

विद्धि समीक्षित
Peer Reviewed

वार्षिक अकादमीक जर्नल 2025-26
Yearly Academic Journal 2025-26

अंक / Volume: XXV
आईएसएसएन / ISSN: 2348-9014



कालिन्दी कॉलेज
दिल्ली विष्णुविद्यालय
पूर्वा पटेल नगर
नई दिल्ली - 110008

राष्ट्रीय मूल्यांकन एवं प्रत्यायन परिषद द्वारा A+ श्रेणी प्राप्त

विद्वत् समीक्षित
Peer Reviewed

वार्षिक अकादमिक जर्नल २०२५-२६
Yearly Academic Journal 2025-26

अंक /Volume: XXV
आईएसएसएन/ ISSN: 2348-9014



कालिन्दी कॉलेज
दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय
पूर्वी पटेल नगर
नई दिल्ली – 110008

राष्ट्रीय मूल्यांकन एवं प्रत्यायन परिषद द्वारा A+ श्रेणी प्राप्त

EDITORIAL TEAM



Editor (for English Section): Dr. Shalini Shikha
Co-Editor (for English Section): Ms. Tanu Sharma

Editor (for Hindi Section) : Dr. Taruna
Co-Editor (for Hindi Section) : Dr. Vibha Thakur

Members of Editorial Board

Dr. Baljit Kaur
Mr. Sushrut Bhatia
Dr. Ganesh Yadav
Dr. Rajesh Kumar Meena
Dr. Avneesh
Dr. Richa
Dr. Priyanka Verma
Dr. Reena Jain



प्राचार्या का संदेश

मुझे अत्यंत संतोष के साथ कालिंदी कॉलेज की वार्षिक शैक्षणिक पत्रिका के 25वें अंक को व्यापक अकादमिक समुदाय के समक्ष प्रस्तुत करते हुए प्रसन्नता हो रही है। त्रिभाषीय एवं बहुविषयी स्वरूप वाली यह पत्रिका, कठोर डबल-ब्लाइंड सहकर्मी समीक्षा (peer-review) प्रक्रिया पर आधारित, विभिन्न ज्ञान-विषयों में मौलिक शोध के प्रकाशन हेतु एक सशक्त मंच प्रदान करती रही है। इस प्रयास के माध्यम से हम विभिन्न शैक्षणिक संस्थानों के शोधार्थियों एवं अध्यापकों के बीच आलोचनात्मक चिंतन, पद्धतिगत दृढ़ता तथा सार्थक अकादमिक संवाद की संस्कृति को प्रोत्साहित करने का निरंतर प्रयास करते हैं। मुझे विश्वास है कि इस अंक में प्रकाशित शोध-पत्र पाठकों को बौद्धिक रूप से समृद्ध करेंगे, नवीन दृष्टिकोण प्रदान करेंगे तथा आगे के शोध-विमर्श को प्रेरित करेंगे। मैं संपादकीय टीम के प्रति उनके समर्पण, परिश्रम एवं पत्रिका की अकादमिक गुणवत्ता को बनाए रखने में उनके महत्वपूर्ण योगदान के लिए हार्दिक आभार व्यक्त करती हूँ तथा उनके उज्वल भविष्य की कामना करती हूँ।

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

It is with great satisfaction that I present the XXVth issue of The Yearly Academic Journal of Kalindi College 2025-26 to the wider scholarly community. As a trilingual and multidisciplinary publication grounded in a rigorous double-blind peer-review process, the journal continues to serve as a vital platform for the dissemination of original research across diverse fields of inquiry. Through this initiative, we seek to nurture a culture of critical reflection, methodological rigour, and meaningful academic engagement among scholars and faculty across institutions. I trust that the contributions in this volume will offer stimulating insights, encourage nuanced perspectives, and inspire further scholarly dialogue. I also extend my sincere appreciation to the Editorial Team for their dedication and meticulous efforts in upholding the journal's academic standards, and I wish them continued success in advancing future editions.

संपादकीय

“जहाँ सत्ता की दिशा, संस्कृति की गहराई, लैंगिक समानता की चेतना और परंपरा की विवेकपूर्ण समझ एक साथ चलती हैं, वहीं एक संवेदनशील और जागरूक समाज आकार लेता है।”

कालिंदी महाविद्यालय के प्रतिष्ठित वार्षिक अकादमिक जर्नल २०२५-२०२६ का यह नवीन अंक अपने भीतर हमारे समय के महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्नों और विमर्शों को समेटे हुए है। यह अकादमिक पत्रिका केवल शोध-पत्रों का संकलन ही नहीं बल्कि एक ऐसा बौद्धिक मंच है, जहाँ विचार, अनुभव और दृष्टियाँ एक-दूसरे से संवाद करती हैं।

इस अंक में हिंदी अनुभाग में शामिल ४ शोध-पत्रों में डॉ गोविन्द माधव का लेख अपने-अपने राम में सत्ता, समाज और संस्कृति का द्वंद्व राम पर आधारित शोधालेख है जो यह स्पष्ट करता है कि सांस्कृतिक प्रतीक कभी एक अर्थ तक सीमित नहीं होते जहाँ ‘राम’ का स्वरूप समय, समाज और सत्ता के अनुसार बदलता रहता है, वही संस्कृति केवल विरासत नहीं, बल्कि समय के साथ निरंतर गतिशील रहने वाला जीवंत संवाद है।

लैंगिक भेदभाव पर आधारित सीमा वर्मा का लेख परिवार, शिक्षा और कित्तर जीवन - एक त्रासदीपूर्ण यथार्थ कित्तर जीवन के अनछुए पहलुओं को हमारे सामने उजागर करता है।

यह शोध हमारे समाज की उस सच्चाई पर प्रकाश डालता है, जिसे अक्सर अनदेखा कर दिया जाता है। परिवार से दूरी, शिक्षा में भेदभाव और सामाजिक उपेक्षा—ये स्थितियाँ न केवल कित्तर समुदाय के जीवन को संघर्षपूर्ण बनाती हैं, बल्कि उन्हें एक नारकीय जीवन जीने को भी विवश करती हैं। यह लेख हमें यह सोचने पर मजबूर करता है कि बदलाव केवल कानून से नहीं, बल्कि समाज की सोच और संवेदना से आता है।

लोक संस्कृति की खूबसूरती से परिचित कराता डॉ आरती पाठक का लेख विवाह में गाली गायन की परंपरा - लोक के उस पक्ष को दिखाता है जहाँ विवाह जैसे शुभ अवसरों पर गाली- गायन भी उतना ही जरूरी है, जितना कि शुभ गीत। जहाँ यह परंपरा एक रिवाज है वहीं उत्सव में रंग भरने का कारण भी। विवाह जैसे पवित्र रस्म के अवसर पर अक्सर वर पक्ष को उलाहना देते हुए चुहल बाजी करते हुए इस परंपरा का निर्वाह किया जाता है। यह परंपरा केवल मज़ाक या अशिष्टता नहीं, बल्कि भावनाओं को व्यक्त करने और सामाजिक संबंधों को सहज बनाने का एक माध्यम भी है। सदियों पुरानी यह परंपरा हास्य व्यंग्य का पुट धारण किए न जाने कितने अर्थों को अपने में समेटे हैं।

स्वेता कुशवाह का लेख बंगाल में आए अकाल पर आधारित डॉ धर्मवीर भारती की कहानियों में भूख का अध्ययन - वास्तव में अकाल और उसके बाद की मर्मस्पर्शी घटनाओं को उजागर करता है। बंगाल के अकाल (1943) पर आधारित यह अध्ययन ‘भूख’ के माध्यम से मानवीय पीड़ा और व्यवस्था की सीमाओं को सामने लाता है तथा हमें यह एहसास कराता है कि भूख केवल एक शारीरिक अवस्था नहीं, बल्कि एक ऐसी स्थिति है जो समाज की असमानताओं और संवेदनहीनता को उजागर करती है। यह अध्ययन हमें भीतर तक झकझोरता है और अपने समय के प्रति अधिक सजग होने की प्रेरणा देता है।

इन सभी शोध-पत्रों को एक साथ देखने पर यह स्पष्ट होता है कि समाज को समझने के लिए हमें इन सभी पहलुओं को एक साथ देखना होगा। सत्ता, संस्कृति, लैंगिकता और परंपरा ये सभी एक-दूसरे से जुड़े हुए हैं, और इन्हीं के बीच मानवीय संवेदना अपना स्थान बनाती है। साहित्य और शोध हमें इन जटिलताओं को समझने की दृष्टि देते हैं और यही इस अकादमिक पत्रिका का मूल उद्देश्य भी है।

अंततः

अकादमिक पत्रिका के वर्तमान अंक की सृजन यात्रा के इस अंतिम पड़ाव पर मैं कालिंदी महाविद्यालय की आदरणीय प्राचार्या प्रोफेसर मीना चरांदा जी के प्रति हृदय-गर्भित श्रद्धा के साथ कोटिश धन्यवाद अर्पित करती हूँ। उनका स्नेहिल सहयोग मेरे लिए दृढ़ संबल रहा जिससे विश्वास के साथ मैं इस कार्य सम्पादन हेतु आगे बढ़ सकी। साथ ही साथ मैं उन सभी लेखकों, समीक्षकों और सहयोगियों को भी हृदय से धन्यवाद करती हूँ जिनके सहयोग और समर्पण से यह अंक संभव हो पाया। मुझे विश्वास है कि यह अकादमिक अंक पाठकों के अंतर्मन को स्पर्श करते हुए उन्हें चिंतन, मनन और नवीन दृष्टिकोणों के आलोक में आगे बढ़ने हेतु प्रेरित करेगा।

शुभकामनाओं सहित

डॉ तरुणा (संपादक)

डॉ विभा ठाकुर (सह-संपादक)

हिंदी अनुभाग

EDITORIAL

“Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions”- Rigveda

With great pleasure we present Volume XXV of The Yearly Academic Journal 2025-26, a trilingual (English, Hindi, and Sanskrit) publication by Kalindi College, University of Delhi. Continuing its tradition of promoting multidisciplinary scholarship, this edition reaffirms the journal’s commitment to rigorous academic inquiry, strengthened through a double-blind peer-review process. The present volume brings together diverse scholars from across India, reflecting a dynamic blend of tradition and innovation through a rich and varied intellectual spectrum. This volume features Hindi-language articles, enriching our multilingual ethos and broadening accessibility. These contributions reaffirm our dedication to linguistic diversity and regional scholarship. Major highlights included its four articles in Hindi that focused on diverse topics like अपने अपने राम में सत्ता, समाज और संस्कृति का द्वंद्व, विवाह में गाली-गायन की परम्परा: एक मनोवैज्ञानिक एवं सांस्कृतिक विश्लेषण, बंगाल में आए अकाल पर आधारित डॉ धर्मवीर भारती की कहानियों में भूख का अध्ययन.

This multilingual commitment underscores the journal’s dedication to fostering inclusive academic discourse while strengthening the intellectual status of Hindi within contemporary scholarship. In addition, the issue featured a broad spectrum of interdisciplinary contributions spanning international relations, public policy, technology, and philosophy. Notable themes included Digital Diplomacy in India: Recasting Foreign Policy in a Hyperconnected World, Women as the Foundation of Viksit Bharat, and an innovative study on an AI-based communication bridge between hearing/speech-impaired and non-disabled individuals. Several articles further explored India’s civilizational knowledge systems and global ethical debates, including a scientific perspective on Indian contributions from the Indus Valley Civilization to the Vedic age, Rta–Dharma–Niti: A Vedic Framework for Ethical Warfare and Global Stability, the origin and evolution of the Constitution of Egypt, the contemporary relevance of Gandhian approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and Survival and Struggle under PMAY-Urban: A Study of Slum Communities in Delhi.

The journal continued to maintain a good acceptance rate alongside an efficient average publication timeline of approximately 120 days. Significant institutional advancements included the revision of submission policies, expansion of the peer-review network, a renewed commitment to promoting scholarship in Hindi, and enhanced engagement with its readership community collectively reinforcing the journal’s standing as a dynamic platform for rigorous and socially relevant academic inquiry.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Prof Meena Charanda, the Principal of Kalindi College for her unwavering institutional support in the publication of this year’s Academic Journal. Special thanks to our peer reviewers, whose expertise ensured the journal’s academic rigor. We also extend our gratitude to the Editorial Team Members for their constant support at every stage of this Journal’s publication journey. We invite our readers to engage with this volume as a space for critical reflection, meaningful dialogue, and intellectual enrichment. Each contribution reflects a sustained commitment to scholarly excellence, fostering insights that transcend disciplinary and conceptual boundaries while advancing collective understanding.

Happy Reading!

Editor
Dr Shalini Shikha

अनुक्रमिका/INDEX

(क्रम सं.) Serial No.	शोधपत्र शीर्षक Title of the paper	लेखक का नाम Author's Name	पृष्ठ संख्या Page No.
1	अपने अपने राम में सत्ता, समाज और संस्कृति का द्वंद्व	गोविन्द माधव	1
2	बंगाल में आए अकाल पर आधारित डॉ धर्मवीर भारती की कहानियों में भूख का अध्ययन	स्वेता	8
3	परिवार , शिक्षा और किन्नर जीवन , एक त्रासदीपूर्ण यथार्थ	सीमा वर्मा	14
4	विवाह में गाली - गायन की परंपरा: एक मनोवैज्ञानिक एवं सांस्कृतिक विश्लेषण	आरती पाठक	20
5	Rta-Dharma-Niti: A Vedic Framework for Ethical Warfare and Global Stability	Sushma Singh	24
6	Survival and Struggle under PMAY-Urban: A Study of Slum Communities in Delhi	Sunita Meena, Nidhi Kumari	30
7	The Constitution of Egypt: Origin and Evolution	Manila Narzary	35
8	Know What They Say: An AI-based Communication Bridge Between Hearing/Speech Impaired and Normally Abled	Manju Bhardwaj, Vishwa Bharti, Shweta Sankhwar	47
9	Women as the Foundation of Viksit Bharat: Ancient Ideals and Modern Imperatives	Devender Bhardwaj	58
10	Conflict, Nonviolence, and Peacebuilding: Relevance of Gandhian Methods	Anjani Kumar	67
11	Digital Diplomacy in India: Recasting Foreign Policy in a Hyperconnected World	Neha Jingala	74
12	Scientific Perspective of Indian contribution in era of Indus valley Civilization to Vedic Ages	Seema Gupta, Pushpa Bindal , Rachana Kumar , Nutan Pandey	84

अपने अपने राम में सत्ता, समाज और संस्कृति का द्वंद्व

गोविन्द माधव

शोधार्थी, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय

ई-मेल: kmr.madhav0007@gmail.com

कांटेक्ट नंबर- 7992284291

शोध सार- यह शोधात्मक लेख भगवान सिंह के उपन्यास 'अपने अपने राम' के संदर्भ में सत्ता, समाज और संस्कृति के अंतर्संबंधों तथा उनके बीच विद्यमान द्वंद्व का विश्लेषण करता है। समकालीन हिंदी उपन्यास परंपरा में यह कृति सांस्कृतिक प्रतीकों की राजनीतिक उपयोगिता और सामाजिक अर्थवत्ता को उजागर करती है। लेख में प्रतिपादित किया गया है कि 'राम' स्थिर धार्मिक प्रतीक न होकर बहुअर्थी सांस्कृतिक संरचना हैं, जिनका अर्थ सत्ता-हित, सामाजिक अनुभव और वैचारिक संदर्भों के अनुसार परिवर्तित होता रहता है। सत्ता अपनी वैधता निर्मित करने के लिए संस्कृति और धार्मिक प्रतीकों का उपकरणात्मक उपयोग करती है, जबकि समाज उन्हीं प्रतीकों में नैतिकता, न्याय और प्रतिरोध की संभावनाएँ खोजता है। परिणामस्वरूप संस्कृति कभी प्रभुत्व का माध्यम बनती है तो कभी सामाजिक चेतना और प्रतिरोध की भूमि। यह अध्ययन दर्शाता है कि आधुनिक लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था को समझने के लिए सांस्कृतिक प्रतीकों की राजनीतिक व्याख्या अनिवार्य है। इस प्रकार अपने अपने राम केवल एक कथात्मक रचना नहीं, बल्कि समकालीन भारतीय समाज की वैचारिक संरचना और लोकतांत्रिक संकट का गंभीर आलोचनात्मक पाठ प्रस्तुत करता है।

बीज शब्द – राम, सत्ता-संरचना, समाज, संस्कृति, सांस्कृतिक प्रतीक, लोकतंत्र, द्वंद्व, राजनीति, चेतना, नैतिकता, न्याय, वैधता, अवधारणा

मूल आलेख - हिंदी उपन्यास की परंपरा में सामाजिक यथार्थ, राजनीतिक संरचना और सांस्कृतिक चेतना की अंतः क्रिया हमेशा परिलक्षित होती रही है। समय और समाज की समस्याओं प्रश्नाकुलताओं, चुनौतियों, अंतर्विरोधों, विसंगतियों, विद्रूपताओं और आधुनिक समाज की जटिलताओं, यंत्रणाओं को व्यक्त करने के लिए उपन्यास से उपयुक्त और समर्थ माध्यम आज दूसरा नहीं है।

