुकेरी, बाखो, पामरिया, भिश्ती और धोबी आदि जातियाँ सम्मिलित हैं" (त्रिवेदी, 2016)¹। अरजाल समूह में आने वाली जातियों को ही दलित मुसलमान कहा जाता है। क्योंकि इनका व्यवसाय या पेशा हिन्दू धर्म की दलित जातियों से मिलता जुलता है। यह समाज में निकृष्ट या अस्वच्छ माने जाने वाले कार्यों या पेशों से जुड़े हुए हैं, जिससे दूसरे समूह के मुसलमान उनसे किसी भी प्रकार का सामाजिक सम्बन्ध बनाने से कतराते हैं। प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में दलित मुसलमान तथा पसमांदा मुसलमानों से सम्बन्धित साहित्य, शोध पत्र तथा सरकारी रिपोर्टों का विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन किया गया है। इस अध्ययन के आधार पर यह समझने का प्रयास की गया है कि दलित मुसलमान कौन हैं। सामाजिक स्तरीकरण के आधार पर दलित मुसलमानों की सामाजिक प्रस्थिति क्या है। दलित मुसलमानों की सामाजिक प्रस्थिति और हिन्दू दलितों की सामाजिक प्रस्थिति में कौन-कौन से सम्बन्ध हैं। दलित मुसलमान कौन हैं यह जानने से पहले हमें यह समझना होगा कि दलित शब्द का वास्तविक अर्थ क्या है और किसे दलित कहा जाता है।

दलित की अवधारणा

दलित एक राजनीतिक शब्दावली है। और इस शब्द का अर्थ दबाया या कुचला हुआ होता है। समाज में जिस वर्ग के साथ हजारों वर्षों से अस्पृश्यता जैसा अमानवीय व्यवहार किया गया हो, वह दलित है। डाक्टर बाबासाहेब भीमराव अम्बेडकर ने अपने पत्रिका बहिष्कृत भारत में दलित शब्द का प्रयोग मोटे तौर पर एक विशेष तरह का अनुभव और जीवन-स्थिति का वर्णन करने के लिए किया था। इसके तहत यह माना गया था कि ब्राह्मणवादी हिन्दू व्यवस्था के सामाजिक, आर्थिक, सांस्कृतिक और राजनीतिक प्रभुत्व के कारण अछूतों का शोषण, दमन और बहिष्करण होता है। वैसे अम्बेडकर ने सन्दर्भ के अनुसार उनका अलग-अलग श्रेणियों में उपयोग किया। औपनिवेशिक राज्य के साथ उन्होंने 'डिप्रेसड क्लास', सवर्ण हिन्दुओं के साथ संवाद की स्थिति में 'बहिष्कृत जाति', वही राजनीति के सन्दर्भ में उन्होंने 'अनुसूचित जाति' शब्द का प्रयोग किया और अछूतों को रैडिकल बनाने और उनको प्रभावकारी गोलबंद करने के लिए उन्होंने 'पद-दलित' शब्द का प्रयोग किया (गुरु, 1998)²। बाबासाहेब अम्बेडकर ने दलित शब्द का प्रयोग उन लोगों के लिए किया, जो जाति विशेष में जन्म लेने के कारण सामाजिक, आर्थिक, धार्मिक और सांस्कृतिक उत्पीड़न के शिकार रहे हैं (प्रसाद, 1992)³। बाबासाहेब भीमराव अम्बेडकर के अनुसार दलित जातियां वे हैं जो अपवित्रकारी होती हैं, इनमें निम्न श्रेणी के कारीगर, धोबी, मोची, भंगी और सेवक जातियां जैसे चमार, सऊरी (प्रसूति का कार्य करने वाली), डंगरी (मरे हुए पशु उठाने वाले) और ढोला (डफली बजाने वाले) आते हैं। कुछ जातियाँ परंपरागत कार्य करने के अतिरिक्त कृषि-मजदूरी का भी कार्य करती हैं। कुछ दिनों पूर्व तक उनकी स्थिति अर्धदास, बंधुआ मजदूर जैसी रही है (प्रसाद, 1992)⁴। 1970 के दशक में महाराष्ट्र के दलित पैंथर नामक संगठन ने दलित शब्द को सर्वाधिक लोकप्रिय बनाया। दलित पैंथर द्वारा दलित शब्द का अर्थ अनुसूचित जाति, अनुसूचित जनजाति, नव-बौद्ध, भूमिहीन, गरीब किसान, स्त्रियों और सभी मानव जिनका राजनीतिक, आर्थिक और सामाजिक शोषण आदि के रूप में व्यक्त किया है (मुरुगकर, 1991)⁵। ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि के अनुसार "दलित शब्द का अर्थ है जिसका दलन और दमन हुआ है, दबाया गया, उत्पीड़ित, शोषित, सताया हुआ, उपेक्षित, घृणित, रौंदा हुआ, मसला हुआ, विनष्ट, मर्दित, पस्त-हिम्मत, हतोत्साहित, वंचित आदि से है" (वाल्मीकि, 2004)⁶। दलित पैंथर और ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि की परिभाषा के आधार पर विश्लेषण करे तो दलित शब्द को किसी एकधर्म या एक समुदाय के अस्पृश्य या दमित लोगों को दलित कहना बहुत ही संकुचित होगा। दलित वह सभी लोग हो सकते हैं, जिन्हें हजारों वर्षों से आर्थिक, धार्मिक, सांस्कृतिक और राजनीतिक रूप से उत्पीड़ित, उपेक्षित तथा घृणित किया गया हो। वह समुदाय किसी भी धर्म, वर्ग तथा लिंग से हो सकता है।

दलित मुसलमान : स्तरीकृत असमानता का परीक्षण

भारत के अधिकतर समाजशास्त्री और इतिहासकार यह मानते हैं कि भारत देश के मुसलमान तथा ईसाई आबादी में 95 प्रतिशत लोग भारत के ही निवासी हैं। उन्होंने हिन्दू धर्म में व्याप्त छुआछूत, ऊंच-नीच, जातिप्रथा जैसी कुरीतियों से तंग आकर कालान्तर में इस्लाम या ईसाई धर्म को अपना लिया। हिन्दू धर्म के जिस सोपानक्रम से निकलकर इस्लाम और ईसाई धर्म में आए, और उन्होंने यहाँ के समाज में भी उसी तरह का सोपान-क्रम का निर्माण कर लिया।

यानी हिन्दू धर्म से द्वंद्व के बाद इस्लाम और ईसाई धर्म में जाति-व्यवस्था जैसी कुरीतियाँ आ गयी। भारत में इस्लाम और ईसाई धर्म अपना चुके समाज में भी अनेक स्थानों पर जाति-बिरादरी के नाम पर मस्जिद-गिरजाघर, कब्रिस्तान, तक बने हुए हैं (अनवर, 2023)⁷। पूर्वी उत्तर प्रदेश तथा बिहार में जातियों के नाम पर अनेक मस्जिदें तथा कब्रिस्तान मिल जायेंगी। जैसे राईनी मस्जिद, हलालखोर मस्जिद, सय्यद मस्जिद तथा अंसार मस्जिद आदि।

बाबासाहेब भीमराव अम्बेडकर ने अपनी पुस्तक पाकिस्तान आर पार्टीशन आफ इंडिया में इस तथ्य पर जोर देते हैं कि अमूमन इस्लाम में भी वैसी ही कई बुराइयाँ या प्रथाएँ मौजूद हैं, जो हिन्दू धर्म में विद्यमान हैं। इस संदर्भ में स्त्रियों के स्थिति का विश्लेषण करने के साथ ही मुसलमानों के अन्दर पायी जाने वाली जातिप्रथा के बारे में भी चर्चा करते हैं। उन्होंने 1901 की जनगणना में बंगाल प्रान्त के सुपरिटेण्डेंट आफ सेंसस के विचारों को विस्तार से उद्धृत किया है, जिन्होंने यह बताया था कि बंगाल के मुस्लिमों को तीन भागों में विभाजित किया जा सकता है। प्रथम, अशराफ या अभिजन मुसलमान। इस श्रेणी में सय्यद, शैख, पठान, मुगल, और मलिक को सम्मिलित किया गया। द्वितीय वर्ग, अजलाफ या निम्न वर्ग के मुसलमान। इसमें खेती करने वाले शेख, दर्जी, जुलाहा, फ़कीर, रंगरेज और अन्य वह लोग जो मूलतः हिन्दू किन्तु किसी बुद्धिजीवी वर्ग से सम्बन्धित नहीं हैं। उन्हें अशराफ समुदाय, पिराली और ठकराई आदि में प्रवेश नहीं मिला है। तृतीया वर्ग में भानार, हलालखोर, हिजड़ा, लालबेगी, मउगता और मेहतर जैसी जातियों को सम्मिलित किया गया है। अम्बेडकर ने इस बात पर जोर दिया कि 'अन्य राज्यों में भी वहाँ की जनसंख्या रपटों के माध्यम से इसी तरह के तथ्य एकत्रित किये जा सकते हैं, लेकिन बंगाल का उदाहरण यह दिखाने के लिए काफी है कि मुसलमान सिर्फ जातिप्रथा को ही नहीं मानते हैं, बल्कि वे अस्पृश्यता का भी पालन करते हैं' (अम्बेडकर, 1990)⁸।

1996-97 में पत्रकारिता के क्षेत्र में दिए जा ने वाले के. के. बिड़ला फाउंडेशन फेलोशिप के द्वारा अली अनवर ने 'दलित मुसलमान' विषय पर अध्ययन-शोध किया। इस अध्ययन के आधार पर अली अनवर बताते हैं कि "दलित मुसलमानों से रोटी-बेटी का रिश्ता रखने की बात तो दूर रही, ईद-बकरीद जैसे पर्व पर भी दूसरे मुसलमान उनके दरवाज़े पर नहीं जाते हैं। यह दूरी इस कठोर तथ्य का सबूत है की उनसे 'अस्पृश्यता' बरती जाती है। उनके यहाँ मिलादुशरीफ़ (धार्मिक प्रवचन) के वक्त भी उनकी जातियों को छोड़ दूसरा कोई मुसलमान उसमें कोई शिरकत नहीं करता है" (अनवर, 2023)⁹।

भारत में मुस्लिम समाज तीन भागों में विभाजित है। सबसे उच्च स्थान पर अशराफ (संभ्रांत, शरीफ), अजलाफ (मध्य स्तरीय), सबसे अंतिम स्थान पर अरजाल (नीच, निकृष्ट) श्रेणी के मुसलमान विद्यमान हैं। अरजाल शब्द अरबी के शब्द 'रजल' से लिया गया है, जिसका अर्थ होता 'घृणित' या 'नीच' (अहमद, 2024)¹⁰। पसमांदा तबके में से जो सबसे अधिक पिछड़े हुए हैं, उन्हें ही अरजाल या दलित मुसलमान कहा है। अरजाल शब्द अपमानजनक है, इसीलिए अली अनवर इस शब्द का प्रयोग करने से मना करते हैं। इसके प्रतिकार में वो 'दलित मुसलमान' कहना उचित मानते हैं। "आल इंडिया बैकवार्ड मुस्लिम मोर्चा (एआईबीएमएम) की स्थापना 1994 में एजाज अली ने पटना, बिहार में की थी, एजाज अली ने ही निम्न जातियों से संबंधित स्वदेशी धर्मांतरित आबादी के वंशजों के लिए 'दलित मुसलमान' शब्द गढ़ा था" (अली, 2010)¹¹। जिसका

उद्देश्य सभी विभिन्न निम्न मुस्लिम जातियों को एकत्रित कर, एक साझा मंच पर लाना था (सिकंद, 2001)¹²। दलित मुसलमानों (अरजाल समूह) की श्रेणी में आने वाली जातियां निम्न हैं— गदेहड़ी, भठियारा, गोरकन, हलालखोर, बकखो, नट, पामरिया, धोबी और लालबेगी आदि हैं। इन जातियों के अधिकतर लोग हिन्दू धर्म की निचली जातियों से धर्म परिवर्तित करके मुसलमान धर्म को अपनाया है। इन जातियों के लोगों ने अपना धर्म तो परिवर्तित कर लिया, लेकिन इनकी जो सामाजिक प्रस्थिति हिन्दू धर्म में थी, वही मुस्लिम धर्म में आने के बाद भी बनी रही। महात्मा गाँधी ने अपनी पत्रिका 'हरिजन' में लिखा है कि "चाहे कोई हरिजन नाममात्र को एक ईसाई, मुसलमान या हिन्दू और अब एक सिख हो जाये वह तब भी एक हरिजन ही रहेगा। वह तथाकथित हिन्दू धर्म से विरासत में प्राप्त धब्बों को नहीं मिटा सकता, चाहे वह अपनी वेश-भूषा बदलकर स्वयं को कैथोलिक हरिजन या मुस्लिम हरिजन या नव-मुस्लिम या नव-सिख कहला ले, किन्तु उसकी अस्पृश्यता पीढ़ियों तक उसका पीछा नहीं छोड़ेगी" (गांधी, 1936)¹³

मुस्लिम समुदाय के भीतर अस्पृश्यता की मौजूदगी के बारे में प्रशांत त्रिवेदी और अन्य (2016) ने एक शोध किया, जिसका यहाँ पर उल्लेख करना आवश्यक है। उन्होंने अपने शोध में उत्तर प्रदेश के 14 जिलों में घर-घर सर्वेक्षण कर गैर-दलित मुसलमान, हिन्दू दलित तथा दलित मुसलमानों के साथ अस्पृश्यता के व्यवहार के बारे में अंतर्विरोधी दावों की जाँच पड़ताल की है। प्रशांत त्रिवेदी और अन्य यह तर्क दिया कि दलित मुसलमान को लेकर हुए अब तक के अध्ययन या तो व्यक्तिगत अनुभवों पर आधारित होते हैं या बहुत ही सूक्ष्म स्तर के सर्वेक्षण पर आधारित होते हैं। ऐसा इसीलिए होता है कि जनगणना, नेशनल सैम्पल सर्वे या नेशनल हेल्थ सर्वे जैसे बड़े सर्वेक्षणों में दलित मुस्लिम जातियों के बारे में अलग से अध्ययन नहीं किया जाता है। क्योंकि उन्हें अधिकारिक रूप से ओ.बी.सी. (अन्य पिछड़ा वर्ग) की श्रेणी में रखा जाता है। और ओ.बी.सी. की उपजातियों का जनगणना में अलग से अध्ययन नहीं किया जाता है। इसीलिए दलित मुसलमानों के बारे में अलग से जानकारी कही भी नहीं मिल पाती है। प्रशांत त्रिवेदी के अनुसार, इसी कारण सरकार और समाज ने इस मुद्दे को अब तक ज्यादा गंभीरता से नहीं लिया है। अपने इस अध्ययन में उन्होंने ज्यादा व्यापक अनुभवसिद्ध अध्ययन के माध्यम से मुसलमानों पायी जाने वाली अस्पृश्यता का अध्ययन किया है।

प्रशांत त्रिवेदी और अन्य द्वारा एकत्रित आंकड़ों के अनुसार दलित मुसलमानों के एक बड़े अनुपात ने यह बताया कि गैर-दलित मुसलमानों के विवाह भोज आदि में उन्हें निमंत्रण नहीं मिलता है। हालांकि तीन-चौथाई दलित-मुसलमान परिवारों ने यह कहा कि उन्हें विवाह जैसे समारोह में आमंत्रित किया जाता है। ऐसे समारोह या पारिवारिक उत्सवों में बैठने की व्यवस्था के बारे में पूछे जाने के पर दलित-मुसलमानों के एक समूह ने बताया कि उन्हें गैर-दलित मुसलमानों के पारिवारिक आयोजनों में अलग बैठाया जाता है। दलितों के एक समूह ने यह भी बताया कि उन्हें उच्च-जाति के लोगो को समारोह में खाना खा लेने के बाद ही उन्हें भोजन परोसा जाता है। लगभग 5 से 10 प्रतिशत लोगो ने यह बताया उन्हें अलग प्रकार के थाली में खाना दिया जाता है। एक-चौथाई गैर-दलित मुसलमानों ने यह कहा कि उनके आस-पास या उनके गाँव में कोई दलित मुसलमान नहीं है। इस अध्ययन के आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण करते तो निश्चित रूप से दिखाई देता है कि मुसलमानों के मध्य भेदभाव तथा अस्पृश्यता जैसी महामारी अस्तित्व में है।

प्रशांत त्रिवेदी और अन्य अपने अध्ययन में बताते हैं कि दलित मुसलमानों ने यह कहा कि उन्हें उच्च जाति के कब्रिस्तान में अपने परिजनों को दफनाने की इजाजत नहीं है। दलित मुसलमानों ने आगे बताया कि उन्हें किसी और कब्रिस्तान में दफनाना पड़ता है या उसी कब्रिस्तान के किसी कोने में अपने परिजनों को दफनाते हैं। ऐसी ही चर्चा अली अनवर अपनी पुस्तक 'मसावात की जंग' में भी करते हैं। अली अनवर के अनुसार बिहार के भोजपुर जिले में एक मुसलमान बहुल गाँव है, वहाँ पे पठानों के कब्रिस्तान अलग है। पामरिया जाति के लोग अपने मुर्दे अलग कब्रिस्तान में दफनाते हैं। साईं दर्जी के लोगों का भी कब्रिस्तान अलग-थलग है। एक ही गाँव में अलग-अलग कब्रिस्तान क्यों? इस प्रश्न के उत्तर में एक उत्तरदाता यह बताता है कि "पठानों ने हमारे पूर्वजों को अपने साथ दफन नहीं होने दिया होगा, इसलिए मजबूरी में अपना कब्रिस्तान बनाना पड़ा होगा" (अनवर, 2001)¹⁴। अधिकांश मुसलमान एक ही मस्जिद में नमाज अदा करते हैं। लेकिन कुछ स्थानों पर दलित मुसलमानों ने यह बताया कि मुख्य मस्जिद में उनके साथ भेदभाव किया जाता है। "अली अनवर बताते हैं कि मस्जिद में आगे बैठने पर पामरिया जाति के लोगो को उठाने के लिए मारपीट हो चुकी है। उसके बाद पामरिया जाति के लोगो ने अपनी अलग मस्जिद और मदरसा बना लिया" (अनवर, 2001)¹⁵। अधिकतर दलित मुसलमानों ने यह कहा कि उनके समुदाय को छोटे काम से जुड़ा हुआ माना जाता है। उच्च जाति के मुसलमानों के घरों में अपने अनुभव को बताते हुए 13 प्रतिशत दलित मुसलमानों ने यह कहा कि उन्हें खाना या पीने के लिए पानी अलग बर्तन में दिया जाता है, उच्च जाति के हिन्दू घरों से अगर यह तुलना करे तो उच्च जाति के हिन्दू घरों में यह अनुपात 46 प्रतिशत था। इसी तरह, 20 प्रतिशत दलित मुसलमानों ने यह कहा कि उच्च जाति के मुसलमान उनसे दूरी बनाये रखते हैं, वही 25 प्रतिशत दलित मुसलमानों ने यही बात उच्च जाति के हिन्दुओं के बारे में भी कही, उच्च जाति के मुसलमानों से संवाद करने पर यह बात निकल कर आयी कि 27 प्रतिशत उच्च जाति के मुसलमानों के मोहल्ले में दलित मुसलमानों का कोई घर नहीं था, 20 प्रतिशत उच्च जाति के मुसलमानों ने यह कहा कि उनका दलित मुसलमानों से कोई सामाजिक सम्बन्ध नहीं है, जिन घरों में दलित मुसलमान जाते थे, उनमें से 20 प्रतिशत लोगो ने यह बताया कि वे उन्हें खाने की वस्तुएं नहीं देते हैं, अगर कुछ खाने की वस्तु देते भी हैं तो उन्हें अलग बर्तन में देते हैं (त्रिवेदी, 2016)¹⁶। प्रशांत त्रिवेदी और अन्य लोगो द्वारा प्रस्तुत किये गये इस आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण करने पर साफ़ दिखाई देता है कि अस्पृश्यता तथा भेदभाव का यह व्यवहार सिर्फ हिन्दू धर्म में ही नहीं विद्यमान है। इसका विस्तार बहुत ही व्यापक है। हिन्दू समुदाय के साथ-साथ मुसलमानों, ईसाइयों, सिख आदि जैसे धर्म भी अस्पृश्यता जैसी महामारी से अछूते नहीं हैं। प्रशांत त्रिवेदी तथा अन्य लोगो द्वारा प्रस्तुत किये गये आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण करते हैं तो देखते हैं कि जब अस्पृश्यता या भेदभाव का स्तर हिन्दू उच्च जातियों के अनुपात में मुस्लिम उच्च जातियों के लोग अभी भी काफी पीछे है (अहमद, 2019)¹⁷।

दलित मुसलमानों की जातियाँ : विविधता एवं वंचना

हलालखोर : हलालखोर मुस्लिम समाज के अंतर्गत आने वाली एक जाति का नाम है। हलालखोर शब्द अरबी का शब्द 'हलाल' और फ़ारसी के 'खुर्दम' शब्द से मिलकर बना है, जिसका सीधा अर्थ होता है मेहनत और ईमानदारी से जीविका उपार्जन करने वाला (अनवर,

2023)¹⁸। बिहार में हलालखोर जाति के लोग हिन्दू व मुसलमान दोनों धर्मों में पाए जाते हैं, हिन्दुओं में इस जाति के लोगों को 'हलखोर' या वाल्मीकि कहा जाता है, और दोनों जातियों का परम्परागत पेशा एक समान है (अनवर, 2023)¹⁹। बिहार जातीय जनगणना 2023 के अनुसार बिहार में मुसलमान हलालखोर जाति के लोगों की जनसंख्या 7611 है (बिहार, 2023)²⁰।

जायल ली का मानना है कि पूर्वी उत्तर प्रदेश और बिहार में मुसलमान हलालखोर हेला, डोम और वाल्मीकि जैसी जातियों के साथ-साथ कूड़ा उठाने, सड़कों पर झाड़ू लगाने जैसे साफ-सफाई के काम में लगे हुए हैं। हलालखोर जाति के लोगो को भी हिन्दू जाति के ऐसे काम करने वाली जाति की तरह से रोजमर्रा के जीवन में जातिगत भेदभाव तथा अस्पृश्यता का सामना करना पड़ता है। लेकिन साफ-सफाई का काम करने वाली हेला, डोम तथा वाल्मीकि जातियों के लोगो को अनुसूचित जातियों की श्रेणी में सम्मिलित किया गया है। वही हलालखोर जाति इस्लाम धर्म के अनुयायी है, इसीलिए इन्हें इस श्रेणी से बाहर रखा हुआ है (ली, 2018)²¹। जायल ली अपने अध्ययन में बताते हैं कि इन्हें मस्जिदों में प्रवेश तो मिल गया लेकिन अभी भी जातीय-बहिर्विवाह पर रोक अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से जारी है, जो कि जाति व्यवस्था को कायम रखने की अनिवार्य शर्त है। जायल ली अपने अध्ययन में बताते हैं कि हलालखोर और उनके सहयोगी, कम से कम 1940 के दशक से कलंक, बहिष्कार और भेदभावपूर्ण व्यवहार से मुक्ति के लिए स्थानीय संघर्षों में लगे हुए हैं (ली, 2018)²²।

जायल ली के अनुसार, हलालखोर समाज में अस्पृश्यता जैसी अमानवीय प्रथाएं अभी भी मजबूती से कायम हैं। तथा जातिगत आधार पर संरचनात्मक वंचना नियमित रूप से बनी हुई है। जायल ली बताते हैं कि, मेरे अधिकांश हलालखोर वार्ताकार गैर-दलित मुसलमानों के मोहल्लों से अलग बस्तियों में रहते हैं, और हलालखोर बस्तियाँ, अन्य दलित बस्तियों की तरह, अनुपातहीन रूप से सार्वजनिक शौचालयों और कूड़ा-कचरा डिपो के निकट स्थित हैं – जो कि उस बात का परिणाम है, जिसे मैंने अन्यत्र पर्यावरणीय जातिवाद कहा है (ली 2018)²³। जायल ली के अनुसार उनके अध्ययन क्षेत्र में अधिकांश कब्रिस्तान पूरी तरह से अलग हैं – उदाहरण के लिए, बनारस और भदोही में हलालखोरों को या तो मिश्रित मुस्लिम कब्रिस्तानों के पीछे एक अलग खंड में दफनाया जाता है, एक सीमा चिह्न के पीछे, या फिर उनके अलग-अलग कब्रिस्तान मौजूद हैं (ली 2018)²⁴। जायल ली और अली अनवर के दिए गये आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण करते हैं तो मुसलमान हलालखोर जाति के लोगो की स्थिति आज भी बहुत ही दयनीय है। उनके साथ आज भी निजी स्थानों के साथ-साथ सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर अस्पृश्यता तथा भेदभाव जैसी अमानवीय प्रथा का प्रयोग किया जाता है। मुसलमान हलालखोर की स्थिति हिन्दू दलितों की समान जाति जैसे वाल्मीकि, हेला और डोम जैसी जातियों से भी खराब स्थिति है। हिन्दू दलित जातियों को अनुसूचित जाति का दर्जा मिलने के कारण, उन्हें अनुसूचित जाति आरक्षण का लाभ मिला। जिसके कारण विश्वविद्यालय, लोक प्रशासन और अन्य सार्वजनिक संस्थानों तक उनकी पहुँच हो सकी। मुसलमान हलालखोर जाति के लोगो को अनुसूचित जाति में सम्मिलित न करने के कारण उन्हें अनुसूचित जाति आरक्षण का लाभ नहीं मिला, जिसके कारण उनकी इन संस्थानों तक पहुँच ना के बराबर है।

गोरकन : गोरकन फ़ारसी भाषा का शब्द है। फ़ारसी में 'गोर' का अर्थ कब्र और 'कन' खोदने वाले को कहा जाता है। इनका पेशा कब्र खोदना है। गोरकन वह जाति है, जिसका संबंध इस्लाम में बिल्कुल वैसा ही है, जैसा कि डोम जाति का संबंध हिंदू धर्म में (कुमार, 2023)²⁵। जैसे डोम जाति के हाथों दी गई अग्नि से ही हिंदू धर्म के मृतकों को 'मुक्ति' मिलती है, वैसे ही गोरकन के श्रम के कारण इस्लाम धर्म में मृतक 'सुपुर्द-ए-खाक' होते हैं।

अली अनवर की पुस्तक "सम्पूर्ण दलित आन्दोलन" में उन्हें एक उत्तरदाता ने बताया कि वह दो आदमी मिलकर 25 वर्षों से कब्र खोदने का काम कर रहे हैं। बारह रुपये में भी कब्र खोदी है। अब तो 150 रुपया एक कब्र का मिलता है। किसी गरीब या लावारिस लाश आती है तो चंदा वगैरह का कुछ मिला तो सही, वरना मुफ्त में भी काम कर देते हैं। कई स्थानों पर गोरकन रमजान के महीने में सहरी के लिए रोजेदारों को जगाने का भी काम करते हैं (अनवर, 2023)²⁶। इससे उन्हें फितरा और जकात की रकम में से एक हिस्सा मिल जाता है।

भठियारा : 'भठियारा' आम भाषा में गाली भी है और एक जाति का नाम भी है। रिजले ने अपनी पुस्तक 'द ट्राइब्स एंड कास्ट्स आफ बंगाल' में बताते हैं कि भठियारा शब्द की उत्पत्ति 'भाट' शब्द से हुई है। यह लोग यात्रियों के भोजन और उन्हें ठहरने की व्यवस्था करते और साथ ही तम्बाकू बेचते थे, उन्हें ही इस नाम से पुकारा गया। रिजले लिखते हैं कि इनकी महिलाएँ अक्सर संदिग्ध चरित्र की होती थी (अनवर, 2023)²⁷। बिहार सरकार द्वारा हाल ही में जारी जाति आधारित गणना रिपोर्ट-2023 में इस जाति के लोगों की मौजूदा संख्या केवल 27,263 है (बिहार, 2023)²⁸। बिहार के अतिरिक्त इस जाति के लोग उत्तर प्रदेश, राजस्थान और मध्य प्रदेश में भी पाए जाते हैं। बिहार में भठियारा अति-पिछड़ा वर्ग और उत्तर प्रदेश तथा राजस्थान में ये लोग पिछड़ा वर्ग में शामिल हैं। मोहम्मद कलीम फारुकी एडवोकेट बताते हैं कि भठियारा जाति की प्रस्थिति हिन्दू दलितों से भी बदतर है। इस जाति की साक्षरता दर पांच प्रतिशत से भी कम है। पूरे बिहार में अभी तक इस जाति के किसी को भी शिक्षक अथवा क्लर्क तक की नौकरी नहीं मिली है (अनवर, 2023)²⁹। अली अनवर ने अपनी पुस्तक 'सम्पूर्ण दलित आन्दोलन' में बताते हैं कि गया के बड़ीसराय मोहल्ले में इस जाति की कुछ महिलाएँ आज भी 'टिकिया' बनाने का काम करती हैं। टिकिया कोयले के चूर्ण से बनाया जाता है। इसका प्रयोग हुक्का पीने में होता है। पहले बड़े पैमाने पर इस बिरादरी की महिलाएँ टिकिया बनाने का काम करती थी। लेकिन हुक्के का प्रचलन लुप्तप्राय हो जाने के कारण रोजगार का यह अवसर भी सिकुड़ता गया। मोहम्मद कलीम फारुकी बताते हैं कि इस जाति के अधिकतर पुरुष घोड़ागाड़ी चलाते हैं (अनवर, 2023)³⁰।

बक्खो : बक्खो यानी खानाबदोश या घुमंतू जाति है। बक्खो जाति के लोग बंजारों सा जीवन जीते थे। ऐसी ही अन्य जातियाँ घुमंतू और अर्द्ध-घुमंतू व गैर-अधिसूचित श्रेणियों में शामिल हैं। लेकिन बक्खो इन श्रेणियों में शामिल नहीं। बिहार में ये 30 नवम्बर 1996 को 'बिहार राज्य पिछड़ा वर्ग आयोग' की सिफारिश पर सरकार ने इन्हें अनुसूची -1 में शामिल कर दिया। आयोग में अपनी सिफारिश में लिखा कि - 'जहाँ तक सामाजिक पिछड़ेपन की बात है, यह लोग अन्य लोगों के साथ मस्जिद में एक साथ नमाज पढ़ते हैं, लेकिन अशराफ मुसलमान इनके साथ बैठकर खाना-पीना नहीं करते हैं, यह लोग ज्यादा गंदे रहते हैं तो इन्हें लोग अपने घरों में भी

काम नहीं देते हैं, सरकारी तथा गैर-सरकारी सेवाओं में भी इनकी भागीदारी शून्य है, इनका सामाजिक पिछड़ापन, अन्य मुस्लिम जातियों द्वारा निम्न श्रेणी का समझना, शैक्षणिक शून्यता और नौकरियों में शून्य भागीदारी के कारण बकखो जाति को अत्यंत पिछड़ी जाति अनुसूची -1 में सम्मिलित करने का सुझाव दिया (अनवर, 2023)³¹।

बिहार में सदियों से बकखो जाति का अस्तित्व रहा है। 1901 में हुई जनगणना में इस जाति का उल्लेख मिलता है। लेकिन बकखो जाति का विवरण 1931 में हुई जनगणना में नहीं मिलता है। अभी बिहार में हुई जाति जनगणना में इनकी पूर्ण जनसंख्या 36830 दर्ज की गयी है (बिहार, 2023)³²। बिहार में इस जाति की आबादी पटना, नालंदा, गया, बेगूसराय, समस्तीपुर, मधुबनी और सहरसा जैसे क्षेत्रों में पायी जाति है।

पहले बकखो जाति के लोगो का पेशा लोगो के घरों में जा कर बधाई गीत गाना था। बकखो (पुरुष) हाथ में 'खंजड़ी' तथा बकखोवाइन (स्त्री) 'मचिया' के साथ बच्चा पैदा होने वाले घर पर जाकर बधाई गीत गाते हैं (अनवर, 2023)³³। खंजड़ी और मचिया बकखो जाति की पहचान से जुड़ा हुआ है। रिजले ने अपनी पुस्तक 'द ट्राइब्स एंड कास्ट्स ऑफ बंगाल' में बताया कि हिन्दू और मुसलमान दोनों इस पेशे से जुड़े हुए हैं। लेकिन इस जाति के लोग अपने परंपरागत काम को छोड़कर दूसरे काम को अपना रहे हैं (रिजले, 1891)³⁴। बकखो जाति के लोग बताते हैं कि उनके परंपरागत काम में नाममात्र की आय होती है। इसीलिए इस जाति के अधिकतर लोग दिहाड़ी मजदूरी का काम करने लगे हैं। इस जाति की महिलाओं ने स्टील बर्तन की फेरी का एक नया काम शुरू किया है। धीरे-धीरे बकखो जाति की पहचान खंजड़ी-मचिया का स्थान उनके सर पर स्टील के बर्तनों भरी टोकरी ने लेना शुरू कर दिया है।

निष्कर्ष

धर्म परिवर्तन सामाजिक समानता की गारंटी नहीं देता, विशेषकर उन समुदायों के लोगों के लिए जिन्होंने पीढ़ियों से जातिगत उत्पीड़न, भेदभाव तथा सामाजिक बहिष्कार का सामना किया है। दलित मुसलमानों की स्थिति इसका सबसे बड़ा ठोस प्रमाण है। यद्यपि इस्लाम सैद्धांतिक रूप से जाति विहीन और समतावादी धर्म है, फिर भी भारत या अन्य किसी भी दक्षिणी एशियाई देश के मुसलमानों में व्यवहारिक रूप में जाति के आधार पर भेदभाव, अस्पृश्यता तथा सामाजिक बहिष्करण पाया जाता है। मुसलमानों में सामाजिक स्तरीकरण में सबसे निम्न स्तर पर स्थापित 'अरजाल' या 'दलित मुसलमानों' का पेशा और उनकी सामाजिक प्रस्थिति हिन्दू धर्म के दलितों के समकक्ष या उससे भी दयनीय स्थिति में है।

प्रस्तुत शोध में उपलब्ध आकड़ों का विश्लेषण करने पर यह स्पष्ट हुआ कि दलित मुसलमानों को मुस्लिम समाज के भीतर अलग-अलग स्तर पर भेदभाव, अस्पृश्यता, जातिगत उत्पीड़न और सामाजिक बहिष्कार का सामना करना पड़ता है। कब्रिस्तान में दफन करने को लेकर, मस्जिद में नमाज पढ़ने को लेकर, विवाह, भोजन या प्रतिदिन के सामाजिक संपर्क के रूप में भेदभाव तथा जातिगत उत्पीड़न दिखाई देता है। दलित मुसलमानों को "ओ.बी.सी." श्रेणी में सम्मिलित होने के कारण उन्हें हिन्दू या अन्य धर्मों के अनुसूचित जाति के लोगो के लिए बनाई गयी सरकारी कल्याणकारी नीतियों का लाभ नहीं मिल पाता है। जिसके कारण इनकी प्रस्थिति दिन-प्रतिदिन और दयनीय होती जा रही है। जिसकी चर्चा सच्चर समिति रपट में भी दिखाई देती है।

इस अध्ययन के आधार पर यह भी निष्कर्ष निकाला जा सकता है कि जब तक अरजाल या दलित मुसलमानों को अनुसूचित जाति के रूप में संवैधानिक मान्यता नहीं दी जाएगी, तब तक दलित मुसलमानों का सामाजिक, शैक्षिक और आर्थिक गतिशीलता की कोई सम्भावना दूर-दूर तक नहीं दिखाई देती है। और इसके साथ, उच्च वर्ग के मुसलमानों और मुस्लिम धार्मिक गुरुओं को भी मुस्लिम सामाजिक संरचना के अन्दर विद्यमान जाति के आधार पर भेदभाव तथा अस्पृश्यता जैसी बुराई को स्वीकार कर, उनके साथ सामाजिक न्याय तथा समानता का व्यवहार करना होगा।

अरजाल अथवा दलित मुसलमान को सिर्फ धर्म परिवर्तन तथा पहचान के बदलाव से मुक्ति नहीं मिलने वाली है, किंतु यह निरंतर चलने वाले सामाजिक संघर्ष की एक प्रक्रिया है। जिसमें कानून, नीति, मानदंड, मूल्य, समाज और स्वयं उच्च वर्ग के मुस्लिम समुदाय के लोग तथा मुस्लिम धार्मिक गुरुओं की भूमिका अति-महत्वपूर्ण हो जाती है।



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ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय के वित्तीय पहुँच में सामाजिक-आर्थिक बाधाएँ

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सारांश

ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय के अधिकारों की सुरक्षा के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय और क्षेत्रीय स्तर पर कई प्रकार की व्यवस्थाएँ मौजूद हैं। फिर भी, कई देशों में दंडात्मक कानून, नीतियाँ और प्रथाएँ ट्रांसजेंडर व्यक्तियों को लक्षित करती हैं। इसमें पहचान दस्तावेजों को बदलने की जटिल प्रक्रियाएँ भी शामिल हैं, जो ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को उनके अधिकारों से वंचित करती हैं और न्याय तक पहुँच को सीमित कर देती हैं। इसका परिणाम यह होता है कि राज्य और समाज दोनों ही स्तरों पर उनके मानवाधिकारों का गंभीर हनन होता है। दुनियाभर में ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय का अनुभव गहन सामाजिक बहिष्करण का रहा है जो उन्हें HIV व अन्य बीमारियों जैसे मानसिक स्वास्थ्य समस्याएँ, शिक्षा और रोजगार तक सीमित पहुँच तथा आर्थिक और सामाजिक तरक्की के अवसरों से वंचित करता है। इसके अतिरिक्त, लिंग से जुड़ी सामाजिक मान्यताओं का पालन न करने वाले लोगों के प्रति घृणा और आक्रोश अक्सर हिंसा के रूप में सामने आता है। ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों के खिलाफ इस तरह की हिंसात्मक घटनाएँ आम हैं और अधिकतर मामलों में इनका कोई दंड नहीं होता।

मुख्य शब्द : ट्रांसजेंडर, वित्तीय समावेशन, लैंगिक समानता, लैंगिक विकास।

प्रस्तावना

विकास की प्रक्रिया में जब हम लैंगिक विकास (Gender Development) और लैंगिक समानता (Gender Equality) की बात करते हैं, तो यह मुख्यतः महिलाओं से जुड़ी समस्याओं पर केंद्रित रहता है—जैसे महिलाओं की शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, कार्यस्थल पर समान वेतन, सामाजिक सुरक्षा, राजनीतिक अवसर आदि। सतत विकास लक्ष्य (SDGs) का एक प्रमुख उद्देश्य महिलाओं और बालिकाओं के सशक्तीकरण के माध्यम से लैंगिक समानता को बढ़ावा देना है। हालाँकि “लैंगिक” शब्द सामान्यतः पुरुष और महिला को संदर्भित करता है, लेकिन समाज में एक और

महत्वपूर्ण लैंगिक पहचान है—तीसरा लिंग (Transgender), जिसे अक्सर SDGs के एजेंडा में नज़रअंदाज़ कर दिया जाता है। इसलिए यह प्रश्न अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है कि क्या हम तीसरे लिंग समुदाय को शामिल किए बिना सचमुच लैंगिक समानता स्थापित कर सकते हैं? स्पष्ट रूप से नहीं।

भारत में ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय को विभिन्न नामों से जाना जाता है—जैसे हिजड़ा, किन्नर, अरावणी, कोठी, जोगप्पा/जोगता, शिव-शक्ति और जोगती—हिजड़ा (यूनाइटेड नेशंस डेवलपमेंट प्रोग्राम (UNDP-2010)। सभी हाशिए पर रहने वाले समुदायों में से, ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय सबसे अधिक बहिष्कृत है—उन्हें जीवन के हर क्षेत्र से बाहर रखा गया है। इसलिए ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय के उत्थान के बिना लैंगिक समानता की परिकल्पना अधूरी है। विभिन्न रिपोर्टों के अनुसार, ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय की आमदनी के प्रमुख स्रोत हैं—वेश्यावृत्ति, ट्रेनों में भिक्षावृत्ति, बारों में नृत्य करना और लोगों को आशीर्वाद देना (नेशनल एड्स कंट्रोल ऑर्गनाइजेशन (NACO-2015)। वे समाज में पूरी तरह से बहिष्कृत हैं और हर क्षेत्र में भेदभाव का सामना करते हैं। शिक्षा की कमी, औपचारिक रोजगार से बहिष्कार, बेघरपन और ज़मीन की अनुपलब्धता, खराब स्वच्छता और स्वास्थ्य की स्थिति, तथा सरकारी सुविधाओं की कमी—ये ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय की प्रमुख समस्याएँ हैं।

वित्तीय समावेशन की परिभाषा

वित्तीय समावेशन को उस प्रक्रिया के रूप में परिभाषित किया गया है, जो गरीब और कमजोर वर्गों को सरल, सुलभ और किफायती दर पर औपचारिक वित्तीय सेवाओं तक पहुँच प्रदान करता है। **सरमा, एम., व पेस, जे. (2008)** के अनुसार, यह प्रक्रिया समाज के प्रत्येक गरीब और हाशिए पर मौजूद सदस्य तक वित्तीय सेवाएँ सुनिश्चित करती है। भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक की वित्तीय समावेशन समिति के अनुसार, वित्तीय समावेशन का अर्थ है—हाशिए पर मौजूद और औपचारिक वित्तीय व्यवस्था से वंचित वर्गों को औपचारिक वित्तीय क्षेत्र तक पहुँच दिलाना। एक सच्चे वित्तीय समावेशन में समाज के सभी वर्गों को शामिल किया जाना चाहिए। यदि किसी एक वर्ग को भी वंचित कर दिया गया, तो “सार्वत्रिक वित्तीय समावेशन” का सपना अधूरा रह जाएगा। औपचारिक वित्तीय संस्थानों द्वारा प्रदान की जाने वाली सभी सेवाओं को “सार्वजनिक वस्तुएँ” (Public Goods) माना जाता है। इसलिए जब कोई वर्ग इनसे वंचित होता है, तो इसे सामाजिक वंचना (Social Deprivation) या सामाजिक बहिष्करण (Social Exclusion) माना जाता है। भारत सरकार और रिज़र्व बैंक ने इस स्थिति को सुधारने के लिए कई पहलें की हैं: 1969 में 14 प्रमुख बैंकों का राष्ट्रीयकरण व 1980 में 6 और बैंकों का राष्ट्रीयकरण। 1982 में क्षेत्रीय ग्रामीण बैंक (RRBs) और नाबार्ड (NABARD) की स्थापना। 2006 में सी. रंगराजन की अध्यक्षता में एक समिति का गठन किया गया। 2014 में प्रधानमंत्री जन-धन योजना (PMJDY) की शुरुआत हुई, जिससे लोग शून्य बैलेंस पर बैंक खाता खोल सकते हैं।

हालांकि इन सभी पहलों के बावजूद, समाज के एक बड़े हिस्से तक अभी भी औपचारिक वित्तीय व्यवस्था की पहुँच नहीं है। एक महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न यह है: वित्तीय समावेशन से वंचित लोग कौन हैं? इसका उत्तर यह है कि—किसान, असंगठित क्षेत्र के मज़दूर, महिलाएँ, कारीगर, स्वरोज़गार करने वाले लोग और कैदी इस श्रेणी में आते हैं (देव, एस. एम. 2006)। इनकी

वित्तीय वंचना के कारण दो प्रकार के हो सकते हैं: डिमांड साइड (माँग पक्ष) कारण: जब उपयोगकर्ता स्वयं प्रणाली का लाभ नहीं उठा पाते—जैसे जानकारी की कमी, दस्तावेजों की अनुपलब्धता या असुविधा। सप्लाई साइड (आपूर्ति पक्ष) कारण: जब संस्थान पर्याप्त सेवाएँ या उत्पाद उपलब्ध नहीं करा पाते—जैसे कर्मचारी का भेदभाव, दूरस्थ स्थान या उपयुक्त उत्पादों का अभाव।

वित्तीय समावेशन में लैंगिक असमानता

आर्थिक विकास, गरीबी, असमानता, मुद्रास्फीति, मानव विकास और मानव पूंजी पर वित्तीय समावेशन के प्रभाव का वर्णन करने के बावजूद, इसके लाभों को लैंगिक दृष्टिकोण से भी देखा जा सकता है। सामाजिक रूप से बहिष्कृत और कलंकित लैंगिक समूह अभी भी औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली से असमान रूप से वंचित हैं। ग्लोबल फाइंडेक्स डेटाबेस 2014 के अनुसार, दुनिया की बैंक-विहीन आबादी का आधे से अधिक हिस्सा महिलाएं हैं। वित्तीय समावेशन में लैंगिक अंतर विकासशील और विकसित दोनों देशों में मौजूद है, और कुछ विकसित देशों में भी यह अंतर अधिक है (फ्रैंटा, ए.बी. और मुटसोनजिवा, के. (2016))। महिलाओं के अन्य जीविका से बहिष्करण के मुद्दों को शोध में अच्छी तरह से संबोधित किया गया है, लेकिन महिलाओं और ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों के औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली से बहिष्करण के मुद्दों को शोधकर्ताओं व नीति निर्माताओं द्वारा पर्याप्त रूप से संबोधित नहीं किया गया है। वित्तीय समावेशन में लैंगिक अंतर चिंताजनक है क्योंकि बहिष्कृत लैंगिक समूह वित्तीय प्रणाली से वंचित रह जाते हैं और आर्थिक विकास एवं प्रगति में उनका योगदान छूट जाता है।

इसके अलावा, औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली से बहिष्करण समानता के अधिकार का उल्लंघन है, जो सामाजिक और आर्थिक गतिविधियों में समान भागीदारी की बात करता है। लगभग हर समाज में, बैंकिंग गतिविधियों के संदर्भ में उच्च लैंगिक असमानता पाई जाती है। महिलाओं के पास औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली से वित्तीय उत्पादों और सेवाओं तक पहुंचने के कम अवसर होते हैं। अधिक प्रतिशत महिलाओं के पास कम वित्तीय शिक्षा, कम संपत्ति संचय, अनियमित और अनौपचारिक आय स्रोत, कानूनी पहचान की समस्या आदि होती है, जिसके कारण कई महिलाएं स्वयं को औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली से दूर रखती हैं (कुंट, ए.डी. और क्लैपर, एल. (2012))। आमतौर पर, परिवार के पुरुष सदस्यों के पास आर्थिक शक्ति होती है, इसलिए परिवार में पुरुष सदस्य के नाम पर बैंक खाता होने की संभावना अधिक होती है। कम विकसित और विकासशील देशों में, आय उत्पादन गतिविधियों में महिलाओं की भागीदारी भी बहुत कम होती है। आर्थिक गतिविधियों में कम संलग्नता के कारण महिलाएं अपने नाम पर बैंक खाता खोलने में असमर्थ होती हैं। यह देखा गया है कि जिन राज्यों में महिला आबादी का हिस्सा अधिक है, वहां वित्तीय समावेशन का स्तर कम है (आरबीआई, 2015)।

भारतीय समाज पितृसत्तात्मक मूल्यों और मानदंडों पर आधारित है, जहां पुरुषों को महिलाओं की तुलना में अधिक अधिकार प्राप्त हैं। राज्य भारत के पूर्वी भाग में स्थित है, जहां एक बड़ी संख्या में लोगों की सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति निम्न है। स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा, रोजगार और राजनीति जैसे हर क्षेत्र में लैंगिक असमानताएं व्यापक रूप से विद्यमान हैं। सामाजिक और आर्थिक जीवन में समाज के पुरुष सदस्यों का वर्चस्व होता है। चूंकि पुरुष सदस्यों के पास

आर्थिक शक्ति होती है, इसलिए वे औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली के लाभों का आनंद लेते हैं। खाता धारण, बचत, ऋण और बैंकिंग सेवाओं तक पहुंच में लैंगिक अंतर पाया जाता है।

ट्रांसजेंडर क्यों?

ट्रांसजेंडर शब्द उन लोगों के लिए एक व्यापक शब्द है जिनकी लैंगिक पहचान, लैंगिक अभिव्यक्ति या व्यवहार उनके जन्म के समय निर्धारित लिंग (यानी जन्म प्रमाण पत्र में उल्लिखित लिंग) से भिन्न होता है। इसी तरह, स्वास्थ्य और परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार ने 'हिजड़ों' को उन जैविक पुरुषों के रूप में परिभाषित किया है जो समय के साथ अपनी 'पुरुष' पहचान को अस्वीकार करके 'महिला' या 'गैर-पुरुष' या 'पुरुष और महिला के बीच' या न तो पुरुष और न ही महिला के रूप में पहचानते हैं। ट्रांसजेंडर शब्द एक व्यापक शब्द है और गैर-ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों द्वारा उपयोग के लिए उपयुक्त है (नेशनल सेंटर फॉर ट्रांसजेंडर इक्वालिटी, 2014)। 'ट्रांस' शब्द ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को संदर्भित करने का एक संक्षिप्त रूप है। आम तौर पर, ट्रांसजेंडर दो प्रकार के होते हैं, एक 'ट्रांस मैन' और दूसरा 'ट्रांस वुमन'। ट्रांस मैन शब्द का उपयोग उस पुरुष के लिए किया जाता है जो महिला से पुरुष (एफटीएम) में परिवर्तित हुआ है। इसके विपरीत, ट्रांस वुमन शब्द उस महिला को संदर्भित करता है जो पुरुष से महिला (एमटीएफ) में परिवर्तित हुई है।

ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय का चरित्र प्राचीन हिंदू ग्रंथों में अच्छी तरह से वर्णित है। ट्रांसजेंडर को प्राचीन साहित्य जैसे कामसूत्र, एक हिंदू ग्रंथ जो मानव के यौन व्यवहार का वर्णन करता है। ट्रांसजेंडर पात्र महाभारत और रामायण जैसे प्रसिद्ध प्राचीन हिंदू महाकाव्यों में भी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाते हैं। मुगल काल के दौरान भी, ट्रांसजेंडर को उच्च और प्रतिष्ठित पद दिए गए थे, जैसे शाही प्रशासन में सदस्यता और राजा के राजनीतिक सलाहकार। वे अपनी चतुराई, विश्वसनीयता और राजा एवं रानी के निकटता के लिए जाने जाते थे (मिशेलराज, एम. (2015)। उन्हें अपने सामाजिक जीवन में अधिक स्वतंत्रता दी जाती थी और वे अपनी इच्छा के अनुसार किसी भी स्थान व व्यक्ति के पास जाते थे। औपनिवेशिक शासकों के आक्रमण के साथ भारतीय ट्रांसजेंडर की स्थिति पूरी तरह से बदल गई। उन्नीसवीं शताब्दी के उत्तरार्ध के दौरान, औपनिवेशिक शासकों ने ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय को अपराधी घोषित कर दिया (क्रिमिनल ट्राइब एक्ट 1871 के माध्यम से) और उन्हें नागरिक अधिकारों से वंचित कर दिया। स्वतंत्रता के बाद के दौर में, भारत सरकार ने भारतीय ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय के प्रति औपनिवेशिक रवैया अपनाया; परिणामस्वरूप, वे फिर से मुख्यधारा समाज से बहिष्कृत हो गए। ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों के सामाजिक रूप से वंचित जीवन को शैक्षणिक शोध, सार्वजनिक नीति और सार्वजनिक क्षेत्रों में अपर्याप्त रूप से संबोधित किया गया है।

हाइन्स, एस. और सेंगर, टी. (2010) ने तर्क दिया कि मुख्यधारा के समाजशास्त्रीय अध्ययनों में लैंगिक विविधता को कम संबोधित किया गया है। इसलिए, कभी-कभी ट्रांसजेंडर अध्ययनों ने क्वीर सिद्धांत में अपनी जगह की अपील की है और एक आंतरिक आलोचना प्रस्तुत की है और कभी-कभी उन्होंने अपनी वंशावली को क्रोधपूर्वक खारिज कर दिया है तथा अपना घर बनाने के लिए निकल पड़े हैं। यह दावा किया जाता है कि पिछले दशक में कानूनी और चिकित्सा प्रणालियों में ट्रांस पहचानों को मान्यता दी गई है (रिचर्ड्स, बोमन, सील,

बार्कर,नीडर, टी'सजोएन, 2016) ; लैंगिकता और यौनिकता के सिद्धांत को अधिकविस्तारित करने की आवश्यकता है और ट्रांस कथाओं के साथ अधिक जुड़ाव की आवश्यकता है। ट्रांसजेंडर अध्ययन, शोध के नए क्षेत्र के रूप में, लैंगिक बहिष्करण, लैंगिक पहचान और सामाजिक न्याय के क्षेत्र में कुछ उभरती समस्याओं को संबोधित करने की क्षमता रखते हैं, जिन्हें मुख्यधारा के लैंगिक अध्ययनों ने सफलतापूर्वक संबोधित नहीं किया है। कई सरकारी और गैर-सरकारी संस्थानों तथा राष्ट्रीय व अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संगठनों ने उन लैंगिक मुद्दों को संबोधित करने का प्रयास किया है जो मुख्य रूप से महिलाओं की समस्याओं से जुड़े हैं। ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों के मुद्दों को संबोधित करने के लिए कम प्रयास किए गए हैं।

हाल के समय में, विभिन्न राष्ट्रीय सरकारों द्वारा उन्हें संवैधानिक और मौलिक अधिकार प्रदान करने के लिए कुछ पहल की गई है। दक्षिण एशियाई देशों में 2007 में, नेपाल के सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने ट्रांसजेंडर को उनके नागरिकता दस्तावेजों में पहचान दी। पाकिस्तान में, पाकिस्तान के सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने पाकिस्तान सरकार को उन्हें मतदान का अधिकार प्रदान करने के लिए राष्ट्रीय पहचान पत्रों में तीसरे लिंग का विकल्प रखने का निर्देश दिया। इसी तरह, 2014 में, भारत के सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने ट्रांसजेंडर को 'तीसरे लिंग' के रूप में वर्गीकृत करने की घोषणा की ताकि उन्हें सभी मौलिक अधिकार प्रदान किए जा सकें व सरकार को उच्च शिक्षा और सार्वजनिक रोजगार क्षेत्रों में उन्हें 2 प्रतिशत आरक्षण प्रदान करने का निर्देश दिया। अतः एक उचित समय आ गया है कि ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों के लिए 2 प्रतिशत आरक्षण की उपलब्धता और उपयोगिता का आकलन किया जाए। क्या वे उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों और सार्वजनिक रोजगार क्षेत्रों में 2 प्रतिशत आरक्षण प्राप्त करने में सक्षम हैं, यह संबोधित करने के लिए एक बड़ा प्रश्न है। हमारे सर्वेक्षण से प्राप्त साक्ष्य से पता चला है कि अधिकांश ट्रांसजेंडर ने कक्षा 10 तक पढ़ाई की है। 13-16 वर्ष की आयु के दौरान, जब उनके शारीरिक परिवर्तन होते हैं, वे स्कूल और ट्यूशन में भेदभाव का सामना करते हैं, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप वे कक्षा छोड़ देते हैं। कम शैक्षिक प्राप्ति के कारण, उनके लिए औपचारिक रोजगार क्षेत्र में नौकरी प्राप्त करना बहुत मुश्किल होता है। यदि कोई ट्रांसजेंडर किसी निजी संगठन में शामिल होता है, तो वह कार्यस्थल पर यौन उत्पीड़न का शिकार होता है (राजकुमार, 2016)। कम साक्षरता और उच्च बेरोजगारी उन्हें औपचारिक वित्तीय संस्थानों से वित्तीय सेवाओं और उत्पादों तक पहुंच से वंचित कर देती है।

एक ओर, सूक्ष्म स्तर के अध्ययनों ने गरीबों, असंगठित श्रमिकों, स्वरोजगार व्यक्तियों और महिलाओं के बीच वित्तीय समावेशन के महत्व पर चर्चा की है। दूसरी ओर, व्यापक अध्ययन वित्तीय समावेशन के महत्व को आर्थिक विकास और प्रगति, गरीबी और असमानता में कमी, रोजगार में वृद्धि, फर्म उत्पादन में वृद्धि और मानव विकास एवं मानव पूंजी में सुधार के रूप में तर्क देते हैं। हालांकि, शोधकर्ताओं और नीति निर्माताओं द्वारा अब तक ट्रांसजेंडर के बीच वित्तीय समावेशन पर ध्यान केंद्रित नहीं किया गया है, लेकिन लैंगिक बहिष्करण केवल महिलाओं के विभिन्न सामाजिक-आर्थिक अधिकारों से बहिष्करण तक ही सीमित है।

ट्रांसजेंडर के लिए वित्तीय समावेशन क्यों आवश्यक है?

सामाजिक रूप से बहिष्कृत और कलंकित लैंगिक समूहों को औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली से बाहर रखा गया है। विभिन्न सरकारी संगठनों और गैर-सरकारी संगठनों (एनजीओ) ने

महिलाओं को औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली में शामिल करने के लिए कुछ प्रयास किए हैं। लेकिन आश्चर्यजनक रूप से, किसी भी सरकारी संगठन द्वारा ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय को औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली में शामिल करने के लिए कोई नीतिगत पहल नहीं की गई है। वे किसी भी औपचारिक वित्तीय सेवा प्राप्त करने से बहुत दूर हैं। इसलिए, औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली में ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को शामिल करने से औपचारिक वित्तीय बाजार में लैंगिक समानता को बढ़ावा मिलेगा।

एसडीजी (सतत विकास लक्ष्य) के उद्देश्यों को पूरा करने के लिए, ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को हिंसा और सामाजिक भेदभाव से मुक्ति मिलनी चाहिए व उनके लिंग, जाति, जन्म स्थान और अन्य स्थिति के बावजूद सार्वभौमिक समावेशन को प्राथमिकता दी जानी चाहिए। वित्त की उपलब्धता और आसान पहुंच का आर्थिक अधिकारों पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव पड़ता है (सेन, 1999)। वित्त सामाजिक रूप से बहिष्कृत और कमजोर वर्गों को आर्थिक शक्ति हस्तांतरित करने में सक्षम बनाता है, जिसका मानव विकास पर गहरा प्रभाव पड़ता है। यह आर्थिक शक्ति ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों तक बचत की आदतों में सुधार, निवेश को बढ़ावा देने, पर्याप्त ऋण उपलब्ध कराने और उनके वित्तीय जोखिम को कम करके पहुंचाई जा सकती है। सर्वेक्षण से पता चला है कि विपरीत परिस्थितियों में, अधिकांश ट्रांसजेंडर अपने दोस्तों और रिश्तेदारों से पैसे उधार लेते हैं। इसलिए, आसान और सस्ती वित्तीय सुविधाएं उनके वित्तीय जोखिम को कम करके उन्हें आर्थिक रूप से स्वतंत्र बना सकती हैं। ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को अपने कार्यस्थल पर भेदभाव और यौन उत्पीड़न का सामना करना पड़ता है (डेविस डी, 2009), जिसके कारण वे औपचारिक रोजगार क्षेत्रों से दूर रहते हैं। हालांकि, कुछ स्वरोजगारी ट्रांसजेंडर की सफलता की कहानियां भी सुनने को मिलती हैं, जो खाद्य दुकानों, एनजीओ, राजनीति, पत्रकारिता, अभिनय और अन्य व्यवसायों में सक्रिय हैं। सामाजिक सर्वेक्षण में पाया गया कि अधिकांश ट्रांसजेंडर स्वरोजगारी और आत्मनिर्भर बनना चाहते हैं। एक छोटा व्यवसाय शुरू करने के लिए वित्तीय सहायता की आवश्यकता होती है। इसलिए, औपचारिक वित्तीय संस्थानों से जुड़कर वे बैंकों से वित्तीय सहायता प्राप्त कर अपना व्यवसाय शुरू कर सकते हैं और आत्मनिर्भर बन सकते हैं।

चूंकि ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को उनकी पैतृक संपत्ति, भूमि स्वामित्व और औपचारिक रोजगार बाजार से बाहर रखा जाता है, इसलिए वित्तीय समावेशन के माध्यम से वित्त प्रदान करने से उन्हें अपने वित्तीय बोझ को प्रबंधित करने, नया व्यवसाय शुरू करने और एक ट्रांसजेंडर उद्यमी बनने में मदद मिलेगी। बैंक खातों से वंचित ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को औपचारिक वित्तीय संस्थानों में आसान और सस्ती लागत पर शामिल करने से उनके जीवन स्तर में सुधार हो सकता है व गरीबी कम हो सकती है। यह तर्क दिया जाता है कि सामाजिक कलंक और बहिष्कार के कारण ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों के अन्य लोगों की तुलना में कम सामाजिक संबंध होते हैं (जोस एवं विनोद, 2014)। इसलिए, वित्तीय समावेशन के माध्यम से ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली में सक्रिय रूप से भाग लेने का अवसर मिल सकता है, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप वे धीरे-धीरे मुख्यधारा समाज के साथ सामाजिक संबंध स्थापित कर सकते हैं। इससे उनके मानसिक तनाव को कम करने में मदद मिल सकती है। यह भी दावा किया जा सकता है कि वित्तीय समावेशन के माध्यम से ट्रांसजेंडर जैसे बहिष्कृत लैंगिक समूहों को औपचारिक वित्तीय

प्रणाली में शामिल किया जा सकता है, जिससे लैंगिक समानता का लक्ष्य प्राप्त किया जा सकता है। एक अध्ययन में तर्क दिया गया है कि वित्तीय समावेशन एक महत्वपूर्ण उपकरण है जिसका उपयोग सहस्राब्दी विकास लक्ष्यों (एमडीजी), विशेष रूप से गरीबी और लैंगिक असमानता की समस्या को हल करने के लिए किया जा सकता है (चिब्बा, एम., 2009)। अक्सर ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों का मुख्य व्यवसाय ट्रेन में भीख मांगना, वेश्यावृत्ति, बार/होटल में नृत्य करना, दूसरों को आशीर्वाद देना और पारिवारिक अवसरों में भाग लेना (शादी के समय नृत्य करना, नवजात शिशुओं को आशीर्वाद देना आदि) है।

इस अध्ययन में पाया गया कि वेश्यावृत्ति आय का एक मुख्य स्रोत है और बड़ी संख्या में ट्रांसजेंडर लोग इस कार्य में संलग्न हैं। इसलिए, एचआईवी-एड्स का संक्रमण उनमें बहुत आम है (यूएनडीपी, 2010)। शारीरिक स्वास्थ्य समस्याओं के साथ-साथ वे मानसिक स्वास्थ्य समस्याओं से भी पीड़ित हैं। उनके जीवन में भारी भेदभाव और हिंसा मानसिक स्वास्थ्य समस्याएं पैदा करती है (जोस एवं विनोद, 2014)। दूसरी ओर, अध्ययनों से पुष्टि हुई है कि ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों में भेदभाव का सामना करना पड़ता है। उनके जीवन के इस पहलू को देखते हुए, स्वास्थ्य बीमा या जीवन बीमा की उपलब्धता उनके लिए अतिआवश्यक है। लेकिन हमारे पायलट अध्ययन में पाया गया कि 46 नमूनों में से किसी भी ट्रांसजेंडर के पास स्वास्थ्य बीमा कवरेज नहीं था। केवल कुछ ट्रांसजेंडर ने कुछ स्थानीय एजेंटों के माध्यम से अपने नाम पर जीवन बीमा पॉलिसी (एलआईसी) ली थी। इसलिए, स्वास्थ्य बीमा या जीवन बीमा पॉलिसी की व्यवस्था उनके भविष्य के जीवन को अधिक सुरक्षा प्रदान करेगी। अन्यथा, केवल बैंक या डाकघर में जमा खाता/बचत खाता खोलने से उन्हें बचत करने में मदद मिलेगी, जिसका उपयोग वे बुढ़ापे में कर सकते हैं। सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली (पीडीएस) में भ्रष्टाचार और गड़बड़ी के कारण, कई संसाधन गरीब से गरीब लोगों तक नहीं पहुंच पाते हैं। इसके उपाय के रूप में, भारत सरकार ने हाल ही में प्रत्यक्ष लाभ हस्तांतरण (डीबीटी) योजना शुरू की है, जिसके तहत एलपीजी सब्सिडी, खाद्यान्न सब्सिडी और अन्य सरकारी कल्याणकारी धन (जैसे मजदूरी भुगतान, पेंशन भुगतान आदि) लाभार्थी के बैंक खाते में सीधे हस्तांतरित किए जा सकते हैं। इस योजना को उपभोक्ताओं को बिचौलियों के शोषण से बचाने और पीडीएस को बढ़ावा देने के लिए शुरू किया गया था। डीबीटी कार्यक्रम के तहत, आधार कार्ड को एक सुविधाजनक तंत्र के रूप में उपयोग किया जाता है, जो बायोमेट्रिक पहचान पर आधारित है, इसलिए नकली और डुप्लीकेट लाभार्थियों की पहचान करने की संभावना है। इस संबंध में जन धन-आधार-मोबाइल (जेएएम) त्रय योजना की हालिया घोषणा बहुत उल्लेखनीय नीतिगत पहल है। इसके अलावा, डीबीटी समयबद्ध हस्तांतरण की अनुमति देता है, जो धन हस्तांतरण में देरी से बचता है और साथ ही वितरण प्रणाली में पारदर्शिता लाता है। यह दावा किया जाता है कि हालांकि डीबीटी योजना में कुछ खामियां हैं (जैसे ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में बैंकिंग सुविधाओं की अनुपलब्धता, इच्छित उद्देश्य को पूरा करने के लिए उपयोग नहीं किया जा सकता, निरक्षर लाभार्थियों के लिए कठिनाइयां पैदा करता है आदि), लेकिन यह योजना यह सुनिश्चित करने का एक उत्कृष्ट तरीका है कि हर पैसा वास्तविक लाभार्थियों तक पहुंचे। इसलिए, इस संबंध में बैंक खाता खोलने से ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को सब्सिडी और अन्य सरकारी लाभ प्राप्त करने में भी मदद मिल सकती है।

निष्कर्ष

विकास की खोज में, लैंगिक समानता ने एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है। विकासशील और विकसित देशों के शोधकर्ता व नीति निर्माता जीवन के हर पहलू में मौजूदा लैंगिक अंतर को पाटने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं। इस लेख में, हमने ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों के लिए वित्तीय समावेशन के महत्व पर तर्क दिया और औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली से उनके बहिष्कार के मुख्य कारणों का पता लगाया। इस अध्ययन में पाया गया कि मांग और आपूर्ति दोनों पक्षों के कारकों ने ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को औपचारिक वित्तीय सेवाओं तक पहुंचने से रोका है। सामाजिक कलंक और रूढ़िवादिता ने ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को मुख्यधारा समाज से बाहर कर दिया है; परिणामस्वरूप इसने कम साक्षरता, सामाजिक बहिष्कार, कोई औपचारिक रोजगार न होना, भूमिहीनता, बेघर होना और औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली से बहिष्कार को जन्म दिया है। दूसरी ओर, आपूर्ति पक्ष के कारकों ने भी ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों को औपचारिक वित्तीय प्रणाली का हिस्सा बनने से नजरअंदाज किया है।

हालांकि ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों के मानवाधिकारों में प्रगति के अन्य उदाहरण मौजूद हैं, लेकिन यह बदलाव अक्सर अलग-थलग, गैर-व्यवस्थित और अपर्याप्त है। ट्रांसजेंडर लोग आज भी अत्यंत विषम परिस्थितियों में जीवन यापन कर रहे हैं। जिसकी आवश्यकता है, वह है बड़े पैमाने पर परिवर्तन और प्रगति। सतत विकास लक्ष्यों (एसडीजी) के प्रति अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय की हालिया प्रतिबद्धता सकारात्मक हस्तक्षेपों को गति देने और विस्तारित करने का एक अवसर प्रदान करती है। एसडीजी संयुक्त राष्ट्र चार्टर द्वारा निर्देशित और मानवाधिकारों की सार्वभौमिक घोषणा में निहित हैं। वे ऐसी प्रक्रियाओं की परिकल्पना करते हैं जो “लोग-केंद्रित, लैंगिक रूप से संवेदनशील, मानवाधिकारों का सम्मान करने वाली और सबसे गरीब, सबसे कमजोर और सबसे पीछे छूट गए लोगों पर विशेष ध्यान केंद्रित करती हैं” तथा एक “न्यायपूर्ण, समतामूलक, सहिष्णु, खुला और सामाजिक रूप से समावेशी दुनिया जिसमें सबसे कमजोर लोगों की जरूरतों को पूरा किया जाता है”। वे मानवाधिकारों और गरिमा, न्याय व गैर-भेदभाव के सार्वभौमिक सम्मान और एक समान अवसर की दुनिया की पुष्टि करते हैं जो नस्ल, रंग, लिंग, भाषा, धर्म, राजनीतिक या अन्य विचार, राष्ट्रीय या सामाजिक मूल, संपत्ति, जन्म, विकलांगता या अन्य स्थिति की परवाह किए बिना सभी के लिए मानव क्षमता की पूर्ण प्राप्ति की अनुमति देती है। जैसा कि अनुभवजन्य साक्ष्य से पता चला है, वित्तीय समावेशन महिला सशक्तीकरण को बढ़ावा देता है; इसी तरह, ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों के लिए भी, वित्तीय समावेशन उनके सशक्तीकरण को बढ़ावा देने के लिए एक नीतिगत उपकरण हो सकता है। केवल तभी ट्रांसजेंडर लोग एक ऐसी दुनिया की कल्पना कर सकते हैं जो उनके मूल व्यक्तित्व का सम्मान करती है, और एक ऐसी दुनिया जिसमें गरिमा, समानता और कल्याण उनके जीवन में वास्तविकता बन जाते हैं।



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Ambedkar and Gandhi's Approach to Casteism : A Study of their Ideological Divergence and Proposed Solutions

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Abstract

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's view of Mahatma Gandhi's approach to casteism reveals a deep ideological divide between the two leaders. Gandhi condemned untouchability and sought to integrate untouchables (whom he referred to as Harijans) into Hindu society. He upheld the varna system as a framework for social order, believing that caste distinctions were acceptable as long as they did not result in discrimination. Gandhi advocated for reform from within the Hindu tradition, relying on moral persuasion. Ambedkar, however, was highly critical of Gandhi's position, viewing the caste system as inherently oppressive and incapable of reform. He argued that caste dehumanised Dalits and needed to be dismantled entirely. Ambedkar advocated for the abolition of sub-castes, the promotion of inter-caste dining and marriages, and most importantly, the rejection of the shastras that sanctified caste. He called Brahmins and intellectuals to lead the fight against caste, emphasising the need for reason and morality over religious tradition. While Gandhi's gradualist approach focused on persuading the upper castes to abandon their prejudices, Ambedkar sought systemic change through legal and political reforms to secure the rights of Dalits. Gandhi saw Hinduism as a source of social harmony, whereas Ambedkar viewed it as a tool of caste oppression, ultimately rejecting it and embracing Buddhism. Gandhi's vision was to uplift Dalits within the existing system, but Ambedkar demanded its complete rejection for true equality. This research paper analyses Ambedkar's perspective on Mahatma Gandhi's views on casteism, highlighting their ideological differences and proposing constitutional measures for abolishing the caste system.