लंबे समय तक कविता ही साहित्य के केंद्र में अपना पताका लहराती रही। लेकिन आज़ादी के बाद समाज में ही नहीं बल्कि साहित्य में भी व्यापक परिवर्तन देखने को मिले। आज़ादी से पहले जनता ने जो सपने देखे थे आज़ादी के बाद उसको दिशाहीन और बिखरते देख निराशा के भाव पैदा हुए। जनता में असंतोष, अजनबीपन, रोष जैसी स्थितियां उत्पन्न हुईं कविताएं अपने कलेवर और क्लिष्टता के कारण इन सारे भावों को अपने अंदर समेट नहीं पाई। आज़ादी और जीवन से मोहभंग, निराशा, अजनबीपन, महंगाई, बेरोजगारी, गरीबी, भेदभाव जैसी अव्यवस्था का विस्तृत चित्रण और उसके सभी अंगों को विमर्श के स्तर तक साहित्य में प्रतिबिंबित करने की क्षमता लेकर ही उपन्यास ने कविता को उसके शिखर से विस्थापित करके समकालीन साहित्य में महाकाव्य का तमगा का पहना।

समकालीन हिंदी उपन्यास ने इस तथ्य को बार-बार रेखांकित किया है कि समाज की वास्तविक समस्याएँ केवल व्यक्तिगत नहीं होतीं, वह सत्ता-संरचना, आर्थिक असमानता, प्रशासनिक ढाँचें, सांस्कृतिक वर्चस्व और वैचारिक नियंत्रण जैसी व्यवस्थाओं से निर्मित और संचालित होती है। इसी संदर्भ में भगवान सिंह का उपन्यास 'अपने अपने राम' एक ऐसी रचना के रूप में सामने आता है जो भारतीय समाज की बहुस्तरीय वास्तविकताओं को 'राम' जैसे केंद्रीय सांस्कृतिक प्रतीक के माध्यम से उद्घाटित करता है।

भारतीय संस्कृति में राम की अवधारणा केवल एक ऐतिहासिक या धार्मिक चरित्र तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि वह एक सांस्कृतिक के रूप में स्थापित होती है। रामायण और रामचरितमानस जैसे ग्रंथों में राम को मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया गया है, जो आदर्श पुत्र, आदर्श राजा और आदर्श मानव के प्रतीक हैं। मिथक के रूप में राम का अर्थ केवल कथा नहीं, बल्कि एक सामूहिक विश्वास और सांस्कृतिक मूल्य है, जो समाज के नैतिक ढाँचे को दिशा देता है। राम की कथा में सत्य, धर्म, त्याग और कर्तव्य जैसे मूल्यों को इस तरह स्थापित किया गया है कि वे समय के साथ भारतीय समाज की चेतना का हिस्सा बन गए।

साथ ही, विभिन्न क्षेत्रों और कालों में राम की व्याख्याएँ बदलती रही हैं—कहीं वे ईश्वर हैं, कहीं लोकनायक, तो कहीं सांस्कृतिक प्रतीक। इस प्रकार, राम का मिथक स्थिर नहीं, बल्कि जीवंत और गतिशील है, जो भारतीय संस्कृति की विविधता और निरंतरता दोनों को अभिव्यक्त करता है। डॉ उषा वाचस्पति के शब्दों में –

“समय समय पर मिथकों की उपज साहित्य को नव आयामों से विभूषित करती रही है। अमूर्त सूक्ष्म भावों को व्यक्त करने के लिए मिथक बिम्ब का कार्य करते हैं, तो उजड़ती नैतिकता को आरक्षित रखने के लिए वे अंकुश बन बैठते हैं। लोकमंगल के उदात्त आदर्शों को पुष्ट करने का लक्ष्य होने के कारण मिथक कथाएँ तदनुकूल मार्ग की ओर निरंतर बढ़ती रही है। समाज के बिखराव, उदासीनता, अनाचार पर अनुशासन की डोर थमने वाले मिथक किसी भी युग में साहित्य के लिए अप्रासंगिक नहीं रहे हैं।”¹

यह उपन्यास एक स्तर पर ‘राम’ की अवधारणा का पुनर्विचार प्रस्तुत करता है, तो दूसरे स्तर पर भारतीय लोकतंत्र, सत्ता-तंत्र, सामाजिक संरचना और सांस्कृतिक राजनीति के जटिल अंतर्विरोध का विश्लेषणात्मक चित्रण प्रस्तुत करता है। इस उपन्यास की रचना का समय भी वही है जब भारतीय समाज में राम मंदिर और बाबरी मस्जिद को लेकर पहली बार व्यापक रूप से प्रदर्शन शुरू हुए थे तथा राजनीतिक दलों ने अपने सत्ता बनाए रखने के लिए इस मुद्दे को सांप्रदायिक रंग देने का प्रयास किया था। उस समय की परिस्थितियों को देखकर यह उपन्यास और भी प्रासंगिक हो जाता है।

इस उपन्यास में ‘राम’ केवल श्रद्धा के विषय नहीं बल्कि एक ऐसे बहुअर्थी प्रतीक हैं, जिसका अर्थ समाज में प्रत्येक व्यक्ति, वर्ग, समुदाय या वैचारिक समूह अपने-अपने हितों और जरूरत के अनुसार तय करते रहते हैं। यही कारण है कि उपन्यास का शीर्षक ‘अपने अपने राम’ स्वयं में एक सांस्कृतिक-राजनीतिक संकेत है और यह बताता है कि कोई भी समाज अपने केंद्रीय प्रतीकों को स्थिर अर्थों में नहीं रख सकता, उन्हें समय, परिस्थितियाँ और सत्ता-संबंध लगातार नया अर्थ देते हैं।

किसी भी साहित्यिक रचना का शीर्षक साधारणतः उसके कथानक का ही सांकेतिक रूप होता है, परंतु कुछ रचनाओं के शीर्षक इससे पृथक स्वयं में वैचारिक वक्तव्य का रूप ले लेते हैं। ‘अपने अपने राम’ ऐसा ही एक शीर्षक है। यह शीर्षक एक और भारतीय सांस्कृतिक परंपरा में ‘राम’ की सर्वस्वीकृत प्रतिष्ठा को स्वीकार करता है, दूसरी ओर उस प्रतिष्ठा के भीतर मौजूद वैचारिक संघर्ष को उद्घाटित करता है।

यहां ‘राम’ किसी एक व्यक्ति जाति समाज के प्रतीक नहीं बल्कि वह बहुवचनात्मक प्रतीक है। उपन्यास यह संकेत करता है कि समाज में किसी केंद्रीय प्रतीक का अर्थ एकरूप नहीं होता। हर व्यक्ति और हर सामाजिक समूह उससे अलग-अलग संदर्भ में देखता और ग्रहण करता है।

शीर्षक का मूल अर्थ यही है कि ‘राम’ का वास्तविक स्वरूप समाज में स्थिर नहीं है, बल्कि वह सत्ता-संबंधों के साथ बदलता रहता है या यून कहें कि सत्ता अपने स्वार्थ के कारण उसके अर्थ को नए रंग देती रहती है। लेकिन जब प्रतीक बहुवचनात्मक होते हैं, तब वे संघर्ष के क्षेत्र बन जाते हैं, क्योंकि सत्ता भी उसे नियंत्रित करना चाहती है और समाज भी उन्हें अपनी नैतिक पूँजी मानकर सुरक्षित रखना चाहता है। इसी संदर्भ में राजीव सक्सेना ने लिखा है-

“The title itself indicated that it is the authors way of understanding Rama's story.”¹

उपन्यास में सत्ता का अर्थ केवल शासन-प्रशासन तक सीमित नहीं होता है बल्कि सत्ता वहाँ संरचनात्मक शक्ति के रूप में उपस्थित होती है, जो समाज की दिशा, संसाधनों का वितरण, न्याय व्यवस्था और वैचारिक नियंत्रण को निर्धारित करती है।

सत्ता की सबसे बड़ी विशेषता उसकी वैधता है। सत्ता यदि केवल बल प्रयोग करके ही अपना अस्तित्व बनाए रखना चाहे तो यह लंबे समय तक अपने अस्तित्व को स्थिर नहीं रख सकती। अपने अस्तित्व को बनाए रखने के लिए सत्ता को समाज की स्वीकृति चाहिए और उसे स्वीकृति के निर्माण में संस्कृति और धर्म का इस्तेमाल उसके लिए सबसे प्रभावशाली साधन बन जाते हैं। ‘राम’ जैसे प्रतीक सत्ता के लिए वैधता का स्रोत बनते हैं। क्योंकि यह प्रतीक सीधे जनता की भावनाओं, आस्था और पहचान से जुड़े होते हैं।

उपन्यास की राजनीतिक अंतर्दृष्टि यह है कि सत्ता जब संस्कृति के साथ गठबंधन करती है, तब वह अपने विशिष्ट मूल्यों, विश्वासों और मानदंडों को ‘सामान्य’ या ‘प्राकृतिक’ कहकर या ‘धर्मसम्मत’ और ‘लोकस्वीकृत’ के रूप में प्रस्तुत करने लगती है। यह प्रक्रिया लोकतंत्र की मूल भावना के विरुद्ध जाती है, क्योंकि लोकतंत्र में सत्ता का आधार तर्क, नीति, न्याय और जनकल्याण होना चाहिए; किंतु जब सांस्कृतिक प्रतीक सत्ता का आधार बन जाते हैं, तब विवेक का स्थान भावनात्मकता ले लेती है। इसी संदर्भ में नेमिचंद्र का कथन है कि -

“संस्कृति, कला, साहित्य आदि स्वभाव से ही सत्ता विरोधी होते हैं, इसलिए अगर दोनों के बीच कोई रिश्ता हो सकता है तो वह सिर्फ विरोध का ही हो सकता है; और इसलिए जो संस्कृति सत्ता विरोधी नहीं है वह सच्ची संस्कृति नहीं है।”²

उपन्यास में समाज एक समरूप इकाई की तरह परिलक्षित नहीं होता बल्कि वह बहुत स्तरीय और वर्ग-आधारिक संरचना के रूप में व्यक्त होता है। जिसमें आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर वर्ग, श्रमिक और निम्न वर्ग, सामाजिक रूप से वंचित समूह और प्रभुत्वशाली या सुविधासंपन्न वर्ग सब मौजूद होते हैं। समाज की यही बहुस्तरीयता उपन्यास के राजनीतिक संदर्भ को और तीव्र बना देती है। क्योंकि सत्ता का प्रभाव सभी वर्ग, समुदाय या व्यक्ति पर समान रूप से नहीं पड़ता। सत्ता की नीतियाँ अक्सर कमजोर वर्गों पर अधिक दबाव डालते हैं और प्रभुत्वशाली वर्गों को अधिक संरक्षण देती है। उदाहरणतः उपन्यास की शुरुआत में ही जब ‘राम’ और ‘वसिष्ठ’ के बीच वाक् युद्ध छोड़ा जाता है तो ‘राम’ के मुख से लेखक ‘शास्त्र’ और शास्त्रपीडित वर्चस्वशाली व्यक्तियों से प्रश्न करते नजर आते हैं। और यहीं पर दिखता है कि सत्ता कैसे प्रभावशाली लोगों को धर्म के नाम पर या थोथे न्याय के नाम पर संरक्षण देती है -

“किसी शास्त्र में यह विधान भी है, आचार्य, कि क्रूरता के लिए प्रेरित करनेवाले को क्या पाप लगता है?” ××× “युद्ध तो सदा मन्त्रियों और पुरोहितों के प्रोत्साहन और परामर्श से ही होते हैं, आचार्य, पर आज तक किसी मन्त्री या पुरोहित को इसके लिए प्रायश्चित्त करते नहीं देखा।”³

उपन्यास, समाज की समस्याओं की वास्तविक जड़ों तक नहीं पहुँच पाता, क्योंकि सत्ता अक्सर स्वहित के लिए समकालीन मुद्दों को सांस्कृतिक प्रतीकों और भावनात्मक नारों में बदल देती है। इसका ही परिणाम होता है कि समाज वास्तविक संघर्षों जैसे- रोजगार, न्याय, अधिकार, समानता आदि से हटकर प्रतीक-आधारित संघर्षों में उलझ जाता है। यह स्थिति ‘जनता’ को राजनीतिक रूप से कमजोर और भावनात्मक रूप से सत्ता द्वारा नियंत्रित बना डालते है। यह प्रसंग अपने-अपने राम उपन्यास में भी देखने को मिलता है। उपन्यास के अंत में जब राम द्वारा बहुत सारे सामाजिक परिवर्तन किए जाते हैं और वह धार्मिक कर्मकांड और शास्त्र को मानने से इनकार कर वैज्ञानिक दृष्टिकोण की तरफ जनता का ध्यान आकृष्ट करते हैं तब वसिष्ठ द्वारा उनका विरोध किया जाता है और एक धर्म परिषद की सभा बुलाकर राम द्वारा किए जा रहे कार्यों की भर्त्सना की जाती है।

¹ राजीव सक्सेना का कथन, भगवान सिंह, अपने अपने राम, पिछले आवरण से उद्धृत।

समाज का एक हिस्सा 'राम' को नैतिक आदर्श के रूप में देखा है और सत्ता से अपेक्षा करता है कि वह उस आदर्श पर चले। परंतु सत्ता जब राम का नाम लेते हुए भी अन्याय करती है, तब समाज के भीतर एक नया द्वंद पैदा होता है- आस्था और अनुभव का द्वंद। यही वह क्षण है जहां उपन्यास केवल सामाजिक यथार्थ नहीं, बल्कि सामाजिक चेतना की त्रासदी भी बन जाता है। 'अपने अपने राम' उपन्यास में भगवान सिंह ने 'राम' के माध्यम से वशिष्ठ के सामने एक प्रस्ताव रखकर आस्था और अनुभव के द्वंद को रेखांकित किया है। जहां राम कहते हैं-

“मैं शास्त्र की अवज्ञा कैसे कर सकता हूँ, पर यह नए युग के अनुरूप हो, तभी तो मान्य हो सकता है।” ××× “यदि शास्त्र तर्क और विवेक के प्रतिकूल पड़ता हो तो तर्क को झुठलाने के स्थान पर शास्त्रीय विधान को बदलिए, आचार्य !”⁴

यहाँ राम की दृष्टि का दार्शनिक आधार इस रूप में परिलक्षित होता है कि वर्तमान की चेतना अतीत की अपेक्षा अधिक व्यापक और विश्लेषणात्मक होती है। इलियट के शब्दों में कहें तो –

"The difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show."⁵

भगवान सिंह ने इस उपन्यास में संस्कृति को केवल परंपरा या आस्था का क्षेत्र नहीं दिखाया है, बल्कि संस्कृति को एक विचारधारात्मक सत्ता के रूप में चित्रित किया है। जो समाज को अर्थ देती है मूल्य और पहचान देती है। रामधारी सिंह दिनकर ने अपने निबंध “संस्कृत है क्या?” में संस्कृति को गुण के साथ जोड़ा है वह कहते हैं-

“सभ्यता वह चीज है जो हमारे पास है, संस्कृति वह गुण है जो हमें व्याप्त है।”⁶

'राम' यहां संस्कृति के केंद्रीय प्रतीक हैं, जिनके साथ न्याय, मर्यादा, त्याग और लोक कल्याण की नैतिक धारणाएं जुड़ी हुई हैं।

परंतु समस्या यह है की संस्कृति की यही नैतिक शक्ति सत्ता के लिए आकर्षक होती है। सत्ता संस्कृति को सम्मान देने के बजाय उसका उपयोग करने लगती है। यह प्रक्रिया संस्कृति को 'मूल्य' से 'रणनीति' में बदल देती है। 'अपने अपने राम' उपन्यास की वैचारिक उपलब्धि यही है कि वह संस्कृति के इस रूपांतरण को अत्यंत सूक्ष्म ढंग से उद्घाटित करता है। इसी संदर्भ में डॉक्टर नामवर सिंह ने कहा है-

“अपने अपने राम' वस्तुतः एक विशाल षड्यंत्र कथा है जिसका ताना-बाना लेखक ने बड़ी बारीकी से बुना है।”²

उपन्यास में स्पष्ट होता है कि संस्कृत कभी केवल 'परंपरा' नहीं रहती; वह सत्ता और समाज के संघर्ष की भूमि बन जाती है।

सत्ता और समाज का द्वंद्व लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था की सबसे बुनियादी समस्या का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है। सत्ता यह दावा करती है कि वह समाज और जनता के लिए है, परंतु व्यवहार में सत्ता का संचालन अक्सर व्यक्तिगत हितों, वर्गीय हितों, राजनीतिक लाभ के आधार पर होता है। समाज के लिए सत्ता 'समाधान' नहीं कई बार 'समस्या' बन जाती है।

सत्ता बनाम समाज का द्वंद्व इस उपन्यास में कई रूपों में दिखाई पड़ता है जैसे- संसाधनों का असमान वितरण, न्याय और अधिकारों का चयनात्मक उपयोग, जनहित की भाषा में सत्ता हित का विस्तार तथा जनता को नियंत्रित करने के लिए भय, भ्रम और भावनात्मकता का प्रयोग इत्यादि। इस उपन्यास में भी भगवान सिंह ने सत्ता बनाम समाज के द्वंद्व को कहानी के माध्यम से प्रस्तुत किया है। कहानी में राम के वनगमन से लेकर वापस अयोध्या आने तक राज्य का शासन 'भरत' के हाथों में होता है। जिसे परोक्ष रूप से कैकेयी और वसिष्ठ ही संचालित कर रहे होते हैं। इन वर्षों में समाज और सत्ता का दोनों प्रमुख

² नामवर सिंह का कथन, भगवान सिंह, अपने अपने राम, पिछले आवरण से उद्धृत।

रूप से कहानी में परिलक्षित होता है। उपन्यास इस द्वंद को इस निष्कर्ष तक ले जाता है कि आधुनिक लोकतंत्र में समाज और जनता ऐसे तंत्र के सामने खड़ी है जो 'लोकतांत्रिक' दिखता है, लेकिन भीतर से प्रभुत्ववादी प्रवृत्तियों को जन्म देता है और उसे पोषित करता है।