Keywords: Casteism, Untouchability, Discrimination, Varna System, Equality, De-humanised

INTRODUCTION

Casteism has always been a contentious topic of discussion and debate, particularly in India, where the caste system has historical roots dating back to the Vedic era and still continues to exist. Casteism is a deep-rooted societal divide, perpetuating inequality, which has to be addressed in order to guarantee that every person in society is treated equally and has equal opportunities. The discussions over casteism in India have been significantly influenced by the contrasting ideologies of Dr B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi. Both figures emerged as important leaders in the fight for social justice, yet their approaches and perspectives diverged significantly. Gandhi's approach placed a strong emphasis on non-violent resistance, moral persuasion and the incremental upliftment of the oppressed, especially through appeals to the conscience of the upper castes for the removal of untouchability. Ambedkar, on the other hand, based on his personal experiences of discrimination, advocated for a more radical and systemic transformation of society, emphasising political rights and legal reforms as crucial instruments for a casteless society. This research paper highlights Ambedkar's criticism of Gandhi's approach to addressing the issue of casteism, underscoring the ideological differences between their respective proposals for social change. After examining their writings, speeches, and public actions, this research aims to highlight the contrast between Ambedkar's determination to abolish the caste system and Gandhi's emphasis on moral reforms, thereby providing a thorough understanding of their contributions to addressing caste-based oppression in India.

UNDERSTANDING OF CASTE

Caste is one of the most complex and enduring social institutions of South Asia, particularly India. It shapes social identity, regulates interactions, structures economic roles, and influences political power. Understanding caste requires examining its historical evolution, its socio-religious foundations, and its contemporary transformations. Traditionally, caste is understood through two interrelated concepts—**varna** and **jati**. Varna refers to the ancient fourfold division of society into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, with a fifth category, the “untouchables” or Dalits, historically placed outside the hierarchy. However, this theoretical model never fully reflected the complexity and lived reality of caste. Instead, jati—thousands of birth-based, endogamous groups—became the practical basis of social organization. Jatis determine who individuals can marry, what occupations they can pursue, and how they participate in social life. Although the two terms are often confused, varna represents an ideological framework, while jati refers to the everyday functioning of caste. However, scholars such as M. N. Srinivas argue that this varna model is largely an ideological construct rather than a description of actual social organization. Caste operates through several key principles: **hierarchy, purity and pollution, hereditary occupational specialization, and social segregation**. Louis Dumont, in his seminal work *Homo Hierarchicus* (1970), emphasized that caste is fundamentally a hierarchical system grounded in the ideology of

purity. Higher castes claim greater ritual purity, while lower castes are associated with occupations considered polluting, such as leatherwork or sanitation. These ideological principles historically legitimized social inequality and restricted social mobility. However, caste is not merely a ritual hierarchy; it is also deeply intertwined with power, the **economy, and social control**. B. R. Ambedkar described caste as a system of “graded inequality” that institutionalizes discrimination and denies lower castes access to education, resources, and dignity. His critique highlights that caste is maintained not only through religious norms but also through social habits, economic dependency, and political structures.

The colonial period brought significant changes to the caste system. British administrators attempted to classify Indian society systematically through censuses and ethnographic surveys. Scholars such as Nicholas Dirks² argue that this process rigidified caste categories and gave them a bureaucratic form. At the same time, anti-caste movements—led by thinkers like Jyotiba Phule, Periyar, and Ambedkar—challenged caste oppression and demanded social equality, education, and political rights. In independent India, the Constitution abolished untouchability and guaranteed equality before the law. Policies of **affirmative action**, especially reservations in education and public employment, were introduced to uplift historically marginalized communities. Despite legal reforms, caste continues to influence marriage patterns, village power structures, access to land, and political mobilization. Urbanization and modern education have weakened some caste practices, but caste identities persist, often taking new forms. Understanding caste today requires acknowledging its **dynamic nature**. It is not simply a relic of tradition but a system that adapts to changing economic and political contexts. Caste remains intricately linked to social justice, identity politics, and development policies. Therefore, any meaningful effort toward equality requires confronting both the historical roots and the contemporary manifestations of caste-based discrimination.

GANDHI ON CASTEISM

Gandhiji himself condemned the untouchability system that was in place in Hindu society and started the anti-untouchability movement to make Hindus aware of the injustices done to the Harijan group.³ He actually believed that untouchability was a political issue rather than a social one⁴ and associated himself with the “Untouchables” even though he was a “caste Hindu” himself.⁵ He wrote in his book *Young India* that “Hindus must hang down their heads in shame as long as the curse of Untouchability persists.” Although he opposed untouchability, he did not entirely reject the varna system, which consists of four castes: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras.⁶ According to him, if the varna system were used without inequality, he thought it might serve as a useful model for the division of labour in society. Gandhi viewed it as a system that could guarantee social order, in which various castes would be interdependent while carrying out distinct tasks. He did not advocate for the system’s total dissolution, as he believed in the religion’s spirituality and placed a strong emphasis on reforming it by eliminating untouchability and pro-

moting unity across castes. According to him, “Hindus are slaves of caste and do not want to destroy it.”

Moreover, Gandhi favoured subtle modifications to the social systems that are now in place and in order to address social ills like untouchability, he advocated for inter-caste harmony and non-violent protest (Satyagraha). He advocated moral reforms as a means of upliftment. He believed that the upper castes would treat the lower castes with dignity and willingly relinquish their biases if they were morally enlightened, and that his strategy should primarily appeal to the oppressors’ consciences. Further, he placed a strong emphasis on trusteeship, in which the higher castes would look out for the well-being of the lower castes, encouraging ethical responsibility over legal equality. He affirms that the untouchables’ problems can be fully resolved by adhering to his principles and by the kindness and zeal of the Hindu community.

Therefore, Harijans, a term Gandhi used to refer to untouchables, meaning “children of God,”⁷ and he fought for their acceptance into Hindu society. Working within the confines of Hinduism, he attempted to improve their social and economic circumstances, and his approach of gradual reforms and preserving Hinduism has been debated and even criticised by other reformists and the intellectual class. In support of Hinduism, Gandhi replied to the speech by Ambedkar ‘Annihilation of caste’ where he asserts that “A religion has to be judged not by its worst specimens but by the best it might have produced. For that and that alone can be used as the standard to aspire to, if not to improve upon”.

AMBEDKAR ON CASTEISM

The first untouchable leader in India was Ambedkar, known as “Saviour of the Untouchables”. Ambedkar was raised in a Dalit household and had to deal with the brutal reality of untouchability and social discrimination. He was emotionally affected by this discrimination, which strengthened his resolve to end this barbaric tradition. He made the decision to resist it⁸ and spent forty years writing extensively about untouchability and its impact on Indian society.⁹ He denounced the caste system in his speech ‘Annihilation of Caste’ as the source of societal injustice and inequity and demanded that it must be completely abolished, claiming that it obstructs the development of a just society and the empowerment of the disadvantaged. He underlined that eliminating discrimination based on caste is the only way to achieve true social justice and equality.¹⁰

Ambedkar opposed the caste system in its entirety, including the varna system. He believed that caste was a system of exploitation and oppression that dehumanised people in lower castes, particularly Dalits, by the upper caste Brahmins, wherein they focus on protecting their own interests. The division of labour based on the natural capabilities of people is not considered in the caste system; hence, the lower castes were forced to adopt occupations based on heredity. Thus, caste is a direct cause of unemployment.¹¹ Ambedkar, in his book, opined that caste is not a good thing as it doesn’t allow people from different castes to marry each other. The

caste system has demoralised Hindus, and every Hindu is conscious of his caste, which is why they can't form a just society or nation. He further asserted that the caste system has prevented Hinduism from spreading and being adopted by other communities because of its inherent flaws, and also, among Hindus, there is no Sanghatan or fellow feeling among them, which has undermined the spirit of public charity. Therefore, he says that, "Caste in the hands of the orthodox has been a powerful weapon for persecuting the reforms and for killing all reform".

Ambedkar was an advocate for taking direct action by amending the laws and the constitution, and in an effort to end caste-based prejudice, he attempted to utilise his political influence to destroy the systems that supported it. For Dalits and other underprivileged people, Ambedkar prioritized legal protections, economic development, and education by destroying the hierarchical structure perpetuated by the caste system. He believed that the issue of untouchability was inextricably linked to the issue of caste and that Dalits could only truly attain freedom and dignity by abolishing the caste system. He says that "Hindu Society is a Myth" and that all of this needs to be unlearned by the Hindus. He further asserted that caste had to go; it could neither be ethically justified nor corrected. His revolutionary approach aimed to establish an egalitarian society devoid of caste and class distinctions.

AMBEDKAR'S CRITIQUE OF GANDHI'S APPROACH TO CASTEISM

Gandhi's views on casteism are thoroughly criticised by B.R. Ambedkar in his book 'Gandhi and Gandhism', wherein he pays attention to Gandhi's superficial and inconsistent attempts to address the issue of untouchability. According to Dr. Ambedkar, Gandhi showed no interest in the upliftment of untouchables, which he justifies by citing the example of the Bardoli Programme, which aims to uplift the untouchables rather than their removal. Untouchability was recognised by this programme, but it did nothing more than build separate wells and schools.¹² Ambedkar claimed that the systemic underpinnings of caste-based discrimination were not much challenged by Gandhi's public actions, including his fasts and talks over the Poona Pact. Gandhi attempted to enhance the status of Untouchables without challenging the hierarchy that classified them as such, instead focusing on amelioration rather than abolition. Ambedkar, in this book, criticised him for using Satyagraha against the Britishers but never used it against the Hindus to let the untouchables use the wells and temples. He further highlighted that Gandhi used fasting as a weapon and undertook 21 fasts for various reasons, but none of them was undertaken to remove untouchability.¹³

Gandhi was again attacked for his role at the Round Table Conference in 1930, wherein communal representation was demanded by the minorities, and he didn't show any sympathy or support to the untouchables. Likewise, Ambedkar gave numerous examples highlighting how Gandhi had done nothing for the untouchables. Moreover, Gandhi prioritised the political cause of independence over the social upliftment, and Ambedkar called him "Political Shoemaker". He asked the Hindus to remove untouchability as a precondition to attaining Swaraj. His ef-

forts, according to Ambedkar, were driven more by a desire to maintain Hindu social unity than by a sincere desire to free the oppressed, as he advised the untouchables not to embrace any other religion, suggesting that they could find salvation through Hinduism alone.¹⁴

Additionally, Gandhi encouraged upper-caste Hindus to treat untouchables with more compassion and emphasised moral upliftment; however, it achieved little in eliminating the underlying injustices that the varna system perpetuates, and the Hindus only reacted to political messages rather than his social or religious preaching. Gandhi also hesitated to empower the untouchables, fearing that they might become independent and weaken the positions of the Hindus. Ambedkar cited the example of Harijan Sevak Sangh, which was controlled by upper caste Hindus, to eradicate untouchability and Gandhi's decision to forbid Untouchables from holding leadership positions in the Sangh. Gandhi contended that Untouchables have no right to run the Sangh because Hindus of the caste system provide the funds, which is a penance for their practice of untouchability. Ambedkar considers this line of thinking to be offensive and intolerable¹⁵ Ambedkar further condemned Gandhi's advocacy of gradual transformation and moral persuasion, emphasising caste integration through social harmony, whereas Ambedkar attempted to dismantle the caste system through legal and ideological reforms, and Gandhi focused on bringing about gradual change within the existing framework. Ambedkar opposed Gandhi's approach, saying that it is nothing more than an altered form of traditional Hinduism that upholds the same basic principles about caste, hereditary professions, cow worship, karma, and the supremacy of the Shastras. While Gandhism adds an intellectual layer to make Hinduism seem more respectable and acceptable, he contends that Gandhism maintains the same oppressive structure and offers little genuine hope for the Untouchables' salvation.

SUGGESTIONS GIVEN BY AMBEDKAR AND GANDHI TO ABOLISH CASTEISM

Suggestions by Ambedkar

The speech "Annihilation of Caste", written by Dr B.R. Ambedkar about eight decades ago, was never given. Reading it creates a bridge between the brutal reality of caste discrimination he used to face on a daily basis and the ideals taught to many Indians. He opined that only by changing the existing social order is progress possible. The inherent caste system undermines the morality, unity and the nation's progress. He further states that anything built on the basis of caste will ultimately crumble.¹⁶ He questioned how to reform the Hindu social order and abolish caste. And suggested various steps to reform the caste system.

In his book, the first step he suggested would be to eliminate sub-castes, assuming that they are more similar in status than castes. However, this presumption is mistaken. Another solution to end caste is through inter-caste dining, but it hasn't been able to eradicate caste consciousness. The true remedy, according to him, is intermarriage as it's the only thing that can promote kinship and end the estrangement caused by caste. In Hindu society, where societal ties are weak,

caste divisions must be broken through intermarriage. The root of casteism is religion, especially the Shastras that uphold caste, and to end this authority of the Shastras, the question should be raised. It is pointless to criticise people's actions without addressing the beliefs that have shaped them; therefore, until the sanctity of these texts is rejected, true change is not possible, and real reform necessitates freeing people from the beliefs ingrained by the Shastras. According to him, the Vedas contain rules and regulations rather than spiritual principles, which reduces them to mere conformity, depriving people of the moral life of freedom, making them incompatible with human progress and thus they shall be destroyed. Ambedkar urged the upper-caste Hindus or Brahmins, as they are the intellectual class, to take a stand against the caste system, recognizing that their influence over the community could drive societal change; however, he acknowledged that this would be difficult because it is improbable that they would support something that would damage their status and authority. He further contends that reason and morality are essential for ending caste, but they are impeded by the Vedas and Shastras, which support the caste system. He suggests that these religious texts should be dismantled or reformed drastically to eradicate casteism. He acknowledged the need for religion and advocated for reforming Hinduism by proposing a single standard religious text accepted and recognised by all, the abolition of the priesthood, and requiring that no priest who does not hold a sanad is deemed valid in law. Priests would be state servants, subject to disciplinary action, and their number is limited by law to prevent misuse of power. He emphasized that the priestly class must not mislead people, stating, "Brahminism is the poison that has spoiled Hinduism". Moreover, he asked Hindus to re-examine their religion, acknowledge the evils of the caste system, and decide whether to preserve their entire social heritage or retain only what is beneficial for future generations. Hindus should understand that nothing is fixed or eternal, and be open to revising outdated values.¹⁷

Suggestions by Gandhi

Gandhi believed that Hinduism might be a force for good and societal harmony if it were properly understood and applied. He advocated reforms from inside the Hindu system in an attempt to reconcile caste customs with his idea of social equality, viewing untouchability as a distortion of Hindu values. He advocated that Hindus must have a charitable spirit and zeal in order to uplift the untouchables and help them with the difficulties they face on a daily basis.¹⁸ According to him, the only way to effect change was by nonviolent means. He underlined that ahimsa (non-violence) and satyagraha (truth-force) should be the cornerstones of the struggle against untouchability and caste prejudice. Furthermore, to empower the untouchables and lower castes, he emphasised the importance of education and advocated for moral education for all, ensuring that the excluded could make an equal contribution to society and be respected by everyone. He underlined the necessity of influencing the upper castes' consciences to view untouchables equally and with respect.

CONSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TO ADDRESS CASTEISM IN INDIA

The Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950, aims to eliminate discrimination based on caste in order to establish a just, equitable, and inclusive society. It contains clauses that, by outlawing discrimination and ensuring that every citizen has equal

access to opportunity, safeguard marginalised communities and advance social justice.¹⁹ Key constitutional provisions are :

- Article 14: Right to Equality
- Article 15: Prohibition of Discrimination
- Article 16: Equality of Opportunity in Public Employment
- Article 17: Abolition of Untouchability
- Article 19: Right to Freedom
- Article 21: Right to Life and Personal Liberty
- Article 21: Right to Life and Personal Liberty

Affirmative Action and Reservation Policies- These are enacted in order to guarantee social justice and remedy past discrimination. These seats in legislatures, government employment, and education are reserved for SCs, STs, and OBCs, providing them with an opportunity to overcome historical disadvantages.²⁰

CONCLUSION

Although the approaches and ideologies of Gandhi and Ambedkar differed significantly, they shared the same goal of ending caste discrimination. The vision of society appears to have strayed, despite its best efforts, and today's leaders lack the moral courage to carry on with the objective of uplifting the subjugated. Arguments about casteism are still relevant today, which emphasizes how difficult it will be to end the caste system. If we are to genuinely improve society and eliminate this pervasive societal evil, we must either adopt their ideas or devise new ones. Moreover, the opposing viewpoints of the two leaders highlight how difficult it is to combat caste-based prejudice and how different strategies are required to overcome ingrained social injustices.



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Social Justice and Muslim Women in India An Overview

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Introduction

Women have a very important role to play in the national development of any country. In a country like India, where Muslim Women are one half of the segment of Muslim population, we cannot keep them out of the main Stream of the country's activities. According to 2011 census there are 14.2% percent Muslim in India, which is India's largest minority groups. Among them about 7.2% percent are Muslim women in India. India is a democratic secular country and the Constitution provides equal rights to all citizens irrespective of their religion. India's constitution has protected the rights of Muslims including Muslim women. But there are many factors in which women are neglected in various aspect of development. Muslim women generally have inadequate opportunities in areas related to social justice issues, like equality, dignity, rights and status.

Even after seventy-six years of independence a major portion of Muslim women belong to the most backward groups in the country. Although "Islamic i.e. Ideology" gives equal rights and Social Justice to Muslim women, but factually there are many differences between Islamic ideology and present practices related to Muslim women in India. The lack of providing social Justice to Muslim women in India is a crucial issue which is in need of urgent action.¹

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the present paper are to :-

- (1) Discuss the nature and aim of social justice in context of Islamic and modern ideology of social justice.
- (2) Analyze under the discourse of social Justice whether Muslim women are getting equal rights and status which the "Quran" and "Hadith" visualized for Muslim women.

- (3) Describe why Muslim women today are struggling for equal opportunities and status and their distance away from the path of development.
- (4) Suggest some remedial measures while granting social Justice to muslim women in India.

The methodology is mainly descriptive and analytical in the context of historical facts. So, as far as my knowledge is concerned, little work has been done on this subject.

The Concept of Social Justice

The concept of social justice is an old concept which can be found in classical Christian philosophical sources, from early Greek, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. But the modern concept of social Justice first emerged in the 19th century, as there were wide disparities in wealth distribution and their social standing perpetuated through the social structure of the era. Social justice initially focused on issues such as distribution of property and wealth due to the extreme levels of inequality. Today Social justice has shifted its emphasis on social-equality, human rights and political participation and improving, the lives of disadvantaged and marginalized groups who have historically faced discrimination in society. So the modern concept of social justice is of the view that everyone deserves equal opportunities in terms of their rights and status. The goal of Social Justice is to enable equal participation of people from all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs.²

“In a broader sense, social Justice means an idea of creating a society or institution which is based on the principles of providing solidarity, equality, and respecting human rights and providing dignity.

Concept of Social Justice in Islam

Islam was born in an era where the ills of pre-Islamic society was spreading everywhere during these times. At that point the teachings of Prophet Mohammad created a revolution in that society Allah says in the Quran, indeed we sent our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and Balance that people may uphold justice.”³ (Al-Hadid, 57-25)

In Quran, Allah says- Be Just, that is closest to Godliness.” Social Justice in Islam extends to the fact that I will not be considered a Muslim if I go to sleep with my stomach full while my neighbour sleeps hungry.

Islam has emphasized several principles of social Justice, so that- and duties among members of the society may be justified and fairly organized. For most among these principles are equality in, property distribution and fairness while granting justice. So, social Justice in Islam lays emphasis on the revival of true Islamic form of social justice from beginning till the present day.⁴

In Islam, women have equal status as men, as referred by fundamental text of Islam- “The Quran”. The Holy Quran says “If you cannot maintain equality with more than one wife marry only one or any Slave girls you may own. That will make easier for you to avoid injustice.” (Surah an- Nisa 4;3). But the question arises today

that where is the social justice, equality, dignity and status which the holy “Quran” and “Hadith” visualized for Muslim women. These are the question which are going to be dealt with here in this paper.

Muslim women and Social Justice, equality

Although Islamic ideology advocates equal rights and social Justice for Muslim women, there are some communities within the Muslim society who have not due in all affairs of their life. There are three ideological groups based on granting Justice, equality and Status of Muslim women within the Muslim Community.

They are as follows:

(1) Islamic fundamentalists: -

Islamic fundamentalists advocate the Islamic principles at every aspect of their life opposed to the western norms of democratic values and consider that Muslim women should be confined to their homes in veils.

(2) Islamic neo-traditionalist: -

They are much in common with the fundamentalist. They believe: -

- (i) Literalistic reading of Quran
- (ii) Idealize the early Islamic community
- (iii) Stress the wearing of the veil and oppose the public affairs,
- (iv) Reject western norms and values
- (V) Believe in five pillars of Islam.

(3) **Islamic Liberalism:-**

They believe in the Quran and Hadith and evaluate their significance in modern life. They believe in democratic norms, social justice, equality and liberty.⁵

Traditional outlook of the Muslim society is no doubt, one of the major reasons for Muslim women being backward in India. Muslim women in India are one of the most disadvantaged sections of the society in two ways, firstly being a woman and secondly believing in religious orthodoxy. Muslim society is a patriarchal society where Muslim woman's social position is confined within home and veil according to some narrations.⁶

Although Indian constitution guarantees certain fundamental rights to all Indian citizens including Muslim women such as: -

- (i) Right to equality
- (ii) Right to freedom
- (iii) Right against exploitation
- (iv) Right to freedom of religion
- (v) cultural and educational rights.

There are constitutional provisions also which ensure gender equality and Social Justice. Apart from, this some specific provision to ensure the rights of women have also been incorporated in Directive Principle of State Policy.⁷

The Shah Bano case is a key event in the development of Muslim women's social Justice. The creation of "Islamic feminism" emerged in 1990's in response to question about women rights in the context of Islam and predominantly Muslim societies. Muslim movements such as- Muslim women's Right Network (MWRN) and Bharitiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA) were founded in 2007 and 2011 respectively. Islamic feminists advocate a progressive and egalitarian aspect of Islam, which grants women the same rights and opportunities as men. Muslim women movement play a key role in the promoting the rights of Muslim women and in combating discrimination and inequality that are faced by them in the society.⁸

The situation of Muslim women in India

The situation of Muslim women in India reflects a complex and unequal society, characterized by a deep-rooted patriarchal society.

Muslim women in India face increasing marginalization due to institutionalized persecution of their community. The situation of Muslim women in India are worst in terms of social, political educational and economical fields of development.⁹

Social :- Muslim society is a patriarchal society, where Muslim women's Social position is confined within home and veil. Muslim communities are divided on caste and class lines and under this preview Muslim women also come. The social issue of Muslim women is closely followed by multiple marriages, Tripple Talak and abandonment without Mehar.

Educational:- Muslim women are logging behind in educational aspect Undoubtedly. Traditional outlook of the Muslim society is one of the major reason for Muslim women backwardness. The orthodox section of the community creates a hindrance in women's participation in higher educational institutions, although the constitution gives the right of education at primary level to all children belonging to the age group of 6 to 14, still less than 50 percent of Muslim women are literate even after 76 years of Independence. The illiteracy rate of Muslim women is much higher in comparison to women belonging to other minority communities. The literacy rates of women belonging to Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism are 76 percent, 64 percent and 90 percent respectively. of Muslim women in higher education is a mere 3.56% which is lower even than that of the scheduled caste (4.25%)*

Ranjit Biswas, IJSRE, Vol-4, issues 8, Angal-2016-P.5662.

Economical:- The economic situation of Muslim women in India is not good as compared to other minority communities. A majority of the Muslim women in rural areas are engaged in agricultural activities. In urban areas Muslim women are engaged in tailoring, crafts, Zardozi and other small domestic occupations. Very few Muslim women are engaged in professional and technical fields.

Political:- Muslim women in the modern era are underrepresented in state function, politics and governance because of the patriarchal and feudal set up of the Muslim Society. Some Muslim societies consider that politics is a dirty field for Muslim women

and believe that women should be confined to their homes in their veils.

The representation of Muslim women in the parliament is merely 0.7%. which comprises 7.2% of the general population, five of the 18th Lok Sabha since independence have had no Muslim women member, and their number never crossed four in the 543 Seats. Political representation of Muslim women in Lok Sabha and State Assembly is very low.¹⁰

Conclusion

Some Muslim women are among the socially disadvantaged, educationally and economically backward and politically marginalized group in India.

The Current status of Muslim women who are lagging behind is attributable to the unnecessary societal norms imposed by ignorant people in the name of religion.

The lack of Social Justice and granting equal rights of Muslim women is a crucial issue is need of urgent action.

Suggestions :

There are some suggestions which would be play a crucial role for the improvement of social justice of Muslim women in India. These are :-

- (1) Strengthening social Justice and human rights mechanisms for the development of Muslim women.
- (2) Removing social evils against Muslim women.
- (3) Creating more employment opportunities for Muslim women
- (4) Setting up more Muslim women organization.
- (5) Creating an opportunity for improving social, educational, economic and political status of Muslim women in India.
- (6) Creating opportunities for self-empowerment programme for Muslim women like debate, Seminars conference etc.

The ministry of Minority affairs Govt of India is providing “Leadership development of minority women scheme,” is one of the most important schemes for the upliftment and empowerment of Muslim women in India.

In conclusion an improvement of Muslim women in India in terms of their getting social justice and equal rights would depend on the attitudes of the people towards gender equality. Muslim women in India need to actively participate in state affairs in order to maintain democracy and this will enable in granting social Justice to Muslim women in India.



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Beyond Western Frames: Reimagining Multiculturalism through the Indian Civilizational Lens

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Abstract

This paper argues that India represents a unique and indigenous model of multiculturalism that cannot be adequately understood through Western liberal frameworks. Unlike the Western idea of multiculturalism—which emerged from Enlightenment rationalism, individual rights, and the politics of recognition—India’s pluralism is rooted in a civilizational ethos that harmonizes diversity rather than merely tolerating it. Drawing upon philosophical, historical, and sociological perspectives, this study examines how Indian pluralism evolved organically through centuries of cultural dialogue, religious coexistence, and moral philosophy encapsulated in notions such as VasudhaivaKutumbakam (the world as one family) and Sarva Dharma Sambhava (equal respect for all faiths).

The paper contrasts India’s relational, community-oriented pluralism with the rights-based, contractual multiculturalism of the West, highlighting how the former fosters coexistence through ethical interdependence rather than institutional accommodation alone. It also challenges Western critiques that question India’s multicultural credentials by demonstrating that socio-political conflicts do not negate the underlying civilizational commitment to plurality. Ultimately, the study calls for a decolonized understanding of multiculturalism that acknowledges India’s experiential model as a legitimate theoretical paradigm capable of enriching global discourses on diversity and coexistence.

Keywords: India, multiculturalism, pluralism, postcolonial theory, civilizational ethos, decolonization

1. Introduction

The debate over multiculturalism has largely been shaped by Western liberal theory, grounded in Enlightenment ideals of autonomy, individual rights, and cultural recognition. Scholars such as Will Kymlicka (1995)¹ and Charles Taylor (1994)² advanced frameworks in which diversity is accommodated through liberal citizenship and state neutrality. Within these paradigms, multiculturalism functions as a political mechanism to manage cultural difference in plural societies. However, such models are products of Western historical experiences—immigration, nation-state formation, and liberal democracy—and cannot be universally applied to societies whose histories and philosophies have evolved along different trajectories.

India presents one of the most enduring examples of multicultural coexistence in the world, yet it remains insufficiently theorized within global academic discourse. Western frameworks often interpret Indian diversity as a fragile patchwork of religions, castes, and languages rather than as an integrated pluralist civilization. This paper contends that India embodies an indigenous model of multiculturalism—civilizational, ethical, and dialogical—that precedes and transcends Western notions of cultural pluralism. Far from being an imitation of liberal ideals, the Indian experience of diversity emerges from its own philosophical and moral universe.

Historically, India's pluralism has been cultivated through continuous encounters among multiple traditions—Vedic, Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, Sikh, and tribal—each contributing to a shared moral vocabulary of coexistence. The Mauryan emperor Ashoka's edicts, advocating compassion for all faiths, or Emperor Akbar's policy of *Sulh-i Kul* (universal peace) illustrate how pluralism was institutionalized long before the rise of Western liberal democracies. Philosophically, the Indian worldview locates diversity within a broader metaphysical unity expressed through concepts like *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti* ("Truth is one, the wise call it by many names"). This orientation toward unity-in-diversity forms the ethical foundation of India's social life and political imagination.

Modern Indian thinkers—Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and later Amartya Sen—reinterpreted this pluralistic inheritance within the context of colonial modernity. Gandhi's vision of *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all) and Tagore's idea of universal humanism were not derived from Western liberalism but from India's dialogical traditions. Sen (2005)³ later described India as a "civilizational argument," a society where debate, dissent, and difference are intrinsic to collective life. Thus, Indian multiculturalism is not merely a social reality; it is a moral and intellectual ethos embedded within its historical consciousness.

In contrast, Western multiculturalism, as formulated by theorists like Kymlicka (1995)⁴, is primarily concerned with ensuring minority rights within a liberal state. It focuses on balancing equality and difference through policies of recognition and redistribution. While this model has been significant in addressing issues of immigration and ethnic diversity in Western societies, it remains limited by its emphasis on

the individual and the state as primary moral agents. India's pluralism, by comparison, operates through community networks, social interdependence, and spiritual reciprocity rather than legalistic accommodation.

This divergence also reveals a deeper epistemological gap. Western political theory views multiculturalism as a *problem* to be solved—how to manage diversity within a cohesive polity—whereas Indian civilization treats plurality as a *given condition* of existence. The Indian worldview does not seek to “tolerate” the other but to engage with the other as an extension of the self. This relational approach is visible in countless practices—from local syncretic festivals to linguistic federalism and multi-faith neighbour hoods—where difference is normalized within shared ethical frameworks.

Critics often argue that India's social conflicts, particularly communal and caste tensions, undermine its claim to multiculturalism. While acknowledging these contradictions, this paper maintains that such tensions arise not from civilizational deficiency but from political distortions of an otherwise plural ethos. As Ashis Nandy (1983)⁵ observes, colonialism disrupted India's indigenous pluralism by imposing rigid identity categories, converting fluid cultural interactions into fixed communal divisions. Therefore, contemporary conflicts should be seen as residues of colonial modernity rather than evidence against India's multicultural spirit.

Furthermore, the Indian Constitution institutionalizes this ethos through provisions guaranteeing religious freedom, cultural rights, and linguistic autonomy (Articles 25–30). India's secularism—often misunderstood as Western separationism—actually reflects *Sarva Dharma Sambhava*, implying equal respect rather than exclusion of religion from public life (Bhargava, 1998)⁶. This model of “principled distance” allows multiple communities to coexist within a shared democratic framework without erasing their distinctive identities.

In this context, the central research question of this paper is: *Can India's pluralistic tradition offer an alternative theoretical model of multiculturalism distinct from Western liberal paradigms?* The study seeks to demonstrate that India's civilizational pluralism constitutes a self-sustaining model grounded in ethical coexistence, dialogical engagement, and cultural reciprocity. By comparing Indian and Western frameworks, the paper aims to decolonize the discourse on multiculturalism and propose India's experience as a global resource for rethinking coexistence in an age of cultural anxiety.

The following sections will first review dominant Western theories of multiculturalism and their limitations in explaining non-Western realities. Subsequently, the paper will explore India's historical evolution as a pluralistic civilization, examine the philosophical foundations of its inclusivity, and critique Western misinterpretations that reduce Indian diversity to communalism. Through this comparative analysis, the study aspires to illuminate how India's indigenous pluralism challenges the hegemony of Western epistemologies and contributes to a more holistic understanding of multiculturalism as a global human condition.

2. Conceptual Framework: Understanding Multiculturalism

The term *multiculturalism* has acquired wide academic and political significance since the late twentieth century, especially within the liberal democracies of the West. At its core, multiculturalism refers to the recognition, accommodation, and coexistence of multiple cultural, ethnic, and religious identities within a single political community (Parekh, 2000; Taylor, 1994)⁷⁸. However, this seemingly inclusive concept is far from uniform. Its meaning, scope, and philosophical grounding differ according to the intellectual traditions from which it emerges.

In Western discourse, multiculturalism is primarily a response to the challenges of diversity in societies shaped by **migration, colonialism, and modernity**. The concern has been how liberal states can uphold equality while recognizing cultural difference without undermining social cohesion (Kymlicka, 1995)⁹. Thus, multiculturalism in this context evolved as an extension of liberal political theory — an attempt to reconcile individual rights with cultural membership. According to Kymlicka (1995)¹⁰, members of minority groups require not only the same rights as others but also *group-differentiated rights* that protect their cultural identities within the liberal framework of justice. This view situates multiculturalism as a rights-based arrangement that enables minorities to maintain their distinctiveness while participating equally in civic life.

Charles Taylor (1994)¹¹, on the other hand, emphasizes the *politics of recognition* as essential to multicultural coexistence. For Taylor, individuals derive their sense of identity through social recognition; thus, the denial of cultural recognition becomes a form of oppression. Liberal multiculturalism, therefore, seeks to ensure that all cultural groups are acknowledged as equal bearers of dignity within the public sphere. Yet, as Bhikhu Parekh (2000)¹² notes, Western models often struggle to transcend the boundaries of liberal individualism. By prioritizing rights and equality, they frequently overlook the deeper ethical, communal, and historical dimensions of cultural coexistence.

The Western model of multiculturalism, while normatively progressive, remains embedded in the **epistemology of modernity** — the belief that the individual precedes the community, and that the state functions as a neutral arbiter among competing identities (Modood, 2013)¹³. This understanding is shaped by the European Enlightenment, where universal reason replaced religious authority, and secularism became the guiding principle of public life. Consequently, diversity is managed through law, policy, and institutional frameworks rather than through organic social practices. The emphasis lies in *tolerating* difference rather than *integrating* it into a shared moral world.

In contrast, the Indian experience of multiculturalism cannot be reduced to such contractual or legalistic notions. India's pluralism is not an outcome of modern liberal democracy but a **civilizational condition** that long predates the modern state. As Amartya Sen (2005)¹⁴ observes, Indian society historically nurtured a “culture of argument” — an intellectual and moral openness that allowed multiple

traditions to coexist without erasing their differences. This dialogical culture shaped a social ethos where diversity was not perceived as a threat but as a manifestation of cosmic and human plurality.

The conceptual foundations of Indian pluralism rest on **ethical inclusivity** rather than juridical tolerance. Ancient Indian thought articulated this principle through expressions such as *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti* (“Truth is one, though the wise call it by many names”) and *VasudhaivaKutumbakam* (“The world is one family”). These formulations reflect a metaphysical understanding of unity-in-diversity — not the homogenizing unity of a centralized ideology, but a harmonious interdependence that values difference as intrinsic to the moral order (Panikkar, 1999)¹⁵. This vision of coexistence is relational and experiential, rooted in everyday practices of dialogue, synthesis, and mutual respect.

Furthermore, Indian multiculturalism differs from Western models in its **non-binary conception of identity**. The Western discourse typically operates through dichotomies — majority/minority, secular/religious, public/private — which often reinforce divisions rather than dissolve them. The Indian worldview, informed by the plural strands of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, Sikh, and tribal traditions, conceives identity as overlapping, fluid, and situational (Nandy, 1983)¹⁶. Cultural belonging is not an exclusive category but a shared continuum that allows for simultaneous identification across multiple axes of faith, language, and community.

Another critical distinction lies in the approach to **secularism and state neutrality**. In liberal Western thought, secularism is based on the strict separation of religion and state — a principle intended to safeguard individual freedoms (Bhargava, 1998)¹⁷. In India, however, secularism is better understood through the idea of *Sarva Dharma Sambhava* — the equal respect and coexistence of all religions. As Rajeev Bhargava (2010)¹⁸ explains, Indian secularism maintains a “principled distance” from all faiths, intervening not to suppress religion but to ensure fairness among diverse communities. This model reflects India’s civilizational ethos of balancing spiritual diversity with civic unity.

The theoretical contrast may be summarized thus: while Western multiculturalism is **policy-driven**, India’s multiculturalism is **civilizationally sustained**. It does not depend solely on institutional design but on shared ethical dispositions cultivated over centuries. The Indian model’s strength lies in its capacity to absorb diversity within a moral and cultural framework, where coexistence is not negotiated through rights alone but practiced through empathy, ritual exchange, and dialogical engagement.