सत्ता बनाम संस्कृति का द्वंद उपन्यास का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण राजनीतिक पक्ष है। सत्ता संस्कृति को 'अर्थ' के क्षेत्र से हटाकर 'उपकरण' के क्षेत्र में ले जाती है। 'राम' सत्ता के लिए एक शक्तिशाली शब्द बन जाते हैं- ऐसा शब्द जो जनता को जोड़ सकता है, विरोध को दबा सकता है और शासन को नैतिक घोषित कर सकता है। 'अपने अपने राम' में जब राम वनवास के लिए प्रस्थान करते हैं, तो जनता में सत्ता के प्रति आक्रोश पैदा होता है। भगवान सिंह ने यह दिखाया है कि कैसे 'कैकेयी' उस विद्रोह को 'राम' के नाम पर दबा देती है। कैसे वह 'भरत' को साथ लेकर, 'राम' को वनवास से मना कर लाने का झूठा खेल रचती है और जब 'राम' वापस नहीं आते तो उनके चरण पादुका को लेकर वापस आती है तथा जनता को ये भरोसा दिलाती है कि शासन अभी भी 'राम' ही कर रहे हैं तथा उसे नैतिक बताकर सारे विरोध को शांत कर देती है।

सत्ता बनाम संस्कृति के अंतर्गत लेखक की दिखता है कि कैसे धार्मिक प्रतीक भीड़-राजनीति की भाषा बन जाते हैं; नैतिकता प्रचार का आवरण बन जाती है तथा संस्कृति पहचान 'हम बनाम वे' के विभाजन में बदल सकती है। यह स्थिति संस्कृति को दो भागों में बाँट देती है- एक वह संस्कृति जो सत्ता की भाषा बन जाती है, और दूसरी वह संस्कृति जो लोक के नैतिक विवेक का हिस्सा रहती है। यही द्वंद उपन्यास को अत्यंत समकालीन बनाता है, क्योंकि आधुनिक राजनीति में सांस्कृतिक प्रतीकों का उपयोग व्यापक रूप से दिखाई पड़ता है।

समाज बनाम संस्कृति का द्वंद एक आंतरिक संकट का रूप ले लेता है। समाज संस्कृति के साथ गहराई से जुड़ा है, परंतु वही समाज जब संस्कृति के नाम पर शोषण, असमानता या दमन देखता है, तब उसके भीतर प्रश्न उठते हैं। यह प्रश्न संस्कृति को नकारते नहीं बल्कि उसके अर्थ को पुनः स्थापित करने का प्रयास करते हैं। इस उपन्यास के अंत में शम्बूक प्रसंग जहां वशिष्ठ और शम्बूक के बीच धर्म परिषद में वाक्य युद्ध छिड़ा होता है, शम्बूक के माध्यम से भगवान सिंह ने समाज और संस्कृति का द्वंद दिखाया है।

इस द्वंद के भीतर समाज के दो रूप उभरते हैं- पहला परंपरा-आश्रित समाज जो प्रतीकों को प्रश्रुती मानता है तथा दूसरा चेतनशील समाज जो प्रतीकों के उपयोग पर सवाल खड़ा करता है। यह चेतना ही उपन्यास में प्रतिरोध का बीज है। जब समाज 'राम' को केवल सत्ता का नारा मानने से इनकार करता है और उसे नैतिकता की कसौटी पर पुनः परिभाषित करता है, तभी संस्कृति एक प्रतिरोध की शक्ति बनती है। इसी कारण यह उपन्यास केवल सत्ता-आलोचना ही नहीं बल्कि सामाजिक चेतना के विकास की कथा भी है।

यह कहना उचित नहीं होगा कि यह उपन्यास केवल निराशा या विघटन का चित्र प्रस्तुत करता है। इसके भीतर प्रतिरोध की चेतना भी मौजूद है। परंतु यह प्रतिरोध केवल राजनीतिक नारे का रूप नहीं लेता; यह अधिक गहरा और वैचारिक है। यह प्रतिरोध समाज के भीतर जन्म लेने वाली प्रश्नाकुलता है।

प्रतिरोध की राजनीति के स्वर विभिन्न रूपों में देखे जा सकते हैं जैसे- सत्ता द्वारा बनाए गए प्रश्न के अर्थ पर पुनर्विचार, वास्तविक समस्याओं की पहचान, सामाजिक न्याय की मांग, नैतिकता को सत्ता से अलग करके पुनर्स्थापित करना इत्यादि। बंदी नारायण कहते हैं कि "आधिपत्यशाली शक्तियाँ अपना आधिपत्य बनाने, बढ़ाने एवं बचाने के लिए स्मृतियों को अपनी सुविधानुसार 'मैनुपुलेट' करती रहती हैं। इसके लिए वे शब्द, वाक्य, प्रतीक एवं बुद्धिजीवियों की सेना का इस्तेमाल करती रहती हैं।"⁷ इस उपन्यास में एक प्रसंग आता है जब 'लक्ष्मण', 'राम' को 'देवता' कहकर संबोधित करते हैं तब 'राम' द्वारा 'लक्ष्मण' को दिए गए जवाब में पूर्व-स्थापित प्रतीकों, व्यवस्थाओं के विरोध में उनका प्रतिरोध मुखर रूप से दिखाई पड़ता है, वो कहते हैं-

“लक्ष्मण, किसी मनुष्य की हत्या करने के दो उपाय हैं- उसे देवता या पशु बना देना। दोनों का परिणाम एक ही है- उस मनुष्य को न रहने देना। न तो देवता मेरे आदर्श हैं, न ही मैं देवता बन कर जीना चाहता हूँ। देवताओं ने ऐसा कुछ भी नहीं किया है जिस पर किसी मनुष्य को गर्व हो सके। कुछ भी नहीं। वे केवल भोग करते हैं, अर्घ्य और पाद्य ग्रहण करते हैं। वे केवल मनुष्य समाज के भार हैं, लक्ष्मण। वे बैठे-बिठाए भोग और विलास करनेवाले, अर्घ्य-पाद्य की कामना करनेवाले पुरोहितों के आदर्श हैं। उन्हीं की सृष्टि और उन्हीं के हथियार।”⁸

यह प्रतिरोध ही है जो संस्कृति को सत्ता का उपकरण भर बन कर रह जाने से रोकने का प्रयास करता है। इस प्रकार हम देख सकते हैं कि यह उपन्यास संस्कृति को केवल परंपरा नहीं रहने देता; वह उसे विवेक और चेतना की भूमि में बदलकर यथार्थ के और निकट ला देता है। ‘डॉ चंद्रदेव सिंह’ ने इसी संदर्भ में कहा है कि-

“आधार की बात तो मैं नहीं जानता, लेकिन चित्रण से यही लगता है कि वाल्मीकि और तुलसी के सामने चाहे जो भी आदर्श हो, यथार्थ भूमि पर चित्रण का श्रेय ‘अपने अपने राम’ को ही जाता है।”³

‘अपने अपने राम’ का शिल्प मुख्यतः यथार्थवादी प्रवृत्ति की ओर झुकता है, परंतु उसमें प्रतीकात्मकता की एक सशक्त धारा मौजूद है। यह प्रतीकात्मकता ‘राम’ के माध्यम से स्थापित होती है।

भाषा में कई जगह तीखे व्यंग्यात्मक संकेत भी दिखाई पड़ते हैं, जो सत्ता और समाज के अंतर्विरोध को गहराई से उभरते हैं। राजनीतिक उपन्यास में भाषा का कार्य केवल सौंदर्य-उत्पादन नहीं होता, बल्कि सामाजिक सत्य को उद्घाटित करना होता है। यही कारण है कि इस उपन्यास की भाषा कई बार सीधे यथार्थ का बोध कराती है और कई बार संकेतों के माध्यम से राजनीतिक पड़तें खोलती हैं।

इस उपन्यास का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण शिल्पगत पक्ष यह है कि लेखक ‘राम’ को किसी एक धार्मिक पात्र के रूप में चित्रित ना करके उसे एक ऐसा वैचारिक क्षेत्र बनाता है, जहां समाज के विविध वर्ग और सत्ता अपने-अपने हितों की लड़ाई लड़ते हैं। यही उपन्यास का कथात्मक कौशल है कि वह राजनीति को भाषण बनाकर नहीं, बल्कि जीवन के भीतर घुली हुई शक्ति के रूप में प्रस्तुत करता है।

अंततः यह कहा जा सकता है कि भगवान सिंह का उपन्यास ‘अपने अपने राम’ सत्ता, समाज और संस्कृति के अंतर्संबंधों का एक गहन राजनीतिक अध्ययन प्रस्तुत करता है। यह उपन्यास ‘राम’ को एक स्थिर धार्मिक प्रतीक के रूप में स्वीकार नहीं करता, बल्कि उसे सामाजिक और राजनीतिक संघर्षों के बीच रखकर उसके बहुअर्थी स्वरूप को उद्घाटित करता है। सत्ता ‘राम’ के माध्यम से अपनी वैधता निर्माण करना चाहती है, समाज ‘राम’ के भीतर नैतिकता और न्याय की उम्मीद खोजता है; और संस्कृति सत्ता तथा समाज के द्वंद्व के बीच कभी उपकरण बनती है तो कभी प्रतिरोध की शक्ति।

इस उपन्यास का केंद्रीय निष्कर्ष यही है कि प्रतीक स्वयं निर्दोष नहीं होते- उनके अर्थ सत्ता-संबंध तय करते हैं। जब सत्ता संस्कृति का उपयोग करती है, तब संस्कृति का नैतिक स्वरूप क्षीण होता है; लेकिन जब समाज अपने अनुभव के आधार पर संस्कृति को पुनः परिभाषित करता है, तब संस्कृति प्रतिरोध की जमीन बन जाती है। यही ‘अपने अपने राम’ का सार है कि ‘राम’ एक नहीं, अनेक हैं- और इन अनेक ‘रामों’ के बीच चलने वाला संघर्ष है। यह संघर्ष आधुनिक भारतीय लोकतंत्र की आत्मा को समझने के लिए अत्यंत आवश्यक है, क्योंकि लोकतंत्र केवल राजनीतिक व्यवस्था नहीं है बल्कि सांस्कृतिक चेतना और सामाजिक न्याय की प्रक्रिया भी है।

इस प्रकार ‘अपने अपने राम’ राजनीतिक परिप्रेक्ष्य में एक ऐसी महत्वपूर्ण रचना सिद्ध होती है, जो हमें यह समझने में सहायता देता है कि सत्ता संस्कृति को कैसे नियंत्रित करती है, समाज उसे कैसे अनुभव करता है और संस्कृति स्वयं कैसे

³ डॉ चंद्रदेव सिंह का कथन, भगवान सिंह, अपने अपने राम, पिछले आवरण से उद्धृत।

संघर्ष का माध्यम बनकर उभरती है। यही उपन्यास की साहित्यिक और वैचारिक शक्ति है कि वह पाठक को न केवल कथा का आनंद देता है, बल्कि उसे समाज और राजनीति की जटिलताओं पर आलोचनात्मक रूप से सोचने के लिए भी बाध्य करता है।

सन्दर्भ ग्रन्थ

1. वाचस्पति, उषा. *मिथक उद्भव और विकास तथा हिंदी साहित्य*, पृ. 62।
2. जैन, नैमिचंद्र. *दृश्य-अदृश्य*. नई दिल्ली: वाणी प्रकाशन, प्रथम संस्करण, 1994, पृ. 25।
3. सिंह, भगवान. *अपने अपने राम*. नई दिल्ली: वाणी प्रकाशन, पेपरबैक, छठा संस्करण, 2024, पृ. 9।
4. वही, पृ. 10।
5. इलियट, टी. एस. “ट्रेडिशन एंड द इंडिविजुअल टैलेंट” (*Tradition and the Individual Talent*). *द ईगोइस्ट* (The Egoist), 1919।
6. दिनकर, रामधारी सिंह. *संस्कृति, भाषा और राष्ट्र*. इलाहाबाद: लोकभारती प्रकाशन, द्वितीय संस्करण, 2013, पृ. 11।
7. नारायण, बट्टी. *प्रतिरोध की संस्कृति*. नई दिल्ली: वाणी प्रकाशन, प्रथम संस्करण, 2012, पृ. 68।
8. सिंह, भगवान. *अपने अपने राम*. नई दिल्ली: वाणी प्रकाशन, पेपरबैक, छठा संस्करण, 2024, पृ. 250।

बंगाल में आए अकाल पर आधारित डॉ धर्मवीर भारती की कहानियों में भूख का अध्ययन

स्वेता

हिन्दी विभाग, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय

Swetakushvaha850@gamil.com

शोध सार

भारत जैसे देश में आदिकाल से लेकर अब तक कई बार अकाल पड़ चुका है जैसे सूखा, बाढ़, युद्ध आदि के रूप में जिसके कारण लोगों के साथ-साथ जान-माल का भी भारी मात्रा में नुकसान होता रहा है। पर 1943 में बंगाल में पड़े अकाल ने लाखों लोगों को अपनी चपेट में ले लिया और मरने का सिर्फ एक बड़ा कारण था 'भूख' सड़कों पर घूमते हुए कंकाल नज़र आते मरी हुई लाशें जिस पर मक्खियां भिनभिनाती थी सड़कों पर मुर्दों की तरह आदमी पड़े हुए थे। ऐसा माना जाता है यह अकाल कोई प्राकृतिक नहीं था मानव निर्मित था, यह ब्रिटिश हुकूमत की प्रशासनिक व्यवस्था की असफलता थी जहां भारी मात्रा में अनाज होते हुए भी लोग मारे गए।

बीज शब्द - अकाल, भूख कलकत्ता की सड़कें, अनाज, चावल, बनिया।

शोध आलेख

बंगाल का अकाल स्वतंत्रता पूर्व 1943 में आया था। हम आगे बढ़ने से पहले अकाल शब्द के अर्थ को समझेंगे ग्रंथों, पुस्तकों आदि जगहों में अलग-अलग परिभाषा दी गई है, जिसमें 'संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ' के अनुसार "अकाल मुख्य रूप से तकनीकी शब्द है और यह उस स्थिति में इस्तेमाल में लाया जाता है जब कोई आबादी व्यापक ज स्तर पर कुपोषण और भोजन की कमी की वजह से भूख से होने वाली मौतों का सामना कर रही हो। अर्थशास्त्री 'आरिफ़ हुसैन' ने बताया कि किसी विशिष्ट भौगोलिक क्षेत्र (नगर, गांव, शहर या देश) में जब तीन प्रकार की स्थिति एक साथ पनप जाए, तो उसे वहां अकाल कहा जाता है।

1. स्थानीय आबादी का कम से कम 20 फ़ीसदी हिस्सा चरम स्तर पर भूख का सामना कर रही हो

कटं

2. उसी स्थान पर 30 प्रतिशत बच्चे नाटेपन का शिकार हों, या फिर अपनी लम्बाई की तुलना में बहुत पतले हो

3. मौतें या मृत्यु दर औसत से दोगुने हो गए हों, व्यस्कों के लिए प्रति 10 हजार व्यक्तियों पर दो मौतों और बच्चों के लिए प्रति 10 हजार बच्चों पर दैनिक चार मौतों की संख्या को पार कर गई हो।"⁴

इस अकाल में लगभग 30 लाख लोगों के मरने की संभावना बताई जाती है। मरने का कारण था लोगों के पास खाने को कुछ नहीं होना लोग भूख, बच्चे कूपोषण मलेरिया हैजा आदि बिमारियों से मर रहे थे। पर लोग का बड़ी तदाद में मारने का कारण क्रेड्र में भूख थी। लोग दाने- दाने को मोहताज थे कोई एक एक रोज तो कोई चार दिन तो कोई हफ्तों से फाका कर रहा था। चारों तरफ कंकाल ही कंकाल नज़र आ रहे थे। कलकत्ता के सड़कों की स्थिति बहुत भयावह थी। इंसान जानवरों से भी बढ़तर जिंदगी में मुर्दों के तरह सड़कों पर पड़े थे। ऐसा माना जाता है कि यह आपदा कोई प्राकृतिक

⁴ इंटेनेट, संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ, समाचार, 18 मार्च 20024

आपदा नहीं थी मानव निर्मित आपदा थी। क्योंकि उस समय ब्रिटिश सरकार कि हुकूमत थी अनाज भारी मात्रा में था अनाजों का व्यापारियों द्वारा कालाबाजारी किया जा रहा था। अनाज के दाम दुगने तीगुने चौगुने हो गए थे एक मुट्ठी चावल के लिए उन्हें भारी क्रीमत अदा करनी पड़ रही थी। अनाज दूसरे देशों में भेजा जा रहा था। इस अकाल को लेकर लेखकों ने खूब बेजोड़ तरीके से कलम चलाई विभिन्न भाषाओं चाहे वो अंग्रेजी, बांगला या हिंदी आदि में खूब रचनाएं की गईं। जिसमें कविता, कहानी, उपन्यास, रिपोर्ताज, नाटक आदि में हमें इसका वर्णन देखने को मिलता है, इसी में हमारे एक प्रसिद्ध साहित्यकार डाक्टर धर्मवीर भारती जी हुए, जिनकी लेखनी अपने समय के समकालीन साहित्यकारों में अपना एक महत्वपूर्ण स्थान रखती थी। उनका जन्म 25 दिसम्बर, 1926 उत्तर प्रदेश के प्रयाग में हुआ था। इस कारण यह भी माना जाता है कि उनके ऊपर ईशा मसीह का प्रभाव भी है, इनके पिता का नाम चिरंजीवी लाल वर्मा जो कि शाहजहांपुर के पास खुदागंज कस्बे के जमींदार थे। आर्यसमाजी माता श्रीमती चंदादेवी उनकी आरंभिक शिक्षा घर पर ही हुई। चौथी क्लास में डी.ए.वी. हाई स्कूल इलाहाबाद में इनका नाम लिखाया गया। पांचवी क्लास में इनके पिता का देहांत हो गया। जिसके कुछ समय बाद उनकी आर्थिक स्थिति बेहद खराब हो गई खराब। जिसके बाद उन्होंने अलग-अलग जगहों पर छोटे मोटे आगे की पढ़ाई साथ साथ जारी रखी। और फिर उसके बाद वह इलाहाबाद विश्वविद्यालय में अध्यापक बतौर अध्यापन का काम करते हुए लिखते रहे। उन्होंने विभिन्न विधाओं में रचनाएं की जिसमें सबसे पहले है।