Yet, the dominance of Western paradigms in global academia often obscures these distinctions. Postcolonial scholars such as Ashis Nandy (1983)¹⁹ and Raimon Panikkar (1999)²⁰ have argued that the Western fixation with defining multiculturalism through liberal categories represents an epistemic colonization — a tendency to universalize European experiences as normative. Recognizing India’s indigenous pluralism requires moving beyond these inherited frameworks toward a decolonized

understanding of diversity that acknowledges non-Western civilizational experiences as equally valid theoretical sources.

Thus, this conceptual framework establishes the foundation for the argument advanced in this paper: that multiculturalism, when viewed through India's civilizational lens, reveals an alternative paradigm — one grounded not in tolerance but in relational harmony, not in individual rights but in collective ethics, and not in the state's neutrality but in society's moral plurality. The next section will explore how this indigenous ethos evolved historically through India's encounters with diverse cultures, religions, and philosophical traditions, making its pluralism both ancient and living.

3. The Indian Experience: Historical and Philosophical Roots of Pluralism

India's multicultural character is not a product of modern state policy but the outcome of a **long civilizational evolution** that integrated diversity into its moral and social fabric. From its earliest texts to contemporary constitutional principles, Indian pluralism reflects an unbroken tradition of coexistence grounded in dialogue, ethical reciprocity, and mutual respect.

Ancient and Classical Foundations

The roots of Indian pluralism can be traced to the **Vedic** and **Upanishadic** worldview, where truth is seen as manifold and inclusive. The dictum *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti* ("Truth is one, though the wise call it by many names") from the *Rig Veda* epitomizes an epistemic openness that celebrates difference as an expression of the same cosmic reality. Philosophical schools such as **Hindu Vedanta, Jainism, and Buddhism** emerged not as antagonistic doctrines but as dialogical participants within a shared moral universe (Panikkar, 1999)²¹.

The **Mauryan Emperor Ashoka** (3rd century BCE) institutionalized this ethos through his edicts advocating *Dhamma*, a universal ethical order grounded in compassion, tolerance, and inter-religious respect. His message — that one should honor others' faiths to strengthen one's own — remains one of the earliest state articulations of pluralism in world history (Thapar, 1997)²².

Medieval Syncretism

The medieval period witnessed a deep fusion of spiritual and cultural traditions through the **Bhakti** and **Sufi** movements. Thinkers like **Kabir, Nanak, and Chishti saints** dissolved religious boundaries, promoting a shared devotion transcending doctrinal rigidity. Emperor **Akbar's** principle of *Sulh-i Kul* (universal peace) and his experiment with *Din-i-Ilahi* reflected an attempt to institutionalize this inclusive vision at the political level (Eaton, 2000)²³. These movements demonstrated that India's pluralism was sustained through **interfaith engagement**, not mere coexistence.

Colonial Encounter and Modern Reformulation

Colonial rule disrupted India's organic pluralism by imposing rigid religious categories and promoting communal divisions (Nandy, 1983)²⁴. Yet, modern Indian thinkers sought to **revive the civilizational ideal of unity in diversity**.

- **Mahatma Gandhi** reinterpreted pluralism through *Sarva Dharma Sambhava* (equal respect for all faiths), framing it as the ethical foundation of national life.
- **Rabindranath Tagore** envisioned India as a moral civilization that harmonized differences without suppressing individuality (Tagore, 1917)²⁵.
- **Jawaharlal Nehru** (1946)²⁶ called India's composite culture "the palimpsest of successive layers," where each civilization left an imprint without erasing the others.

Constitutional and Contemporary Continuities

Independent India's Constitution institutionalized this plural ethos through guarantees of cultural, linguistic, and religious freedoms (Articles 25–30). Its secularism, unlike the Western separationist model, enshrines **equidistance and equal reverence** toward all religions (Bhargava, 1998)²⁷. Despite contemporary challenges, this civilizational continuity ensures that India's pluralism remains a **lived reality** rather than a political construct.

In essence, India's multiculturalism is not an imported ideology but a **civilizational inheritance** that evolved through centuries of moral negotiation and cultural synthesis — a dynamic equilibrium between unity and difference that continues to define its collective consciousness.

4. Western Misreadings — The Critique of Liberal Multiculturalism

The Western discourse on multiculturalism, largely shaped by liberal political theory, has often misread or oversimplified the Indian experience of diversity. The core problem lies in the **application of Western epistemological categories** to interpret non-Western civilizational realities. Multiculturalism in the West emerged as a response to the challenges of immigration, minority rights, and post-Enlightenment secularism. It is primarily concerned with managing cultural difference within the liberal nation-state through institutional recognition, equality, and state neutrality (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994)²⁸. This liberal model assumes that the state is the primary guarantor of justice and that individual rights form the moral foundation of diversity management.

However, when this framework is imposed on India, it distorts rather than illuminates the nature of Indian pluralism. India's multiculturalism is **not a negotiated consensus among competing communities**, but a civilizational ethos embedded in the collective consciousness of society. Diversity in India has historically been experienced as a **moral and spiritual continuum**, not merely as a social fact requiring legal regulation. As Parekh (2000)²⁹ notes, Indian diversity cannot be adequately understood through the liberal lens of equality and recognition because it operates on fundamentally different philosophical premises — interdependence, ethical coexistence, and dialogical engagement rather than contractual tolerance.

Western theorists often mistake India's **civilizational pluralism for fragmentation**. From colonial anthropology to modern political theory, India has been portrayed as a land of contradictions—multiple religions, castes, and languages al-

legedly held together by state authority rather than voluntary consent (Nandy, 1983)³⁰. This interpretation ignores that Indian pluralism long predates the modern state and sustained itself through cultural negotiation, mutual respect, and overlapping identities. Indian social life has historically been regulated less by legal codification and more by shared moral frameworks derived from the principle of *Dharma*, understood as moral duty and relational balance.

The Western focus on **rights and recognition** is therefore inadequate to grasp the Indian notion of coexistence, which emphasizes **duties, responsibility, and relational harmony**. In India's moral universe, the individual's fulfillment is inseparable from the well-being of the collective. As Sen (2005)³¹ argues, the Indian tradition of argument and dialogue reflects a civilization that sustains dissent without disintegration. The culture of pluralism here is dialogical, not adversarial — it assumes that difference is a natural and enriching feature of human existence rather than a challenge to be managed.

Another critical misreading arises from Western conceptions of secularism. The liberal separation of religion and state—designed to ensure neutrality in Christian-majority societies—has been mistakenly universalized as the standard model of plural coexistence. In India, secularism is articulated through the principle of *Sarva Dharma Sambhava* — “equal respect for all religions” — which seeks **equidistance and engagement** rather than exclusion (Bhargava, 1998)³². The Indian state, thus, does not withdraw from religion but maintains a balanced involvement to ensure harmony among faiths. This is fundamentally different from the Western “wall of separation” model and reflects India's deeper civilizational confidence in spiritual diversity.

Furthermore, Western critiques often cite episodes of communal conflict as evidence of India's failure as a multicultural society. Such readings overlook that these tensions are **political and historical distortions**, not civilizational flaws. The enduring resilience of interfaith coexistence — from shared festivals to intercommunal solidarity — demonstrates that India's pluralism operates at a level deeper than formal politics. Its plural ethos continues to manifest through everyday cultural practices that resist homogenization despite modern pressures.

In essence, India's experience exposes the **epistemological limits of Western liberal multiculturalism**. The liberal approach remains procedural, rights-centric, and state-dependent, while the Indian model is organic, ethical, and community-cantered. The former seeks to manage diversity; the latter celebrates it as a moral condition of existence. To understand India's multiculturalism, therefore, one must move beyond Western frameworks and acknowledge its **civilizational logic of coexistence**, where plurality is not tolerated but embraced as intrinsic to human flourishing.

5. Comparative Analysis — India vs. Western Models

The distinction between India's multiculturalism and Western liberal models lies in their **philosophical foundations, moral orientations, and sociopolitical ex-**

pressions. While both aim to sustain diversity within a shared political framework, their approaches diverge fundamentally in purpose and method.

Western multiculturalism evolved within the **modern nation-state** and is deeply rooted in Enlightenment liberalism, emphasizing **individual autonomy, legal equality, and cultural recognition** (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994)^{33/34}. It views cultural pluralism as a challenge to be managed through institutional frameworks and rights-based guarantees. The goal is to ensure minority inclusion without compromising civic unity. Consequently, Western states conceptualize diversity primarily as a **policy problem**, seeking administrative balance rather than ethical synthesis (Parekh, 2000)³⁵.

In contrast, the **Indian model of multiculturalism** is **civilizationally sustained** rather than state-constructed. Diversity in India is not an outcome of modern liberal thought but an inherent social reality embedded in centuries of coexistence. Its pluralism functions through moral interdependence, dialogical interaction, and shared ethical traditions such as *Dharma*, *VasudhaivaKutumbakam*, and *Sarva Dharma Sambhava* (Sen, 2005; Panikkar, 1999). Rather than managing diversity through rights, India harmonizes it through **reciprocity and relational duty**, perceiving difference as an intrinsic component of social order.

Dimension	Western Model	Indian Model
Philosophical Basis	Liberal individualism, equality, rights	Civilizational pluralism, moral duty, harmony
View of Diversity	Managed through state policy	Lived as ethical interdependence
Secularism	Religion–state separation	Equal reverence for all faiths
Identity	Minority–majority dichotomy	Overlapping and relational identities
Goal	Recognition and inclusion	Harmony and coexistence

The **Western paradigm** is procedural and juridical, while the **Indian paradigm** is ethical and experiential. One seeks to guarantee coexistence through law; the other **cultivates it through culture**. India’s model, though not free from conflict, demonstrates a resilience grounded in its moral imagination rather than institutional coercion.

Thus, India’s civilizational pluralism offers an **alternative epistemology of multiculturalism**, expanding the discourse beyond Western liberalism toward a more holistic, value-centered understanding of coexistence.

6. India’s Indigenous Ethos of Multiculturalism in the Contemporary Context

India’s multiculturalism is not an abstract ideal confined to its past; it continues to shape the **constitutional, cultural, and social foundations** of the modern republic. Despite globalization, political polarization, and religious tensions, the Indian ethos of pluralism remains deeply rooted in everyday practices and the con-

stitutional imagination of the nation. The resilience of this pluralism stems from India's civilizational heritage, which perceives coexistence not as a policy necessity but as a **moral condition of being**.

The **Constitution of India (1950)** institutionalized this ancient ethos by translating civilizational values into democratic principles. Articles 25 to 30 guarantee **freedom of religion, cultural autonomy, and minority rights**, ensuring that every community can preserve its identity within a shared political framework. India's secularism, as theorized by Bhargava (1998), is distinct from Western separationist models. It represents *principled distance*—a dynamic balance where the state maintains equidistance from all religions while engaging positively to promote justice and harmony. This constitutional design reflects India's belief that **diversity strengthens democracy**, rather than undermines it.

At the societal level, India's multiculturalism thrives through the **intermingling of traditions**. Shared festivals, linguistic coexistence, interfaith cultural expressions, and localized syncretic practices—such as the Sufi-Bhakti heritage—continue to sustain inter-community bonds. As Sen (2005) notes, this culture of dialogue and public reasoning forms the bedrock of India's pluralist democracy. Unlike the Western model, which often treats difference as a challenge to governance, Indian pluralism celebrates it as a **source of moral enrichment**.

Contemporary India, however, faces serious challenges to this plural ethos. The rise of **identity-based politics**, economic inequality, and global ideological influences have at times intensified polarization. Yet, these conflicts should not be mistaken for the erosion of pluralism itself. Rather, they reveal tensions between the **civilizational ideal of coexistence** and the **modern politics of exclusion**. India's long tradition of internal reform movements—from Buddha's ethical universalism to Gandhi's *Sarva Dharma Sambhava*—demonstrates its capacity to self-correct through moral introspection and dialogue (Nandy, 1983).

Moreover, the Indian diaspora and global recognition of its multicultural democracy underscore that this model continues to inspire beyond its borders. India's engagement with multiple languages, religions, and philosophical systems shows that diversity, when grounded in ethical reciprocity, can coexist with national unity. This is evident in the functioning of its federal structure, where regional and linguistic diversity are accommodated without fracturing the whole (Nehru, 1946).

Thus, the Indian model of multiculturalism remains **distinctively indigenous**—a living, adaptive ethos that harmonizes ancient moral insights with modern constitutionalism. It rests not on abstract liberal principles but on a civilizational understanding that humanity's spiritual and cultural plurality is an expression of the

same universal truth. In a world increasingly fractured by identity politics, India's example reaffirms that pluralism, when rooted in ethical imagination, can serve as the **most sustainable foundation for democratic coexistence**.

7. Counterarguments and Responses

Any defence of India's multiculturalism must engage with its **internal contradictions** and the **external criticisms** that question its authenticity. Critics—particularly from Western liberal and postcolonial traditions—have argued that India's pluralism is fragile, hierarchical, and inconsistent. Internally, challenges such as caste discrimination, communal violence, and gender inequality are often cited as evidence that India's diversity functions more as a **social mosaic of divisions** than as a coherent multicultural system (Chatterjee, 1993). However, a closer examination reveals that these challenges, though real, do not negate the **civilizational ethos of coexistence**; rather, they expose the tension between inherited moral ideals and evolving social realities.

From a Western perspective, scholars often claim that India's pluralism lacks the structural guarantees of equality present in liberal democracies. The liberal argument assumes that multiculturalism is meaningful only when it is mediated through rights, legal protection, and political recognition (Kymlicka, 1995). Yet, this critique overlooks the fact that India's pluralism operates not solely through **state institutions** but also through **social ethics** embedded in daily interactions and cultural practices. The durability of intercommunal coexistence—despite occasional violence—illustrates that pluralism in India is a **lived moral experience**, not a policy construct.

Communal conflicts, though visible, represent political instrumentalization rather than civilizational failure. As Nandy (1983) argues, colonial modernity fractured India's dialogical culture by imposing rigid religious and communal identities. These divisions were aggravated by postcolonial politics, yet the enduring fabric of interfaith trust in rural and urban life demonstrates a deeper moral continuity. Even after episodes of tension, communities frequently return to cooperation, suggesting that **pluralism in India regenerates itself through cultural memory and moral reciprocity**.

The caste system is another common target of critique, often portrayed as inherently incompatible with multicultural ideals. While caste-based inequality has indeed been a persistent injustice, it must be distinguished from the broader civilizational value of plural coexistence. The reformist traditions of Buddhism, Bhakti, and modern social movements led by figures like **Gandhi and Ambedkar** exemplify India's internal capacity for **self-critique and ethical renewal** (Sen, 2005). These movements sought not to abandon pluralism but to democratize it by aligning spiritual equality with social justice.

Thus, India's multiculturalism should not be judged by its failures but by its **capacity for moral regeneration**. Its strength lies in its reflexive ability to accom-

moderate dissent, reform contradictions, and sustain unity through ethical dialogue. The existence of inequality or conflict does not invalidate India's plural ethos; rather, it affirms its resilience in reconciling diversity through continuous moral evolution.

8. Decolonizing Multiculturalism — The Way Forward

To understand India's multiculturalism merely through Western liberal categories is to misrecognize its philosophical essence. The next intellectual step, therefore, is not only to defend India's model but to **decolonize the very idea of multiculturalism**—to liberate it from Eurocentric assumptions and reimagine it through plural civilizational experiences. Decolonizing multiculturalism entails acknowledging that cultural coexistence can emerge not only from political liberalism but also from **ethical and spiritual worldviews** that have evolved independently of Western modernity.

The Western discourse, though valuable in its emphasis on rights and inclusion, remains limited by its **historical context and epistemic boundaries**. It evolved as a corrective to the homogenizing tendencies of the European nation-state, emphasizing equality through legal frameworks (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995). However, this model is inherently procedural—it seeks to manage diversity rather than internalize it as a moral value. India's experience challenges this procedural liberalism by demonstrating that multicultural harmony can be sustained through **ethical imagination**, not merely institutional engineering.

Decolonizing multiculturalism requires moving from a **politics of tolerance** to a **philosophy of coexistence**. In India, diversity is not negotiated through confrontation but through dialogue—what Panikkar (1999) calls the “intra-religious dialogue,” where understanding grows through empathy and self-transformation rather than competition. This dialogical spirit is what makes Indian pluralism civilizational rather than political. It assumes that truth itself is plural, and therefore, every tradition, however distinct, contributes to the realization of the universal.

This approach offers valuable insights for the global discourse on multiculturalism. As globalization intensifies cultural encounters and identity conflicts, the Western liberal model often reaches its limits, oscillating between **assimilation and separation**. The Indian paradigm, in contrast, offers a **relational ontology**—a worldview in which difference is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be harmonized. The emphasis on *VasudhaivaKutumbakam* (“the world is one family”) provides an ethical vocabulary that transcends borders, proposing a vision of global coexistence grounded in compassion and reciprocity rather than in mere legal recognition.

Furthermore, decolonizing multiculturalism means reclaiming intellectual autonomy for societies whose experiences of diversity are **civilizational, not migratory**. The Indian case invites scholars to develop post-Western frameworks of multiculturalism that integrate ethics, spirituality, and community into the political. This does not reject Western theory but **complements it** by expanding its moral and cultural horizon.

In the contemporary world marked by polarization, the Indian experience demonstrates that enduring pluralism cannot be sustained by rights alone—it requires a **shared moral consciousness**. By reinterpreting multiculturalism through India’s civilizational ethos, global thought can move toward a more inclusive and humane understanding of coexistence, one that honors diversity as a path to unity rather than an obstacle to it.

9. Conclusion

India’s multiculturalism represents far more than the coexistence of multiple religions, languages, or ethnicities—it embodies a **civilizational philosophy of unity in diversity** that has evolved over millennia. This study has argued that India’s pluralism is neither a derivative of Western liberalism nor an accidental social phenomenon. It is a **deeply embedded moral worldview**, sustained by ethical traditions, dialogical reasoning, and a shared sense of humanity that transcends rigid identity boundaries.

The comparison between Western and Indian models of multiculturalism reveals two distinct paradigms. The Western model, born out of the Enlightenment and the modern nation-state, is **rights-based and procedural**, seeking to regulate diversity through institutional inclusion and legal equality. India’s model, by contrast, is **ethical and experiential**, grounded in cultural interdependence and mutual respect. It treats difference not as a political problem but as a spiritual and moral opportunity—a path toward social harmony.

Through its civilizational evolution—from Ashoka’s moral pluralism to the Bhakti–Sufi syncretism and the inclusive vision of Gandhi and Tagore—India has continuously reaffirmed that diversity need not threaten unity. Its Constitution, in enshrining freedom of belief, cultural autonomy, and secularism as *equal reverence for all*, continues this ancient commitment in modern democratic form.

The paper also acknowledges India’s internal contradictions—communal tensions, caste inequality, and political polarization—but argues that these do not invalidate its plural ethos. Instead, they highlight the **dynamic and self-corrective capacity** of Indian civilization. The country’s moral imagination allows it to critique, reform, and renew itself without abandoning the ideal of coexistence.

In an era of global fragmentation and rising ethnonationalism, India’s indigenous model of multiculturalism offers a compelling **alternative paradigm**—one that moves beyond tolerance to active empathy, beyond rights to responsibilities, and beyond state policy to social ethics. It demonstrates that pluralism, when grounded in moral dialogue and shared humanity, can sustain unity without uniformity.

Ultimately, India’s experience reminds the world that multiculturalism need not be managed; it can be **lived**—as an enduring act of coexistence, compassion, and civilizational wisdom.



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Judicial Activism: An Accountability to the Constitution

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Abstract

The philosophy of checks and balances embedded in the Indian Constitution is the cornerstone of Indian's federal democracy. The Indian judiciary, empowered under Article 142¹ (in the name of 'complete justice') of the Constitution, has consistently struck a refined balance among the legislature, executive, and judiciary through the procedures of 'judicial review' and 'judicial activism'. The recent case, 'State of Tamil Nadu vs. Governor of Tamil Nadu (2024)²', has again highlighted the Indian judiciary's adherence to accountability concerning the Indian Constitution, signalling the broader scope of judicial review. This research paper focuses on highlighting the important and relevant tool in the hands of the Indian judiciary for ensuring the sustenance of the rule of law and substantive justice, that is, 'judicial activism'. This paper presents an in-depth historical background of the emergence of the concept and nature of judicial activism in India, along with a theoretical analysis of the significant judicial cases through which the judiciary has evolved from the journey of judicial review to judicial activism now. Since India's Constitution is the lengthiest in the world, with various implicit and unexpressed but inculcating norms that need a lawful interpretation in different periods and changed circumstances by an unbiased institution, in such a scenario Indian judiciary, being the sole interpreter of constitutional laws, has played a responsible role in establishing the constitutional validity among the people of India through being a sui generis agency. The process of judicial activism has not only warned the legislature to take more cautious action, but it has also pressured the executive to implement laws accountably and not allow politics to overtake justice. The findings of this paper show that judicial activism has helped sustain the implicit constitutional values and morals of Indian democracy and maintain citizens' belief in the Indian judicial system as the sole preserver of their fundamental rights.

Keywords: (Check and balance, Indian Constitution, Judicial Activism, Judicial Review, Indian Democracy)

INTRODUCTION

India, the largest democratic country, also has the world's highest population and the greatest diversity. Managing such a diverse population imposes great responsibility on the Indian administration. And in this, the Constitution has served as a lighthouse, guiding the righteous path towards the values of equality, fraternity, liberty, justice, and morality, which have now become an integral part of Indian society. In today's time, it is impossible to think about living a life without these basic rights. All the democratic countries are governed by an organization called the government. The government establishes certain rules and regulations to ensure law and order and administer justice in the country, allowing people to live peacefully. Imparting uniform justice to all in all scenarios sometimes does not serve justice to all citizens of the country. Because humankind is an evolving entity over time and space, changes must be made according to the demands of time, and this is also the case with the concept of justice, which has been a highly debated topic for a long time. It has varied according to the place, time, situation, and person.

The Indian parliamentary system governs through the supremacy of the constitution, unlike some other authoritarian and theocratic countries. The Constitution is a document that contains the fundamental laws and rules governing the country. Earlier, there were monarchical systems, ruled by one person. The running of administrative systems depended on their choices; there was neither the concept of equality nor a defined idea of justice. But in today's world, countries are ruled by the constitution either in written or unwritten form. The people of India wrote the Constitution to safeguard themselves from oppression by others and to ensure 'just and dignified existence' for all citizens. In this context, the role of the judiciary, facilitated through the mechanism of judicial activism, comes into play. The term 'judicial activism' is not mentioned or defined in the Indian Constitution; rather, it is the product of evolving Indian judicial practices.³ With the demand for time, it has become an important tool to keep a check and balance on laws in the country if practiced on rational grounds within the limits of the federal mechanism.

'Judicial Activism' is a concept that represents the innovation of the judiciary. It describes a mindset or strategy in which judges act according to their conscience rather than adhering to the customary role of interpreting laws from the constitution or other judicial codes and applying them in a general manner. Under this, they actively mould and shape policy by making choices that are perceived as creating new laws, frequently based on public or political concerns, and sometimes to claim the supremacy of the judiciary over other organs of the government, but with a positive approach. This idea is frequently contrasted with judicial restraint, which holds that judges should not intervene in legislative or executive decisions unless they blatantly breach the rule of law or impede the constitutional process.

Judicial activism allows the judiciary to protect individual rights, address injustices, and make new laws for modern societal needs. Famous instances of judicial activism from throughout the world include historic judgments by the United States Supreme Court, such as **Brown v. Board of Education**⁴, which eliminated racial segregation in schools, and **Roe v. Wade**⁵, which secured the right to abortion. These judgments had significant social impacts and are often cited in discussions about the judiciary's role in shaping law and creating a justifiable society.

For several reasons, including the court's ability to actively participate in safeguarding fundamental rights, promoting justice, and preserving constitutional values, judicial activism is considered crucial in democratic countries. There would be a threat of increasing authoritarianism in society if no concept of judicial activism prevails. If the legislature and executive bodies are left without checks and balances, then justice would be difficult to attain. If justice needs to be established, then there must be an authority that looks after whether the policies made by the government are useful for the majority or not. In this, the judiciary appears as a responsible guardian to have an eye on the lawmakers and law enforcers. As it is said that "change is the only constant thing"⁶, the interpretation of the constitution also needs to be altered over time. Accordingly, it was the farsightedness of the Constituent Assembly that led them to formulate the Indian Constitution in a manner that allows for amendments to meet situational demands.

Constitutional Provisions for Judicial Review

Though the Indian Constitution does not provide any specific provision that directly empowers the judiciary for judicial review, numerous sections indirectly establish the foundation for its practice. Based on this, the Indian Judiciary not only works proactively but also justifies its action on the grounds of being 'the preserver of the Indian Constitution and Constitutional customs and morals'. Several provisions in the Constitution provide for the practice of judicial review, including the following—

In India, judicial review is based on Article 13⁷ of the Constitution, which prohibits laws that violate basic rights. It proclaims that any law that is inconsistent with or violates basic rights (Part III of the Constitution) is null and invalid. This article empowers the judiciary to take action against individuals who violate citizens' basic rights. This article acts as a check against legislative excess, giving the court the authority to evaluate and overturn invalid laws. Its laws also promote accountability and protect the values of justice and equality in India.

Remedies for the enforcement of rights

Another important article that safeguards the judicial review is Article 32⁸ of the Indian Constitution, which establishes constitutional remedies and enables citizens to petition the Supreme Court directly for the enforcement of their basic rights. This article empowers the Supreme Court to issue directives or writs to ensure the protection and safeguarding of constitutional rights.

Power of High Courts to issue certain Writs (Article 226) ⁹

This article empowers the High Court to issue writs for the enforcement of fundamental rights and other legal remedies. This guarantees that activities by public bodies do not violate constitutional requirements and permits citizens to petition the High Court for redress of complaints.

Inconsistencies in Laws

Laws enacted by the parliament and the state legislature may occasionally vary. Hence, Articles {251 and 254}¹⁰ deal with the inconsistencies in statutes. In this situation, union law, as enacted by parliament, prevails, and state law becomes void.

Other important articles in the Indian Constitution provide support to the mechanism of judicial review, viz. –

- a) **Article (131-136)¹¹** authorizes courts to resolve conflicts between the Union and States, upholding the Constitution in governance and jurisdiction issues.
- b) **Article 137¹²** empowers the Supreme Court to examine its own judgments and orders, supporting the judicial review principle.
- c) **Article 245¹³** specifies the scope of the authorities of Parliament and the State legislatures. It indicates that every law made by them must adhere to the Constitution.
- d) **Article 246¹⁴** defines the subjects on which the Union and State legislatures can legislate. It assures that the legislative powers of each body fall within the **Constitution**.

In light of the implicit and explicit powers and responsibilities mentioned in the Constitution and assigned to the judiciary, the Indian judiciary has performed its functions in accordance with the requirements and demands of the time. Sometimes performing general adjudication and sometimes more active adjudication, which is called today's 'judicial activism'.

Types of Judicial Review in India

Based on various judicial cases and related adjudication, for the sake of a systematic understanding of its functioning and its nature, we see the three dimensions of judicial review in India:

- Related to Legislative Actions
- Related to Administrative Actions
- Related to Judicial Decisions

a) Review of Legislative Actions

The judiciary is the protector of fundamental rights. It has the authority to analyze bills enacted by the legislature to verify that they do not contradict the constitution. This involves determining whether a legislation is consistent with the requirements of the constitution. If a court determines that a statute violates the Constitution, it may declare it unconstitutional and in valid. For example, "In its landmark judgment in *Golaknath v. State of Punjab* Case (1967)V¹⁵, the Supreme Court asserted the power of judicial review over constitutional amendments, holding that fundamental rights were immutable and beyond the amending power of Parliament."

b) Review of Administrative Actions

Administrative acts are decisions or actions made by government authorities or agencies. The judiciary has the jurisdiction to assess these activities to ensure

that they are legal and fall within the extent of authority assigned to these entities. If an administrative action is shown to be arbitrary, discriminatory, or unfair, the court may intervene and overturn the decision. The execution of laws needs to be fair. For example, the Supreme Court and Delhi High Court took a strict stance in the mid-2000s, initiating a “sealing drive” to address the widespread unlawful building and commercial usage of residential properties in Delhi, which violated master plans and legislation, often with the knowledge of municipal officials. The court ordered municipalities to seal (shut) thousands of unauthorised commercial operations in residential areas and personally oversaw the campaign, despite the inactivity and corruption of local administrative entities. Similarly, in 2017, in the case of *State of Tamil Nadu v. K. Balu*¹⁶, the Supreme Court banned all liquor shops within 500 meters of any national or state highway across India, citing the high number of road accidents caused by drunk driving and linking it to the Right to Life under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. This verdict overturned the state government’s licensing decisions and prioritized public safety over state revenue.

c) Review of Judicial Decisions

Within the Indian constitutional framework, the principle of judicial review encompasses not only the scrutiny of legislative and executive actions but also extends to the judiciary’s re-examination of its precedents. This inherent power of self-correction, exercised primarily through the mechanism of curative and review petitions, allows the Supreme Court and High Courts to rectify jurisprudential errors and adapt doctrinal interpretations to evolving societal norms and complexities. This process is fundamental to maintaining the dynamism of the legal system, ensuring its continued legitimacy and responsiveness to transformative constitutional challenges. For example, the Supreme Court demonstrated critical self-review in *Joseph Shine v. Union of India (2018)* by overturning its regressive precedents in *Sowmithri Vishnu (1985)* and *V. Revathi (1988)*¹⁷. The Court rectified its earlier jurisprudence by striking down ‘Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code’, declaring it a violation of ‘Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution’. This act jettisoned patriarchal assumptions and affirmed the constitutional values of individual dignity, equality, and autonomy within marriage.

Once again, the Supreme Court has expanded its scope on the very recent report titled, “City hounded by strays and kids pay price”, published on 28th July. In this report Supreme Court of India, suo moto, ordered Delhi-NCR to clear localities of stray dogs within eight weeks, and house them in shelters and ensure none were released back on August 11, 2025.¹⁸ But, later, massive public protests forced the Court to modify its earlier suo moto directives and allowed the release of captured dogs into their original places of habitation after being dewormed and vaccinated.¹⁹ This shows that though the Supreme Court has suo moto power but it sometimes does not analyze all the dimensions of the matter and does hasty generalization, which is unexpected to be performed by the supreme law agency of India.

Interaction between the Legislature and the Judiciary before the concept of Judicial Activism in India

Although Indian integrated judicial system operates on the principle of check and balance and conducts a critical review of all the executive as well as legislative actions taken by both the executive and the legislature on the questions of constitutional issues, when we observed the pro- active behaviour of judiciary in India, we generally found that judicial activism cases were always adhered between judiciary and the legislature.

After independence, India underwent progressive growth and came to terms with the various facets of national governance. It has been observed that the relationship between the judiciary and the legislature was different compared to today. At that time, the legislature had made numerous modifications to the constitution on its own, disregarding the constitutional spirit of checks and balances, and sometimes even exceeding the limits, because judicial activism was not a concept in India. The court was not initially identified as a directing agency to the legislature in cases of breach of constitutional values and provisions, which is why the decisions were scarcely reviewed. It was easier for the government to make rules in its favour. There are certain cases where the legislature has surpassed the constitutional morals and conventions in the following ways-

1. The case of *A.K. Gopalan v. State of Madras* (1950) ²⁰ is a foundational judgment in Indian constitutional law concerning the scope of preventive detention and fundamental rights. The petitioner, a communist leader, challenged his detention under the Preventive Detention Act of 1950²¹, contending that it violated his rights under Articles 19 (1)(d) (freedom of movement, etc.)²², 21 (right to life and personal liberty)²³, and 22 (protections against arrest and detention)²⁴ of the Indian **Constitution**.

In its ruling, the Supreme Court adopted an exceedingly narrow interpretation of fundamental rights. It declared that the fundamental rights were distinct and could not be interpreted in tandem. Consequently, while the detention curtailed Gopalan's liberty, the Court upheld its legality, asserting that the state had followed the procedure set by law as required by Article 21. This judicial posture reflected a period of restraint, where the Court deferred to the legislature and employed a narrow construction of liberty. This approach would later be reconsidered in subsequent jurisprudence.

2. The case of *State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan* (1951) ²⁵ represents a foundational precedent in Indian constitutional law. The litigation contested the constitutional validity of a Communal Government Order issued by the State of Madras, which instituted a caste-based quota system for admissions to state educational institutions. The petitioner, Srimathi Champakam Dorairajan, a qualified Brahmin candidate, was denied admission to a medical college according to this quota policy. The Madras High Court ultimately ruled the order unconstitutional, empha-

sis the supremacy of fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution. The court pronounced that while the Directive Principles of State Policy provide guiding objectives for governance, they remain subordinate to and cannot infringe upon the justifiable Fundamental Rights guaranteed to citizens. This landmark decision underscored the primacy of the right to equality and the prohibition of discrimination based on religion, race, caste, or sex as enshrined in Articles {14, 15, and 16}²⁶. The court's decision to strike down the quota order for violating fundamental rights forced a major constitutional change. This ruling was the direct catalyst for the First Amendment, which introduced Article 15(4)²⁷. This new clause explicitly empowered the state to create special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes, fundamentally reshaping India's concept of equality from sameness to one that includes equitable opportunity.

3. In the case of *Shankari Prasad v. Union of India (1951)*²⁸, the major issue was the first amendment to the Indian Constitution, which established land reform legislation and contested property rights under Article 31 (Right to Property)²⁹ was the main issue. The petitioner claimed that some fundamental rights were violated by the change. However, the Supreme Court upheld the modification, concluding that Parliament has the authority to modify any section of the Constitution, including the clauses dealing with basic rights. The judiciary was restrained during this time, allowing the legislature to amend the Constitution.

4. The identical legal approach used in *Shankari Prasad* was replicated in *Sajjan Singh v. State of Rajasthan (1965)*³⁰. Once again, the Supreme Court backed Parliament's authority to modify the Constitution, even if doing so would compromise fundamental liberties. Changes to land reform legislation that limited property rights were a point of contention in the case. The court ruled by a 3-2 vote that amendments made in conformity with Article 368³¹ of the Constitution were permissible and might even alter fundamental rights. This decision exemplified the conservative judicial mindset that prevailed before the emergence of judicial activism, as well as the judiciary's reluctance to engage in legislative matters.

These instances demonstrate how, before the rise of judicial activism, Indian courts strictly adhered to a literal expounding of the laws and the Constitution. The Judiciary largely deferred to the legislative and executive branches and avoided getting involved in policymaking. This concept emphasized judicial restraint, arguing that the court's job was to interpret the law as stated, rather than actively shaping social and political policy.

Emergence of Partial Judicial Activism:

In the late 1960s, we saw a smooth shifting of the Indian Judiciary from the conventional perspective to a more assertive and proactive role, when partial judicial activism was reflected in some cases. This transition was largely the result of parliamentary overreach of the Constitution, which forced the Judiciary to broaden its interpreting powers to defend fundamental rights and enforce constitutional responsibility. The Judiciary actively participates in addressing social justice, envi-

ronmental protection, and governance-like issues. It also established a culture of judicial oversight that continues to reshape Indian democracy, and following the checks and balances idea, with the self-imposed limits of the principle of separation of powers. The initial reflections of activism are-

1. The case of *Keshav Singh vs. Speaker, Legislative Assembly and Ors.*, (1965)³² dealt with the power struggle between the Judiciary and the Legislature. The problem began when Keshav Singh, a citizen, was imprisoned for contempt by the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly for printing a leaflet that it deemed defamatory. Singh successfully contested his arrest in the High Court, which granted him interim bail. In response, the Legislative Assembly voted a motion declaring that the judges are responsible for the order to be in contempt. The Supreme Court intervened, stating that the courts may review legislative decisions and that they could defend individual rights even when the legislature was at odds with them. This decision finally established the judiciary's role as the final arbitrator of constitutional legitimacy, ensuring that no institution, no matter how strong, could act absolutely outside of the parameters of the Constitution. While this is not a quintessential example of judicial activism, it indicates the judiciary's increasing independence in defending constitutional rights.

2. The *Golak Nath v. State of Punjab (1967)* case is still considered to be from the pre-judicial activism era, despite being a landmark case in the legal system. The Supreme Court had to decide in this case whether Parliament might alter fundamental rights under Article 368 or not. The court overturned its prior findings in the *Shankari Prasad and Sajjan Singh* cases, ruling that the parliament could not modify the Constitution in a way that would violate the Fundamental Rights. According to the court's interpretation, fundamental rights are "transcendental" and "immutable," and any legislation that restricts or eliminates them violates the constitution.³³

This decision was reversed by the 24th Constitutional Amendment, which empowered Parliament to change any portion of the Constitution, including fundamental rights.³⁴ However, the case is notable in the history of judicial review in India since it was the first major court intervention in the field of constitutional modifications. While this decision prevented the amendment of fundamental rights, the court continued to play a relatively passive role and avoided taking a leading position in addressing more general social justice issues.

3. The "Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1969"³⁵ was contested as unconstitutional in the *R.C. Cooper v. Union of India (1970)*³⁶ case, sometimes referred to as the Bank Nationalization Case. R.C. Cooper, the petitioner, claimed that this nationalization violated his right to property under Article 31 of the Constitution. The owners of the nationalized banks were not sufficiently compensated according to the law, so the Supreme Court decided that the government's actions breached their right to compensation under Article 31(2)³⁷. The ruling was significant because it showed that the court was prepared to protect individual rights against government actions while abstaining from actively influencing public policy and staying within the parameters of judicial restraint.

These cases pave the way for the Judiciary to commence formal Judicial Activism in India by establishing the supremacy of the Constitution. It takes a dynamic approach to upholding the check-and-balance concept. The origins of judicial activism in the United States date back to 1803, with the landmark “*Marbury v. Madison*”³⁸ case. The Supreme Court stated that “it is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is”. Article 142³⁹ of the Constitution empowers the Supreme Court to render judgments or issue decrees essential for justice in any ongoing case. These rulings or directives are binding across India under the laws of Parliament as well as the President, and they determine the scope of judicial activism in the country.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** was introduced with the efforts of ‘Justice V R Krishna Ayer’ and ‘Justice P N Bhagwati’ to expand access to justice, which is considered one of the most significant breakthroughs in Indian judicial activism. In their pursuit of justice, it enables people or organizations to petition the courts on behalf of the general public or underrepresented groups. As a result, more people could now use the legal system, and the courts could now address more social issues without waiting for the government or the executive to take action.

Through PILs, Indian courts have interfered in situations like environmental degradation, human rights violations, custodial torture, and corruption. Cases including the rehabilitation of displaced people, pollution management, and prison reform are noteworthy instances.

Famous Judicial Activism Cases

1. In the famous case of *Kesavananda Bharti Sripadagalvaru v. State of Kerala and Anr.* (1973)⁴⁰, with a majority of 7-6 among 13 judges, the Supreme Court established the ‘Basic Structure Doctrine,’ which held that while Parliament might modify the Constitution, it could not alter its *Basic Nature*; it included the essence of the Constitution (like democracy, secularism, etc). Additionally, the court can later investigate the scope of the fundamental framework of the Constitution.
2. In the case of *Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain & Anr.*, (1975)⁴¹, after independence, this was the first time that the election of the PM was declared void. Primarily, Raj Narain, the opponent of Indira Gandhi in the 5th Lok Sabha election during 1971, filed a petition against Indira Gandhi in the Allahabad High Court, challenging the elections and accusing Indira Gandhi of violating the ‘*Representation of the People’s Act 1951*’⁴². After hearing, the High Court declared the election invalid and found Indira Gandhi guilty under Section 123(7) of the ‘*Representation of the People’s Act, 1951*’ (Corrupt Practices in elections)⁴³. Indira Gandhi challenged the ruling in the Supreme Court of India, and the court issued an injunction temporarily stopping the High Court’s ruling until further hearing.⁴⁴ Besides the case, President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed declared a National Emergency due to internal disturbance using Article 352.⁴⁵ During the emergency period, Parliament added Article 329 (A) to the Constitution by the 39th Constitutional Amendment.⁴⁶ The

Supreme Court of India declared Clause (4) of Article 329(A) unconstitutional as it infringes the basic nature of the Constitution. This case astonished India due to its unique character and political diplomacy. This decision represents the first-time use of the “Doctrine of Basic Structure”, established by the *Keshvananda Bharti Case (1973)*. Later on, the entire Article 329 (A) was repealed from the Constitution by the 44th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1978.⁴⁷ In this decision, the Supreme Court maintained that judicial review is a fundamental component of the Indian Constitution. The court concluded that even revisions to the Constitution proposed by the Parliament would be subject to judicial review if they violate the Constitution’s essential principles.

Shift to Judicial Activism: Relationship between the Legislature and Judiciary in India

In Indian judicial history, the emergency period (1975–1977), during which civil freedoms were drastically restricted, constituted a watershed movement. The transition to Judicial Activism in India profoundly altered the relationship between the legislative and judiciary, particularly in the post-Emergency era. As evidenced by the *ADM Jabalpur v. Shivakant Shukla (1976)*⁴⁸ case, in which the court decided that *Habeas Corpus* could be suspended under the emergency, the judiciary came under fire for failing to check the excesses of the government during the emergency. In this era, the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, took a more activist stand to defend the rule of law, fundamental rights, and democracy.

Extension of Rights

The Constitution’s Fundamental Rights, especially Article 14 (*Right to Equality*), Article 19 (*Right to Freedom*), and Article 21 (*Right to Life and Personal Liberty*), have been liberally interpreted by the Indian judiciary. These rights now cover a wide range of social justice issues due to judicial activism.

*Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978)*⁴⁹ is a significant decision in this regard, with the Supreme Court ruling that Article 21’s “right to life” includes not just survival but also a dignified existence. The foundation for further judicial interventions in matters of human rights, education, health, and environmental preservation was established by this ruling. In *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985)*⁵⁰, the court upheld that Article 21 guarantees the right to life, including the right to a means of subsistence. Similarly, in the *National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India (2014)*⁵¹ case, the Supreme Court deemed transgender people to be a “third gender” and instructed the government to grant them legal protection.

Protection of the Environment

In India, judicial activism has played an important role in the evolution of environmental law. When it comes to pollution, deforestation, and ecological protection, courts have been proactive. To safeguard sustainable development and preserve natural resources, the Supreme Court has issued several significant decisions. For instance, the court acknowledged the need to preserve both the environment

and cultural legacy when it acted to lessen industrial pollution surrounding the Taj Mahal in the *M.C. Mehta v. Union of India (1997)*⁵² litigation, often known as the “Taj Trapezium Case”. In a similar vein, the court stressed sustainable development in *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum v. Union of India (1996)*⁵³ and held that businesses must operate with environmental protections, specifically by implementing the ‘Precautionary Principle’ and the ‘Polluter Pays Principle’ as essential, non-negotiable elements of their operations.

Protection of Marginalised Groups and Social Justice

To address the issues of marginalized people, including Dalits, women, children, and the impoverished, judicial activism has been crucial. To guarantee social justice, the judiciary has addressed problems including bonded labour, worker exploitation, and educational access. The Supreme Court established rules in the 1997 case of *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*⁵⁴ to stop sexual harassment of women in the workplace. Given that the legislature at the time had not yet passed any explicit legislation addressing the matter, this was a crucial step in defending women’s rights. In the 1993 case of *Unnikrishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh*,⁵⁵ the Supreme Court ruled that the right to education is an essential component of the right to life.

Reforms in Politics and Elections

To maintain accountability and transparency, the Indian judiciary has also gotten involved in political and electoral issues. The Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in the *Union of India v. Association for Democratic Reforms (2002)*⁵⁶, to declare criminal background (if any), assets, liabilities, and educational qualifications for election candidates during the nomination process, has increased electoral transparency. In the case of *People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) v. Union of India (2013)*⁵⁷ court introduced the NOTA (None of the Above) option in elections, which allows citizens to reject all the candidates if they are not suitable for their representation, this case expands Article 19 (1) (a)⁵⁸, freedom of expression, and secrecy.

For improving the election process and transparency, in the 2013 case of *Subramanian Swamy v. Election Commission of India*⁵⁹, the court directed to Election Commission of India to introduce the VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail), so the apprehension of misuse of the EVM (Electronic Voting Machine) can be suspended. The very recent famous case of the *Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India (2024)*⁶⁰, where the Supreme Court abolished the Electoral Bonds Scheme, as it violates the constitutional provisions under the Right to Information of voters {Article 19 (1) (a)}, and creates ambiguity in political funding or donation. The court also ordered SBI to disclose the purchasers and recipients of those bonds since 2019.

Judicial Overreach and Reactions

Judicial activism has been applauded for protecting justice, but it has also come under fire for judicial overreach, which occurs when judges are thought to be

encroaching on the authority of the legislature as well as the executive branch. Critics contend that the judiciary has occasionally overreached its constitutional authority, especially when it comes to issuing orders that bear a resemblance to policymaking—a function that is customarily assigned to the legislature.

In the 2011 case of *Aruna Shanbaug v. Union of India*⁶¹, for instance, opponents contended that the legislature ought to have taken the choice to permit passive euthanasia under stringent limitations. Similarly, some have claimed that the courts occasionally intrude into areas where the administration should have more discretion in matters involving reservations or economic policy.

A similar action was again done by the Supreme Court in a very recent case, where the Supreme Court ordered barring a judge of Allahabad High Court from hearing criminal cases (on August 04, 2025), who had been accused of converting a civil case into a criminal case for speedy trial. SC has cited it as illegal.⁶² But the point of discussion is that though Article 141 of the Indian Constitution makes the decisions of the Supreme Court binding on all courts within the territory of India, Article 235 also grants the High Court of a state control over its subordinate courts and the judicial personnel in those courts. And Supreme Court has only appellate jurisdiction on the decisions of a high court, and no such appeal has been made in this case in Sc. This arbitrary action of the SC shows judicial arbitrariness on one hand and encroachment of judicial independence on another and giving birth to institutional conflict, which is not a healthy practice for sustaining the Indian Judicial System.

Conclusion

As the findings suggest, Judicial activism has been proven to be the most effective tool for good governance. Its contribution to the Indian administrative system has been inclusive and collaborative in terms of providing justice to citizens. Judicial activism has been instrumental in safeguarding fundamental rights guaranteed to citizens, especially when the other governance agencies (the legislature and the executive) fail to do so. Courts intervene when individuals or groups are subjected to violations of their rights and can expand the scope of these rights through interpretation to align with evolving societal values. Also, Judicial activism has become a significant tool in driving social change by addressing systemic inequalities and ensuring justice for marginalized communities. It has been a catalyst for important reforms, such as decriminalizing homosexuality in India and strengthening gender equality.

Judicial activism has helped in addressing legislative and executive failures. Many times, it has filled legislative vacuums by interpreting laws creatively to address emerging social issues or when existing laws are outdated or ambiguous. This proactive approach encourages the judiciary to ensure legal clarity and uphold the rule of law even when the legislative or executive bodies are sluggish.

Furthermore, the unique feature of the Indian judiciary of being both the agency of interpreting the laws and the self-correcting agency in case it has left any area of

imparted decisionundefined, has marked the commitment, reliability,and responsibility of the judiciary towards people.

Judicial activism is considered important because the interpretation of the Constitution needs to be done in such a manner that justice reaches every chunk of society. Asit has generally been noticed that “power corrupts and extreme power corrupts extremely”, one organization should neither have extreme power nor should it be allowed to exercise extreme authority. So, it is the case with the Indian judiciary sometimes. Hence, judicial actions also need to be checkedin case of judicial overreach. Its importance lies in the fact that the court is the place where people come when they lose hope in the government’s policies, or when people find that the passed policy is not in favour of the mass population. This demands a scrutiny mechanism over governmental actions to keep it under checks and balances, and making the executive responsible towards the citizens of India, and in this judiciary is playing a significant role through examining the government policies passed by parliament. In this way, it also helps in protecting democratic values by regulating the government of not becoming authoritative. Hence, it has helped in promoting transparency and accountability in governance by compelling authorities to function within constitutional boundaries and adhere to the rule of law.

Through tools like Public Interest Litigation (PIL), judicial activism has broadened access to justice for disadvantaged sections of society who might otherwise face obstacles in approaching the courts. This has enabled the judiciary to address systemic issues affecting vulnerable groups, including environmental protection, human rights violations, and government corruption.

The only problem associated with the concept of judicial activism is the case of judicial overreach (often defined and interpreted as the courts encroaching on the legislative or executive branches), and this must be balanced. There is a positive side to this, too. As activism makes people more alert, so is the case with the judiciary, but it should have to be more careful towards the constitutional provision of separation of powers and democratic processes to ensure that every arm of government serves the nation’s citizens and fulfils its constitutional purpose.



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From Manholes to Margins: Foucauldian Biopolitics of state and the migration of Dalit Labor

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the role of the state in the entangled nexus of caste-inflected labor migration and structural socio-economic hierarchies which foregrounding the lived realities of Dalit manual scavengers. The migratory trajectories of marginalized caste groups from agrarian hinterlands to urban conglomerates like Delhi are often propelled by aspirations for dignified livelihoods and economic mobility. Yet, these aspirations are frequently thwarted by systemic barriers such as limited access to formal education and skill development that channel them into hyper-precarious, stigmatized occupations. Manual scavenging, a caste-sanctioned form of labor, becomes not merely a job but a site of embodied oppression, where the promise of urban opportunity collapses into cycles of invisible exploitation. These individuals are not just migrating bodies, they are sentient agents navigating hostile terrains of caste, class, and capital, often with little more than resilience and hope. Drawing on Foucauldian notions of biopolitics and state surveillance, the state's selective visibility mechanisms render the existence and mortality of manual scavengers invisible, excluded from official datasets, statistical frameworks, and policy discourses. Operating as daily wage laborers without formal documentation, they are denied access to social welfare and legal safeguards. This invisibility is not accidental but a product of state power that disciplines and marginalizes through omission, silence, and neglect.

Keywords: Dignity, state power, Migration, Bio-politics, caste Discrimination

Caste Pride as a Technology of Power : A Foucauldian Critique of Social Stratification

This theme captures the core argument that caste pride, like state power in

Foucault's framework, operates as a subtle disciplinary mechanism that normalizes inequality and invisibles marginalized identities. It also signals the theoretical lens and the critical stance of the analysis.

Foucault conceptualized the state not merely as a centralized authority but as a diffuse network of power that operates through institutions, norms, and discourses. His ideas on **biopolitics, disciplinary power, and governmentality** help us understand how power is exercised not just through laws but through the regulation of bodies, identities, and social behavior. The ostensible celebration of caste heritage, often framed as a benign expression of cultural pride, conceals a deeper, insidious mechanism of social stratification. Through the lens of Michel Foucault's theory of state power and oppression, this phenomenon can be understood as a form of disciplinary normalization where pride in caste identity functions as a subtle technology of power that reinforces hierarchical divisions. Foucault's conception of the state as a diffuse network of institutions and discourses that regulate bodies and identities parallels the caste system's pervasive control over social behavior and occupational roles. Just as the state governs populations by determining who is visible, valuable, and worthy of care, caste operates by rendering certain lives particularly those of Dalits disposable and stigmatized. The assertion of caste pride, while seemingly innocuous, perpetuates a regime of truth that legitimizes exclusion and inequality. It masks the violence of caste under the guise of tradition, embedding discriminatory logics into everyday practices and social norms. In this way, caste oppression mirrors Foucauldian state oppression: both rely on the normalization of difference, the invisibilities of marginalized bodies, and the silent reproduction of power through cultural and institutional means.

MANUAL SCAVENGING

"Caste is not just a division of labor. It is a division of laborers."

-Dr. B. R. Ambedkar¹

"In India, a man is not a scavenger because of his work. He is a scavenger because of his birth irrespective of the question whether he does scavenge or not"—is widely attributed to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.² Manual scavenger means a person engaged or employed, at the commencement of this Act or at any time thereafter, by an individual or local authority or an agency or a contractor, for manually cleaning, carrying, disposing of, or otherwise handling in any manner, human excreta in an insanitary latrine or in open drain or pit into which the human excreta from the insanitary latrines is disposed of, or on a railway track or in such other space or premises, as the central government or state government may notify, before the excreta fully decomposes in such a manner as may be prescribed, and the expression manual scavenging shall be constructed accordingly. Manual scavenging embodies the darkest aspect of the caste system, perpetuating untouchability, impurity and pollution. Marginalized communities remain under this horrific evil; they live a life which we can't even think of. India's manual scavenging Act The prohibition of employment of manual scavengers, 1993 and their rehabilitation amendment Act

2013 theoretically banned by government of India but still persists behind the curtain of legal system. Every year numbers of people died in hazardous chambers and sewers but their data remained unrecognized. Manual scavengers risk their lives daily, descending into septic tanks, open drains and manholes with only a rope and bucket without any protective gears etc. This is simply a birth-based work.

Data From 2011 census with the socio economic and caste census (2011)

1. 1,82,505 manual scavengers identified in rural India (SECC 2011)³
2. Over 26 lakh insanitary latrines perpetuating the practice (Census 2011)⁴
3. 676,000 manual scavengers remained exploited (Ministry of social justice and empowerment 2003- 2004)⁵
4. 1,314,652 toilets directly connected to the open drains⁶
5. 793,390 latrines requiring manual cleaning of human excreta census 2011
6. As of 2018, approximately 58,098 people worked as manual scavengers in India (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2018)
7. Maharashtra has the highest number of manual scavengers, with 63,713 individuals, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, and Karnataka (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2020).⁷
8. Between 1993 and 2020, at least 941 people died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks (Human Rights Watch, 2014).⁸
9. These fatalities reflect the systemic neglect and caste-based exploitation documented by Human Rights Watch (2014) and further analyzed by Chawla (2024)⁹

Biopolitics of Migration: Caste, Surveillance, and the Urban State

This subtheme captures the Foucauldian framing of how power operates through migration, spatial control, and caste-based exclusion. It emphasizes the role of the state in regulating marginalized bodies through invisibility and informalization, while also highlighting the intersection of caste and urban governance.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the state's oppression of marginalized individuals—such as Dalit manual scavengers—during migration is not always overt or violent, but rather insidiously embedded in systems of governance, surveillance, and exclusion. Foucault conceptualized the state not as a monolithic entity, but as a diffuse network of power that operates through institutions, norms, and discourses to regulate bodies and identities. When lower caste individuals migrate from rural to urban spaces, they enter a new regime of control where their visibility is paradoxically heightened in terms of stigma, yet diminished in terms of rights and recognition.

Urban migration, for Dalits, often leads to their absorption into informal economies where they are undocumented, unprotected, and unacknowledged by the state. This lack of documentation is not accidental—it is a form of biopolitical governance that renders them invisible in policy frameworks, denying them access to housing, healthcare, education, and legal protections. Their bodies are disciplined through spatial segregation (slums, ghettos), occupational fixity (manual scavenging), and

social surveillance (caste-based policing), all of which are mechanisms of Foucauldian power. The state, through its bureaucratic silence and institutional neglect, produces and perpetuates their marginality.

Moreover, the promise of transformation through migration is unequally distributed. For upper caste individuals, migration is facilitated by state-supported pathways—elite education, international mobility, and professional networks. For Dalits, migration becomes a survival strategy that deepens precarity. In Foucauldian terms, this reflects a differential investment in populations: some are nurtured and empowered, while others are managed and contained. Thus, caste oppression in migration is not merely a social failure—it is a calculated outcome of state power that governs through exclusion, invisibility, and the normalization of inequality.

In urban centers, marginalized groups such as migrant laborers, daily wage workers or particularly manual scavengers often attempt to negotiate their subordinate positions by embracing strategies of social mobility, including “Reharmonization” and “Sanskritization” (Srinivas, 1952). These processes, given by M.N Srinivas involve the adoption of cultural practices, rituals and values associated with the upper caste groups, in an effort to distance themselves from their stigmatized identities and gain greater social acceptance. But the rigid boundaries of the caste system often render these efforts futile. As Bezwada Wilson notes, the dominant castes rarely accept the lower caste as equal and instead, perpetuate their subordination through systematic exclusion ((Wilson, 2017). Dipankar Gupta also claims in his writing that migration and urbanization is often assumed to be a panacea for social justice but it is insufficient to eradicate the deeply ingrained structural and cultural dynamics that perpetuates caste dynamics (Gupta, D 2011).

The writing by Chakraborty on vulnerability of migrant laborers from underprivileged castes, who frequently engage in hazardous labor under restricted social net. The study also underscored the plight of unregistered laborers, who remain invisible in official government records, thereby denying, labor protections, and other welfare schemes. According to the data from the periodic labor force survey, a significant proportion of the migrants from rural to urban areas are women, comprising 54.3% of total migrant population, a figure remarkably close to the 54.8% of men who migrate¹⁰. This stark reality underscores the growing trend of female migration that women, highlighting that women are also compelled to migrate in pursuit of better economic opportunities and livelihood. In pursuit of improved living standards, numerous migrants trapped themselves in exploitative and unstable forms of unpaid and unremunerated labor. According to parliament report, response in upper house 2021, a total of 58,098 manual scavengers, 97.25% belongs to scheduled caste migrated from different states to urban cities in search of employment indulged in manual scavenging¹¹. Official statistics provided by the government, which asserts a nil mortality rate due to manual scavenging, have been contested by numerous organizations like Safai karamchari andolan, advocating for the eradication of this practice. These organizations have uncovered a disparate narrative, revealing a

disturbingly high incidence of fatalities and injuries Among manual scavengers, thereby exposing the egregious discrepancy between official claims and ground reality. In May 2023 with in a single month¹² people died from Uttar Pradesh and Delhi because of manual scavenging (kokan mandal and nooni mandal from Noida, Uttar Pradesh). Same incident recently happens in Rohini, where a men died from asphyxiation while he was cleaning the septic tank. These examples shows that tragically, numerous individuals who migrated in pursuit of employment opportunities have instead encountered ultimately death, which awaits and ultimately engulfs them.

The proliferation of manual scavenging among migrant workers in urban India is a paradigmatic example of the intersectionality of caste, class, and labor. Despite the putative abolition of manual scavenging, the 2018 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) reveals that approximately 2.6 million households in India continue to engage in this practice (SECC, 2018) ¹². This phenomenon is perpetuated by the systemic inequality and lack of access to education and job opportunities, which are hallmarks of India's caste-based social hierarchy (Thorat, 2018). The precarious nature of migrant work in India is exacerbated by the informalization of labor, which renders workers vulnerable to exploitation and deprivation of basic rights. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that there are over 40 million migrant workers in India, many of whom are employed in informal sectors, including manual scavenging (ILO, 2018)¹³. This underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the intersections between caste, class, and labor in India.

Furthermore, the persistence of caste-based inequality in India is a significant obstacle to social mobility and equality ((Deshpande, 2013). The abolition of manual scavenging requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the systemic inequalities and social injustices that perpetuate this practice. The phenomenon of migration from rural to urban areas in India is a complex issue, driven by a multitude of factors. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) 2017-18, a significant proportion of migrant laborers, approximately 55%, lack formal education (NSSO, 2018)¹⁴. This dearth of educational attainment is compounded by the persistence of caste identities, which are often more pronounced in rural areas ((Deshpande, 2013). The rigid social hierarchies and discriminatory practices perpetuated by the caste system can lead to social exclusion, limited access to resources, and lack of opportunities, thereby prompting migration ((Thorat, 2018).

Furthermore, the lack of skills and vocational training among rural youth can also drive migration (Kundu, 2017)). The NSSO 2017-18 data reveals that only 2.5% of migrant laborers possess vocational training (NSSO, 2018)¹⁵. This scarcity of skilled labor can lead to limited job opportunities, lower wages, and poor working conditions, making migration a more attractive option. In addition to these factors, rural-urban disparities in terms of infrastructure, amenities, and services can also contribute to migration. The lack of access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and sanitation in rural areas can push individuals to migrate to urban

centers in search of better opportunities and living standards. Scholars such as (Deshingkar, 2006) have also highlighted the role of poverty, landlessness, and environmental degradation in driving migration from rural to urban areas. The intersectionality of these factors can create a perfect storm that propels individuals to migrate in search of better lives.

Occupation and Assimilation

The occupation of manual scavenging in India is deeply entrenched in the caste system, with the notion of pollution being a pivotal factor in perpetuating this practice (Ambedkar, 1936). Historically, upper castes have exercised privilege and agency in selecting prestigious occupations, such as those in agriculture, industry, education, trade, or business, thereby reinforcing their dominant social status (Deshpande, 2013). The focus on social group refers that people are excluded because of ascribed rather than achieved features which is beyond individual agency (Thorat, 2018). Conversely, individuals from marginalized communities, particularly the Dalits, have been systematically relegated to undignified and stigmatized occupations, including manual scavenging. This caste-based division of labor has been perpetuated through the notion of pollution, which has been used to justify the exclusion of Dalits from prestigious occupations and their confinement to “impure” task (Ambedkar, 1936).

The intersectionality of caste, class, and labor has resulted in the perpetuation of manual scavenging as a caste-based occupation, with Dalits being disproportionately represented in this sector. The lack of access to education, skills, and job opportunities has further entrenched the Dalit community in manual scavenging, perpetuating a cycle of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion (Deshpande, 2013).

In North India, the scavenging class is referred to by various designations, including; Mhetar and Bhangi. These terms carry pejorative connotations, with “Bhangi” being derived from the Sanskrit word “bhanga”, meaning “broken”; or “fragmented”; and also implying an individual with purported drinking habits (Gupta, 2000). The use of such terminology perpetuates the stigmatization and marginalization of this community, reinforcing their subordinate position within the social hierarchy.

The deployment of these terms reflects the complex power dynamics and social norms that govern interactions between different caste groups in North India. The language used to describe marginalized communities often serves as a tool of oppression, perpetuating negative stereotypes and reinforcing social exclusion (Deshpande, 2013). In the Indian subcontinent, the nomenclature employed to identify sanitation workers varies across regions, reflecting the complex and nuanced dynamics of caste-based occupations. In Punjab, sanitation workers are referred to by a plethora of terms, including “Chura”, “Valmiki”, “Lal Begi” “Dom” “Dhanuk”, “Halakhors” and “Bharwala” (Jodhka, 2010). These designations are often imbued with pejorative connotations, perpetuating the stigmatization and marginalization of these communities.

In Eastern India, a distinct set of terms is employed to identify sanitation workers, including “Bansphor”, “Lalbegi”, “Hari”, “Maghiya”, “Dom”, “Ghasi”, “Ura” and “Kurmi”. These terms often reflect the complex interplay between caste, occupation, and regional identity, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which these communities operate.

The use of these terms serves as a stark reminder of the persistent caste-based inequalities that pervade Indian society, perpetuating the social exclusion and marginalization of sanitation workers (Deshpande, 2013). Furthermore, the varied nomenclature employed across regions underscores the need for a contextualized understanding of caste-based occupations, one that takes into account the complex interplay between regional identity, social hierarchy, and economic marginalization. According to Louis Dumont, the concepts of purity and impurity are ideological constructions that serve to maintain social hierarchy and reinforce power dynamics within a society ((Dumont, 1970) In the context of manual scavenging, this perspective is particularly relevant. Manual scavenging, the practice of manually removing human waste from dry toilets and sewers, is a stigmatized occupation that is disproportionately performed by Dalits, a marginalized caste group in India. The association of manual scavenging with impurity and pollution is a key factor in its stigmatization.

Dumont’s perspective suggests that the notion of impurity associated with manual scavenging is not an inherent property of the occupation itself, but rather an ideological construction that serves to maintain the social hierarchy. By labelling manual scavenging as an “impure” occupation, the dominant castes reinforce their own superiority and justify the subordination of Dalits.

In this context, the ideology of purity and impurity serves as a tool of oppression, perpetuating the marginalization and exclusion of Dalits from mainstream society. By challenging these ideological constructions, it is possible to subvert the dominant discourse and promote a more inclusive and equitable society.

Despite the prevailing assumption that modernization, urbanization, and Westernization would erode the linkages between caste and occupation, the persistence of caste-based occupational hierarchies remains a stark reality (Deshpande, 2013). The anticipated decline of traditional caste-based occupations has not materialized, and instead, these occupations continue to be disproportionately performed by marginalized communities, perpetuating their social and economic subordination. Traditional caste-based occupations such as leather work, railway track cleaning, and manual scavenging persist, with devastating consequences for the lower strata of society (Thorat, 2018). These occupations are often characterized by hazardous working conditions, lack of social security, and limited economic mobility, thereby reinforcing the intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality.

The resilience of caste-based occupational hierarchies can be attributed to the complex interplay between social, economic, and cultural factors (Jodhka, 2010). The perpetuation of these hierarchies is facilitated by the persistence of discrimina-

tory social norms, limited access to education and skills training, and the absence of effective policies and interventions aimed at promoting social mobility and occupational diversification (Deshpande, 2013).

Assimilation and Inclusion: A Foucauldian Critique of Caste and Power

Despite their persistent efforts to integrate into mainstream society, marginalized communities—particularly those marked by caste—remain tethered to their ascribed identities. In their pursuit of social mobility and dignity, many adopt dominant cultural codes, upper-caste ideologies, and even the aesthetics of Western modernity (Bhabha, 1994). Yet, this assimilation is not liberatory; it is fraught with contradiction and constraint. Michel Foucault's theory of power offers a critical lens to understand this dynamic. He argues that power does not merely repress—it produces subjects through norms, institutions, and discourses. In this context, assimilation becomes a disciplinary process wherein marginalized individuals are subtly coerced into conforming to dominant norms, not to be included as equals, but to be regulated and contained.

Amartya Sen's concepts of 'unfavorable exclusion' and 'unfavorable inclusion' resonate deeply here. The former refers to the denial of access to opportunities due to caste-based discrimination, while the latter describes forced or exploitative inclusion—where participation is not based on agency but on necessity or coercion. Foucault would interpret such inclusion as a form of governmentality where the state and society manage marginalized populations by integrating them into exploitative roles under the guise of inclusion. The assimilated Dalit subject is thus not emancipated but reconstituted within a framework that continues to surveil, discipline, and marginalize. Their inclusion is conditional, their visibility is instrumental, and their identity is shaped not by self-determination but by the imperatives of caste and capital. In this way, both exclusion and inclusion operate as technologies of power that reproduce inequality while masking it as progress.

The notion of assimilation into mainstream society for children of manual scavengers is a distant dream, perpetually shrouded in the shadows of stigma, exclusion, and marginalization. These young individuals are coerced into perpetuating the cycle of manual scavenging, forced to participate in the hazardous and dehumanizing work alongside their parents. This draconian fate is further exacerbated by the societal ostracism they face, as their peers view them with disdain, perceiving them as unhygienic and malodorous.

The educational aspirations of these children are ruthlessly truncated, as they are compelled to drop out of school due to the crushing weight of social exclusion. The trauma of being shunned by their peers and the indignity of being relegated to the fringes of society ultimately culminates in a catastrophic disconnection from the social fabric. This precipitous descent into the abyss of marginalization ultimately leads to a disheartening dropout from life itself. The pernicious effects of this entrenched exclusion are far-reaching, perpetuating a vicious cycle of poverty, stigma, and social isolation. The children of manual scavengers are condemned to a life of

drudgery, their potential and aspirations suffocated by the crushing weight of societal disdain. It is imperative that we, as a society, acknowledge the inherent dignity and worth of these young individuals and strive to create an inclusive environment that fosters their social, emotional, and economic empowerment. Women engaged in this profession face a triple burden of marginalization, stemming from their gender, caste, and occupation. This intersectional oppression severely hinders their assimilation into mainstream society. Women manual scavengers are disproportionately affected by patriarchal norms and power structures. According to the 2011 Census of India, women constitute approximately 70% of the manual scavenging workforce (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2013)¹⁶. This overrepresentation is a result of limited access to education, economic opportunities, and social mobility.

The nature of manual scavenging work itself perpetuates social exclusion. Women engaged in this profession are often subjected to ridicule, harassment, and social ostracism. A survey conducted by the Human Rights Watch (2014)¹⁷ revealed that 70% of manual scavengers reported facing social exclusion and humiliation.

Biopolitics of Intersectional Marginalization: Gendered Caste Bodies and the Politics of Invisibility

The intersection of gender, caste, and occupation produces a layered and deeply entrenched form of marginalization, particularly for women manual scavengers. From a Foucauldian perspective, this condition is not merely the result of social neglect but a manifestation of how power operates through biopolitics, **disciplinary mechanisms**, and **governmentality**. Foucault argued that power is exercised not only through laws and institutions but through the regulation of bodies, behaviors, and identities especially those deemed deviant or disposable by dominant norms.

Women manual scavengers are subjected to a form of **biopolitical governance** wherein their bodies are managed, exploited, and invisible. Their exclusion from education, healthcare, and social security is not incidental it is a calculated outcome of a system that disciplines through omission. The state and society, through bureaucratic silence and cultural stigma, render these women hyper-visible in their degradation yet invisible in policy and protection. Their gendered caste identity becomes a site of surveillance and control, where their labor is essential to urban sanitation but their personhood is denied. Moreover, their exclusion from decision-making and social participation reflects Foucault's notion of **governmentality**—the subtle ways in which populations are governed by shaping norms, expectations, and possibilities. These women are not just denied rights; they are denied the very capacity to imagine alternative futures. Their inclusion in the labor force is exploitative, their exclusion from civic life is strategic, and their marginalization is reproduced through every day practices that normalize inequality. In this way, Foucauldian power helps us understand how intersectional oppression is sustained not by overt violence, but by the quiet, insidious operations of state and societal control.

Conclusion

The assimilation of individuals associated with manual scavenging into mainstream society remains a formidable challenge, deeply entangled in the structural violence of caste and state neglect. Children, women, and family members of manual scavengers routinely face systemic exclusion from education, employment, and social participation, reinforcing cycles of marginalization. The pervasive stigma attached to this occupation—rooted in caste ideology—renders them “impure” in the social imagination, leading to their exclusion from community events and civic life. Migration to urban areas, often framed as a pathway to opportunity, paradoxically intensifies their vulnerability. In Foucauldian terms, the state operates not merely through laws but through diffuse mechanisms of governance that regulate bodies and identities. Migrant manual scavengers, lacking social capital and institutional support, are absorbed into informal economies where they are undocumented, unprotected, and invisible. This invisibility is not accidental—it is a form of biopolitical management, where the state disciplines through omission and silence.

The continued engagement in manual scavenging is not a matter of choice but of structural compulsion, perpetuated by the absence of viable alternatives and the intergenerational transmission of caste-based labor. Assimilation is obstructed by entrenched stigma, discriminatory norms, and limited access to state-sponsored resources. The intersectionality of caste, occupation, and migration reveals a complex matrix of exclusion that demands robust policy intervention. From a Foucauldian perspective, the state must be held accountable not only for its overt failures but for its subtle complicity in reproducing inequality through bureaucratic inertia and selective visibility. Effective rehabilitation and livelihood programs, alongside stringent enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, are essential to dismantle the caste-capitalist nexus that sustains manual scavenging. Ultimately, addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that confronts the deep-seated structures of caste, reimagines social mobility, and affirms the dignity and rights of all individuals—beyond the categories imposed by birth and labour.



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Resource-Rich and Politically Fragile: Balochistan's Role in China's Belt and Road Strategy

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Abstract

This article, “Balochistan’s Role in China’s Belt and Road Strategy,” looks at Balochistan’s crucial position in China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Despite its abundant natural riches, Balochistan has traditionally suffered from neglect, underdevelopment, and a lack of political representation, resulting in repeated rebellions over the last six decades. Chinese investments in the CPEC have connected this sparsely populated province, which borders Iran and Afghanistan, by connecting China’s western city of Kashgar to Balochistan’s Gwadar Port. The study examines the historical backdrop of violence in the region to better understand how Chinese economic engagement affects Balochistan and may deepen underlying frustrations.