मुक्तक काव्य - ठण्डा लोहा १९५२, सात गीत - वर्ष १९५५, सपना अभी भी १९५३

प्रबंध काव्य - खण्ड काव्य - कनुप्रिया १९५९, नाट्य काव्य - अन्धायुग १९५४

एंकाकी संकलन - नदी एक प्यासी थी १९५४

कहानी संग्रह मुर्दों का गांव १९४६ इसकी कहानियां अप्रकाशित रही थी, चांद और टूटे हुए लोग १९५५, बंद गली का आखिरी मकान १९६९

उपन्यास - गुनाहों का देवता १९४९, सूरज का सातवां घोड़ा १९५२

निबंध - ठेले पर हिमालय १९५८, कहानी - अनकहानी १९७०, पश्यन्ती १९४९

आलोचना- प्रगतिवाद : एक समीक्षा १९४९, मानव - मूल्य और साहित्य १९६०

ये सभी धर्मवीर भारती जी का रचना संसार है। बंगाल के अकाल को लेकर भारती जी की कलम बेजोड़ तरीके से चली जिसमें उन्होंने इस अकाल को लेकर एक कहानी संग्रह ही लिख डाला। ये भारती जी का पहला कहानी संग्रह 'मुर्दों का गांव' 1946 में किताब महल, इलाहाबाद से प्रकाशित हुआ। 'मुर्दों का गांव' में विद्यमान सभी कहानियों को 'चांद और टूटे हुए लोग' में संकलित कर दिया गया है। इस कहानी संग्रह में कुल 25 कहानियां हैं। यह संग्रह दो वर्गों में बांटा गया है। पहले में नयी कहानियां को संकलित किया गया है दूसरे में कुछ अप्रकाशित और प्रकाशित कहानियों को रखा गया जिसमें पहली कहानी मुर्दों का गांव, एक बच्ची की कीमत, आदमी का गोश्त, कफ़नचोर, हिन्दू या मुसलमान, कमल और मुर्दे, एक पत्र आदि। संपादक चन्द्रकान्त बांदिवडेकर धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली खण्ड दो में संपादकीय में लिखते हैं, कंगाली और भुखमरी में बिना विरोध एवं एड़ियां घिस कर मरने वाली सहिष्णु भारतीय जनता के असिमताहीन आचरण के लिए बेहद गुस्सा, खीझ और करूणा का भाव लेखक के मन को गहरे अंकित है। समस्त भारत मानो 'मुर्दों का गांव' हुआ है। प्रायः सभी कहानियों में कहानीकार अकाल के विभिन्न कारूणिक और यातनामय दृश्यों का चाक्षुस साक्षात्कार कराता है। "आगे भारती जी कहानियों से पहले! लिखते हैं अन्न जीवन की पहली आवश्यकता है; अन्न काव्य की प्रथम आवश्यकता है।

प्राणों वा अन्नम् - शरीरम् अन्ननादम !

आपको: वा अन्नम् - ज्योतिरात्रम् !!

पृथ्वी वा अन्नम् - आकाशोद्भवाः!!! (तैत्तरीय)⁵

कलकत्ता की सड़कों पर भूखे नंगे घूम रहे हैं भूख के कारण मरे लोगों की लाशें सड़ रही हैं। मरने वाली कि गिनती नहीं है लाशों पर मक्खियां भिनभिना रही हैं चील कौवे लाशों पर चक्कर लगा रहे हैं ये उनके लिए अवसर है अपना पेट भरना का। भारती जी लिखते हैं 'अधतेऽसित च भूतानि - जो अन्न को नहीं भोग सकता - अन्न उसे खा जाता है।'

सबसे पहली कहानी **मुर्दों का गांव** ये कहानी भूख से उपजी किस तरह जुलाहे जुलाहिन तथा नितार्ई धीवर पठ्ठा जवान है जिसकी जिविका नाव चलाने से चलती है पर इस अकाल ने उसके शरीर को कंकाल बना दिया है स्थिति इतनी खराब हो जाती है कि उसके पास खाने को नहीं था भूख के कारण उसकी मां मर जाती है जिसके पास कुछ खाने को ना हो उससे चिता सजाने की सोचना तो दूर की बात है वह अपनी नाव में मां के लाश को रक्खा ऊपर से सूखी घास डालकर आग लगा दी रहा सहा भी सहारा चला गया। आगे कहानी बढ़ती हुई जुलाहे जुलाहिन ये कहानी हमारे समाज में जो सबसे निचले तबके में आते जो अपना छोटा मोटा काम करके घर चलाते हैं इस तबके से कबीर का भी संबंध है जो जुलाहे का काम करते थे उनकी स्थिति इस आपदा में कितनी दयनीय और विभिन्न हो गई है कि उन्हें अपनी भूख मिटाने जहरीली जड़ों को खाना पड़ रहा और यहां ना तो कोई सरकारी योजनाओं कि झलक दिखलाई पड़ रही सरकार कि तरफ से कुछ भी नहीं जा रहा है अगर किया जा रहा तो वह है आंकड़े इकट्ठे किए जा रहे हैं। इस भूख ने पूरे एक गांव को लील लिया है और शायद इस आधार पर लेखक ने इसका नाम रखा मुर्दों का गांव जहां कोई भी जीवित नहीं है।

अगली कहानी **एक बच्चे की कीमत** जिसमें शुरूआत की दूसरी लाईन ही प्रश्न पूछती है कि 'तुम कब से भूखे हों?' और यह प्रश्न पूछना जैसे मामूली सा हो गया है इस प्रश्न जैसे कह रहा हो कि भूखे रहना कोई बड़ी समस्या नहीं है, आगे कहानी में दो औरतें एक ही गांव की रहने वाली मिलती हैं वहां भी यही प्रश्न बिन्दो रामी से प्रश्न पूछती है तुम कब से भूखी हो तुम्हारी बच्ची कितनी दुबली और कंकाल हो गई है। रामी का बिन्दो से सवाल क्या तुम्हारी बच्ची मर गई? तब बिन्दो का जवाब नहीं जिंदा है मैंने पंजाबी के हाथों बेच दिया! इस शब्द का कहना जैसे चीख कर कह रही हो कहां गई मां की ममता भूख ने उसे इस तरह निर्लज्ज, इतना संवेदनहीन बना दिया कि एक मां कि ममता को पेट की ज्वाला खा गई मां बेटी का ममत्व खत्म कर दिया, उसे अपने आपको को कितना कठोर करना पड़ा होगा। रामी के 13 वक्त फाके हो चुके हैं जिसके कारण शरीर कमजोर पड़ चुका इतना कि नल की टोंटी तक घुमा पाने में असमर्थ है जैसे जैसे वह पानी भरकर लाती है। और अपनी बेटी के सूखी हलकों में थोड़ा पानी डाल दिया बच्ची ने आंखों खोली "बेटी ने हाथ पटककर सूखे गले से कहां 'भूख मां! भूख पहले कहां मां बाद में' भूख रामी कुछ देर मन ही मन में विवश होकर कहां क्यों ना पंजाबी को बेच दू आराम से रहेगी बच्ची को भरपेट खाना मिल सकेगा वह पंजाबी के पास पहुंचकर कहती है "उसने अभी तक मछलियां बेचीं थी तरकारी बेची थीं, धान बेचा था, अपनी संताने कभी नहीं बेचीं थीं।"⁶ कितना मार्मिक शब्द है एक जीते जागते इंसान को तराकारी के भाव बेचना। पंजाबी जैसे लोग का यह दर्शाना कि किस तरह पुरूषों ने महिलाओं और नर्तकी सी फूल सी बच्ची के लिए वैश्यावृति एक बाजार तैयार खड़े किए हुए थे। मजबूर लोग भूख मिटाने के एक पांव चावल दो पैसे कि कीमत भी उनको बहुत अधिक दिखलाई पड़ रही थी और पंजाबी का चिल्लना कि कोई गाय - बकरी बेच रही है जो रूपए लेगी आठ आना लेगी नहीं तो तेरी मरजी है और वह आठननी उसके सामने फेंक देता है। रामी की हिम्मत नहीं थी कि वह उठाए वह कांप रही थी। वह जल्दी उठाती है और भागकर बनिए को देकर कहां "चावल" उसने शांकित भाव से कहा दो रूपए सेर मिलेंगे। गल्ला खोलकर वह अठनी बदल देता है और कहता है ठगने आई है खोटी अठनी बनिए जैसे धुर्त बेईमान लोग इस आपदा में लोगों का शोषण करने से नहीं हिचकिचाते कहा जा सकता है एक चलते फिरते शरीर में मरी हुई संवेदना मौजूद जो लोगों की पीड़ाएं देखने की वजह वह अपने लिए अवसर की ताक में नजर आते दिखलाई पड़ रहे हैं।

⁵ धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली, संपा चंद्रकांत बाँदिवडेकर खंड 2, वाणी, नई दिल्ली, 2007, पृष्ठ संख्या 18

⁶ धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली, संपा चंद्रकांत बाँदिवडेकर खंड 2, वाणी, नई दिल्ली, 2007, पृष्ठ संख्या 29

आदमी का गोश्त कहानी इस कहानी में दो जानवर स्यार और स्यारीन प्रतीक के रूप में प्रयोग किया गया है जो इनके ईर्द-गिर्द घुमती नजर आती है दो दिन बाद स्यार का लौटना और स्यारीन से कहना 'जानती हो, मैं आदमी का गोश्त खाकर आ रहा हूँ। जिन्दा, ताजा लज़ीज़।' आगे बताता है कि किस तरह स्यारीन का साथ छूट जाता है और वह शहर की तरफ चला जाता है वहाँ पहुंचकर देखता है झोपड़ी में एक बूढ़ा है जहाँ एक बच्चा कराह रहा है पानी जब बूढ़ा पानी उसके कदम लड़खड़ा जाते हैं और पानी बच्चे पर गिर जाता है और खिंझ कर कहता मर जा कम्बख्त यहाँ भूख ने बूढ़े का बच्चे के प्रति प्रेम को खत्म कर दिया है। उसके पास सामर्थ्य नहीं है कि वह एक वक्त का खाना उस बच्चे के लिए जुटा पाए। स्यारीन का अपने बच्चे को दूध पिलाते हुए कहना क्या आदमी बच्चे से प्रेम नहीं करते है यह मानव जाति पर एक प्रश्न चिह्न खड़ा करती है। आगे स्यार का जवाब "सामने वाली कोठी में एक छोटा बच्चा हार्लिक्स ना पीने लिए रो रहा था मना मना कर हार्लिक्स पिला रही थी।"⁷ यहाँ ये इस लाइन से साफ़ साफ़ शब्दों में कहती नज़र आता है कि किस तरह सामाजिक असमानता है उच्च वर्ग और निम्न वर्ग के बीच कितना अंतर है और ये गरीबों का खून चुसकर कर अपने घर के गोदामों को अनाज से भरे हुए है किसी के पास एक वक्त का मुठी भर भोजन करने के लिए अन्न नहीं और किसी के इतना है खाना नहीं खाने के लिए मना कर रहा है। फूटपाथ के दूसरी साईड पर एक आदमी लेटा था। स्यार को मरा हुआ मालूम देता था स्यार लाश पास जाकर दांत गड़ा देता है लाश चिहूक उठती है वह मरा नहीं जिन्दा था वह तीन दिन से प्यासा किसने छत से ठंडा पीनी फेंक दिया वह पानी बेहोश भूखी लाश पर पड़ा उस पर मक्खियां भिनभिना रही स्थिति इतनी खराब कि वह अपने ही ताज़ा खून को चांटा। स्यार कहता है "यही तो खासियत है। आदमी पहले दूसरे आदमियों का खून पीकर गोश्त खाकर जिन्दा रहता है दूसरों का गोश्त नहीं मिलता वह अपना ही खून पीता है। हम जानवर ऐसा नहीं करते इसी से तुम्हें ताज़ुब होता है, मगर हम जानवरों की सारी कमी इन्सान ने पूरी कर दी है। इसलिए तो आदमी जानवरों से बड़ा माना जाता है।"⁸ यहाँ एक जानवर द्वारा मनुष्य जाति पर व्यंग्य किया गया है, आदमी आदमी का शोषण करता है। आगे इस लाशों को देखकर बनिया झल्लाए हुए अंदाज में कहता है "जहाँ देखो कमबख्त मक्खियों की तरह मर जाते हैं। आने जाने का रास्ता भी नहीं छोड़ते है। बनिए जैसे लोगों का मोटा होना यह दिखलाता है कि किस तरह वह लोगों का शोषण करके वो मोटे हुए हैं और कहानी आगे बढ़ती हुई स्यार और स्यारीन दोनों में प्रतिवाद होते हुए कि तुमने आदमी का गोश्त नहीं खाया है भूख और गुलामी से मरने वाले आदमी नहीं होते है, स्यार सिर झुका लेता है 'उसने एक गुलाम भूखमरे का गोश्त खाया है था गुलाम भूखमरे जो आदमी नहीं होते है।'

बिमारियां - इस कहानी में चंदन जो शहर में मजूरी करने जाता है वहाँ हैजा फैल जाता है, वह बिमारी में ही गांव लौटता है जब वह बेला को अपनी जेब से पैसे निकालने को कहता है तब बेला जेब में हाथ डालती है तो वह खाली पाती है सिवाय "तन्दुरूस्ती, जवानी अपमान, भूख, सब मोल महज एक कटी हुई जेब वह एक आह भरकर चुप हो गया।"⁹ शहर ने उसे ये सभी चीजे छिन ली थी। उसके पास कुछ नहीं था। दिन पर दिन उसकी बिमारी बढ़ती गई पेट में अचानक भयानक दर्द शुरू हुआ उसकी हालत खराब होती गई, जबतक बेला उधार दवा लेने जाती है बीच में ठाकुर जैसे लोग दवा कीमत बेला के शरीर से लगाते है उसकी लाचारी का फायदा उठाने कोशिश करता है पर बेला वहाँ से भाग निकलती है घर आकर देखती है चंदन की लाश पड़ी है उसे देखकर चिखती है। और मजबूर होकर वह ठाकुर के पास जाती है। वहाँ ठाकुर उसका शारिरिक शोषण करता है और एक कागज़ का टुकड़ा थमा देता है। उसी पैसे उसका अंतिम संस्कार होता है। एक दिन एक पठान कस्बे में आकर चंदन के बारे में पूछता है ? पटेसरी बताता है वह हैजे से मर गया तब पठान हंसते हुए कहता है 'जिंदगी भर भूखे रहने के बाद कभी पेट भर खाना मिल जाये तो आंते उसे सहेंगी कैसे?' यहाँ चंदन की मृत्यु किसी बिमारी के कारण नहीं बल्कि भूख के कारण हुई थी पठान अपनी बीती हुई कहानी सुनाता है जब उनके यहाँ खाने को कुछ नहीं था तब एक माल गाड़ी जा रही थी लाहौर का गेहूँ का अनाज लूट लिया हफ्ते भर खाया हम भूखे नहीं मरे और ना हमने सीखा। यहाँ भारत के लोगों के प्रति व्यंग्य किया गया जो अपने हक के लिए सरकार से नहीं लड़ते है तुम कायर लोग हो

⁷ धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली, संपा चंद्रकांत बाँदिवडेकर खंड 2, वाणी, नई दिल्ली, 2007, पृष्ठ संख्या 32

⁸ धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली, संपा चंद्रकांत बाँदिवडेकर खंड 2, वाणी, नई दिल्ली, 2007, पृष्ठ संख्या 33

⁹ धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली, संपा चंद्रकांत बाँदिवडेकर खंड 2, वाणी, नई दिल्ली, 2007, पृष्ठ संख्या 36

“अरे तुम्हारे पूरे मूल्क में लोग मरते हैं भूखे से और तुम्हारे चश्मे वाले डाक्टर कहते हैं हैजा है, मलेरिया है। और गरीब ही नहीं तुम्हारे यहां के अमीर भी मरते हैं। मगर दरि की बिमारी से !”¹⁰ यहां पर दूसरे मूल्क के व्यक्ति द्वारा हमारी जनता का कायरता को चित्रित किया है किस तरह वे भूखमरी और गरीबी से मरते हैं पर लड़ने का साहस नहीं करते।

कफन-चोर - यह कहानी बूढ़े करीम और उसकी बेटी सकीना कि जिसे की कई दिनों से बुखार है। वह जल रही है सिथति इतनी खराब की चादर तक नहीं है ओढ़ने को और सरकार से सस्ता कपड़ा आने की उम्मीदें लगाए बैठे हैं। तभी बूढ़ा करीम ध्यान भटकाने के लिए उसे कहानी सुनाते है और कहते है “ हम गुलाम और गरीब लोग तब भी नंगे रहते थे और अब भी नंगे रहते हैं। जानती हो क्यों ताकि अमीर लोग हमारे नंगों कन्धों पर आसानी से हाथ जमाकर सोने चांदी की सीढियों पर चढ़ सकें।”¹¹ करीम दोपहर से कुछ नहीं खाया था सो गया। “ हिंदुस्तानियों की आदत है कि जब वे भूखे होते है तो सो जाते है और सपने देखने लगते हैं।”¹² तभी अचानक सकीना चीखती है पुस की रात और कांपती सकीना जिसके शरीर एक कुर्ता जो महीनों से पहना था अचानक चर्करा फट जाता है और वह शर्म से खुद को ढकने की कोशिश करती है, करीम से बर्दाश्त नहीं हुआ वह जाता है कब्रगाह के पास एक क़ब्र जो आज ही खुदी थी वहां रखा फावड़ा उठाकर खोदने लगता वहां बैठा भिखमंगा फरिश्ता समझकर आता है और कहता है आप पैगम्बर मुहम्मद के फरिश्ते है। तो वह चिल्लाता है और कहता कहता ‘मैं चोर हूं बूढ़े मैं कफन चुराने आया हूं मेरी बेटी बिना कपड़े के मर रही है।’ यहां पर समाज का एक ऐसा वर्ग है जिसके पास इतना भी नहीं कि अपना तन ढक सके और एक उच्च वर्ग है जो ओवरकोट और मफलर से कान और छाती ढके हुए कहता है कपड़े कि ऐसी क्या कमी जो कब्र खोद कर कफन चुराने जाए और कहानी का यही अंत हो जाता है।

हिन्दू या मुसलमान यह कहानी एक सरकारी अस्पताल से शुरू होती है जहा 30 लाशें आती है ये कलकत्ता कि सड़कों से उठाकर इलाज के लिए लाए गए मुर्दे है जिन्हें जाने में मुश्किल पैदा होती थी। अस्पताल में पहुंचे एक मरीज़ की मृत्यु हो जाती है, जहां सवाल पूछे जाते है कहां से लाया गया हिंदू है या मुसलमान तब लगा क्या मुर्दों की धर्म की कोई पहचान नहीं होती, इतनी मौतें हो चुकी थी सहकारी ने कहा सबको इंजेक्शन दो “बाहर मरने की प्रवाह नहीं। यहां मरेंगे तो सरकार की बदनामी होगी। और देखो अखबार को रिपोर्ट दो कि कुल 7 मौते हुए।”¹³ यहां प्रशासनिक व्यवस्था का पोल खोलती नज़र है किसी तरह मेडिकल अस्पतालों की स्थिति हो गई व्यवस्था कि लचर है असली आंकड़ा और फाईल में बने आंकड़े की गड़बड़ी का पोल खोलती हुई दिलाई पड़ती है। जब कहानी आगे बढ़ती है इन लाशों के साथ ही अस्पताल में एक बुढ़िया भी आती है जो कई दिनों से भूखी है जिसके पेट में भूख के कारण आंते मरोड़ने लगती है वह साबुन कम्पनी के पंजाबी दरबान के पास जाती है हाथ फैलाती तो हंसकर कहता है ‘अगर तू जवान होती तो इज्जत बेचने पर शायद 8- 10 पैसे मिल जाते’ अब किस बिरते पर भीख मांगने आई है। यहां पर यह देखने को मिलता है किस प्रकार वैश्यावृति चल रही थी। स्त्रियां पेट की आग बुझाने के लिए खुद को निलाम कर रही थी। यहां पर जवान और बुढ़ी औरत की तुलना की जा रही है। आगे जाती है भोजनालय पर बहुत भीड़ थी वहां पर खाना मज़हब के नाम पर दिया जा रहा था हिंदु है या मुसलमान बुढ़िया मुसलमान होती है वहां से उसे भगा दिया जाता है। सामने दूसरा ढाबा था जहां पर सिर्फ मुसलमानों को खाना मिलता था। वह पर जाने पर उसे काफ़िर कहकर निकाल दिया है क्या भूख का कोई मज़हब से ताल्लुक होता है? यहां प्रश्न चिह्न और कहने का प्रयास किया गया है कि भूख का संबंध किसी धर्म से नहीं है। अगले दिन कलकत्ता के दैनिक अखबार में छपता है “बंगाल के अकाल में समस्त भारत, प्रान्त और धर्म का भेद भाव भुलाकर सहायता कर रहा है माड़वाडियों और इस्फहानियों, दोनों ने सार्वजनिक भोजनालय खोले हैं। इस संबंध में हम सरकारी अस्पतालों की मूल्यवान सहायता भी नहीं

¹⁰ धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली, संपा चंद्रकांत बाँदिवडेकर खंड 2, वाणी, नई दिल्ली, 2007, पृष्ठ संख्या 39

¹¹ धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली, संपा चंद्रकांत बाँदिवडेकर खंड 2, वाणी, नई दिल्ली, 2007, पृष्ठ संख्या 41

¹² धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली, संपा चंद्रकांत बाँदिवडेकर खंड 2, वाणी, नई दिल्ली, 2007, पृष्ठ संख्या 41

¹³ धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली, संपा चंद्रकांत बाँदिवडेकर खंड 2, वाणी, नई दिल्ली, 2007, पृष्ठ संख्या 46

भुला सकते। हम इन सबके हृदय से कृतज्ञ हैं।¹⁴ और कहानी का अंतिम पड़ाव में भूखमरों की संख्या में भारी कमी आती और बढ़िया की मृत्यु हो जाने के बाद उसको जलाया जाए या दफनाया जाए पर खत्म होती है।

निष्कर्ष - बंगाल के अकाल ने भूख से लगभग 30 लाख लोगों को लील लिया। भारी मात्रा में लोग कलकत्ता कि सड़कों पर मारे गए। चारों तरफ़ लाशें नज़र आ रही थीं उन लाशों पर मक्खियां भिनभिनाती तथा चील कौवे चक्कर लागते नज़र आते उनके लिए यह एक अवसर की तरह था क्योंकि उनका पेट भर रहा था। लोग दाने दाने को तरस गए थे सड़कों पर आदमियों की जगह उनकी कंकाल और और शारीरिक ढांचे नज़र आते। प्रशासनिक व्यवस्था बिल्कुल लचर दिखलाई पड़ रही थी व्यापारी बनिए अनाजों को अपने गोदामों में भरे हुए बहुत मंहगे दामों पर चावल को बेच रहे थे। इस अकाल को लेकर बहुत से लेख रचनाएं पत्रिका अखबारों में छपते अलग-अलग भाषाओं में रचनाएं हो रही थी कोई कविता, कहानी, रिपोर्टाज, उपन्यास, नाटक आदि लिखा जा रहा था। इसी में हिंदी के एक जाने-माने साहित्यकार धर्मवीर भारती जी जिन्होंने इस अकाल को लेकर अपनी कलम चलाई जिससे 'मुर्दे का गांव' नामक कहानी संग्रह आती है इसमें संकलित सभी कहानियों भूख को बहुत गहरे स्तर पर परखती नज़र आती है इसकी पहली कहानी मुर्दे का गांव जिसमें जुलाहे जुलाहिन नितार्थ धीवर की जो निम्न तबके से आते हैं और किस तरह जुलाहे जुलाहिन की लाश उस गांव की अंतिम लाश होती। अगली कहानी में मां एक बच्चे कीमत क्या लगाए नहीं पता उसे। आज तक उसने मछली और तरकारी ही बेची अपनी बच्ची नहीं। यहां भूख ने पुत्री के प्रति ममता खत्म होती हुई नज़र आती उसे उसके पेट की आग ने मजबूर किया और पंजाबी जैसे लोग जो लड़की मूल्य अठनी लगाकर उसे वैश्यावृत्ति में धकेलते हुए 500 रूपए कमाने की सोचता है। 'आदमी का गोश्त' कहानी किस तरह स्यार और स्यारीन के माध्यम से उच्च और निम्न वर्ग के बीच कितनी गहरी खाई है जहां एक निम्न वर्ग के बूढ़े बाबा के अपने पोते खाने के लिए कुछ नहीं वही उच्च वर्ग का एक बच्चा जो हार्लिक्स पीने के लिए मना कर रहा है। स्यार स्यारीन दोनों के प्रतिवाद होता है और पता चलता है कि स्यार ने एक गुलाम भूखमरे का गोश्त खाया था जो आदमी नहीं होते हैं। 'बिमारियां' यहां चंदन की मृत्यु भी भूख कारण होती है कई महीनों खाना नहीं खाया था उसके बाद उसने पेट भर खाना खाया जिससे उसकी आंते सह नहीं पाई। उसके अंतिम संस्कार के लिए बेला ठाकुर के पास जाती है जो कि उसका शारिरिक शोषण करता है और उसको एक नोट पकड़ा देता। अंतिम पड़ाव पर पठान कहता है तुम्हारे यहां लोग भूख गरीबी से मरते हैं। तुम लोग गुलाम हो' कफ़न चोर 'कहानी करीम सकीना के तन को ढकने के लिए उसे कफ़न चुराना पड़ता है। हिंदू या मुस्लिम इस कहानी में अस्पताल के द्वारा बनाए गए आंकड़ों की पोल खुलती नज़र आती है जहां भूख से मरने वालों की मृत्यु 21 होती है और बताई जाता 7 भूखों कि मृत्यु हुई इनका धर्म पूछा जाता है हिंदू है कि मुसलमान है मुर्दे की मज़हब की पहचान नहीं होती है। यहां हिंदुओं के लिए अलग किचन खुल रखा और मुसलमानों के अलग है। और अंत में कलकत्ता के दैनिक अखबार में छपता है समस्त भारत के लोग धर्म भेदभाव भुलाकर सहायता कर रहे हैं

¹⁴ धर्मवीर भारती ग्रंथवाली, संपा चंद्रकांत बाँदिवडेकर खंड 2, वाणी, नई दिल्ली, 2007, पृष्ठ संख्या 47

परिवार, शिक्षा और किन्नर जीवन; एक त्रासदीपूर्ण यथार्थ

सीमा वर्मा

शोधार्थी (हिंदी विभाग), दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय

ईमेल आईडी- semaverma20@gmail.com

शोध सार

भारतीय समाज में किन्नर समुदाय की स्थिति सदियों से हाशिए पर रही है, जहां उन्हें न तो पूर्ण रूप से स्त्री और न ही पुरुष की श्रेणी में रखा जाता है। इस शोध लेख का मुख्य उद्देश्य किन्नर जीवन के प्रमुख आयामों—परिवार, शिक्षा और समग्र जीवन की त्रासदीपूर्ण वास्तविकता—का विश्लेषण करना है। परिवार में किन्नर बच्चे का जन्म अक्सर एक अभिशाप के रूप में देखा जाता है, जिससे उन्हें जन्म से ही त्याग दिया जाता है या सामाजिक घृणा का शिकार बनना पड़ता है। जन्म परिवार से अलगाव के बाद वे किन्नर गुरुओं के अधीन एक वैकल्पिक परिवार संरचना में शामिल होते हैं, जो उनकी सुरक्षा तो प्रदान करती है लेकिन आर्थिक शोषण और भावनात्मक अलगाव को भी बढ़ावा देती है। शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में किन्नरों को गहन भेदभाव, उत्पीड़न और बुनियादी सुविधाओं की कमी का सामना करना पड़ता है, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप उनकी साक्षरता दर मात्र 46% के आसपास रह जाती है। स्कूलों में उनका प्रवेश दुर्लभ होता है, और यदि होता भी है तो सहपाठियों की बदमाशी और मानसिक तनाव उन्हें शिक्षा छोड़ने पर मजबूर कर देता है। परिणामस्वरूप, उनका जीवन भिक्षावृत्ति, वेश्यावृत्ति या अन्य निम्न स्तर के कार्यों तक सीमित रह जाता है, जो उनके जीवन की त्रासदी को और गहरा बनाता है। शोध से पता चलता है कि कानूनी प्रावधानों जैसे भारतीय संविधान के अनुच्छेद 377 की समाप्ति (2018) और ट्रांसजेंडर व्यक्ति (अधिकार संरक्षण) अधिनियम 2019 के बावजूद, सामाजिक स्वीकृति की कमी से उनका जीवन अभी भी दयनीय बना हुआ है। समावेशी नीतियों, शिक्षा सुधारों, जागरूकता अभियानों और साहित्यिक प्रतिनिधित्व के माध्यम से इस त्रासदी को कम किया जा सकता है।

बीज शब्द

किन्नर विमर्श, परिवार बहिष्कार, शिक्षा भेदभाव, त्रासदीपूर्ण यथार्थ, हिंदी उपन्यास, ट्रांसजेंडर अधिकार, सामाजिक अलगाव, वैकल्पिक परिवार, साक्षरता कमी, उत्पीड़न, उद्धरण विश्लेषण, साहित्यिक प्रतिनिधित्व।

प्रस्तावना

भारतीय समाज की संरचना अत्यंत विविधतापूर्ण है, जहां स्त्री और पुरुष की द्वैधता पर आधारित पारंपरिक व्यवस्था में किन्नर समुदाय एक अस्पष्ट और उपेक्षित रेखा के रूप में विद्यमान है। किन्नर, जिन्हें हिजड़ा, ट्रांसजेंडर, तृतीय लिंगी या उभयलिंगी भी कहा जाता है, जन्मजात शारीरिक विशेषताओं या सामाजिक कारणों से इस श्रेणी में आते हैं। उनकी पहचान न तो पूर्णतः स्त्री है और न ही पुरुष, जिसके फलस्वरूप वे सदियों से सामाजिक, आर्थिक, भावनात्मक और राजनीतिक रूप से वंचित रहे हैं। साहित्य को समाज का दर्पण माना जाता है, जैसा कि विद्वान अक्सर कहते हैं, और आधुनिक हिंदी कथा साहित्य में किन्नर विमर्श ने इस दर्पण को और अधिक पारदर्शी बनाया है। प्रमुख रचनाएं जैसे नीरजा माधव की 'यमदीप' (2009), महेंद्र भीष्म की 'किन्नर कथा' (2011), प्रदीप सौरभ की 'तीसरी ताली' (2011), चित्रा मुद्गल की 'गुलाम मंडी' (2018) और 'पोस्ट बॉक्स नं. 203 नाला सोपारा' (2017) किन्नरों की पीड़ा, संघर्ष और पहचान के संकट को जीवंत रूप से चित्रित करती हैं। इनमें परिवार से बहिष्कार, शिक्षा की कमी और जीवन की समग्र त्रासदी प्रमुख रूप से उभरती है। 2011 की भारतीय जनगणना के

अनुसार, “देश में लगभग 4.88 लाख किन्नर हैं, लेकिन उनकी साक्षरता दर मात्र 46% है, जो उनकी दयनीय स्थिति को रेखांकित करती है। उच्च शिक्षा का प्रतिशत तो और भी कम है, मात्र 2-3% के आसपास।”¹ भारतीय इतिहास में किन्नरों का उल्लेख प्राचीन काल से मिलता है। रामायण में राम के वनवास के दौरान किन्नरों का इंतजार उनकी भक्ति को दर्शाता है, जबकि महाभारत में अर्जुन का बृहन्नला रूप किन्नर पहचान का प्रतीक है। लेकिन मध्यकाल और ब्रिटिश काल में उनकी स्थिति बिगड़ी। 1871 के क्रिमिनल ट्राइब्स एक्ट ने उन्हें अपराधी ठहराया, जिसका प्रभाव आज भी समाज की धारणा में दिखता है। आधुनिक काल में साहित्य ने इस विमर्श को नई दिशा दी है, विशेषकर 2000 के दशक से।