Key words: -CPEC, SEATO, CENTO, BLA, SCS, TRF, POJK, BRI

Introduction

Throughout history, numerous nations have influenced the region of Balochistan, a territory that has consistently retained its geopolitical and geostrategic prominence despite prolonged neglect. Positioned at the crossroads of the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and the Indian Ocean, Balochistan has long served as a strategic transit zone for foreign historians, statesmen, and military powers. Its geographical location renders it vital not only to Pakistan’s national interests but also to broader global calculations—making it a focal point for historical and contemporary superpowers (Goyalpa, 2024). Balochistan, as the best possible marine passage in the Indian Ocean of the Eastern, Central, and Western divisions of Asia, has attained a highly significant position among international powers by creating a competitive environment for securing and dominating its sea paths, which are now critical for

enormous global trade and energy shipment. The unique and spectacular physical landscape of Balochistan continues to gain importance in regional political events. Vast amounts of natural gas deposits and other precious minerals have attracted the attention and interest of worldwide investors and developers, making them an ideal economic target for global powers. Foreign governments' goals are to gain economic dominance and worldwide hegemony by controlling a large percentage of the world's energy resources. As a result, time is of the essence in spreading their control over global energy resources, energy transportation routes, and important land and sea commerce ties, and Balochistan has emerged as a prime target for global geopolitical exploitation. It is also a significant part of the CPEC, a multibillion-dollar Chinese-funded project. China intends to use the CPEC to enhance its influence in Pakistan and Central and South Asia, countering US and Indian dominance. The CPEC strategically advantages Beijing while exploiting Balochistan, exacerbating inequities, and ignoring local development. Following seven decades of invasion and exploitation of Tibet and East Turkestan, China is also abusing Balochistan outside its geopolitical limits. Balochistan is a region between Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan populated mostly by the Baloch people. The most ambitious China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has caused frustration and instability, particularly among Balochis. CPEC, which provides several benefits to China, is not viewed as a means to development. Instead, it is a means of exploiting the inhabitants of this trilateral territory (Goyalpa, 2024).

Balochistan movements

The partition of India left behind a profound legacy of territorial disputes, most notably the enduring conflict in Kashmir, four Indo-Pakistani wars, and the 1971 civil war that culminated in the creation of Bangladesh. Beyond these headline conflicts, peripheral regions in South Asia have also experienced persistent unrest—often overlooked by international scholars and media. Balochistan stands among them. The term *Balochistan* denotes an ethno-linguistic region spanning present-day Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, predominantly inhabited by tribal communities. Before colonial intervention, Balochistan's sociopolitical structure was characterized by fragile tribal alliances. This dynamic was partially reshaped under British rule, particularly following the Treaty of Gandamak in 1879, which transferred Pashtun territories from Afghanistan to British India. These areas were subsequently merged with the Marri-Bugti tribal zones to form British Balochistan, formally annexed in 1884. While the region was administered directly by the British, the Kalat State—under the Khan of Kalat—retained nominal autonomy, constrained by British political oversight (Zeb, 2019).

During colonial rule, both Pashtun and Baloch territories witnessed pro-independence agitation. However, following the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, tribal and municipal leaders abstained from participating in the new federation's formation. The Kalat State initially declared independence but capitulated after nine months under mounting pressure from Pakistan, leading to its incorporation into the nascent state.

Despite state efforts to suppress dissent, Pashtun and Baloch separatist movements endured, shaping regional power dynamics. Post-1947, Baloch nationalist organizations shifted their demands from secession to calls for greater autonomy, enhanced civil and political rights, and equitable resource distribution. The forcible annexation of Balochistan in 1948 marked the beginning of a protracted insurgency that continues to challenge Pakistan's internal cohesion.

During the conflict between the Balochi insurgency and the government, there were periods of quiet followed by uprisings, including in 1958-59, 1963-1969, 1973-1977, and 2005-2006, following the death of key leader Akbar Bukti (Casolari, 2025). Insurgents claim to ensure self-determination and equitable revenue sharing from raw resource exploitation.

Baluchistan's geopolitical and economic significance, and the US-China new game

Historically, during the British Raj, the British military maintained a significant presence in Balochistan, whose partition legacy remains embedded within Pakistan. While scholars often acknowledge Balochistan's strategic importance, they frequently overlook this crucial historical context. In 1947, Britain transferred control of Balochistan to Pakistan, granting it the right to utilize the province for future strategic purposes. Pakistan's inability to address post-independence challenges in Balochistan may be more accurately attributed to UK-US Cold War alignments in Asia than to other external influences.

In the 1950s, Pakistan was linked to the United Kingdom and the United States through a twin system of treaties made by SEATO. In 1954, the United States, United Kingdom, France, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as CENTO, met in Manila. The Middle East Defence Organization (MEDO) was established to complete two unfinished projects initiated by Great Britain during World War II. CENTO was an evolution of the Baghdad Pact, signed in February 1955 by the UK, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq (Casolari, 2025)

Since the Enduring Freedom Operation, the US Air Force has conducted air strikes in Afghanistan and Pakistan from Western Pakistan airfields. Since 2004, the US has been conducting a secret drone operation in collaboration with Pakistan to combat cross-border terrorism.

Baloch insurgents were also targeted in various military operations, with several reports indicating that a significant number of victims were unarmed civilians. Estimates suggest that between 3,363 and 4,467 insurgents—comprising both Afghan and Pakistani nationals—were killed. Multiple air strikes were reportedly launched from Balochistan's air bases during these campaigns. The exact number of Balochi deaths since 1947 remains unknown. Notably, between 1999 and 2015, approximately 20,000 individuals disappeared in Balochistan; however, precise data on these disappearances is unavailable. Pakistan's government and army continue to exploit and oppress the land and its people. Previously, the government used harsh measures, including human rights violations, abductions, and disappearances. The perpetrators of abuses in Pakistan are mostly from the Punjabi ruling elite, descend-

ants of postcolonial rulers chosen by the British to lead independent Pakistan and Anglo-American politicians to form alliances in Asia.

Today's politics and military must secure control of Baluchistan, a strategically important and resource-rich region, at all costs, like their forefathers did. Since 2002, there have been complaints over the Chinese-funded project to expand Gwadar port, which is still ongoing. Chinese involvement in Balochistan began in 1990 when China Metallurgical Group Corporation (MGC) obtained a contract to extract gold and copper from Saindak mine. Balochis have expressed dissatisfaction with government-managed infrastructure projects, which only employ a few Balochis (in Gwadar, Chinese engineers and laborers are hired), with little benefit to the province. Since the 2015 inauguration of the China CPEC as part of the BRI in Pakistan, insurgents have increased attacks against Chinese workers, which intensified in 2018. On November 23, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) launched a shocking attack on the People's Republic Consulate in Karachi. In August 2018, a suicide attempt on a bus transporting Chinese engineers failed. After a pause between 2019 and 2021, perhaps due to the COVID-19 epidemic, attacks resumed in 2022 with female bombers and a foiled plan in 2023. The BLA's shift from fighting the government to targeting Chinese interests in Pakistan stems from their image of China as an accomplice to the Pakistani government. The rebels claim that China is not only a "partner in crime" with the government in plundering Balochistan's natural resources, but also aids the Pakistani government in violating the rights of Balochis. The CPEC claims to benefit Pakistan's economy, while in reality, China seeks access to the Gulf and Arab oil. Pakistan-China relations have been strained recently due to debt pressures, problems repaying Chinese infrastructure projects, and security concerns. In recent years, a new danger to Chinese interests in Balochistan appears to be increased American participation in the region. The US may assist the Balochi rebellion and Balochistan's claims for self-determination or independence due to concerns over Chinese economic and military influence in the region and encroachment into the Persian Gulf. Certainly, the United States does not intend to sit quietly while China expands its regional influence.

A crisis of insecurity and underdevelopment.

The CPEC, a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, was started in 2015 after being proposed in 2013 as the primary development vehicle for Balochistan. The \$62-billion regional corridor, which includes road, rail, and port infrastructure as well as energy projects, was hailed as a game changer in Pakistan. However, a decade later, economic and human growth in Balochistan has remained unchanged as a result of separatist bloodshed and turmoil. For example, on August 26, the BLA terrorists killed 53 civilians in a new wave of attacks throughout ten districts of Baluchistan (Basit, 2024).

The current wave of violence coincides with the 18th death anniversary of famous Baloch tribal leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, as well as Chinese Chief of General Staff General Li Qiaoming's visit to Pakistan. During the near-simultane-

ous, several planned strikes, the BLA blocked Balochistan's key entrance routes, preventing security forces from reinforcing and extending the duration of its violent campaign to fuel its media warfare by giving the idea that Pakistani writ was sliding into the province.

The assaults by Baloch separatists have created a climate of instability and turmoil in Balochistan, undermining CPEC projects and its growth. At the same time, Pakistan's unmet pledges to Chinese enterprises, bureaucratic inefficiencies, financial crises, and uncertain political atmosphere have all hampered progress. In June, Liu Jianchao, Minister of the Central Committee of the International Department of the Communist Party of China, warned Pakistan that "security threats were the main hazards to CPEC cooperation" and that "the primary factor shaking the confidence of Chinese investors was the security situation (Basit, 2024).

Balochistans Reality

In addition to its maritime significance, the CPEC allows China to guarantee its energy supply and grow its influence in South Asia. It provides Beijing with a speedier, cheaper path to Middle Eastern markets and energy sources, avoiding existing routes that are lengthier and more prone to geopolitical problems (Hatim, 2025). As China faces greater security and competition from global powers in areas such as the South China Sea, access to the Arabian Sea offers a crucial alternative for protecting its strategic and economic interests.

However, while the CPEC represents a big geopolitical success for China, the people of Balochistan, whose land and resources are critical to the project, have been left behind. For example, Gwadar, a CPEC main area, has major infrastructural shortcomings. Residents continue to struggle to get basic amenities, and the port's anticipated economic benefits have failed to materialize. Instead, Gwadar has become more militaristic. The Pakistani government has cordoned off significant portions of the city, thus limiting access for its own citizens. As Dr. Baloch pointed out, this militarism is not only about controlling the Baloch people, but also about protecting Chinese interests in the region.

Chinese workers got the promised jobs

The corridor was once expected to be a game changer for Pakistan's economy. Many people anticipated it would provide thousands of employments, update infrastructure, and stimulate economic growth. Several years have passed, yet these pledges remain mostly unmet. Critics claim that Chinese firms and workers receive the vast bulk of CPEC contracts and jobs. They leave next to nothing for the local labour. Furthermore, the project has saddled Pakistan with significant debt since Islamabad must borrow extensively from China to finance it. These Chinese loans are putting enormous strain on Pakistan's already shaky economy. Concerns are increasing about Pakistan's ability to repay them.

A Tool for Exploitation

Many Pakistanis are also apprehensive about the long-term advantages of CPEC. They see it as an opportunity for China to increase its influence and exploit

Pakistan's riches. Much of the economic advantage goes back to China, while Pakistan bears the brunt of the environmental, social, and financial repercussions. As a result, opponents of the CPEC are raising concerns about who would benefit from the project. China will benefit from the project by gaining access to important marine routes, energy security, and growing influence in South Asia. Pakistan's benefits are more uncertain. While there are some short-term benefits, such as infrastructure development and foreign investment, they appear to exceed the long-term drawbacks. These include rising debt and increasing internal instability.

However, the situation in Balochistan is much more dangerous (Akins, 2017). CPEC has resulted in human rights violations and increased militarization of Balochistan. Entire populations have been uprooted, and Beijing is benefiting from the region's resources. As Dr. Baloch stated, CPEC is not a development project. Rather, it is a weapon for exploitation, meant to benefit foreign forces while abandoning the Baloch people. It is legitimate for the international community to hold China accountable for human rights violations.

Exploiting Pakistan's Weaknesses: India's military efforts, notably Sindoor, are intended to highlight Pakistan's security inadequacies. Post-Sindoor, Pakistan's punitive tactics in Balochistan—such as collective punishment of civilians—have unintentionally intensified local animosity, bolstering separatist narratives.

Terror Strikes Balochistan:

On August 26, 2024, Balochistan was hit by one of the bloodiest terrorist strikes in years, shocking the province to its core. Dozens of civilians and security personnel were slain in coordinated attacks that were meticulously planned and brutally executed. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), an outlawed separatist movement, instantly claimed credit for the strikes, indicating a potentially hazardous escalation in its ongoing struggle. The violence was not just a local tragedy, but also a sharp reminder of the larger geopolitical stakes in Balochistan, which is important to Pakistan's economic and strategic goals.

Among the most horrific of these attacks was at Musakhel, where over two dozen passengers were forcibly taken from their vehicles, identified, and killed in cold blood. Over a dozen automobiles were set on fire, leaving a catastrophe in their wake. While this attack received a lot of media attention, other occurrences throughout the province were just as horrible and carried out with frightening cruelty. These attacks coincided with a high-profile visit by General Li Qiaoming, Commander of China's People's Liberation Army Ground Forces, who was in Pakistan to meet with the Army Chief—a timing that reveals much about the message underlying the violence.

Targeting Pakistan's Lifeline: CPEC and Gwadar

The timing and substance of the assaults point to a larger, more sinister motive: undermining Pakistan's strategic cooperation with China and damaging major infrastructure projects such as the CPEC and Gwadar Port. Both projects are criti-

cal not just for Pakistan's national development, but also for Balochistan's future job generation, economic growth, and regional connections. However, these projects have long been targeted by organizations like as the BLA, who perceive them as emblems of foreign exploitation rather than engines for local growth. The BLA's actions might be taken as a message to both Pakistan and China, warning against future collaboration and threatening to disrupt the CPEC. In a post-attack statement, the BLA leader delivered a strong warning to both nations, emphasizing the violence's larger geopolitical ramifications. The group's goals are similar to those of anti-Pakistan and anti-China elements, who are determined to impede any progress in Balochistan (Gul,2025).

Planning to Surround India

China provides Pakistan with funds, weaponry, and infrastructure. It intends to encircle India by constructing highways and bases around it. CPEC goes across Pakistan-occupied Jammu Kashmir, which is an integral part of India. That renders CPEC unlawful from India's perspective. That's why, following the Pahalgam terror attack, Operation Sindoor dealt a setback to China's plans. In only 23 minutes, it destroyed nine terror camps, killing more than 100 terrorists, including the masterminds of the Pahalgam attack. This was India's way of saying to China, "We won't stay quiet if you support our enemies."

Establishing Military Presence Near India

Gwadar is more than simply a port. It may become a Chinese navy facility. China already has outposts in Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Bangladesh, encircling India like a "String of Pearls." However, Operation Sindoor exposed Pakistan's poor air defence. India utilized Rafale planes and BrahMos missiles, which Pakistan couldn't counter. On the other hand, Pakistan's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, Ishaq Dar, would not have arrived in Beijing unexpectedly. After all, China is Pakistan's largest creditor, excluding its investments in the CPEC. According to the World Bank, Pakistan owes China \$22 billion, or 22% of its overall debt. It is surviving because the Chinese government keeps delaying the payments (Kakar,2025). Pakistan will crumble the day it comes to an end. As a result, it is a vassal state of China, bound by Beijing's dictates. Pakistan can purchase military equipment from the West; instead, it relies on Chinese and Turkish items, the majority of which are available at steep prices, making it a testing ground. For China, Pakistan serves as a proxy to divert India's attention away from its northern front. In recent years, China has projected its military equipment, including aircraft, air defence systems, and artillery, as among the greatest in the world, although they are poor replicas of Russian weapons. A copy, no matter how near, can never be as good as the original. This was proven lately.

China was irritated with Pakistan for two reasons, which prompted it to summon Dar. One was the complete failure of its renowned military goods, which it was seeking to market to African and Asian countries. It was already under fire for its low-quality fighter aircraft from Nigeria and Myanmar, which were grounded ow-

ing to widespread mechanical failures. Furthermore, it projected these capabilities as a deterrence to any potential US assault in retribution for its attempt to retake Taiwan (Kakar,2025).

The second aspect was Asim Munir addressing US Secretary of State Marc Rubio to urge a truce with India rather than China, and then having their DGMO approach his Indian counterpart. This demonstrated that Rawalpindi feels Washington is more trustworthy than Beijing, or that it blames defective Chinese technology for the fall of its defences. Similarly, China intended to demonstrate that the Brahmos missiles, which are now being purchased by states in conflict with China in the South China Sea, including the Philippines and Vietnam, were simply interceptable and nothing exceptional. Initially, the China-Pakistan narrative about the downing of Indian aircraft, including the Rafale, was effective; but, with no evidence surfacing and no crash site discovered, the story began to collapse. Pakistan's initial success in the narrative war might be ascribed to its aggressive social media campaign and India's lack of response. Air Marshal AK Bharati, the air force spokeswoman, kindly stated that there had been losses in the combat, but all pilots are safe. This was misunderstood as Indian approval of Pakistan's absurd allegations.

Next came the Indian counter. It dismantled China's renowned air defence systems by providing evidence of the destruction of Pakistan's vital assets, which were protected by Chinese air defense systems, as well as the demolition of Chinese-made radar and missile installations. China's air defence system was unable to kill a single Indian Brahmos missile, adding fuel to the fire. While Bharati did not specify the number of Pakistani planes downed, he hinted at it. Beijing's resentment of Rawalpindi escalated. What was more painful for China was that India used its goods, such as the Akashteer air defence system, anti-drone systems, and Brahmos missiles, with tremendous success. The Akashteer also combined many systems, including the Russian S-400, refurbished L-70, and Zu 23 cannons. China used Pakistan as a proxy to demonstrate to the rest of the world that its defense industry had matured. (Kakar,2025) It is also plausible that China paid Pakistan's army leadership to undertake the Pahalgam strike, knowing that India would be forced to reply and face a bloodied nose, benefiting both Pakistan and China. Furthermore, it would influence the Quad and put the US-India relationship to the test. However, all of its schemes flopped. While demand for Chinese items will decrease, demand for Indian air defence systems and Brahmos missiles is increasing. Rafale shares, which had fallen owing to Pakistan and China's false narratives, have recovered to their peak levels. Chinese defence stocks, on the other hand, fell to new lows. Once again, as China is forced to suck its wounds, it will, as always, blame Pakistan.

Operation Sindoor, India's Moment of power

On April 22, 2025, terrorists from the Resistance Front (TRF) killed visitors in Kashmir. They separated ladies and slaughtered 26 males, most of whom were Hindus. India responded by launching Operation Sindoor on May 7. Rafale planes, SCALP missiles, and Brahmos were utilized to attack terrorist bases in Jammu and

Kashmir (PoK) and Punjab. Over 100 terrorists were killed, including Jaish commanders. India avoided killing civilians and did not target Pakistan's troops, demonstrating accuracy and restraint. Pakistan attempted to respond with drones, but India's S-400 systems shot them down. On May 10, a truce was declared, but India had made its message clear.

China's Apprehensive Reaction

China expressed "concerned" and requested peace. But, behind closed doors, it begged both sides to stop—because the \$62 billion CPEC was jeopardized. India's NSA, Ajit Doval, emphasized to China's Wang Yi that India targeted terrorists rather than Pakistan's army. China didn't complain much since it knew CPEC would pass through a combat zone. According to reports, China utilized satellites to monitor the situation—not for peace, but to preserve its investments (Lingania,2025).

Present status of Baluchistan after Operation Sindoor

Following a terror incident in Pahalgam that killed 26 people, India started Operation Sindoor on May 7, 2025 to target militant infrastructure in Pakistan and the Kashmir region (ICCT,2025). In the days that followed, India resisted Pakistani military operations and retaliated against vital airbases. Hostilities ceased after Pakistan's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) contacted the Indian side. Following Operation Sindoor, there has been a reported increase in violence in Balochistan.

This conflict is most visible in CPEC, China's flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). CPEC passes through not just Pakistan-occupied PoJK, which India strongly opposes, but also the sensitive provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab (where India's Operation Sindoor targeted four terrorist camps) (Pankaj,2025). Baloch insurgents have periodically launched military attacks on Chinese people and facilities in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. With Operation Sindoor demonstrating India's willingness to elevate the price of proxy-based terror, any future conflagration in these zones would directly harm Chinese interests and would be strategically counterproductive.

In this context, China should reconsider the value of its "iron-clad" cooperation (Pankaj,2025). It is no longer enough to see Pakistan as a balancer to India or a steadfast Belt and Road customer. The connection requires conditionality. It must exert measured pressure on Islamabad to rein down its terror networks, recognizing that the option is not between allegiance and denunciation, but between strategic patronage and regional chaos. Unchecked proxies jeopardize not just India's security, but also the infrastructure, influence, and legitimacy China seeks to maintain throughout the region.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while Operation Sindoor was a small military intervention by India, it appears to have worsened pre-existing internal tensions and instability in Balochistan, resulting in a complicated and difficult security and humanitarian situa-

tion in the province. The unfulfilled promises of the CPEC, as well as Operation Sindoor, have exacerbated the unrest in Balochistan. While separatists see CPEC as “economic colonization,” India’s military operations have aggravated Pakistan’s security problem, resulting in harsher crackdowns that further alienate Baloch civilians. The outcome is a self-sustaining cycle: Pakistan’s heavy-handed tactics justify separatist claims, while India’s operations exploit Pakistan’s instability, making Balochistan’s economic prospects increasingly poor.



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Challenging Boundaries : A Sociological Analysis of Inter-Caste Marriages and Emerging Trends in India

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Abstract

Marriage, as a socially and legally sanctioned institution, plays a crucial role in sustaining familial and societal structures in India. Traditionally governed by norms of endogamy and caste-based hierarchy, Indian society has long resisted inter-caste unions, which challenge the deep-rooted ideologies of caste purity and social stratification. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and freedom, caste continues to shape social behaviour and marriage norms. Drawing on the concepts of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who saw inter-caste marriage as a means of dismantling caste systems, this study investigates the transformational potential and lived realities of inter-caste marriages in modern India. By utilizing secondary sources including Dalit literature, government data, and national surveys, the study highlights the tensions between tradition and modernity, law and social practice, and resistance and conformity in the lived experiences of inter-caste couples. After reviewing the literatures, it is found that it is almost impossible to think of a marriage outside the caste due to the rigidity of the caste system. If such marriages happen, these marriages do not get social/family acceptance of existing set of norms and values like traditional marriage and face the negativity of society. The continued stigma towards such marriages labels them as social deviance and therefore disapproved by families and society. Young inter-caste couples endure discrimination, isolation, violence, and honour killings. However, due to higher education, social media, and changing pattern of cinema, inter-caste weddings are happening, but not as frequently as they should in the 21st century.

Keywords: Inter-caste Marriage, Caste System, Caste Hierarchy, Social Internalization, Social Change, etc.

Introduction

Marriage is an Institution admitting men and women into Family Life¹. The institution of family is socially and biologically a major social frame work of production and reproduction of persons by sharing the material substance, in which marriage, as a socially and legally legitimized form of union, plays an important role. This social and legal legitimization becomes more significant when it comes to securing and protecting rigid social institutions and stratification of the society, particularly in India. The conventional social norms, ideas, and ideologies in Indian society, functioning on the level of the house hold², create a framework to govern the social and gender relationships among the people, which also sustains the social system of caste and other ideologies associated with it. That emerged due to endogamy in society and converted the Indian society into a civilization of “Homo Hierarchicus”³, which also led to the denial of social mobility and retards social solidarity.

The structure of Marriage has changed throughout a long period of time, assuming many different forms and functions. Marriage is always significant in all communities, yet there are variations in the patterns of marriage. Hindu tradition views marriage as playing a vital role in socio-religious life towards the family and community, in addition to fulfilling personal desires and achieving family objectives. For centuries, Indian society has been divided based on religion and caste. In accordance with Indian societal norms, unions between individuals belonging to the same caste and community are respected. Marrying persons from different classes and religions is often perceived as a difficult and taboo concept. Despite the presence of constitutional guarantees of equality and legal frameworks such as Special Marriage Act of 1954 and Article 21(right to life and liberty), inter-caste marriage is still not widely accepted. Families, local panchayats, caste associations, and political interest groups frequently serve as guardians of the caste order, imposing conformity through emotional pressure, economic disinheritance, public shame, or, in extreme situations, honor-based violence. This study revolves around the two objectives First is to examine the impact of inter-caste marriages on the existing social structure and its reaction to social internalization. Secondly to analysing how socio-political machinery and violence functioned as the preserver of “caste hierarchy”.

The emancipation of India from the colonial regime did not only mark the advent of a new political setup based on the notions of liberty, rights, political participation, etc. but also mark a process of establishing emancipation of lower caste and women from the bondage of the caste in order to convert Indian democracy as a social democracy, which has been largely based on the Ideas and philosophy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who famously pointed out that inter-caste marriage works as the real remedy of breaking the caste clutches and an antidote to endogamy⁴.

In this context, inter-caste marriage emerges as a significant site of social change as well as resistance. It represents not just a personal choice between individuals but also a socio-political act that challenges the deeply entrenched norms of endogamy. While the Indian Constitution and various legal frameworks promote

equality and non-discrimination, the ground realities often reflect contradictions between law and lived experience. Inter-caste couples frequently face emotional, social, economic, and even physical challenges in navigating their relationships amidst a society that often resists such unions. This research done by using the secondary sources. The secondary sources for the information collected from the various sources include Dalit literatures, government official's sites, newspapers, magazines, etc. This study seeks to explore the formation of new identities that arise from inter-caste marriages and the impact these unions have on the existing social structure. It delves into how social internalisation and community responses reveal the persistent strength of caste ideologies. Furthermore, the research investigates the role of the socio-political machinery, including instances of violence and coercion, that serve to preserve caste hierarchies in the guise of tradition or honor. At the same time, the study examines how modernity manifested through education, legal rights, urbanisation, and media has begun to reshape institutions like family and marriage. It highlights how modern values intersect with traditional expectations, creating spaces of both conflict and transformation. Finally, it addresses the problems faced by inter-caste married couples, including societal rejection, familial alienation, and institutional apathy, in their efforts to sustain a dignified and equal partnership. By engaging with these themes, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how inter-caste marriages serve as both a mirror and a critique of contemporary Indian society challenging caste as a system, while also illuminating the evolving dynamics of identity, resistance, and modern belonging. The individual of such marriage duels between their community and the culture of their spouse. This dueling often led to the counter-reaction from the society in order to re-establish and re-assure its caste and the social-hierarchical boundaries in the form of social as well as political violence.

But in recent years, due to quality education, land property, substantial numbers of Dalit and backward people are also going through inter-caste marriage. This development, particularly through inter-caste marriage, provided them a new space, as a unified community, to ascertain new social spheres and positions. Inter-caste marriage does more than just bring two people together; it changes how people see themselves and questions social norms that have been around for a long time. Partners frequently negotiate dual cultural worlds, resulting in new hybrid identities and household cultures. This cultural negotiation has the potential to destabilise caste system. After independence, India envisioned not just political democracy but also social democracy, in which dignity and equality prevailed in daily life. Ambedkar asserted that without inter-caste marriage, democracy is incomplete since caste discrimination is most forcefully replicated through family structure. Inter-caste marriage is thus more than just a private choice; it is a communal social act that tests the strength of democratic norms. Each such union serves as a silent resistance against inherited hierarchies. Despite their small number, they widely significant symbolic influence.

Conceptualisation

Marriage: Marriage is defined as “a social and legal contract between two individuals that unites their lives legally, economically, and emotionally that gives legitimacy to sexual relations within the marriage.

Inter Caste Marriage: As per the definition of Department of the Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India (2012), an inter-caste marriage is the marriage between scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, Vimukta Jaties, Nomadic tribes and Savarna Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Lingayat, Shikh.

Stigma: Stigma, as defined by Goffman (1963), is an attribute that significantly discredits an individual, transforming them from a whole and typical person into a diminished and devalued one.

Endogamy: It denotes the practice of marrying inside a particular social group, caste, clan, or religion to maintain group borders. Endogamy is the biological and social mechanism that perpetuates caste inequality. Ambedkar characterises endogamy as the “essence of caste,” indicating that the persistence of caste is contingent upon regulated marriages (M.N. Srinivas 1962).

Caste Hierarchy: Louis Dumont (1970), in book *Homo Hierarchicus* characterises caste as a hierarchical structure founded on concepts of purity and defilement, wherein each caste group is ranked rather than merely distinguished. The hierarchy is perpetuated through controlled marital customs, ceremonial regulations, and societal penalties. Inter-caste marriage undermines this hierarchy.

Social Stratification Melvin Tumin defines social stratification as “systematic inequalities among groups in society regarding their access to material and symbolic rewards.” Caste represents a tight stratification system that constrains mobility. Marriage serves as a means to maintain social hierarchy.

Theoretical lenses

Pierre Bourdieu’s Social Reproduction Theory explains how cultural norms, upbringing, and symbolic power contribute to the persistence of inequality. “Reproductive strategy” is the term used to describe the practice of marriage in India, in which families arrange marriage ties in order to maintain caste and class capital. Marriage between people of different castes disrupts this process by destroying symbolic borders and posing a challenge to the inherited logic of maintaining status continuity. Pierre Bourdieu stated in his books “*Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*” (1977) that social hierarchies are maintained from one generation to the next through the transmission of cultural capital, habitus, and symbolic power. The institution of marriage functions as a “reproductive strategy,” particularly in countries with a hierarchical social structure like India. The pursuit of marriage pairings that preserve caste rank, property, honour, and social connections is something many families aim to do. Endogamy constitutes a practice that ensures the preservation of cultural capital within the confines of predetermined social groups.

Inter-caste marriage undermines this logic by changing the allocation of cultural and symbolic capital, threatening the stability of caste privilege. Therefore, when people choose spouses who are not members of their caste, they are challenging the deeply formed habit that serves to legitimise caste distinctions. The opposition to such relationships is not primarily based on feelings; rather, it is a protective reaction to what is perceived to be a weakening of symbolic authority and social stratification. In his books “The Social System” (1951) and “Family, Socialisation and Interaction Process” (1955), Talcott Parsons conceived of the family as a fundamental institution that is accountable for the upkeep of social order. Within the context of India, this duty is carried out by the family through the establishment of regulated marital partnerships, particularly endogamy, which guarantees the continuity of group identity and cultural uniformity. Endogamy, from a Parsonian point of view, is a social structure that is stabilised by matching marriage with the expectations that are based on caste. Marriage between people of different castes causes “structural strain,” which in turn disrupts the established order. Various strategies are utilised by society in response to this disturbance. These techniques include social ostracism, social pressure to comply, reaffirmation of caste rules, and emotional and occasionally violent surveillance based on the concept of “honour.”

Merton’s Social Deviance (Strain) Theory links inter-caste marriages to the conflict between modern cultural values of individual freedom, love, and equal choice and the traditional caste-based methods that govern marriage in India. While society increasingly emphasises personal liberty, caste norms continue to limit acceptable pathways for choosing partners, causing stress for young people. Therefore, many individuals adopt “innovation,” Merton’s most pertinent mode of adaptation, by achieving the culturally sanctioned objective of love through non-traditional and socially disapproved means such as inter-caste marriage. Families and societies that value ritualism and obedience frequently designate such partnerships as deviant, resulting in punishments such as social exclusion, emotional pressure, withdrawal of support, and, in some cases, violence or honour-based retaliation. Thus, inter-caste marriage becomes a type of adaptive deviance, not because it is evil, but because it challenges established caste norms and uneven access to legitimate marital choices, demonstrating how institutional restrictions impact personal decisions.

Persistence of Caste Endogamy in the Era of Legal Reform

In an effort to ascertain the contemporary attitude towards inter-caste marriages K.M. Kapadia (1954) in his book “Marriage and family in India”⁵ describes Hindu marriage as a socially approved union of a man and a woman aiming at dharma, procreation, sexual pleasure, and observance of certain social obligations. Inter-caste marriages remain socially problematic in India, despite the availability of legal procedures to support them. Although the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 does not prohibit inter-caste marriages, and the Special Marriage Act of 1954 establishes a secular framework for marriage between people from different religious or social backgrounds, social acceptance remains low. Empirical evidence

demonstrates this disparity: inter-religious weddings account for just about 11% of all marriages in India, but inter-caste marriages account for about 5.58% (Goli 2013). This demonstrates a significant gap between legal reforms and current cultural norms. Dalit politician Ram Vilas Paswan, who was married to a Brahmin, had once remarked that inter-caste marriage is the biggest weapon to end societal division and promote “social equity”. The couples in Inter-caste marriages undergo hard times when their immediate families disown them⁶. Children born out of such marriages also face the difficulty of recognition in society. Marriages in India are widely seen to represent not just the union of two individuals, but also the alliance of two families. This is a fundamental belief in the country.

Banerjee et al. (2013) found evidence that a household head would prefer to marry his daughter to someone from his caste with no education than to someone with a Master’s Degree from a different caste⁷. The caste system has established its roots in society so strongly that even the advice of the most cherished leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar has fallen on deaf ears. B.R. Ambedkar, in his book “Annihilation of Caste”, gave importance to intermarriages for the betterment of society and for him Marriage is like a binding force for hierarchical and stratified society. The caste system sings in the blood of the people and hence those who enter into inter-caste marriage require a lot of courage to live together forever⁸. Ghurye (1961) has also found in his study that many educated young men and women are prepared to break the bonds of caste if mutual love or attraction demands it. Kannan did two different research studies on inter-caste marriages prior to 1970. He made a study of 200 inter-caste and 50 inter-community marriages in Maharashtra⁹. During the 1900s-1930s, inter-caste marriages were very rare due to an agricultural-based society and lack of educational awareness. Society followed a strict caste system therefore it was very difficult for a man or a woman to go outside the caste for marriage. But after the 1930s, with the increase in women’s education, there were many instances of inter-caste marriages. Highly educated Indians who pretend to be broad-minded and deeply influenced by western society are found to stick to their own caste when it comes to the selection of a marriage partner. He used matrimonial advertisements and he found that these advertisements invariably state the caste and even sub-caste of the advertiser implying that the choice of a marriage partner is restricted to the advertiser’s caste or subcaste. Many young people who have migrated to Western countries and usually visit India to select their marriage partners, often within their own caste or sub-caste, have arranged marriages.

When we look at the institution of marriage in India, endogamy is considered the cornerstone of the caste system which ensured both the purity of caste and social stratification based on the caste system¹⁰. In mega cities, there is no caste restriction in social interactions and caste practices have to be restricted to the realm of the home, still, caste endogamy has been sustained. Caste is the gravitational force of the Hindu social world and it is continuing due to caste endogamy

which prescribed the ban on intermarriages¹¹. In general, the quick shifts in socio-economic and cultural values, along with the influence of western education and economic dissemination, are the primary factors that are accountable for the changes that have occurred in marriage practices. There is a significant correlation between mixed marriages and significant shifts in the demographic makeup and results across time. Due to the fact that marriages in India, which are endowed with religious, social, and economic significance, reflect the aspirations of a society, the socio-cultural assimilation of communities through mixed marriage can lead to a better integration of society.