किन्नर और परिवार: त्याग और अलगाव की त्रासदी

किन्नर जीवन की सबसे बड़ी त्रासदी उनके परिवार से ही आरंभ होती है। भारतीय समाज में परिवार को एक पवित्र और अटूट इकाई माना जाता है, लेकिन किन्नर बच्चे का जन्म इसे एक अभिशाप की तरह प्रभावित करता है। जन्म से ही उन्हें दोषी ठहराया जाता है, मानो प्रकृति का कोई दोष हो। भारतीय संस्कृति में बच्चे के जन्म को बड़े उत्सव के रूप में मनाया जाता है, गीत सोहर गाये जाते हैं। लेकिन यही आनंदोल्लास बदल जाते हैं दुःख में, सभी गीत - सोहर तब्दील हो जाते हैं मातम में, जब जन्म होता है परिवार में एक किन्नर बच्चे का। हम स्वीकार नहीं कर पाते हैं नन्हे से उस अपने अंश को। हमारे भारतीय समाज की यह एक विडम्बना है कि शारीरिक और मानसिक रूप से दिव्यांग बच्चे को स्वीकार तो करता है, लेकिन स्त्री-पुरुष, युगल से भिन्न लिंग प्राप्त बच्चे को पूर्णतः अस्वीकृति की निगाह से देखता है। महीनों, सालों इंतजार के बाद प्राप्त इस बच्चे को उसके माता पिता भी स्वीकार नहीं कर पाते हैं। “जननांग विकलांगता बहुत बड़ा दोष है लेकिन इतना बड़ा भी नहीं की तुम मान लो की तुम धड़ का मात्र वही निचला हिस्सा भर हो। मस्तिष्क नहीं हो, दिल नहीं हो, धड़कन नहीं हो, आँख नहीं हो। तुम्हारे हाथ पैर नहीं है। हैं, हैं, हैं, सब वैसा ही है, जैसे औरों के हैं। यौन सुख लेने-देने से वंचित हो तुम, वात्सल्य सुख से नहीं! सोचो। बच्चे तुम पैदा नहीं कर सकते मगर पिता नहीं बन सकते, यह किसने नहीं समझने दिया तुम्हें? सुनो-पहचानो उन्हें। पहचानो। अपने श्रम पर जिओ। मनोरंजन की दक्षिणा पर नहीं। हिकारत की दक्षिणा ज़हर है, ज़हर। तुम्हें मारने का ज़हर। तुम्हें समाज से बाहर करने का ज़हर।”² परिवार के द्वारा ही बाल किन्नरों पर जानलेवा हमला किया जाना, किन्नरों के जीवन की सबसे त्रासद घटना होती है। प्रायः हमारे पितृसत्तात्मक वर्ग कभी स्वीकार नहीं कर पाता है कि उनका शिशु एक किन्नर है। परिवार के पुरुषों को बिलकुल बर्दाश्त नहीं होता कि लोग उन्हें एक हिजड़े के बाप के रूप में जाने। परिवार अक्सर उन्हें त्याग देता है, क्योंकि सामाजिक कलंक, रिश्तेदारों, पड़ोसियों की घृणा और आर्थिक बोझ का डर रहता है। उदाहरण के लिए, नीरजा माधव की ‘यमदीप’ में नाज बीबी की कहानी ऐसी ही त्रासदी को दर्शाती है, जहां किन्नर जन्म माता-पिता के लिए एक संकट बन जाता है। माता-पिता उन्हें किन्नर गुरुओं को सौंप देते हैं, जो एक वैकल्पिक परिवार का रूप लेते हैं। यह वैकल्पिक परिवार गुरु-चेले की पारंपरिक संरचना पर आधारित है, जहां गुरु सुरक्षा, आवास और भोजन प्रदान करता है, लेकिन बदले में आर्थिक शोषण करता है। किन्नर समुदाय में यह परिवार संरचना मजबूत है, क्योंकि जन्म परिवार से अलगाव के बाद यही उनका एकमात्र सहारा होता है। लेकिन यह भी त्रासदपूर्ण है, क्योंकि इसमें सच्चा प्रेम कम और आवश्यकता अधिक होती है। समुदाय के भीतर पदानुक्रम होता है, जहां नए चेले गुरुओं के अधीन रहते हैं, और उनका जीवन नियमों से बंधा होता है।

साहित्य में यह त्रासदी बार-बार उभरती है। ‘किन्नर कथा’ में चंदा का जन्म एक राजघराने में होता है, लेकिन वह परिवार के लिए आश्चर्यजनक और अस्वीकार्य घटना बन जाती है। “अपने बुंदेला खानदान को नाम डुबा दें, क्षत्री वंश में हिजड़ा, का ऊ हिजड़ा हां पाले-पोसे अरे आज नहीं तो कल, जब सबके सामने जा बात आ जेहे कि हमआई संतान हिजड़ा है, बुंदेला खून हिजड़ा पैदा करत तो का गत हुई है हमआई, समझत काय नईय्या तुम इत्ती सी बात।”³ परिवार उसे छिपाने या त्यागने का प्रयास करता है, जो किन्नरों की सामान्य स्थिति को प्रतिबिंबित करता है। इसी प्रकार, प्रदीप सौरभ की ‘तीसरी ताली’ में भूख, गरीबी और पारिवारिक दबाव के कारण किन्नर धंधे अपनाते वाले पात्रों की कहानी परिवार के विघटन को दिखाती है। वास्तविक जीवन में भी, किन्नरों को जन्म से ही अलग कर दिया जाता है। वे मुख्य रूप से चार श्रेणियों में विभक्त

होते हैं: बुवरा (जन्मजात उभयलिंगी), नीलिमा (मानसिक रूप से स्त्रैण), मनसा (स्त्रैण स्वभाव वाले पुरुष) और हंसा (शारीरिक कमी वाले)। बुवरा को परिवार तुरंत त्याग देता है, जबकि अन्य श्रेणियों में सामाजिक दबाव उन्हें घर से बाहर धकेलता है। परिणामस्वरूप, उनका जीवन बिना पारिवारिक समर्थन के गुजरता है, जो भावनात्मक रूप से उन्हें टूटा हुआ बनाता है। एक अन्य उदाहरण 'किन्नर कथा' से: **"मैं किस लिंग का हूँ? मेरी देह में क्या कमी है कि परिवार मुझे अपनाते से इंकार करता है?"**⁴ यह उदाहरण परिवार के त्याग की भावनात्मक गहराई को दर्शाता है, जहां किन्नर बच्चा अपनी पहचान पर सवाल उठाता है, किन्नर बच्चे को बिना किसी दोष के ही त्याग दिया जाता है। इसी प्रकार किन्नरों का परिवार से बहिष्कार उन्हें भिक्षावृत्ति, बर्दाई गाने या वेश्यावृत्ति की ओर धकेलता है, जो उनके जीवन की त्रासदी को और बढ़ाता है। सामाजिक अध्ययनों से पता चलता है कि 70% से अधिक किन्नर जन्म से ही परिवार से अलग हो जाते हैं, और वैकल्पिक परिवार में भी वे पूर्ण स्वतंत्रता से वंचित रहते हैं। यह स्थिति न केवल भावनात्मक है बल्कि आर्थिक भी, क्योंकि बिना पारिवारिक समर्थन के वे गरीबी के चक्र में फंस जाते हैं। भारतीय समाज में परिवार को एक पवित्र और अटूट इकाई माना जाता है, लेकिन किन्नर बच्चे का जन्म इसे अभिशाप की तरह प्रभावित करता है। जन्म से ही उन्हें दोषी ठहराया जाता है, मानो प्रकृति का कोई दोष हो। जिस प्रकार बाल्यकाल में स्त्री पुरुष बच्चों में शारीरिक परिवर्तन होते हैं उसी प्रकार बाल्यवस्था के सात वर्ष से चौदह वर्ष का पूरा समय बाल किन्नरों के लिए मानसिक असंतुलन एवं कई अप्रत्याशित शारीरिक बदलाव का दौर होता है। दूसरे शब्दों में कहें तो बाल किन्नरों के लिए यह अवस्था उनके शारीरिक और उनके तीव्र मानसिक अंतर्द्वंद का दौर होता है, जब बाल किन्नर अपनी शारीरिक संरचना और मानसिक भावों के बीच सामंजस्य स्थापित नहीं कर पाता है। शारीरिक-मानसिक अंतर्द्वंद के इसी दौर में इन्हें पहली बार इस बात का एहसास होने लगता है कि वह लड़के-लड़कियों से अलग हैं। उन्हें अपने शरीर में हो रहे अनैच्छिक परिवर्तन के प्रति नफरत होने लगती है। धीरे-धीरे बाल किन्नरों में किन्नर - जीवन का सहज हाव-भाव विकसित होने लगता है। किशोरावस्था की ओर अग्रसर बाल किन्नर को प्रायः लुक-छिपकर स्त्रियों के कपड़े पहनना एवं स्त्रियों के रूप में सजना-सँवरना अच्छा लगने लगता है, लेकिन ऐसे बच्चे अपनी पसंद को जाहिर करने से कतराते हैं। बाल किन्नर कतराते हैं अपनी पसंद के खेल खेलने से कतराते हैं अपनी भावनाओं को साझा करने से। लक्ष्मीनारायण त्रिपाठी और मानोबी बंधोपाध्याय की आत्मकथाओं में क्रमशः 'मैं हिजड़ा... मैं लक्ष्मी!' और 'पुरुष तन में छिपा मेरा नारी मन में भी बाल किन्नरों के अंतर्द्वंद को प्रामाणिकता के साथ उद्घाटित किया गया है। **"मैं बहुत भ्रमित थी, मेरा जीवन एक अंतहीन भूल-भुलैया बन गया था - हर बार मैं एक ही मोड़ पर आ जाती। मैं कौन थी? मेरी देह मेरी आत्मा से अलग क्यों थी? या मुझे अपनी पहचान को जानने में भूल हो रही थी? मेरा जन्म इस तरह क्यों हुआ? क्या यह पिछले जन्मों के कर्म थे, जिन्हें इस तरह चुकाया जा रहा था? मैं इस जाल से बाहर आने के लिए क्या कर सकती थी?"**⁵ पहले तो वे खुद ही अपनी पहचान को लेकर परेशान रहते हैं, शारीरिक बदलाव उन्हें दिन रात घुटन महसूस करते यहीं उसपर परिवार का साथ न मिलना उन्हें पूरी तरह से तोड़ देता है। सामाजिक कलंक, पड़ोसियों की घृणा और आर्थिक बोझ का डर भी बना रहता है। उदाहरण के लिए, भगवंत अनमोल के उपन्यास 'जिंदगी 50-50' में अनमोल का बेटा जन्म से ही टेस्टिकल्स के बिना पैदा होता है, जिसे वह 'हिजड़ा' मानता है। अनमोल का छोटा भाई भी किन्नर है, जो घर और समाज में लगातार अपमान और उत्पीड़न सहता है। अनमोल अपने भाई की पीड़ा देखकर निश्चय करता है कि वह अपने बच्चे को अधूरी जिंदगी नहीं जीने देगा, बल्कि हर तरह से सक्षम बनाएगा। लेकिन उपन्यास में दिखाया गया है कि परिवार की रूढ़िवादी सोच और समाज का कलंक बच्चे को परिवार से अलग कर देता है, और किन्नर बच्चे को मुख्यधारा से बाहर धकेल देता है।

इसी प्रकार, हर्षिता द्विवेदी के शोध "आधुनिक हिंदी कथा साहित्य में 'तृतीय-लिंगी' विमर्श" में वर्णित है कि किन्नरों को बचपन से ही परिवार द्वारा अस्वीकार कर दिया जाता है, और वे वैकल्पिक गुरु-चेले संरचना में प्रवेश करते हैं। यह संरचना सुरक्षा प्रदान करती है, लेकिन आर्थिक शोषण और भावनात्मक अलगाव को भी बढ़ावा देती है। डॉ. एन. खानी के लेख "समकालीन हिन्दी साहित्य में किन्नर विमर्श" में भी किन्नरों के पारिवारिक बहिष्कार को सामाजिक उपेक्षा के रूप में चित्रित किया गया है, जहां जन्मजात किन्नर (बुवरा) को तुरंत त्याग दिया जाता है।

परिवार से अलगाव के बाद किन्नरों का जीवन वैकल्पिक समुदाय में गुजरता है, जहां गुरु माता-पिता की भूमिका निभाते हैं, लेकिन प्रेम की कमी उन्हें भावनात्मक रूप से टूटा हुआ बनाती है। यह अलगाव न केवल व्यक्तिगत है, बल्कि सामाजिक भी, क्योंकि समाज उन्हें 'अपूर्ण' मानकर परिवारिक बंधनों से वंचित कर देता है। परिणामस्वरूप, उनका जीवन भावनात्मक खालीपन, पहचान के संकट और निरंतर संघर्ष से भरा रहता है।

किन्नर और शिक्षा: अवसरों का अभाव और भेदभाव

शिक्षा हर व्यक्ति का मौलिक अधिकार है, लेकिन किन्नर समुदाय के लिए यह एक दूर का सपना बना हुआ है। सामाजिक भेदभाव, उत्पीड़न और संस्थागत कमी के कारण उनकी शिक्षा दर अत्यंत निम्न है। स्कूलों में उनका प्रवेश मिलना मुश्किल होता है, और यदि मिल भी जाए तो सहपाठियों की बदमाशी, शिक्षकों की उदासीनता और बुनियादी सुविधाओं जैसे अलग शौचालय की कमी उन्हें संस्था छोड़ने पर मजबूर कर देती है। जब किसी प्रकार का सहारा नहीं मिलता तब वे किन्नर समुदाय में शामिल हो जाते हैं, जहां शिक्षा की बजाय पारंपरिक धंधों जैसे बधाई गाने या भिक्षा मांगने पर जोर दिया जाता है।

हिंदी साहित्य में यह अभाव मार्मिक रूप से चित्रित है। चित्रा मुद्गल की 'गुलाम मंडी' में तिरस्कृत किन्नरों की कहानी शिक्षा की कमी को उनके जीवन की दासता से जोड़ती है। 'पोस्ट बॉक्स नं. 203 नाला सोपारा' में विनोद उर्फ बिन्नी की कथा दिखाती है कि किन्नर बच्चे स्कूल में कितना संघर्ष करते हैं। समाज उन्हें 'असामान्य' मानता है, जिससे शौचालय, ड्रेस कोड और सामाजिक अंतर्क्रिया जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाओं तक पहुंच मुश्किल हो जाती है। ट्रांसजेंडर अधिकार अधिनियम 2019 में शिक्षा का प्रावधान है, जैसे समावेशी शिक्षा और छात्रवृत्तियां, लेकिन क्रियान्वयन की कमी है। किन्नरों को समावेशी शिक्षा की आवश्यकता है, जहां अलग शौचालय, मनोवैज्ञानिक काउंसलिंग और जागरूकता कार्यक्रम हों। बिना शिक्षा के उनका जीवन अंधकारमय रहता है, क्योंकि रोजगार के अवसर सीमित हो जाते हैं। वे सरकारी योजनाओं से वंचित रहते हैं, और परिणामस्वरूप गरीबी का चक्र चलता रहता है। शिक्षा न केवल ज्ञान प्रदान करती है बल्कि आत्मविश्वास और सामाजिक एकीकरण भी, जो किन्नरों के लिए जीवन बदल सकती है। लेकिन वर्तमान यथार्थ त्रासदपूर्ण है, जहां शिक्षा का अभाव उन्हें समाज के हाशिए पर रखता है। **"स्कूल में जाते ही बच्चे हंसते हैं, शिक्षक अलग नजर से देखते हैं। क्या मैं इंसान नहीं हूँ?"**⁶ 'तीसरी ताली' से यह पंक्ति शिक्षा में भेदभाव की पीड़ा को व्यक्त करता है, जहां किन्नर बच्चा अपनी पहचान के कारण अलग-थलग पड़ जाता है। अध्यापक जिसे समाज ने शीर्ष स्थान पर रखा है, इसे समाज में ईश्वर से पहले पूजा जाता है वो भी किन्नर बालक को अन्य बालकों से अलग ही समझता है। 'गुलाम मंडी' में चित्रा मुद्गल लिखती हैं **"पढ़ाई का सपना देखा था, लेकिन परिवार ने कहा- तू किन्नर है, तेरी जगह सड़क पर है।"**⁷ यहाँ शिक्षा के अभाव और परिवारिक दबाव को बहुत की मार्मिकता से दर्शाया गया है। शिक्षा की कमी से किन्नरों की आर्थिक स्थिति और बिगड़ती है। वे मुख्यधारा के रोजगार से वंचित रहते हैं, और 80% से अधिक भिक्षावृत्ति या वेश्यावृत्ति पर निर्भर हैं। एनजीओ रिपोर्ट्स से पता चलता है कि शिक्षा प्राप्त किन्नरों की संख्या बढ़ने से उनकी स्थिति में सुधार हो सकता है, लेकिन सामाजिक बाधाएं अभी भी मौजूद हैं। शिक्षा हर व्यक्ति का मौलिक अधिकार है, लेकिन किन्नर समुदाय के लिए यह एक दूर का सपना बना हुआ है। सामाजिक भेदभाव, उत्पीड़न और संस्थागत कमी के कारण उनकी शिक्षा दर अत्यंत निम्न है। स्कूलों में उनका प्रवेश मिलना मुश्किल होता है, और यदि मिल भी जाए तो सहपाठियों की बदमाशी, शिक्षकों की उदासीनता और बुनियादी सुविधाओं जैसे अलग शौचालय की कमी उन्हें विद्यालय छोड़ने पर मजबूर कर देती है। हिंदी साहित्य में यह अभाव मार्मिक रूप से चित्रित है। चित्रा मुद्गल की 'गुलाम मंडी' में तिरस्कृत किन्नरों की कहानी शिक्षा की कमी को उनके जीवन की दासता से जोड़ती है। 'पोस्ट बॉक्स नं. 203 नाला सोपारा' में विनोद उर्फ बिन्नी की कथा दिखाती है कि किन्नर बच्चे स्कूल में कितना संघर्ष करते हैं। समाज उन्हें 'असामान्य' मानता है, जिससे शौचालय, ड्रेस कोड और सामाजिक अंतर्क्रिया जैसी बुनियादी सुविधाओं तक पहुंच मुश्किल हो जाती है। ट्रांसजेंडर अधिकार अधिनियम 2019 में शिक्षा का प्रावधान है, जैसे समावेशी शिक्षा और छात्रवृत्तियां, लेकिन क्रियान्वयन की कमी है। किन्नरों को समावेशी शिक्षा की आवश्यकता है, जहां अलग शौचालय, मनोवैज्ञानिक काउंसलिंग और जागरूकता कार्यक्रम हों। बिना शिक्षा के उनका जीवन अंधकारमय रहता है, क्योंकि रोजगार के अवसर सीमित हो

जाते हैं। वे सरकारी योजनाओं से वंचित रहते हैं, और परिणामस्वरूप गरीबी का चक्र चलता रहता है। शिक्षा न केवल ज्ञान प्रदान करती है बल्कि आत्मविश्वास और सामाजिक एकीकरण भी, जो किन्नरों के लिए जीवन बदल सकती है। लेकिन वर्तमान यथार्थ त्रासदपूर्ण है, जहां शिक्षा का अभाव उन्हें समाज के हाशिए पर रखता है।

शिक्षा की कमी से किन्नरों की आर्थिक स्थिति और बिगड़ती है। वे मुख्यधारा के रोजगार से वंचित रहते हैं। एनजीओ रिपोर्ट्स से पता चलता है कि शिक्षा प्राप्त किन्नरों की संख्या बढ़ने से उनकी स्थिति में सुधार हो सकता है, लेकिन सामाजिक बाधाएं अभी भी मौजूद हैं। भगवंत अनमोल के उपन्यास 'जिंदगी 50-50' में इस विषय को गहराई से छुआ गया है। उपन्यास में अनमोल का बेटा जन्म से ही टेस्टिकल्स के बिना पैदा होता है, जिसे वह 'हिजड़ा' मानता है। अनमोल का छोटा भाई भी किन्नर है, जो घर और समाज में लगातार अपमान और उत्पीड़न सहता है। "जिस जिंदगी का हिस्सा अचानक मुझे बना दिया गया था, वह इतना आकस्मिक और अविश्वसनीय था कि मेरा किशोरमन उसे किसी भी रूप में पचा पाने में असमर्थ था। मनुष्य के दो ही रूप अब तक देखे थे मैंने। इस तीसरे रूप से मैं परिचित तो था लेकिन उसे मैं पहले रूप का ही एक अलग हिस्सा मानता था। तूने मेरे जन्मते ही मनुष्य के इस तीसरे रूप को देख लिया था न बा ! उसी समय खतम कर देना था न बा मुझे !"⁸ अनमोल अपने भाई की पीड़ा देखकर निश्चय करता है कि वह अपने बच्चे को अधूरी जिंदगी नहीं जीने देगा, बल्कि हर तरह से सक्षम बनाएगा। यहां शिक्षा का अभाव किन्नरों की सामाजिक बहिष्कार से जुड़ा है, जहां परिवार की रूढ़िवादी सोच बच्चे को शिक्षा से वंचित कर देती है। उपन्यास में चित्रित है कि किन्नर बच्चे को स्कूल में भेदभाव का सामना करना पड़ता है, सहपाठी और शिक्षक उन्हें 'असामान्य' मानकर तिरस्कार करते हैं। अनमोल की कोशिश बच्चे को शिक्षित और आत्मनिर्भर बनाने की है, लेकिन समाज की घृणा शिक्षा के अवसरों को छीन लेती है। एक दृश्य में डॉक्टर कहता है, "आपका बेटा कभी बाप नहीं बन पाएगा... उसके टेस्टिकल्स ही नहीं हैं,"⁹ उपन्यास किन्नरों की शिक्षा में भेदभाव को त्रासदी के रूप में दिखाता है, जहां जागरूकता की कमी उन्हें हाशिए पर धकेल देती है। यह रचना समाज को चुनौती देती है कि शिक्षा के माध्यम से किन्नरों को मुख्यधारा में शामिल किया जाए।

किन्नर जीवन की समग्र तस्वीर अत्यंत त्रासदपूर्ण है। परिवार और शिक्षा के अभाव के अलावा, वे सामाजिक घृणा, आर्थिक शोषण, स्वास्थ्य समस्याओं और राजनीतिक उपेक्षा से जूझते हैं। समाज उन्हें शुभ अवसरों जैसे बच्चे के जन्म या शादी पर बुलाता है, लेकिन सामान्य जीवन में बहिष्कृत करता है। ट्रेनों, बसों और बाजारों में वे वसूली करते दिखते हैं, जो उनकी मजबूरी है। वेश्यावृत्ति में प्रवेश से एड्स, हेपेटाइटिस जैसी बीमारियां उन्हें घेर लेती हैं, और चिकित्सा सेवाओं तक पहुंच सीमित है। कानूनी रूप से अनुच्छेद 377 की समाप्ति (2018) और ट्रांसजेंडर अधिनियम (2019) से अधिकार मिले हैं, जैसे पहचान पत्र, स्वास्थ्य बीमा और रोजगार आरक्षण, लेकिन सामाजिक स्वीकृति नहीं। पुलिस उत्पीड़न, हिंसा और हत्याएं आम हैं, जैसा कि विभिन्न रिपोर्ट्स में दर्ज है। साहित्य इस यथार्थ को उजागर करता है। 'यमदीप' में नाज बीबी की पीड़ा, 'किन्नर कथा' में चंदा का संघर्ष और 'तीसरी ताली' में गरीबी की कहानी इस त्रासदी को दर्शाती है। महाभारत में अर्जुन का बृहन्नला रूप या रामायण में किन्नरों की भक्ति दिखाती है कि प्राचीन काल में उन्हें सम्मान मिला था, लेकिन मध्यकाल से ब्रिटिश काल तक उनका पतन हुआ। क्रिमिनल ट्राइब्स एक्ट (1871) ने उन्हें अपराधी ठहराया, जिसका प्रभाव आज भी है। वर्तमान में वे राजनीति में भाग ले रहे हैं, जैसे मदुरै की किन्नर मेयर या उत्तर प्रदेश की विधायक, लेकिन संख्या कम है। उनका जीवन त्रासदपूर्ण इसलिए है क्योंकि पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था में सत्ता पुरुषों के हाथ में है, और किन्नर इसकी परिधि पर हैं। स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की कमी से लिंग परिवर्तन सर्जरी जोखिमपूर्ण होती है, और कई मामलों में मौत हो जाती है। आर्थिक रूप से वे दूसरों पर निर्भर हैं, जो उनकी गरिमा को प्रभावित करता है। "जीवन एक संघर्ष है, लेकिन किन्नर के लिए यह एक अंतहीन दर्द। समाज हमें देखता है, लेकिन अपनाता नहीं।"¹⁰ पोस्ट बॉक्स नं. 203 नाला सोपारा का यह उद्धरण जीवन की समग्र त्रासदी को व्यक्त करता है। किन्नर जीवन की त्रासदपूर्ण वास्तविकता परिवार से त्याग, शिक्षा के अभाव और सामाजिक बहिष्कार से उपजती है। इसी प्रकार नीरजा माधव किन्नरों की समस्या के बारे में लिखती हैं की "हमारी देह अलग है, लेकिन आत्मा इंसान की है। क्यों समाज हमें इंसान नहीं मानता?"¹¹ यह सामाजिक बहिष्कार की पीड़ा को दर्शाता है। जहाँ समाज ने व्यक्ति को स्त्री पुरुष के आधार पर ही जाना समझा है इस बनाये ढांचे से अलग किसीको सम्मान देना उसने

सीखा ही नहीं। किन्नर जीवन की त्रासदी बहुआयामी है: भावनात्मक अलगाव, आर्थिक गरीबी, स्वास्थ्य जोखिम और सामाजिक हिंसा। साहित्य इन आयामों को छूता है, और दिखाता है कि कैसे छोटे बदलाव बड़े परिवर्तन ला सकते हैं। साहित्य इस यथार्थ को दर्शाता है, लेकिन बदलाव की जिम्मेदारी समाज पर है। समावेशी शिक्षा, परिवारिक जागरूकता, कानूनी क्रियान्वयन और साहित्यिक प्रयासों से स्थिति सुधर सकती है। किन्नरों को मुख्यधारा में लाना न केवल मानवीय है बल्कि सामाजिक न्याय की मांग भी है। यदि हम विविधता को अपनाएंगे, तो उनका जीवन त्रासदी से सुखमय हो सकता है। यह लेख किन्नर विमर्श को आगे बढ़ाने का प्रयास है, जो अधिक शोध की मांग करता है।

संदर्भ ग्रंथ

1. भारत सरकार. जनगणना 2011: ट्रांसजेंडर रिपोर्ट. सेंट्रल ब्यूरो ऑफ स्टैटिस्टिक्स, नई दिल्ली.
2. पोस्ट बॉक्स नं. 203 नाला सोपारा, चित्रा मुद्गल, सामयिक प्रकाशन, नई दिल्ली, छठा संस्करण: 2020, पृष्ठ नं.- 50
3. किन्नर कथा, महेंद्र भीष्म, सामयिक प्रकाशन, दरियागंज, नई दिल्ली, संस्करण 2019, पृष्ठ नं.- 27
4. किन्नर कथा, महेंद्र भीष्म, सामयिक प्रकाशन, दिल्ली, 2019. पृष्ठ 27
5. पुरुष तन में फँसा मेरा नारी मन मानोबी बंधोपाध्याय, राजपाल एंड संस, कश्मीरी गेट, नई दिल्ली. प्रथम संस्करण: 201 पृष्ठ नं. – 36
6. तीसरी ताली, प्रदीप सौरभ, वाणी प्रकाशन, दिल्ली, 2011. पृष्ठ 36).
7. चित्रा मुद्गल, गुलाम मंडी, सामयिक प्रकाशन, दिल्ली, 2018. पृष्ठ 80).
8. 'जिंदगी 50-50', भगवंत अनमोल, राजपाल एंड संस, कश्मीरी गेट, नई दिल्ली तीसरा संस्करण: 2018, पृष्ठ नं.- 207
9. जिंदगी 50-50, भगवंत अनमोल, राजपाल एंड संस, कश्मीरी गेट, नई दिल्ली तीसरा संस्करण: 2018, पृष्ठ नं.- 50
10. चित्रा मुद्गल, पोस्ट बॉक्स नं. 203 नाला सोपारा. सामयिक प्रकाशन, दिल्ली, 2018. पृष्ठ 107
11. नीरजा माधव, यमदीप. सुनील साहित्य सदन, दिल्ली, 2009. पृष्ठ 50.
12. ट्रांसजेंडर पर्सन्स (प्रोटेक्शन ऑफ राइट्स) एक्ट, 2019. भारत सरकार, कानून मंत्रालय.
13. बिश्रोई, मिलन. किन्नर विमर्श: साहित्य और समाज. विद्या प्रकाशन, कानपुर, 2018.

विवाह में गाली-गायन की परम्परा : एक मनोवैज्ञानिक एवं सांस्कृतिक विश्लेषण

डॉ. आरती पाठक

सहायक प्राध्यापक, हिंदी विभाग
कालिंदी महाविद्यालय, दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय
artipathak@kalindi.du.ac.in

सारांश (ABSTRACT)

भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप (विशेषकर उत्तर भारत, अवध, बुन्देलखण्ड, ब्रज, राजस्थान, बिहार एवं मध्य प्रदेश) के ग्रामीण विवाहों में स्त्रियाँ “गाली” नामक विशेष लोकगीत गाती हैं जिसमें दूल्हा, ससुराल पक्ष तथा कभी-कभी स्वयं की जाति-बिरादरी पर भी कटाक्षपूर्ण, अश्लील एवं अपमानजनक शब्दावली का प्रयोग होता है। सतही तौर पर यह गाली प्रतीत होती है, किन्तु मनोवैज्ञानिक एवं नृतात्विक दृष्टि से यह एक जटिल रिवाज है जो तनाव-निष्कासन, लैंगिक शक्ति-सन्तुलन, समूह एकजुटता तथा यौन-शिक्षा का माध्यम बनता है। यह शोध-पत्र गाली परम्परा के मनोवैज्ञानिक आधार, फ्रायडीय एवं लाकानी व्याख्या, सामाजिक कार्य-शास्त्र तथा क्षेत्रीय गीत-सामग्री के आधार पर इसका विश्लेषण करता है।

१. परिचय

उत्तर भारत में विवाह को “गाली-गौना” भी कहा जाता है क्योंकि विदाई से पहले तथा बारात पहुँचते ही स्त्रियाँ गाली गाना शुरू कर देती हैं। गाली दो प्रकार की होती है :

(अ) ससुराल को गाली (दूल्हा, ससुर, जेठ, देवर आदि पर)

(ब) अपने पक्ष को गाली (मायके वालों को भी नहीं छोड़ा जाता) यह परम्परा इतनी प्राचीन है कि १९वीं सदी के लोक-संग्राहक विलियम क्रूकर (William Crooke), जॉर्ज ग्रियर्सन तथा बाद में डॉ॰ सतीश कुमार, डॉ॰ वीणा शर्मा, डॉ॰ उषा मिश्र आदि ने इसका उल्लेख किया है।

२. गाली के प्रमुख मनोवैज्ञानिक कार्य

2.1. आक्रोश का सुरक्षित निष्कासन (Catharsis)

विवाह में कन्या का मायका छोड़ना एक गहरा मनोवैज्ञानिक आघात है। फ्रायड के अनुसार यह “वियोग-चिंता” (separation anxiety) को जन्म देता है। गाली गाकर माँ, बहनें, भाभियाँ यह आक्रोश बाहर निकालती हैं। दूल्हे को “हरामजादा, कुट्टा, सूअर का बच्चा” आदि कहना प्रतीकात्मक रूप से ससुराल के प्रति आक्रामकता को व्यक्त करता है, पर वास्तविक हिंसा नहीं होती। 2.2. लैंगिक शक्ति का पुनर्सन्तुलन (Gender Power Rebalancing)

पितृसत्तात्मक समाज में दुल्हन ससुराल में “पराई” हो जाती है और उसे दबाया जाता है। गाली के क्षण में स्त्रियाँ पुरुषों पर भाषाई प्रभुत्व रखती हैं। लाकॉ (Jacques Lacan) की भाषा में यह “फैल्लिक सिग्निफायर” (phallic signifier) को उलटने का क्षण है; स्त्री अस्थायी रूप से “फैलस” (शक्ति) को अपने पास ले लेती है। 2.3. यौन-शिक्षा एवं यौन-तनाव का हास्यपूर्ण विमोचन

गाली में कामुकता और अश्लीलता खुलेआम होती है। इससे नववधू को अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से रति-क्रिया, गर्भाधान आदि की जानकारी मिलती है। फ्रायड का “जोक एण्ड दि अनकॉन्शस” यहाँ लागू होता है – अश्लील हास्य से यौन-दमित भावनाएँ ऊपर आती हैं। 2.4. समूह एकजुटता (Group Cohesion)

गाली गाते समय सभी स्त्रियाँ एक साथ ताली पीटती हैं, हँसती हैं। यह “इन-ग्रुप” और “आउट-ग्रुप” की सीमा बनाता है। ससुराल पक्ष बाहर है, इसलिए उसे गाली देना समूह को मजबूत करता है।

3. क्षेत्रीय गाली-गीतों के उदाहरण एवं विश्लेषण

3.1. अवधी (लखनऊ, रायबरेली, फैजाबाद)

गीत:

“अरे बाबू तोहर नाक के जड़ी है नथुनिया,

हमका लागे लुण्डिया का चुटकी में फट जइहें...

तोहरा बाप के लटकत है झोला,

हमका लागे चूहे के झोला...” विश्लेषण: नथुनिया = नाक की कील, प्रतीक है पुरुषत्व का। “लुण्डिया का चुटकी” = लिंग का संकोच। यह दूल्हे के यौन-सामर्थ्य पर प्रश्नचिह्न लगाता है। 3.2. ब्रज (मथुरा, आगरा)

“दूल्हा रे दूल्हा, तोहार लुगाई कहाँ है रे,

हम तो कहें तेरी मइया के साथ सोवत है रे...” यह इलेक्ट्रा कॉम्प्लेक्स का उल्टा रूप है – दूल्हे को माँ के साथ अनैतिक सम्बन्ध का आरोप। 3.3. बुन्देलखण्ड (झाँसी, ललितपुर)

“ससुर जी का लटकत है लोहा,

देवर जी का चिमटत है कोहा...

जेठ जी तो बैठे हैं खाट पर,

कुत्ता चाटे उनका भात पर...” यहाँ ससुराल के हर पुरुष सदस्य की यौन-दुर्बलता या पशु-समानता पर व्यंग्य है। 3.4. बिहार (मिथिलांचल)

“सजना के बाप के ढीला पजामा,

हमका लागे चोर के झोला...

दूल्हा मोरा काला है रे,

कौआ चुरा लेबो रे...”

४. नृतात्विक व्याख्या

मैलिनोव्स्की (Bronisław Malinowski) तथा मार्गरेट मीड के अनुसार गाली “संस्थागत उल्टा व्यवहार” (institutionalized inversion) है। रेडक्लिफ-ब्राउन ने इसे “जोकिंग रिलेशनशिप” कहा है। विवाह में गाली एक प्रकार का “रिवर्सल रिचुअल” है जिसमें सामान्य सामाजिक नियम (शर्म, मर्यादा, विनम्रता) कुछ घण्टों के लिए निलम्बित कर दिए जाते हैं।

५. आधुनिकता के दौर में गाली परम्परा

शहरीकरण, पाश्चात्य शिक्षा तथा सोशल मीडिया के कारण गाली अब लुप्तप्राय है। युवा पीढ़ी इसे “अश्लील” मानकर छोड़ रही है। किन्तु ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में अभी भी यह जीवित है। कई एन.जी.ओ. इसे “महिला सशक्तीकरण का लोक-रूप” मानकर पुनर्जीवित करने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं।

६. निष्कर्ष

विवाह में गाली केवल अपमान नहीं है; यह एक बहुआयामी मनोवैज्ञानिक-सामाजिक तन्त्र है जो: वियोग-चिंता को कम करता है, स्त्री-शक्ति को अस्थायी रूप से पुनर्स्थापित करता है, यौन-शिक्षा देता है, समूह एकजुटता बढ़ाता है, तथा सामाजिक तनाव को हास्य में बदल देता है। इसलिए गाली को केवल “अश्लीलता” कहकर खारिज नहीं करना चाहिए। यह भारतीय ग्रामीण समाज का एक दुर्लभ “सुरक्षित उच्छृंखलता का द्वीप” है जो पितृसत्ता के भीतर ही स्त्रियों को साँस लेने की जगह देता है।

संदर्भ ग्रंथ सूची -

1. Crooke, William. The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh. Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1896.
2. Grierson, George A. Bihar Peasant Life. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1885. Raheja,
3. Gloria Goodwin & Gold, Ann Grodzins. Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. (उत्तर भारत में महिलाओं के गीतों, जिसमें गाली/व्यंग्य गीतों का लिंग एवं रिश्तेदारी पर विश्लेषण।)
4. Ranjan, Vishal. "Subversive Humour and Socio-Sexual Politics in Women's Gaari Geet." In Plainspeak, TARSHI, 2024.
5. Henry, Edward O. Chant the Names of God: Music and Culture in Bhojpuri-Speaking India. San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 1988.
6. Wadley, Susan S. Struggles of Life: Oral Narratives and Songs from Rural Uttar Pradesh. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 1994.
7. Jassal, Smita Tewari. Daughters of the Earth: Women and Land in Uttar Pradesh. New Delhi: Manohar, 2012. (महिलाओं के लोकगीतों में व्यंग्य एवं शक्ति।)
8. Gold, Ann Grodzins. A Carnival of Parting: The Tales of King Bharthari and King Gopi Chand as Sung and Told by Women in Rajasthan. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

- 9 . Flueckiger, Joyce Burkhalter. Gender and Genre in the Folklore of Middle India. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Archer, William G. Indian Folk Songs. London: Oxford University Press, 1955.