Role of Education, Urbanisation and Migration

In his work Srinivas (1962) endeavors to explain the thoughts of two social methods, specifically 'Sanskritisation' and 'Westernization'. Sanskritisation is 'the bit of social movability. This is said to occur inside the arrangement of stations; however, westernization happens outside the structure of the position. Higher education among lower castes, legal rights given to Harijans, and greater Sanskritisation should gradually remove the caste system. Another study by Anjali Kashyap shows that an increase in education level as well as modernization, peer-group enthusiasm, parental support, unavailability of match within caste, desire of getting into upper caste group are some reasons for inter-caste alliances¹². In another article, "Dynamics of inter-religious and inter-caste marriages in India" Kumudin Das, K.C. Das, T.K. Roy and P.K. Tripathi studied the role of caste and religion in an Indian scenario. According to this article, individualism and co-education are the main reasons behind the increase in inter-caste marriages among youngsters of higher and lower caste group people but for middle caste respondents, it's the economic independence that matters first before thinking about the inter-caste marriages. Co-education can be a good tool for all positive social changes. It helps in removing caste barriers and promoting inter-caste marriages more frequently in the near future. Patterns of migration also play an important role. According to Singh (2018), internal migrants living in metropolitan areas display higher acceptance of inter-caste marriage due to anonymity, diverse social interactions, and reduced surveillance from extended kin networks. However, these shifts are uneven and often fragile, as social disapproval or family threat can still produce emotional or financial consequences for couples. Studies on inter-caste marriage in India consistently show that although legal provisions allow individuals to marry outside caste boundaries, the practice remains rare due to persistent social norms, kinship structures, and community pressures. Krishnaswamy and Kamath (1995), highlighted that attitudes vary significantly by socialisation environment, family background, and perceived consequences of violating caste expectations. They further said changes in marriage patterns are not driven solely by legal or economic shifts but also by evolving perceptions of identity, autonomy, and social belonging. Furthermore, research examining education and inter-caste union formation shows mixed effects. While higher education does expand social networks, Dommaraju (2016) finds that educational mobility alone does not necessarily translate into marital exogamy, as marriage de-

cisions are still embedded in familial approval systems. In contrast, Fuller and Narasimhan (2014) note that among certain professional and metropolitan groups, particularly women employed in the formal sector, inter-caste marriage is more likely, suggesting that economic independence can moderate kinship control.

Policy Push and Social Pullback

In support of inter-caste alliances, the Govt. of India introduced schemes like Dr. Ambedkar Scheme for Social Integration through Inter-caste Marriages introduced in 2013 under the aegis of Dr. Ambedkar Foundation (DAF), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The objective of the nationwide scheme is to extend financial support to inter-caste married couples to help them integrate into the mainstream of life. Though only 10 percent of couples benefitted from these schemes¹³. Dr. Shantibhai Patel in his article “The curse of Caste” mentioned that inter-caste marriages are happening but its low numbers and legislation are unable to change the public opinion and basic notion of Hindu society. The low number of inter-caste marriages isn’t just a statistic. It is the result of fears passed down like heirlooms: fear of social rejection, of losing community support, of honor diluted by difference. If minor misunderstanding happens between persons married with different castes like an endogamous couple, people have the view that inter-caste married couples don’t have compatibility. It reflects a society where social mobility is rising, but emotional freedom still negotiates with ancestral boundaries.

According to S.K. Thorat, caste has not completely vanished but its continuity and explanation is still a serious issue. Some catch the tail of the elephant and others, the legs. Endogamy is an important source of exclusion. The traditional rigidities and restrictions have come down to some extent but elements of the caste system still exist to different degrees in economic, social, cultural, personal, and religious spheres¹⁴. In a country where love stories are celebrated in cinema but scrutinised in real life, inter-caste marriages remain whispers in the margins of tradition. Despite constitutional promises of equality and decades of social reform, the caste system continues to write the rules of matrimony in invisible ink, subtle yet powerful. Families often build walls around caste identities, calling them culture, honour, or social order. Young hearts may beat freely in college classrooms or crowded city streets, but when it comes to marriage, love is still expected to seek permission not just from parents but from centuries-old customs. More recent quantitative research reinforces the persistence of caste endogamy. Using nationwide survey data, Allendorf (2013) argues that even when individuals report “love marriage” or partnership based on personal choice, the majority of such unions still occur within the same caste category. This suggests that modernization or urbanization alone does not automatically dismantle caste boundaries in mate selection. The Pew Research Centre (2021) reports that a majority of Indians across caste and religious groups consider it “very important” that their children marry within their caste. This normative belief functions as a moral threshold that discourages young people from entering inter-caste marriages, even when they support the idea of

caste equality in the abstract. People may not think that caste abuse is common in India as a whole, but caste is still a very important part of Indian society. A comparably significant majority of Indians in general believe that the majority or all of their close friends correspond to the same caste as them. In India, people usually don't like it when people from different castes or religions get married.

Conclusion:

Even in the 21st century Inter-caste marriages are taboo to most of the people and figure out the social impact of inter-caste marriages which include the problems, challenges and the difficulties faced by the marriages going through among the persons of different castes. Mostly the parents of the boy or girl do not approve of such inter-caste marriages then they cut off social relations with them¹⁵. Taken together, the literature indicates a complex interplay between education, urban exposure, family power structures, religious and caste identity, and economic independence. While legal frameworks such as the Special Marriage Act offer formal avenues for inter-caste marriage, the social legitimacy of these unions continues to be negotiated within broader networks of caste inheritance and kinship authority. One way to eradicate the caste system is inter-caste marriages. Inter-caste marriages should be promoted as it will discourage casteism and will enhance individuality. These marriages should be promoted as it will bring equality among different castes and will create better understanding. The increasing education facilities and affirmative actions have been contributing to the growth of inter-caste married couples but a majority of people in India are against such marriage in spite of change in socio-political and economic conditions in the country. As a result, marriages between people of different castes create a space in which social balance is challenged and renegotiated.

While existing literature provides valuable insights into the nature of caste, the historical significance of endogamy, and the socio-cultural resistance to inter-caste marriages, most studies have remained limited. Although literature highlights the societal opposition and familial rejection faced by inter-caste couples, there is a lack of focused studies on how communities, state institutions, and local governance bodies actively or passively reinforce caste norms through mechanisms of surveillance, violence, or social exclusion. Many studies mention modernity, education, urbanization, and legal reforms as catalysts for inter-caste marriages. However, few examine how these modern influences intersect with deeply rooted caste values within family structures, and how couples negotiate their roles and relationships in such a paradoxical space.

Yet, every inter-caste marriage is a quiet rebellion a footstep across the lines, a seed of change. Though their numbers may be small, their impact echoes louder than tradition expect. They carry within them the possibility of a future where love does not check caste before choosing a companion.



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The Women's role in Panchayati raj Institution of Jammu & Kashmir after demolition article-370

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Abstract

The gender position of women in Jammu and Kashmir has been on the lower side in comparison with the whole of India besides the state of the group's long-standing political trauma has made the problems of women much worse. J&K has been affected by armed conflicts and terrorists' activities. This type of conflict has had a profound impact on people's livelihood, their surroundings, rights, and obligations, health, and education, along with work, etc. Women are the ones who have short and long-term effects, so they are on the list of the most vulnerable groups during the conflict not only for reasons of violence. However, women's cases are more extreme than those of other people. Here, the paper primarily focuses on the role of women in participation and challenges in Jammu and Kashmir after the removal of article 370. Besides, it also analyses the condition of positive peace and development of the marginalized women in the Halqa.

Keywords: PRI, women participation, Reservation, Positive peace, Development, Conflict, Article 370.

Introduction

Women participation around the world at every social, economic and political all structural level find themselves under represented in parliament and their decision making participation are far away. "Study shows women hold barely 16 percent of parliamentary seats around the world. In our country women constituting half of the population have been an integral part of our social structure principally due to their contribution to the socioeconomic spheres of life." The Indian society's structure is based on a patriarchal system that has treated Indian women discriminately because of the basis of gender bias. The dominant patriarchal structure has denied women equal-opportunities in socio-economic and political sphere, such pa-

triarchal bias Women in India cannot be treated as a homogeneous unit. There are differences amongst women in terms of class, caste, status, space (rural-urban divide) etc. Numerous studies have shown that Indian marginalised rural women's socio-economic and political empowerment is far lower than that of their urban counterparts. Rural Indian women have still been treated as "Object" of development rather than the "Subject" of development (Sarkar, Kumar 2004).

"Women in India, like in many other nations, are drastically under-represented in political institutions. Women as an integral part, account for 662.3 million and represent 48.65 percent of the country's total population as per the 2021 census." (Source: Census Report of 2021). The electoral participation of women in India is a topic of much debate and has various opinions. As per Agrawal's, some thinkers argue that the electoral process in India is dominated by masculine and patriarchy which are hindrances for women participation. The absence of a political voice and the dismal representation of women at all levels are the results of gender-based exclusion that led to women being marginalized. (Agarwal 2006).

Panchayati Raj in J&K

The institutionalization of grassroots democracy through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) is a cornerstone of participatory governance in India. However, in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, the process of establishing an effective and autonomous local governance framework has been fraught with structural, political, and conflict-driven impediments. Unlike other states where the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 laid the foundation for a three-tier decentralized system, Jammu and Kashmir retained a separate legal framework under the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, which lacked critical provisions ensuring democratic empowerment (Mathew, 2013). The absence of direct elections at the intermediate and district levels, excessive bureaucratic interference, and an inadequate devolution of financial and administrative powers severely restricted the autonomy of PRIs, rendering them ineffective in fostering grassroots development (Chowdhary, 2001).

A major dimension of the research is the examination of the impact of the protracted conflict on grassroots democracy in Kashmir. Over the decades, insurgency, political instability, and targeted violence against elected Panchayat representatives have undermined the very foundation of local governance. Many elected members resigned en masse due to threats, assassinations, and the prevailing insecurity, leaving the Panchayati Raj framework structurally weak and functionally redundant. The deep-seated public distrust toward these institutions perceived as mere extensions of the state rather than vehicles of empowerment, further contributed to their limited effectiveness.

Women participation and challenges

The absence of women in political decision-making is a major reason why they do not enjoy the rights and duties that are inherently theirs. Women's opinions about politics are not heard at any level, from the grassroots to the national indirect,

be it a budget discussion or Panchayat Samiti. They often go unheard or are ignored. The exclusion of women from political structures and processes over the years is a consequence of numerous structural, functional, and personal factors that change in different social contexts of various countries. Nevertheless, besides these particularities of national and local contexts, a general problem of women's political participation exists that is connected to the broader context of national and international politics, liberal democracy, and development. The factors that hinder or help women to be politically active depend on socio-economic development level, geography, culture, and political system type. Women are not a homogeneous group; there are significant differences between them, such as class, race, ethnicity, cultural background, and education. The non-inclusion of women in decision-making bodies restricts the possibilities for deepening democratic principles in a society, thus impeding economic development and the attainment of gender equality. In a state like Jammu and Kashmir where a large number of women are unemployed and another considerable portion is made up of widows and half widows, the significance of women's economic independence for their total dignity and even survival is demonstrated by the fact that there is a connection between women's survival and their entry into the (Thaker & Rana, 2018).

Gender Issue

The Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act originally didn't have any provisions for gender-based reservations and only provided for a system of nominations. It was only in 2004 that a 33 percent reservation for women was introduced through an amendment. Therefore, in the 2001 Panchayat elections, no women could have benefited from the reserved seats as there were none, and hence, female participation was very low. The reservation of seats was introduced at the Panch level in 2011, which was a significant moment for women's inclusion in local governance. This made it possible for a record number of women to join the Panchayati Raj system, thereby bringing a new dimension to grassroots governance. The 2014 elections saw the reservation being moved to the Sarpanch level, thus giving women's political representation a stronger basis. On the ground, gender-reserved seats were welcomed by both male and female respondents. A good number of women, after winning elections in 2011, reported a psychological upliftment, thus giving a living example to the significant and empowering role of women's political.

Poor Awareness About Panchayati Raj Institutions

Field surveys revealed that the level of knowledge of the Panchayati Raj system among the public was extremely low. As such, only 15% of male respondents could identify such institutions while just 5% of female respondents were aware of them. Most of the people did not know the roles and the importance of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Also, 95% of the respondents were not aware of the fourteen-line departments related to local governance. The major reason for this general unawareness of the institutions was their long period of inactivity, which led to people's loss of interest in the local self-governance.

Lack Of Proper Infrastructure

Adequate infrastructure is a must-have for the efficient functioning of any institution. But the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jammu and Kashmir were facing serious infrastructural deficits. The field studies found that the Panchayat Ghars which were built by the Rural Development Department were in an awful condition. Around 67.7 percent of the respondents said that these buildings in their villages were dilapidated and lacked even the basic facilities like functional toilets and electricity. A good number of panchayat ghars were closed throughout the year and eventually became shelters for stray dogs.. Additionally, there was no designated watchman to oversee these premises. The lack of essential staff has made the situation worse as Village Level Workers (VLWs) have been given charge of several villages and thus the implementation of Panchayati Raj programs at the grass-roots level has been very.

Poor Capacity Building

The state government, after analysing the 2011 Panchayat Raj elections, had put in place several capacity building initiatives but these were reported to have fallen short of sufficiently educating the Panchayat members on the functioning of Panchayati Raj institutions. The survey pointed out that most of the Panchayat members considered these programs as too theoretical since the main mode of instruction was through lectures and there was hardly any practical work. Almost all the members of the Panchayats were from non-political backgrounds and had never before represented their constituency, therefore, the training hardly made any impact at the grassroots level. There were some elected Panchayat members of 2011 who had the chance to go on a study tour to other states to see how the Panchayati Raj system works.

Lack of Devolution

With reference to the government's schemes for the uplift of Panchayati Raj, the citizens, notably the elected representatives from the 2011 Panchayat, have voiced their strong disapproval. These members were not given the power that was supposed to be transferred to them, and they kept on demanding the transfer of authority all through their term. To advocate their demands, these Panchayat members undertook hunger strikes in Jammu. The activists of the All Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Raj Conference vehemently protested for the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in the state as a prerequisite for the smooth running of the Panchayati Raj institutions. The events and the stories of the Panchayat.

Assassination of Panchayat Members

After the 2011 Panchayat elections, there was a series of murders of Panchayat members by unknown people, thus the fear among the rest of the members and a series of resignations from the Valley. They revealed that some members, who felt insecure, decided to abandon their villages for some time after they were elected. Because of the danger that was looming over the area, numerous members of the Panchayat disguised themselves when they were away from their Villages.

Negative Attitude of People Towards

These Institutions observable behaviour pointed out that the perception of Panchayati Raj institutions was mostly negative and that this feeling was very much widespread. A large number of the respondents held the opinion that these institutions were just a means to take the people's eye off the real issues. A few of them also considered these institutions as 'watching' the villages and hence, the distrust of the panchayat members who were called informers was increasing notably. The negative attitudes that resulted from the deeply rooted ongoing conflict were among the factors that challenged. They also unearthed the fact that female members of the Panchayat often went on to disengage in sharing their participation in Panchayati Raj works. If interrogated about their presence, they would instead say that they were at their mother's house or a hospital to avoid being Watched.

Conflict Ruined the Panchayati Raj in the Valley

The conflict that was going on around the state was one of the most significant obstacles that the Panchayati Raj institutions faced. After the last elections, no peaceful atmosphere was ever created, therefore each time the panchayat elections were postponed due to conflicts and violence. For the same reason, the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Act of 1989 was hardly implemented. The security condition which was unstable caused low voter turnout in the 2001 Panchayat elections, the resignations got doubled after the 2011 elections, and the killings of the elected members were the situations that followed. The 2018 Panchayati Raj elections were also delayed due to the protests caused by the killing of Burhan Wani. The unfriendly situation was the main reason for these elections not being held on time. Even in those days, the turnout was still very low in around 60 percent of areas, there were no voters, and in 30 percent of those areas, the candidates got elected without facing any opposition. South Kashmir districts particularly had very low voter turnout. The present study is showing that 31.7 percent of the respondents support the view that Panchayati Raj institutions have failed due to the conflict, while 14.3 percent consider the lack of political will as the only reason. The same number of people cited lack of awareness, while 15.7 percent of respondents pointed their fingers at corruption. It is interesting that 23 percent of respondents consider the Kashmir issue to be the cause of the problems, whereas only 1 percent think that the failure of Panchayati Raj institutions is due to Article 370.

Groupism At the Village Level and Lack of Accountability

The formation of such exclusive groups that seemingly controlled the Panchayati Raj institutions unfairly was becoming a common trend. Generally, these groups were made up of block officials, sarpanches, local contractors, and their cronies; thus, they had a collective monopoly over the development planning process in villages. Block officials were more likely to present the opinions of these groups to the public, and consequently, free Gram Sabha meetings hardly ever took place. It was intentionally kept a secret that advertisements regarding such meetings were there, so the public had very little chance to participate. As per the report, 68 percent of

respondents claimed that they were not given any prior notice about village development meetings. In addition to that, there was a total absence of accountability in the workings of Panchayati Raj institutions. A very high percentage of respondents, 94 %, stated that they had never heard of Gram Sabha meetings.

Mismanagement of Funds

Profound financial mismanagement, as leastways, through the first layer of exposure was reported in the implementation of village development projects. The paper reveals that the money designated for developmental works was often diverted resulting in paltry construction that went to decay within a couple of months. It is informed that the block officials were demanding a commission of around 30 percent on every lakh that was given to the contractors. The implementation of MGNREGA suffered from corruption with no transparent Gram Sabha meetings held for beneficiary selection. In most situations, the empowered groups were taking over the job cards of the innocent villagers and putting the names of these people as if the work had been done by them whereas these individuals were not engaging in labor under the scheme at all. 58 percent of respondents attributed such corruption to the cause of their dissatisfaction with the Panchayati Raj institutions. Moreover, at the Panchayat level, along with the block officials, the local councilors were also found to be involved in the business of extracting bribes from the villagers. They were taking about ₹1,500 to ₹2,000 as bribes in exchange for giving toilet addresses under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). There was the same problem in the distribution of houses under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) scheme, thus accelerating the process of public trust degradation in the Panchayati Raj institution.

Abolition of article 370 and women condition

Abrogation of Article 370

One significant move in this direction was made in August 2019 by the government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This move was the abrogation of Article 370, which effectively annulled the special status of Jammu and Kashmir that was granted under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Besides this gesture, the state was divided into two new Union Territories: Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh (Shameen, 2019), thus altering not only the legal but also the constitutional landscape of the region and making a radical change. According to the government, the removal of the special status was a prerequisite to make the Jammu and Kashmir region develop, become secure, and get fully integrated. The local administration was going to solve those problems of the area after removing the provisions of special status, they say, by restructuring the governance organs and opening the region to the rest of India thus giving it all the laws and benefits that other states and Union Territories get.

Reactions and Implications

The reaction to the abrogation varied widely from place to place, and its consequences similarly varied in scope and character. The homeland reaction was

ambivalent, depicting the locals' plight that could be read as a mix of complex emotions and even polarity regarding Kashmir. Enough people were convinced that the measure was a nationalistic and unifying step facilitating progression and economic growth while detractors lamented what they perceived as a clampdown on human rights and a constitutional crisis. That helps to build positive and development peace for all human kind specially marginalised women. They can access more opportunities for their development.

Future Trajectory

The information relating to the abrogation of Article 370 is a turning point that influences profoundly and at length the political, legal, socio-economic, and security sides of the Jammu and Kashmir area. With the revocation of the special status having happened, the relationship between the central government and the region has been redrawn and the centralization of power, governance, and decision-making have been given more room, if not made inevitable. Not only that, but also Jammu and Kashmir's future will depend on the wider world political scenario and on the interplay between global politics, regional security, and international diplomacy. It is often said that the Kashmir conflict can only be solved through a complex and long dialogue process, negotiation, and confidence-building measures that address the aspirations and grievances of all parties involved. Meanwhile, Article 370's removal has changed the legal and institutional environment substantially by allowing the region to adopt the complete set of national laws on gender equality, reservations, and local self-government and hence has created new possibilities of changing women's status from mere "objects" of development to active political subjects.

Conclusion

The Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jammu and Kashmir were deeply influenced by the conflicts, lack of proper devolution, and the domination of patriarchy for which the women especially the marginalised women were the most affected as they were pushed to the margins and deprived of the right to participate flagrantly in local governance among other things. These problems like poor awareness of PRIs, broken down infrastructure, lack of skills, the strong influence of the elite, corruption, and the targeted violence of the elected members have destroyed grassroots democracy and created public distrust, therefore, many women have withdrawn or chosen to remain invisible within these structures. Unfortunately, even a single legal change cannot reverse the structural and cultural violence that has been going on for generations. Entry into PRIs for other marginalized women is still limited due to the combined factors of caste, class, gender, and conflict-related insecurity, as well as institutional weaknesses. A Panchayati Raj system in Jammu and Kashmir that is truly participatory and liberating of the people therefore goes beyond mere constitutional conformity: it necessitates the continuous transfer of powers and finances to the lower levels, ongoing and practical capacity-building of women representatives, local planning which is conducted in an open and accountable manner, and the

mere constitutional conformity: it necessitates the continuous transfer of powers and finances to the lower levels, ongoing and practical capacity-building of women representatives, local planning which is conducted in an open and accountable manner, and the conscious breaking down of groupism and the corrupt practices typical of the village level. Gradually fulfilling these conditions, PRIs may become local spaces where marginalized women including SC/ST women can jointly create local development, change power relations, and contribute to a deeper form of peace that is based on justice, dignity, and inclusive governance as opposed to being extensions of the state which are distrusted.



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Bhakti Voices : Navigating and Hierarchy in Braj Region in Bhakti Texts

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Abstract

It has always been a meticulous task to define any society in the world because every society has its problems and solutions. Hence, it is also applied to medieval Indian society. Medieval Indian society was also complex to define. To a certain extent, medieval Indian society may be considered an egalitarian society because 'bhaktas' were preaching the concept of an egalitarian society. However, there are many aspects of Indian medieval society that make Indian society unique in nature, such as the caste system, hierarchal pattern, and concept of purity and pollution. Thus, the idea of hierarchy in medieval Indian societies prevailed in different forms. Although the idea of hierarchy was based on various factors in society, there were various parameters on which individuals and society performed the hierarchy. For instance, society categorises people based on birth, nature of the profession, economic condition, and social conduct. Communities establish boundaries to maintain hierarchy and prevent any actions that go against their social norms. Thus, a complex hierarchy existed in the Braj region during the Bhakti period. Therefore, in this paper, based on various religious texts such as Sursagar, Rasikpriya, and works of other saints I would discuss the hierarchy pattern in the Braj region during the Bhakti period.

Keywords - Bhakti movement, Bhakti text, Braj region, hierarchy pattern.

Introduction

Medieval Bhakti literature provides very fascinating window into the interplay between social structure and devotion in North India. Although, Bhakti movement is often identified for emphasis on devotion as the way of salvation that crossed the caste and class boundaries. But Bhakti literature also reveals a more nuanced relationship with existing social hierarchies. Figures like Kabir, Ravidas, and Mira

spoke about the spiritual equality, often challenging the rigid caste and hierarchy based divisions that defined Indian society.

Like Kabir said, I was Brahmin in a previous life because of my bad deeds, and without worshipping the god, I was born into a low caste family (the weaver family), but he said that for being a devotee of God, caste does not matter; even a low caste can be a true devotee of the god.

Ravidas also says that,

*“All people know, I am from Chamar caste, my
Caste is bad and born in low caste (kula), therefore
With complete devotion, I have surrendered myself to you.”*

(Singh, 1986, p. 45).

So we have seen that both the poets said that they were born into low caste families, but they had no problem with it, or they could worship God, to remain in their caste. Therefore, they clearly said that they had no shame in saying that they belonged to a low caste. And they also criticised Brahmins for their privileged position in society; they also said that

*“I (Ravidas) have been taken education from god.
Brahmins and saints did not allow me to take formal education.
Even they do not allow me to sit along with them” (Ibid, p. 69)
“Ravidas says that do not worship worthless Brahmins.
A person is not untouchable by birth.
A person should be respected according to his wisdom.
Not based on his caste (Ibid, p. 55).*

Bhakti literature also reflects the prevailing tension between these egalitarian ideals and the harsh realities of society. While saints had rejected the caste distinctions in the devotional realm, they were however, bound by the social realities and material world of their time. Therefore, some of the saints such as Tulsidas, Surdas, Padmakar, provides the glimpses of the prevailing conditions of the society and these saints were the part of the society therefore in their writings, they were in the favour of upholding the existing functioning of the society. Hence, their writings often reflect the co-existence of devotional ideals with existing socio-economic hierarchies.

In the context of medieval North Indian society particularly in Braj region the idea of hierarchy was multifaced and complex. It was deeply rooted in profession caste and social behaviour. Hierarchy was largely seen as an inherent part of the social order, where individuals and groups were stratified based on birth, profession, and access to resources. Thus mediaeval Indian societies held the idea of hierarchy, which manifested itself in different forms (Haider, 2016, p.1). This hierarchical structure was often reinforced by religious doctrines, social customs, and economic status, making it both rigid and pervasive in everyday life. Brahmins were at the top then Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, the Shudras placed the bottom in the society. Ruling

class and intellectuals played crucial role in maintaining this hierarchy, often legitimising it through various religious texts and social norms. Moreover, the caste system also played pivotal role in maintaining hierarchy, allowed for the clear distinction between various social groups. As Bailey says caste functioned as an elaborate form of social stratification, where differential access to political and economic resources formed the basis of distinction between high and low castes. (Bailey, 1999, p. 12). Over time, professions became closely associated with caste identities, leading to the solidification of occupational groups into distinct castes, as (Sharma, 1985, p. 197-227).

Religion played a significant role in inculcating the notion of hierarchy in medieval Indian society. The hierarchical relationships between individuals and groups were often justified through religious interpretations, where notions of purity and pollution reinforced social divisions. This, in turn, influenced the material world, as higher caste groups gained greater access to wealth and resources, further consolidating their status. The idea of value in society was not always tied to wealth or power alone; however, access to these resources often shaped the social order. As individuals identified with particular professional or caste groups, they began to distinguish themselves from others, leading to a further entrenchment of the hierarchical system. In this way, both ideas and material forces played crucial roles in shaping the social and economic hierarchies of medieval India. Overall, the hierarchy in medieval Indian society was maintained through a combination of religious, social, and economic factors, each reinforcing the other in complex ways. The interplay of caste, profession, and resource access defined an individual's status within this intricate social structure, making hierarchy a central element of the medieval Indian experience.

Moreover, the concept of purity and pollution also played a very crucial role in defining the status and hierarchy in society because the identity of an individual is defined by his or her immediate family and lineage. (Sharma, 2011, p. 38). The laws of society and norms compelled individuals to follow certain rules to sustain their high lineage. Such restrictions on eating with other castes and making a relationship with lower caste people were not appreciated. If they do not follow customary rules, they will be facing rejection from society or will get punishment from society. As Padmakar said, one has to face difficulties if he does not perform according to the social norms.

“Those who renounce their Kula invite enormous dejection.” (Padmakar, 1959, v. 208)

The idea of hierarchy in Braj literature:

There is a concept of *karma*, which is a very dominating factor in the society to decide someone's status in the society. It was believed that whatever deeds you did in your previous life, you will get birth according to your previous life deeds. If you are born into a low caste, it was believed that you might have done bad deeds in your previous life. For example, many poets were born into a low caste, and they

blame themselves for their bad deeds in their previous lives. Therefore, social hierarchy was an outcome of adjustments and shifting political and Social hierarchy was an institution and ideology that was the product of the perceptions, beliefs, and practices of the individuals (Haider, 2016, p. 3). The ruling class of society was the main head of these institutions; the Brahmins made rules and the king implemented those rules in the society, and both were the main beneficiaries in the society. As Savitri Chandra Shobha rightly said, the “caste system and social hierarchy, which not only justified and sanctified the division of society between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the unprivileged, but also gave the rulers protection in the name of righteousness (*dharma*), kingly duty (*niti*), and social stability (*santulan*),” (Shobha, 1996, p.16).

If we see the writings of these saints, we will find that most of the saints were talking about that each was suggesting that society should maintain the status of every person and society should protect and preserve it through various means. Similarly, Abul Fazl also divides society into fourfold sections like warriors, artisans, merchants, and labourers. He further suggested that it is, therefore, necessary for the king to put each of these in its proper place and by uniting personal ability with due respect for others (Abul Fazl, 1873. p. 4).

As Keshavdas in his *Veer Charita* has suggested about the role and specific task performed by every group of the people in the society. It seems that the poet divided the society based on their hierarchical order and urged them to perform their duties accordingly, and he has given his opinion about the colour and their features and what they look like.

*“The four distinct ones are to be found on earth.
In their proper forms as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra
The Brahmins are fair, the Kshatriya red-bodied,
While many great Vaishyas are yellow-cancelled.
The dark-skinned are called Shudras.
While the mixed varnas have a mixed complexion”
(Keshavdas, 1969, vol.3, p. 555).*

In these verses of *Veer Charita*, it seems like the poets had an idea about the hierarchical order of society. It also shows the prejudices of the poet and made him believe that he belongs to the Brahmin family and therefore the Brahmins have the higher status in the society and they should be respected. He is not the only one who thought in such a way but other contemporary poets also shared same thoughts on the society. One of such poets is Surdas who lived in the period of rapid change in the structure of the society and his writings reflects these changes that were taking place in the Braj region. Although, It was not the purpose of the Surdas to portray contemporary social reality in his writings, but one can derive useful information about contemporary society. He directly did not talk about the caste system and hierarchy in the society, but he assumes the caste system should be the basis of the society.

According to Surdas, Brahmins were to be honoured, fed, and given gifts of various kinds, including cows and grants of villages. He also said that the upper caste was not supposed to take meals and intermarry with the lower caste. He gives an example, like a crow living with a Hansa (swan), garlic associating with camphor, or glass with gold (Surdas, 1976, vol.2, v. 3770). For Surdas, the “Brahmins were to devote themselves to learning; the rulers (Kshatriyas) were responsible for the protection of the country and the people; the Vaishyas for trade; and the Shudras for labour and other obs.” (Shobha, 1996, p. 84).

Surdas wanted to divide society based on the Varna system, but at the same time he also talks about that Krishna devotees and saints have no caste; even from the *Shudras* can be devotees of Lord Krishna and treated equally. For instance, he gave an example, where Krishna stayed with the dasiputra’s (the son of low caste women) Vidura. He shared his meals with him, and when Duryodhana taunted Krishna for having meals with Vidura, he said that even the food that was prepared by the Shudra, I could eat if the Shudra is a true devotee. So we can see that here the Surdas present the fact that, if even the true devotee can belong to the low caste, and since he is a true devotee of Lord Krishna, therefore he should be treated equally. He said that

“The caste, gotra, or family (of a Bhakta) does not matter.

Nor does it matter whether he is a king or a beggar.”

“A Bhakta does not bother about the caste or family while Heeding the teachings of the Vedas and Puranas.” (Surdas, 1976, v. 427).

Further, he has portray a society where the aspect of hierarchy is present. He discussed about the pastoral life of the villages in the Braj areas. He has shed light on the lives of the Ahir people and their livelihood. He says that the Ahir were having a lot of cows and agricultural land for their livings. Their main profession revolved around taking care of the cattle and agriculture. One who has had more cows was considered wealthy in the Braj region. Therefore, Surdas criticized Krishna for his arrogance due to his father’s wealth (Ibid, v. 2109).

Another poet Hansraj also discussed the Krishna and Radha relationship and their status in society. In the first encounter of Radha with Krishna, Radha ask Krishna About his identity:

“To which Vansh does your mother belong, whose son are you?

Are you the son of the king or some Gurjar or Ahir?”

(Hansraj, 1972, section.3, v. 20).

So in this case, Radha is trying to get a sense of status because Gurjar or Ahir is considered inferior in the society. But in the next couplet, Krishna replied to Radha and her friends that

“The most distinguished and most superior Kula

Is the Yadava Vansh, to which I belong?” (Ibid, v. 21)

In the next Pada Krishna asked Radha to reveal her identity, then she said that,

*“She is the daughter of Vrishbhanu Rai and lives in Barsana.
Asking such questions is pointless for the whole world.
Knows that her kula is spotless.” (Ibid, section.2, v. 24).*

So in the conversation of the Radha and Krishna, we can clearly observe that both belonged to a pastoral community; their status is different in society; as the Surdas said, the Ahirs were assigned a status lower than that of the Vrishbhanu clan, also a pastoral community but more affluent. The natives of the barsana were reputed people, living in palaces and grand houses. They were enjoying a large number of cows and wealthy enough to maintain a large body of servants. They were also having elephants, and chariots were so abundant that the roads were overcrowded. Above all, each family in the town kept a large number of cows. Krishna also praised the grandeur of the town (Sharma, 2011, p. 95).

*“The beauty of Vrishbhanu’s town is even greater.
Then the abode of the god.” (Hansraj, 1972, section 8, v. 30).*

Kesavdas also related Krishna to Ahir (pastoral community); when he meets Radha, then she addresses him as a cowherd asks him to take her cows along to graze, so Krishna replies that

*“There is no shame in cattle grazing.
It is a source of livelihood.” (Ibid, section.3, v.11).*

Next time, when Radha and her friends met Krishna, then Lalita (Radha’s close friend) ridicules Krishna for his desire to establish a relationship with Radha. She said that

*“That young girl is the daughter of an eminent
Father and comes from a prestigious family.
You are but the son of the chieftain Nand.
She is the darling of Vrishbhanu.” (Ibid, section.3, v. 65).*
*“Shri Vrishbhanu is the shining light of the kula.
And the ruler of the entire Braj region.
We live under his protection, and he ensures
That all our efforts bear fruit.” (Ibid, section.5, v. 14).*

Another poet, the Dev, also considered the clan of Nanda inferior. Radha extolled the kula of Vrishbhanu to an extent that overshadowed that of Nanda or Yashoda.

*“What is the lineage of your elderly father, Nand?
And who knows the lineage of your mother, Yashoda?
You talked tall in the forest, but inside you are
Jealous of my father, Vrishbhanu.
If I were not constrained by the bond of love,
The elders could have started a quarrel on this matter.
I do not want to abuse you, so I hold my tongue.
You are, but the village cowherd, though you tell me
That you are Hari, the incarnation of Vishnu.” (Dev, 1974, v. 312).*

When Radha and Krishna started meeting, and later on they decided to get married. Due to societal restrictions, they had to marry in secret, as depicted in the following lines.

*“Caste differences and high or low lineage are behavioural codes,
Defined by tradition and the Vedas.
This form of marriage can, however, be appreciated
By those who are discerning and intelligent” (Hansraj, Section.5, v. 48)*

So here both clans belong to the same pastoral community, but their economic status differs in their position in society. Vrishbhanu was the eminent politically powerful landlord of the Braj, and the Nanda accepted the vassalage of the Vrishbhanu. We can assume that social hierarchy did not depend only on genealogical matters, but also the political and economic condition played a very significant role in defining the status in the society. They belong to the same lineage, but the economic and political differences had assigned them different duties in society. As Sandhya Sharma emphasised, lineage alone could not decide status in the social hierarchy. The assets, capital, and political authority wielded by one clan were also factors that evaluated status (Sharma, 2011, p. 96).

Another example of the text ‘*Saneh Sagar*’ where the Ahirs were assigned a lower status than that of the Vrishbhanu clan, also a pastoral community but more affluent. According to poet Dev, the clan of Nanda was inferior; later evolution was taking place, not in terms of genealogies alone, but the political and economic conditions were additional factors, holding more significance in the social hierarchy. Both the communities were cattle keepers, and both clans had a high lineage, but this greatness of kula was not expressed in terms of the Brahminical order. Any kula could be great so long as its members maintained their ideal. Lineage alone could not decide status in the social hierarchy. The assets, capital, and political authority wielded by one clan were also factors that evaluated status.

In the same fashion, The text ‘*Chandayan*’, in which the reflection of society is clearly visible. In the story, Lorik belongs to the Ahir caste, and Chanda belongs to Mahar of Gover, and Lorik lived in that city. But the problem came when the neighbouring raja, Rai Chanda, demanded for Chanda, but her father denied. Therefore, Rai Chand decided to attack Gover, and then Lorik came in the story to save the Gover’s kingdom. Chanda’s father (Gover) walked twenty paces to meet Lorik and promised him that if he defeats the Rai Chand, he will have half of his kingdom. Eventually, when the Lorik got victorious in war, he was seated on an elephant, and a red canopy was spread over his head while the Rawats walked in front of him. This had shown a good deal of flexibility in a matter concerning caste and status (Shobha, 1983, p. 24).

Later on, Lorik fell in love with Chanda (the governor’s daughter), and Chanda eloped to Orissa with Lorik without the permission of her father. The marriage of a woman of high caste with a man of lower caste again went counter to the prevalent *Shastrik* injunctions. But it was not true for the rich and ruling class, because we

have seen in the '*Chandayan*' that when Lorik came back to his city, no one talked about their marriage; everything was ok. Because he belonged to a rich family and got the status of Kshatriya in society. It seems very clear that all the rules and regulations were implemented for the marginalised section of society.

Another example of the hierarchy can be seen in the Vallabhaites sect book named *Sri Nathji ki Prakatya Varta*, in which it was suggested that Sri Nathji will only take milk from the Krishna lineage. Therefore, in this process, there was a man in Anyor named Saddu Pande; he was having more than a thousand cows, and one cow belonged to the Krishna lineage. Saddu Pande belonged to the Brahman caste; therefore, his cow's 'from Krishna's lineage' milk can be used to feed Sri Nathji. Therefore, it seems an obsession with Vallabhaites for the blood inheritance and to maintain the concept of purity and sustain the legacy of lineage. So to observe the concept of hierarchy in society and maintain such ideas through various means and apparatus was visible.

There were two *Brajvasi* named Manik Das and Saddu Pande, who had had more than a thousand cows. One of these cows was from the lineage of Krishna's father, Nandrai. The cow's name was Dhumar; she used to go to feed the Lord Sri Nathji every day. One day, Manik and Saddu Pande suspected the cow and followed. And they saw that she was putting her milk into the mouth of Sri Nathji (Hariray, 1996, p. 16).

Another place in the text says that after the departure, Maha Prabhbu called Siddu Pande and told him that we have built many temples for Sri Nathji. Now we need the priests (*sevak*) for the service of Sri Nathji, and of course, you also are a Brahmin by caste and know Vedas and are experts in sastras. But Saddu Pande explained to him that in our caste there is no such tradition. You should bring the Bengali Brahmin for the service of Sri Nathji (Ibid, p. 28). In *Caurasi, Vaishnav ki Varta* too mentions the appointment of a Bengali Brahmin to serve the Sri Nathji temple.

The preferences were given to Brahmins to serve the deity of Sri Nathji. In the text, Vallabhacarya asked his disciple that we had enough temples of Sri Nathji, so we need the *sevak* for these temples. And a Brahmin (Saddu Pande) was called for the service of the Sri Nathji. Vallabhacarya told him that, being a Brahmin, you know the Vedas and the great experts in the Sastras; therefore, you take charge of the service of Sri Nathji. But Saddu Pande refused such service because he told Vallabhacarya that in his caste there is no such tradition of doing *Seva* of deities. Appointing Bengali Brahmins as the temple priests was deemed more appropriate. Therefore, the Bengali Brahmins were called for the service of the Sri Nathji.

Thus, we can see the sign of the hierarchy in these hagiographical books because the preferences were given to Brahmins because in one verse it was said that for a certain period Ramdas served as a priest of the Sri Nathji temple. He was from Kshatriya, and he served the deity until the construction of the Sri Nathji temple was not done. Once the construction of the temple was done, the Vallabhaites

removed him from the post of a priest and appointed a Brahmin instead of him. Before coming of Vallabhacarya in Braj, he (Ramdas) was discharging his duty, but once Vallabhacarya came in Braj, he decided to appoint a Brahmin in service of Sri Nathji (Ibid, p. 26). Eventually, the clash between the Vallabhaites and Gaudiya had emerged over the seva of Sri Nathji. As the text suggests, Sri Nathji was not happy with the seva of the Bengali Brahmin because their seva was so primitive and ordinary for Sri Nathji (Ibid, p. 31) Therefore, Vallabhaites said Bengali Brahmin to hand over the service of Sri Nathji. But the Bengali Brahmins were not ready to transfer the right of service of Sri Nathji, as the clash became unavoidable, so Krishnadas (the manager of the temple, and he was from Gujarat and belongs to the Kunbi caste) set fire to their homes.

Many times, this book (*Srinath ji ki prakatya Varta*) is full of the stories of Vallabha sect bhaktas, particularly these devotees who were from a higher caste and those who were very wealthy and who had influence over the region. And hardly any lower caste or poor person became the devotee of the sect in the initial phase.

Conclusion:-

Here, from the above discussion, we can see that the notion of hierarchy prevailed in the Braj Region, and the contemporary poets and writers have discussed it, but on a very small scale because the Bhakti poets have written about the devotion to god. But if we look critically at their literature, their writings tell the situation of the society that prevailed in those days. Hierarchy has always been a part of Indian society, even in the medieval period. It was based on various factors, and its implementation was based on the role of the people in the society. A hierarchy is not fixed or permanent; one can improve his or her situation by adopting and maintaining the higher values in the society. Because of the occupational proliferation, most of the norms and criteria of preserving the hierarchy became difficult, and those who were in favour of upholding the Verna system and wanted to maintain the hierarchy in society put various restrictions on society to sustain the concept of purity and pollution. However, with the masses constantly moving from one place to another, preserving hierarchy and enforcing social norms became increasingly challenging but society continues to exert its utmost to preserve the prevailing order and reiterated a desired code of conduct for different groups. It might be true that court poets and kings proposed this 'idea of sustaining the social hierarchy' as the apparatus to legitimise their authority over the people. But this depended on the people to what extent they followed these norms. Because eventually, caste proliferation emerged as the new form of occupation activities spread out in the region.



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Empowering the Marginalized ; Mahtma Jyotiba Fule's Vision for Education and Social Justice

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Abstract

Mahatma Jyotiba Fule, a visionary social reformer of 19th-century India, played a transformative role in challenging entrenched systems of caste-based oppression and gender inequality. This research paper explores Fule's pioneering efforts in using education as a means of empowering marginalized communities, particularly Dalits and women, who were systematically excluded from social, economic, and educational opportunities. Through an examination of his advocacy for universal education, establishment of schools, and critique of religious orthodoxy, this paper highlights Fule's dual emphasis on education and social justice as essential tools for dismantling inequality. Fule's work is analyzed within the historical context of colonial India, where social hierarchies were deeply entrenched. His initiatives, such as the founding of the Satyashodhak Samaj and the promotion of education for marginalized groups, are discussed as revolutionary responses to societal inequities. The paper also evaluates the long-term impact of Fule's contributions, both in shaping subsequent social reform movements and in informing contemporary debates on inclusive education and equity. By revisiting Fule's vision, this study underscores the enduring relevance of his approach in addressing modern challenges of social exclusion and educational inequity, reaffirming the transformative power of education in achieving social justice.

Keywords: Jyotiba Fule, Social Justice, Satyashodhak Samaj, Social Reformer.

1. Introduction

The 19th century in India was marked by pervasive social inequality entrenched within the rigid structures of caste, gender, and economic disparity. The caste system not only dictated social mobility but also marginalized vast sections of society,

particularly Dalits and women, denying them basic human rights, education, and economic opportunities (Sharma, 2019). Women, irrespective of caste, were subject to patriarchy, with restrictions on their freedom and access to education. The Brahminical dominance perpetuated exclusionary practices that reinforced inequality, creating an urgent need for reform (Omvedt, 2017). This period also witnessed the emergence of social reformers who challenged these discriminatory practices. Among them, Mahatma Jyotiba Fule emerged as a pioneering advocate for marginalized communities, emphasizing the transformative power of education as a tool to dismantle inequality and empower the oppressed (Deshpande, 2020).

Education has historically served as a catalyst for social change, enabling individuals to challenge oppressive norms and achieve upward mobility. In colonial India, however, access to education was monopolized by the upper castes, systematically excluding marginalized groups (Nair, 2015). Social reformers like Fule recognized that education was not merely a means of personal advancement but a fundamental right and a pathway to collective liberation. Mahatma Jyotiba Fule's efforts to establish schools for Dalits and girls were revolutionary in a time when societal norms resisted such endeavors. He believed that an educated individual could question unjust practices and contribute to building an equitable society (Ghurye, 2021). Fule's work laid the foundation for using education as an instrument for dismantling oppressive structures and promoting social justice, making his contributions a critical area of study for understanding the intersection of education and equity.

This paper aims to explore Mahatma Jyotiba Fule's vision for education and social justice and its implications for the empowerment of marginalized communities. It examines the historical context in which Fule operated his innovative approaches to education, and his broader advocacy for social reform. By analyzing Fule's contributions, this study seeks to highlight the enduring relevance of his vision in contemporary discussions on education, equity, and inclusion. The relevance of this paper lies in its potential to bridge historical insights with current challenges in addressing inequality through education. Fule's pioneering efforts resonate strongly in a world where access to quality education remains a pressing concern for marginalized communities (Mukherjee & Singh, 2018). By revisiting his work, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on leveraging education as a tool for social transformation and justice.

2. Mahatma Jyotiba Fule: A Historical Context

a) Early Life and Influences

Mahatma Jyotiba Fule was born on April 11, 1827, in the town of Satara, Maharashtra, into a lower-caste family. His early life exposed him to the harsh realities of caste-based discrimination, which significantly shaped his worldview. Despite the societal barriers against his caste, Fule's determination to seek knowledge led him to receive an education, which was uncommon for people of his social standing. He was particularly influenced by the ideas of social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the teachings of Western thinkers on equality and human rights (Ghurye, 2021). Fule's encounters with religious and social practices in his

youth, including the oppressive customs imposed on women and the Dalit community, ignited his resolve to challenge these systems.

The intellectual influence of his wife, Savitribai Fule, who herself became a pioneering educator, was also crucial in shaping Fule's vision for a more inclusive society (Deshpande, 2020). Their shared commitment to education as a vehicle for empowerment set the foundation for their lifelong advocacy of social justice.

b) Socio-Political Environment During His Time

Fule's reforms unfolded within the socio-political landscape of colonial India, a period marked by British colonial rule and deeply ingrained social hierarchies. The caste system, reinforced by both traditional and colonial institutions, dictated nearly every aspect of life, from economic opportunities to educational access. Upper-caste communities monopolized knowledge and education, while lower castes and women were deliberately excluded (Omvedt, 2017). The British administration, though introducing educational reforms, largely catered to the needs of the upper classes and propagated a system that perpetuated inequality (Nair, 2015).

The socio-political environment also saw growing resistance to social reform. The orthodox Brahminical elites viewed social reform movements as threats to their established power, leading to opposition from those defending traditional social structures (Sharma, 2019). Despite these challenges, the intellectual climate of the 19th century, marked by the rise of reform movements like Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj, provided a backdrop for Fule's calls for social change and equality.

c) Emergence as a Social Reformer

Mahatma Jyotiba Fule emerged as a prominent social reformer in this charged socio-political environment, particularly through his advocacy for education as a means to challenge caste-based oppression and promote gender equality. His work began with the establishment of the first school for girls in Pune in 1848, a radical act at a time when educating women, especially from lower-caste backgrounds, was considered taboo (Deshpande, 2020). Fule's commitment to breaking the caste and gender barriers through education was central to his reform agenda, which also included the establishment of schools for Dalits and advocating for the abolition of untouchability.

He founded the Satyashodhak Samaj in 1873, a society aimed at promoting social equality, the eradication of caste-based discrimination, and the education of oppressed communities (Ghurye, 2021). Fule's critique of Hindu orthodoxy and his challenge to the social and religious practices that upheld inequality made him a radical figure, not only in his time but also in the broader context of Indian social reform.

3. Vision for Education

a) Importance of Education for the Marginalized

Mahatma Jyotiba Fule viewed education as a powerful tool for social emancipation, particularly for marginalized communities, including Dalits and women, who had historically been denied access to education. He believed that education could break the chains of caste and gender-based oppression, allowing the oppressed to

challenge their subjugation (Omvedt, 2017). Fule's advocacy for education went beyond literacy; he saw it as a vehicle for developing critical thinking, self-awareness, and autonomy, thereby enabling marginalized individuals to assert their rights and participate in societal reforms (Deshpande, 2020).

For Dalits, access to education was not only a matter of individual development but also a means of combating the caste-based discrimination they faced daily. Women, similarly, were often confined to domestic roles, and education represented a gateway to independence and self-respect (Nair, 2015). Fule's recognition of the transformative potential of education laid the foundation for the broader social reforms that followed, emphasizing its importance in achieving social justice and equality.

b) Establishment of Schools for Girls and Dalits

Fule's efforts to establish educational institutions for girls and Dalits marked a radical departure from the social norms of 19th-century India. In 1848, Fule and his wife, Savitribai Phule, opened the first school for girls in Pune, a groundbreaking step in a society where girls' education was highly restricted (Ghurye, 2021). This initiative challenged traditional views that relegated women and girls to domestic spaces and highlighted Fule's commitment to creating an inclusive educational system.

The establishment of schools for Dalits was equally significant. Fule recognized that education for the lower castes was a crucial tool for dismantling the caste system. He firmly believed that the upliftment of Dalits through education would disrupt the societal order that kept them in subjugation (Sharma, 2019). His work in this area led to the creation of multiple schools specifically designed to serve the educational needs of marginalized groups, including children from the untouchable castes.

c) Challenges Faced and Overcome

Fule faced immense opposition in his efforts to promote education for marginalized groups. His ideas were met with hostility from conservative elements of society, particularly the Brahminical establishment, which feared the disruption of the existing social hierarchy (Mukherjee & Singh, 2018). The resistance ranged from social ostracism to threats of violence, yet Fule persisted in his mission, believing in the potential of education to transform society.

In addition to societal opposition, Fule also encountered financial challenges in funding and sustaining schools for marginalized communities. Despite these hurdles, he continued his advocacy through tireless efforts and the support of like-minded reformers (Deshpande, 2020). His wife, Savitribai, played an instrumental role in running the schools and overcoming gender-based opposition to female education (Omvedt, 2017).

d) Key Educational Contributions

Fule's educational contributions were multifaceted, focusing on both access and content. His curriculum emphasized critical thinking, social justice, and the questioning of traditional norms, which were foundational to the intellectual growth of marginalized communities. He was instrumental in promoting education not just as a means of acquiring knowledge but as a tool for social change and empowerment (Ghurye, 2021).

In addition to the establishment of schools, Fule wrote and published works aimed at advancing the cause of education for the marginalized. His texts, such as “*The Book of Knowledge*”, were designed to challenge prevailing orthodoxies and provide an accessible form of education to those excluded from the formal education system (Nair, 2015). Fule’s work laid the foundation for the modern Indian education system’s focus on inclusivity and social equity, a legacy that continues to influence educational policies today.

4. Vision for Social Justice

a) Advocacy against the Caste System

Mahatma Jyotiba Fule’s staunch opposition to the caste system was central to his vision for social justice. He viewed the caste system as a primary instrument of oppression that perpetuated inequality and deprived millions of their basic rights. Fule’s critique of the caste-based social order was rooted in the belief that it hindered human potential by segregating society along rigid, unjust lines (Omvedt, 2017). His works, such as *Gulamgiri* (Slavery), criticized the inhuman treatment of lower-caste communities and argued for their right to dignity and equal status in society. Fule’s advocacy was not limited to intellectual critique but also to practical measures, including the establishment of schools for Dalit children, thereby empowering them through education (Sharma, 2019). His efforts to raise awareness against caste discrimination laid the groundwork for future movements aimed at social equality, particularly the Dalit rights movement.

b) Role in Women’s Empowerment

Fule’s social justice vision was also profoundly gender-sensitive. In a deeply patriarchal society, where women were often denied basic rights and education, Fule recognized the need for their empowerment. He was one of the first to advocate for the education of women and girls, which was revolutionary for the time (Deshpande, 2020). His establishment of the first school for girls in Pune in 1848 marked a significant milestone in the struggle for women’s rights. Fule believed that women’s liberation could only be achieved through education, which would enable them to break free from the shackles of domestic confinement and patriarchy (Ghurye, 2021). By advocating for the rights of women, particularly those from marginalized communities, Fule challenged societal norms and worked toward a more inclusive and just society.

c) Critique of Religious Orthodoxy and Social Hierarchy

Fule’s critique of religious orthodoxy, particularly Hinduism as practiced during his time, was a key aspect of his vision for social justice. He argued that religious institutions and rituals reinforced the caste system and perpetuated inequality (Nair, 2015). Fule rejected the dominant Brahminical interpretation of Hinduism, which he believed was used to justify the exploitation of the lower castes and women. In works such as *Tritiya Ratna*, Fule criticized religious texts and rituals that supported social hierarchies and called for a reinterpretation of spirituality based on equality and justice (Mukherjee & Singh, 2018). His advocacy for rational thought and social reform within religious contexts positioned him as a forerunner in the

broader critique of religious orthodoxy that would later gain traction with movements such as the reformist Brahmo Samaj.

d) Formation of the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society of Truth Seekers)

In 1873, Fule founded the *Satyashodhak Samaj* (Society of Truth Seekers), a significant social reform organization aimed at promoting the rights of the oppressed. The society was founded with the objective of challenging caste discrimination, promoting education, and advocating for social equality. The Satyashodhak Samaj worked to eradicate untouchability, promote inter-caste marriages, and support the education of women and lower-caste children (Deshpande, 2020). The organization also focused on spreading the ideas of rationality, critical thinking, and social justice, providing a platform for marginalized communities to voice their concerns. Through this society, Fule advanced his vision of a just society based on equality, intellectual awakening, and human dignity. The Samaj played a pivotal role in mobilizing public support for social reforms and laid the foundation for future movements for the rights of Dalits and women (Sharma, 2019).

5. Impact and Legacy

a) Short-Term Impact of Fule's Efforts

Mahatma Jyotiba Fule's social reform efforts, particularly his advocacy for education among marginalized groups, had an immediate and profound impact in the 19th century. His establishment of the first school for girls in Pune in 1848 and his education initiatives for Dalits were revolutionary at the time, challenging deeply entrenched social norms (Deshpande, 2020). The Satyashodhak Samaj, founded by Fule in 1873, not only promoted education but also fought against caste discrimination, untouchability, and the subjugation of women (Ghurye, 2021). These efforts encountered fierce opposition from conservative sections of society, but they sparked critical conversations on the rights of the marginalized. Fule's initiatives inspired a generation of reformers, most notably his wife, Savitribai Phule, who became a prominent educator and social worker in her own right. Despite facing severe resistance, Fule's early educational reforms laid the groundwork for broader social awakening in Maharashtra and beyond (Omvedt, 2017).

b) Long-Term Influence on Indian Social Reform Movements

The influence of Fule's work reverberated long after his time, contributing significantly to subsequent social reform movements. His ideas on caste abolition and education for women were foundational for later leaders, including Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who championed the cause of Dalit rights and education (Gokhale, 2016). Fule's emphasis on secular education and his critique of religious orthodoxy also influenced the modern Indian educational landscape, promoting inclusive curricula that prioritized social justice over traditional caste-based teachings. Moreover, Fule's work on women's rights and the importance of female education resonated in the development of later feminist movements in India, influencing activists like Kamini Roy and Sarojini Naidu (Sharma, 2019).

c) Contributions to Modern Discussions on Education and Equity

In the context of contemporary India, Fule's contributions remain deeply relevant, especially in the ongoing struggle for educational equity and social justice. His pioneering work on opening schools to girls and marginalized communities presaged India's modern educational policies, including the Right to Education Act (2009), which aims to provide free and compulsory education for all children (Nair, 2015). Today, Fule's vision is evident in movements advocating for inclusive education, as well as in calls for reforms that address the systemic exclusion of Dalits, women, and other marginalized groups in education. Scholars continue to engage with Fule's legacy as a critical lens through which to analyze contemporary disparities in access to quality education (Mukherjee & Singh, 2018). His belief in education as a fundamental human right resonates strongly in modern debates about the role of education in social mobility and equality.

6. Comparative Analysis

a) Fule's Vision vs. Contemporary Global Movements for Social Justice

Mahatma Jyotiba Fule's vision for education and social justice, focused on the empowerment of marginalized communities, resonates with several contemporary global movements aimed at reducing inequality and promoting social justice. Like Fule, modern movements such as the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, and the global push for gender equality have sought to dismantle systems of oppression and exclusion. Fule's emphasis on education as a tool for social reform parallels the works of figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Malala Yousafzai, who also advocated for access to education and empowerment as fundamental rights for marginalized groups (King, 2018; Mandela, 2013; Yousafzai, 2013).

Fule's challenge to the caste system finds echoes in contemporary global movements addressing structural inequalities based on race, ethnicity, and class. His belief in the transformative power of education aligns with the principles espoused by organizations like UNESCO and the United Nations, which emphasize inclusive education as a critical pathway toward achieving social equity (UNESCO, 2020). Furthermore, Fule's work laid a foundation for decolonizing education, a concept that has gained significant traction globally in movements for social justice today, particularly in post-colonial societies (Battiste, 2019).

b) Insights for Modern Education and Inclusion Policies

Fule's approach offers valuable lessons for modern education and inclusion policies. His advocacy for universal education and his active role in providing access to education for marginalized groups, such as Dalits and girls, remains highly relevant as contemporary societies continue to grapple with educational inequalities. Today, the emphasis on inclusive education, where all children, regardless of social background, gender, or disability, are given equal opportunities to succeed, is central to educational reform in many parts of the world (Ainscow & Miles, 2018).

Fule's educational philosophy stresses that education should not only focus on academic development but also nurture social consciousness and critical thinking, helping students to challenge the status quo of oppression and injustice. This holistic

approach has been adopted by modern educational policies that emphasize social-emotional learning and critical pedagogy as tools for developing active, socially responsible citizens (Freire, 2000). Moreover, Fule's commitment to women's education continues to inspire movements aimed at closing the gender gap in education globally, as seen in initiatives like the Girls' Education Movement (UNICEF, 2019). Fule's work challenges modern policymakers to rethink existing educational systems that perpetuate inequality. His insights encourage a paradigm shift from education as a privilege for the few to education as a right for all, with a focus on empowering marginalized communities and ensuring that social justice is embedded in the educational process (Sen, 2009).

7. Critical Evaluation

a) Strengths of Fule's Approach

Mahatma Jyotiba Fule's approach to social reform, particularly his advocacy for education, was revolutionary for its time. His vision transcended conventional boundaries, as he recognized that true empowerment could only be achieved through the dismantling of both caste and gender-based inequalities. Fule's initiative to establish schools for Dalits and girls was a direct challenge to the exclusionary educational system of colonial India. His focus on the intersectionality of caste and gender allowed him to address multiple layers of oppression, making his efforts particularly inclusive (Sharma, 2019).

Fule's creation of the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society of Truth Seekers) stands out as one of his most enduring legacies. The organization provided a platform for marginalized communities to not only gain access to education but also engage in social activism. His advocacy for the rejection of religious orthodoxy and social norms imposed by the caste system was a bold and necessary intervention, leading to an ideological shift in the social reform movement (Omvedt, 2017). Fule's emphasis on empirical knowledge over traditional religious teachings also set the foundation for secular education and rational thought, which were essential to building a more equitable society (Ghurye, 2021).

b) Limitations and Criticism of His Work

Despite his contributions, Fule's work was not without limitations and criticisms. One of the primary criticisms of his approach is the relatively narrow scope of his social reform efforts. While Fule made significant strides in education and gender equality, his focus on these areas did not extend as strongly to economic empowerment or the transformation of the broader social and political structures of his time. Critics argue that his efforts, while groundbreaking, did not fully address the economic injustices that accompanied caste-based social stratification (Nair, 2015).

Moreover, Fule's methods and ideas were sometimes seen as too radical by his contemporaries. His critique of the Brahminical order and the rejection of traditional religious practices alienated sections of society, including potential allies among moderate reformers and Brahmin intellectuals (Deshpande, 2020). Some scholars also point out that Fule's work lacked a comprehensive strategy to ensure the

sustainability of the educational reforms, with many of his schools and initiatives fading in prominence after his death (Mukherjee & Singh, 2018). Furthermore, while Fule advocated for education for all, his approach was not fully inclusive of all marginalized groups. The complexity of his work often resulted in the prioritization of certain groups, such as Dalits and women, while leaving other marginalized sections of society, such as the tribals, with less attention (Sharma, 2019).

8. Conclusion

a) Reflection on Fule's Vision and its Relevance Today

Mahatma Jyotiba Fule's visionary approach to education and social justice remains highly relevant in contemporary discussions about inequality and empowerment. His advocacy for accessible education, particularly for women and Dalits, challenged the deep-seated caste and gender discrimination prevalent in 19th-century India. Today, as societies worldwide continue to grapple with issues of inequality, Fule's work serves as a reminder of the transformative potential of education in challenging social hierarchies. His commitment to ensuring that education is a tool of social change for marginalized communities aligns with modern movements advocating for inclusive education policies (Sharma, 2019).

In today's context, where educational disparities still persist, particularly among marginalized groups in India and across the globe, Fule's emphasis on equitable access to knowledge underscores the ongoing struggle for social justice. His focus on self-empowerment through education resonates with global calls for systemic reforms aimed at addressing inequality in educational institutions (Mukherjee & Singh, 2018).

b) Key Takeaways for Social Justice and Education Advocacy

Fule's work offers several key takeaways for social justice and education advocacy. First, the belief that education is a fundamental right for all, regardless of caste, gender, or socioeconomic status, is critical to fostering inclusive societies. Second, Fule's approach highlights the importance of community-led initiatives in creating lasting social change, particularly when formal institutions are slow to adapt. Third, Fule's critique of religious orthodoxy and social hierarchies emphasizes the need for critical thinking and the dismantling of societal structures that perpetuate injustice.

Moreover, Fule's emphasis on the importance of both formal and informal education for marginalized groups serves as a guiding principle for today's educators and policymakers. By focusing on empowerment through knowledge, Fule laid the foundation for contemporary efforts to ensure that education is both a right and a means of liberation for disadvantaged communities (Deshpande, 2020).

c) Closing Remarks

Mahatma Jyotiba Fule's legacy as a social reformer and educator remains integral to understanding the intersection of education, social justice, and empowerment. His pioneering efforts in advocating for marginalized communities demonstrate the critical role that education plays in challenging societal inequities. Today, as global movements continue to demand social change, Fule's vision provides valu-

able insights into the path toward a more just and inclusive society. By revisiting his contributions, we are reminded that the fight for equality and social justice is ongoing, and that education remains a powerful tool in transforming lives and communities.



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समाचार पत्र के स्वामित्व एवं अन्य विवरण के संबंध में घोषणा
(फार्म-4 नियम-7)

1. समाचार पत्र का नाम : पूर्वदेवा
2. प्रकाशन का स्थान : मध्यप्रदेश दलित साहित्य अकादमी,
बाणभट्ट मार्ग, सेन्द्रल स्कूल के सामने
उज्जैन (म.प्र.) 456 010
3. प्रकाशन अवधि : त्रैमासिक
4. मुद्रक का नाम : पूनमचन्द बैरवा
राष्ट्रीयता : भारतीय
व पता : मध्यप्रदेश दलित साहित्य अकादमी,
बाणभट्ट मार्ग, सेन्द्रल स्कूल के सामने
उज्जैन (म.प्र.) 456 010
5. प्रकाशक का नाम : ---- तदैव ----
राष्ट्रीयता :
व पता :
6. सम्पादक का नाम : डॉ. हरिमोहन धवन
राष्ट्रीयता : भारतीय
व पता : मध्यप्रदेश दलित साहित्य अकादमी,
बाणभट्ट मार्ग, सेन्द्रल स्कूल के सामने
उज्जैन (म.प्र.) 456 010
7. स्वामी का नाम : "मध्यप्रदेश दलित साहित्य अकादमी"
व पता : बाणभट्ट मार्ग, सेन्द्रल स्कूल के सामने
उज्जैन (म.प्र.) 456 010

मैं पूनमचन्द बैरवा एतद् द्वारा घोषित करता हूँ कि मेरी अधिकतम जानकारी एवं विश्वास के अनुसार ऊपर दिया गया विवरण सत्य है ।

उज्जैन
दिनांक : 31 मार्च, 2026

हस्ताक्षर
पूनमचन्द बैरवा
प्रकाशक

पूर्वदेवा

मध्यप्रदेश दलित साहित्य अकादमी की सामाजिक विज्ञान शोध पत्रिका

'पूर्वदेवा' के प्रकाशन का उद्देश्य मुख्यतः भारतीय समाज व्यवस्था में व्याप्त मानवीय विषमताओं के उनमूलन, दलितों में मानवीय-अस्मिताबोध एवं अधिकार-चेतना उत्पन्न करने और तदजनित सामाजिक परिवर्तन की भूमिका तैयार कर मानवीय मूल्यों की स्थापना के निमित्त ऐतिहासिक एवं सामाजिक आधार पर विविधपक्षीय, तथ्यपूर्ण एवं शोधपरक अध्ययन एवं चिंतन को प्रवर्त करना है। जिससे कि दलित, सर्वहारा वर्ग का सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक, धार्मिक, राजनीतिक, आर्थिक, शैक्षणिक आदि क्षेत्रों में समुचित विकास एवं मानवीय सम्मान का मार्ग प्रशस्त किया जा सके।

अतएव, इस हेतु विद्वान लेखकों, अनुसंधानकर्ताओं से मौलिक लेख, शोध आलेख एवं अनुभवजन्य, तथ्यपरक लेख, पुस्तक समीक्षाएँ प्रकाशनार्थ सादर आमंत्रित है।

- आलेख MS-Word में A-4 आकार के पेपर पर डबल स्पेस में Kruti Dev010 फॉण्ट में टाईप होना चाहिए।
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- शोध आलेख E-mail ID : mpdsaujn@gmail.com पर प्रेषित करें।
- प्रकाशन हेतु प्राप्त प्रत्येक शोध आलेख की दो विषय विशेषज्ञों द्वारा समीक्षा की जायेगी। समसामयिक प्रासंगिकता, स्पष्ट एवं तार्किक विश्लेषण, सरल एवं बोधगम्य भाषा, उचित प्रविधि मौलिकता आदि आलेख के प्रकाशन हेतु स्वीकृति के मानदण्ड होंगे।
- किसी भी आलेख को स्वीकृत या अस्वीकृत करने का पूर्ण अधिकार सम्पादक का होगा।
- सभी टिप्पणियाँ एवं सन्दर्भ आलेख के अन्त में दिये जाएँ तथा आलेख में यथास्थान उनका आवश्यक रूप से उल्लेख करें।
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- जर्नल के लिए सन्दर्भ हेतु निम्न पद्धति का अनुसरण करें:
उपनाम, (प्रकाशन वर्ष), आलेख का शीर्षक, जर्नल का नाम, अंक, खण्ड, प्रकाशक, प्रकाशन स्थान, पृष्ठ क्रमांक

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बाणभट्ट मार्ग, सेंट्रल स्कूल के सामने, उज्जैन (म.प्र.) 456010

म.प्र. दलित साहित्य अकादमी के लिये पी.सी. बैरवा द्वारा

न्यू गुलाब प्रिन्टर्स, उज्जैन से मुद्रित एवं प्रकाशित

सम्पादन – डॉ. हरिमोहन धवन

मध्यप्रदेश दलित साहित्य अकादमी

□ संक्षिप्त विवरणिका □

तथागत बुद्ध के संदेश 'अत्त दीपो भव' तथा डॉ. अम्बेडकर के आह्वान 'संगठित रहो, शिक्षित बनो, संघर्ष करो' से अनुप्राणित प्रदेश के प्रमुख दलित समाजसेवियों, साहित्यकारों एवं बुद्धिजीवियों के सम्मिलित प्रयास से सांस्कृतिक एवं ऐतिहासिक परम्परा से समृद्ध नगर उज्जैन में एक स्वशासी संगठन के रूप में 'मध्यप्रदेश दलित साहित्य अकादमी' की स्थापना की गई। तदुपरान्त म.प्र. सोसायटी रजिस्ट्रेशन एक्ट, 1973 के अन्तर्गत (क्रमांक 19066 दिनांक 18 नवम्बर, 1987 पर) संस्था का विधिवत् पंजीकरण कराया गया है। अकादमी का प्रधान कार्यालय उज्जैन स्थित है।

□ घोषित लक्ष्य

अकादमी का लक्ष्य समाज के शोषित-पीड़ित दलितजनों को अपने मानवीय अधिकारों एवं समृद्ध सांस्कृतिक विरासत से अवगत कर, उनमें नवीन चेतना का संचार करना और शोषण व असमानता के विरुद्ध संघर्ष के लिए सतत् प्रेरित करना है। इस निमित्त दलित साहित्य सृजन एवं शोध-अनुशीलन तथा तदुनुरूप परिवेश का सजृन करना है। साथ ही दलितों के मानवोचित सामान्य अधिकारों की उपलब्धि के लिए उन्हें सशक्त अभिव्यक्ति प्रदान कर अपनी सक्रिय वैचारिक-साहित्यिक पहल द्वारा उनकी सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक अस्मिता की समाज में पुनर्स्थापना का प्रयास करना है।

□ अकादमी की प्रमुख गतिविधियाँ :

निर्धारित कार्य योजना के अनुसार अकादमी की प्रमुख गतिविधियाँ एवं उल्लेखनीय उपलब्धियाँ एवं संचालित गतिविधियाँ अधोलिखित हैं :

□ सामाजिक विज्ञान शोध केन्द्र की स्थापना

अकादमी की विशेष योजनानुसार उज्जैन में अनुसूचित जाति के विकास एवं समस्याओं पर केन्द्रित एक उच्चस्तरीय अध्ययन-अनुसंधान केन्द्र स्थापित किया गया है। जिसके अन्तर्गत एक समृद्ध ग्रन्थालय, शोधपत्र-पत्रिकाएँ, शोध-अध्ययन कक्ष, म्यूजियम आदि अन्य आवश्यक अनुसंधान सुविधाएँ उपलब्ध हैं।

□ ग्रन्थालय एवं प्रलेखन केन्द्र

अकादमी के ग्रन्थालय में दलित साहित्य, भारतीय समाज व्यवस्था, धर्म-दर्शन, राजनीति, अर्थशास्त्र, इतिहास आदि विषयों पर प्रमुख ग्रंथ संग्रहित हैं। ग्रन्थालय में देश के विभिन्न भागों से प्रकाशित दलित समस्याओं पर केन्द्रित पत्र-पत्रिकाएँ, जर्नल्स आदि संग्रहित किये गये हैं। ग्रन्थालय में शोध-अध्ययन की विशेष सुविधाएँ उपलब्ध कराई जाकर उसे एक समृद्ध प्रलेखन केन्द्र के रूप में विकसित किया जा रहा है।

□ राष्ट्रीय सम्मेलनों, प्रान्तीय सम्मेलनों, राष्ट्रीय शोध संगोष्ठियों का आयोजन, कार्यशाला, व्याख्यानमाला, जयंती, स्मृति व्याख्यान कार्यक्रमों का आयोजन आदि

□ दलित साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार

अकादमी द्वारा दलित साहित्य, इतिहास, कला एवं संस्कृति के क्षेत्र में सृजित उत्कृष्ट कृतियों, ग्रन्थों को पुरस्कृत करने के उद्देश्य से उच्चस्तरीय 'दलित साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार' की स्थापना की गई है।

□ शोध पत्रिका "पूर्वदेवा" का प्रकाशन- 'पूर्वदेवा' का वर्ष 1994 से नियमित प्रकाशन किया जा रहा है जिसके अन्तर्गत माह-मार्च, 2026 तक 137 अंकों का नियमित प्रकाशन किया जा चुका है जिसमें 1099 से अधिक शोध आलेख प्रकाशित किये जा चुके हैं

□ पुस्तक प्रकाशन - पुस्तक, पाण्डुलिपि प्रकाशन योजनान्तर्गत अब तक 12 पुस्तकों का प्रकाशन किया जा चुका है। साथ ही राष्ट्रीय सम्मेलन प्रसंग विशेष पर स्मारिकाओं का प्रकाशन भी किया गया है।

□ अकादमी भवन व परिसर - प्रशासकीय भवन, जिसके अन्तर्गत अकादमी कार्यालय, ग्रन्थालय एवं शोध केन्द्र एवं संत कबीर सभागृह संचालित है। अकादमी का प्रधान कार्यालय - बाणभट मार्ग (केन्द्रीय विद्यालय सम्मुख) उज्जैन मध्यप्रदेश में स्थित 1.672 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्रफल के भूखण्ड पर अवस्थित है।

पी.सी. बैरवा-सचिव

डॉ. हरिमोहन धवन-अध्यक्ष