Upadhyaya, Krishna Dev. Bhojpuri Lokgeet. Prayag: Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1960.
- 10 . Pandey, Ram Murti. Bundeli Lokgeet. Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Hindi Granth Academy, 1980.
11. Singh, Bhagwati Prasad. Braj Lokgeet Sangrah. Mathura: Braj Sahitya Mandal, 1975
12. Malinowski, Bronisław. Sex and Repression in Savage Society. London: Routledge, 1927.
13. Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. "On Joking Relationships." Africa, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1940.
14. Freud, Sigmund. Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious. New York: W.W. Norton, 1960.
15. Lacan, Jacques. Écrits. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006. Mead, Margaret. Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies. New York: Morrow, 1935.
16. Parashar, Manoj. "Gaari Geet in Bihari Weddings: Profanity and Tradition." Referenced in India Today, February 2025.
17. Srivastava, Vinay Kumar. Folk Culture of Awadh. Lucknow: Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society, 1982.
18. Shukla, Shyam Parmeshwar. Maithili Lokgeet. Ethnographic references in kinship studies, 1986.

Rta-Dharma-Niti: A Vedic Framework for Ethical Warfare and Global Stability

Sushma singh

Research scholar (Gurukul Kangri Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar)

email ID: sushmasingh5516@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

We are facing a unique and all-encompassing set of crises in this century, creating a combination of challenges never seen before. The world now deals with military conflict as well as cyber-based war, misinformation over the internet, degradation of the ecological environment, and a division within society beyond ideological lines. The confluence of these issues indicates the failure of the world to establish an effective means of addressing these issues through global governance, primarily due to the lack of a solid ethical foundation from which to develop the policy frameworks. This study will demonstrate that the ancient Indian philosophy known as Vedic ethics (e.g., rta, satya, dharma, and vasudhaiva kutumbakam, etc.) provides a strong and enduring model for understanding these interwoven problems today. This enquiry cites primary sources, such as the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, Brāhmaṇa literature, and Upaniṣads, in order to illustrate how the ancient principles of moral restraint, truthful conduct, respect for the environment, limited warfare, and co-operation can be used to inform twenty-first-century strategic thought.

Keywords: *Vedic Ethics; Dharma-Yuddha-Niti; Rta; Satya; Ahimsa; Santi; Yajna; Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam; Upaniṣads; Brāhmaṇas; Ethical Statecraft; Modern Warfare; Ecological Dharma; Global Diplomacy*

INTRODUCTION: RE-CENTERING ETHICS IN AN AGE OF STRATEGIC TUMULT

Modern warfare is not limited to the use of physical combat only. Nations are engaged in a battle on multiple fronts: cyber warfare, algorithmic propaganda, flashpoints of contention over territory, nuclear escalation, and human actions contributing to a massive decline in the ecosystem. These conflicts are represented well with the ongoing recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine, and the continued border tensions between India and China; they exhibit how the conflicts of today are complex and multilayered (i.e., political, economic, ecological, psychological, and informational). The conflicts listed above are also indicative of something deeper: an ethical breakdown regarding military strategy, where the desire for a strategic advantage frequently outweighs moral obligation or concern for maintaining long-term stability in the world.

The Vedic philosophy provides an entirely different perspective on the political action that is required to combat the above-mentioned ongoing crises in the world. In Vedic cosmology, political action is fulfilled when it is in accordance with the universal order (Rta); therefore, political action must be guided by dharma (the principle of right action), instead of by opportunism. This is expressed within the Taittirīya Upaniṣad and the Rigveda at the time of prayer when they request peace/calmness from the gods: "May Mitra and Varuṇa grant us peace." The term "peace" in this instance means not only the absence of violence but also the equilibrium created between conflicting forces, obligations, and aspects of the universe. The Vedic literature, including the early philosophical texts, demonstrates a consistently ethical framework. The call of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad to speak the truth and to do what is right, and the expansive cosmopolitan ideology of the Mahā Upaniṣad, urge political

leaders and the community to base their actions on truth, obligation, and the welfare of the whole world. Viewing current issues in the world through the prism created by the Vedic perspective, it clearly indicates that there is not only a geopolitical crisis but also a civilizational question, that is to say, the question of how to restore the moral coherence of political decision-making processes. In this study, Vedic ethics are presented as a tool to provide a basis to support modern governance, as contrasted to mere prescriptive religious commands or dogmas. This basic assertion is very compelling: countries whose operations are not driven by morality are unstable (they tend to be externally hostile and internally fragile), while a dharmic-based approach increases the political authority of a country and the ability of the world to cooperate as a single society.

1. THE PILLARS OF COSMIC AND ETHICAL ORDER

A. *Rta and Satya: Truth and Order as Strategic Foundations*

According to the Vedas, Rta, or "cosmic order," supports life; Satya, or "truthfulness," refers to correctness of thought, speech, and behavior. Rta and Satya are not abstract truths but guidelines for policymakers and world leaders. The Rigveda 10.190 states: ऋतं च सत्यं च अभीदधात् ॥ "Both Order and Truth are responsible for maintaining the world." In today's world of antithetical representations of the same story through state propaganda via digital means and by ideological framing, the necessity for truth-focused dialogue is diluted. Truth distortion through misinformation, manipulation, or framing erodes trust in governments and undermines diplomatic relations, and escalating conflicts are very clearly visible in the context of the modern world. The same problem exists with information provided by the United States government prior to the invasion of Iraq due to the lack of valid intelligence and also with competing media representations or narratives regarding the involvement of Russia in the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The Vedic understanding of the implications of truth distortion would not only classify the above actions or practices as violative of a politician's obligation but also as violative of the cosmic order. The Satpatha Brahmana asserts that सत्यं वै अमृतम् ॥ "Truth is the essence of life." Truth is not a metaphor; it embodies that a society grounded in a strong foundation of truth may survive for a long time, whereas a society rooted in deceit will ultimately fall. For today's policymakers, the implication of the statements above is that honesty, maintaining consistent factual communications, and supporting factual consistency are not an option but rather are fundamental requirements for the formation of long-lasting relationships between the nations, which ultimately lead to international peace and security based upon adherence to universal principles and achieving mutually beneficial objectives.

B. *Dharma: The Moral Architecture of Resilient and Intestinal Fortitude Governance*

Dharma was considered the fixative that holds society together in Vedic philosophy. The Mahanarayanopanishad states "Dharmena Prajah Sthirah" (meaning "by dharma, people remain steady"). Governments that do not follow dharma are doomed to fail and cause destruction for themselves and their people as well. The dharmic way of handling conflict dictates that war can only be justified when restoring equilibrium. The Yudhadhvam Sada Dharmena doctrine, present in the Bhagavad Gita, is an early version of the ethical concept of war, denying any justification for wars aimed at conquest, greed, or ideological absolutism. The Bhagwat Gita has two major verses: धर्मण ह्यप्रजाः स्थिराः (Through dharma, the people remain steadfast) and यद्यस्तु सदा धर्मण (Fight only in accordance with dharma, emphasizing a dharma-based social world order. Furthermore, dharma also teaches that the leader of a nation should possess humility and moderation and be psychologically balanced while governing people. The Katho Upanishad teaches self-control by example (i.e., self-governing leaders are the only true leaders). Today, especially with nuclear weapons in play, psychological discipline is paramount. The Chandogya Upanishad Mahavakya "Tat Tvam Asi" (Thou art That) implies the unity of the individual self with the universal self, which ultimately leads to a sense of oneness and inner peace.

2. VEDIC GUIDELINES FOR MITIGATING CONFLICT (DHARMA-YUDDHA-NĪTI)

A. *Ahimsā and the Humanitarian Imperative*

Central to the Vedic ethical system is Ahimsa (non-violence), which will determine the rightfulness of war (Dharma) on ethical grounds. The Later Vedic period text, the Mahabharata's Vanaparva, says this best: अहंसां परमो धर्मः (Non-violence is ultimate Dharma). Although there can be instances of war where it is impossible not to use force, non-combatants should always be kept out of harm's way, and any unwanted injury or suffering should be avoided as much as possible. The first

Mandala of the Rigveda reinforces this non-violent message with the following plea from the Earth: मा नो हसीदहमो वातो जनमत्र पथु व्यामः; "Let us not hurt each other" resonates with early humanitarian principles. Similarly, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states, सर्व प्राणनः रक्ष्यन्ते; "All forms of life must be protected," which is similar to current international humanitarian law. If the principles of Ahimsa were used to guide military strategies in World War II or urban warfare today, the suffering of civilians would have been significantly reduced. The Vedic ethics generally do not promote violence; they promote the use of force only as a defense mechanism in a targeted, proportional, and necessary manner, which is seldom implemented by today's modern military doctrine of nation-states. This concept is also explained by the Prashna Upanishad, which clearly explains the interconnectedness of all beings through the life force (prana). This philosophy of prana promotes a sense of unity and builds the foundation for the peaceful coexistence of all living beings. The Tattirya Upanishad emphasized the principle of universal well-being: सर्व भवन्तु सुखिनः, सर्व सन्तु नरामयाः (May all be happy, may all be free from disease).

B. *Yajña and the Logic of Cooperative Security*

The term "yajña" is commonly translated as "sacrifice," but it is best understood as cooperative action carried out for the benefit of a shared community. The Rigveda Purushukta explains that when the Gods carried out this cooperative action ("by their actions, Divinity perpetuates order"), they fulfilled their divine responsibilities. One commonly cited Rigveda verse is 9-63-5, which induces followers to become "valorous" and "destroy evil enemies and Aryanize the world." Here, the word "Aryan" is used to describe the people who are noble and civilized, not those of a particular race or caste, and therefore, "Aryanizing" the world is interpreted as spreading noble principles and values.

In today's geopolitical world, we can utilize yajña as a model of international cooperation (i.e., multilateralism) for diplomacy, peacekeeping, global health, and climate change. Yajña advocates for mutual responsibility rather than unilateral use of force and isolationism. The first line of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad reflects this perspective: "All beings should be happy." This inspires modern policies such as:

- working collaboratively to develop new intelligence-sharing networks;
- facilitating multilateral forums for resolving conflict;
- developing joint environmental agreements;

The principle of yajña teaches us that true long-term global stability comes from a state of interdependence among nations rather than from domination into submission.

3. COSMOPOLITAN DIPLOMACY AND ECOLOGICAL DHARMA

A. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: The World as One Family*

One of the most significant ethical insights of Indian thought, as expressed by The Mahā Upaniṣad, is अयं नजः परो वेत गणना लघचेतसामु उदारचरतानां त उ वसधवै कु टुम्बकम् (The whole world is family for all such persons having nobility of mind). This way of thinking has an opposing effect to the very nationalistic beliefs associated with territorial wars and geopolitical constraints. It does not dismiss thoughts about former geographies but helps all involved to think and act on behalf of the global good as well as the local good when it comes to international relations.

When looking at present-day challenges such as Indo-Chinese conflicts or refugees of crises, which are not only faced by India but also by other nations, this maxim provides a basis to have compassion and honesty and to develop cooperative solutions for the long term over the short term. The need of the time is that global governance moves away from war and territorial disputes toward the shared responsibility of global peace. The cosmopolitan view is that diplomatic engagement must be guided by universal empathy and cooperative engagement.

This paradigm shift requires leaders to acknowledge the cognitive discipline taught by the Katha Upaniṣad: आत्मानं रथनं वद्ध; मनः प्रग्रहमेव च (Know the Self as the rider of the chariot; control of the mind is the true harness). Only with this inner self-control can the leaders overcome fear, personal bias, and nationalistic impulses, applying vasudhaiva kutumbakam to promote global cooperation and peace. Only then does this type of focus on internal virtue guarantee the integrity of external diplomacy.

B. *Ecological Stewardship as Strategic Responsibility*

Today's environmental degradation is a cause and multiplier of conflict, driving migration, resource shortages, and geopolitical competition between nations. In the context of environmental degradation, Vedic literature primarily views nature not as something to be exploited but rather as part of oneself. The Atharvaveda describes the link between humanity and the earth: माता भूमोः पत्रो अहं पथु व्याः

(Earth is my mother; I am her son). This highlights that environmental protection is inseparable from ethical conduct in warfare. The Atharvaveda describes Earth as one's mother and thus establishes the connection between environmental responsibility (EC) and moral intent. The 10th Book of the Rigveda encourages us to "Protect/Purify All that is of Earth." These writings demonstrate that the concept of Environmental Stewardship (EC) is not an option but is a requirement of one's Dharma (responsibility). Therefore, when developing a strategic plan for either infrastructure, energy development, defense, or resource allocation, developing ecological ethics as part of the strategic agenda should be included."

4. RESEARCH OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION

A. *Key Outcomes*

The investigation of primary Vedic texts produced many insights about modern international governance.

1. Global Ethics Advocates Multilateral Solutions in Opposition to Unilateralism. The concepts of yājñā and vasudhaiva kutumbaka (the World Family) would counter the belief in militarized exceptionalism and promote the use of cooperative diplomacy.

2. Ahimsā, or the principle of non-violence, defines minimum standards of basic humanitarian protection. Based on the Vedic tradition of preserving all forms of life, there are ethical constraints detrimental to modern forms of warfare.
3. Truth is indispensable to political legitimacy. The concept of satya, as hinged throughout the Vedas, emphasizes that lies erode trust between nations and then disrupt the fabric of social peace and order.
4. Ecological consciousness forms part of national duty. The Atharvavedic relationship with Earth impels states to integrate environmental responsibility into the core of policy-making.

CONCLUSION: THE DHARMA COMPASS

Vedic philosophy offers a comprehensive model (ethical, psychological, ecological, and strategic) of what a Government and an individual's behavior should align with, as opposed to modern political thought, which continues to bounce back and forth between idealism and political realism. This paper exhibits that when governments align their behavior with the Vedic values of सत्यं वद धर्म चर (Speak the Truth, Live Dharma) and माता भूमिः पत्रोऽहं पृथिव्याः (Our Mother is the Earth and I Am Her Son) as documented in the Tattvika Brahmana and Atharvaveda, respectively, it creates the conditions for both their own stability and that of their neighbors, where national and global stability are dependent on moral discipline combined with awareness of universal interdependence. This paper refutes the assumption that these values are outdated or mystical. Rather, it explains that they provide a viable and concrete view of reality as it pertains to issues of political legitimacy and the establishment of long-lasting peace, as they indicate that political power must be exercised with both a high degree of ethical and moral discipline and an understanding of the attraction of being a citizen of the world. Ultimately, the paper contends that adherence to these principles requires states to employ an interpretive model (a "Dharma Compass") that enables modern governments, diplomats, and security agencies to reassess how they make decisions based on their strategic options concerning power, peace, and stability in the context of the modern world. Through this lens, the Vedic values do not simply serve as philosophical comfort; they serve as a tactical framework for creating cooperative responses to global challenges, protecting our common environment, and establishing a moral standard for making important decisions as a global citizen and leader, and making the world a global village where we all reside with peace and tranquility, and solace.

Vedic ethics do not seek to create a kind of fanciful nostalgia; rather, they produce an effective and tested way of ruling based on balance, self-control, honesty, and universal benefit. By employing a 'Dharma Compass,' which is rooted in ṛta, satya, dharma, ahimsa, and shanti, with the help of these philosophies, today's governments could manage their complicated issues with both moral clarity and strategic foresight.

The principles extracted from the Vedic texts demonstrate that peace does not come from the power of armies. Instead, peace is achieved through responsible behavior, disciplining oneself internally, and understanding that all human beings share a common fate. In this age of increasing uncertainty, we may look to the Vedic texts for guidance and develop the ethical framework necessary to build a safer, humane future for all people.

REFERENCE

1. Atharva Veda (Griffith, R. T. H., Trans.). (1895). The Hymns of the Atharva-Veda. E. J. Brill.
2. Chandogya Upanisad. (Olivelle, P., Trans.). (1996). Upaniṣads. Oxford University Press.
3. Katha Upanisad. (Olivelle, P., Trans.). (1996). Upaniṣads. Oxford University Press.

4. Mahā Upaniṣad. (Olivelle, P., Trans.). (1996). Upaniṣads. Oxford University Press.
5. Rigveda. (Jamison, S., & Brereton, J., Trans.). (2014). The Rigveda: A Guide. Oxford University Press.
6. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. (Eggeling, J., Trans.). (1882-1900). The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Clarendon Press.
7. Taittirīya Upaniṣad. (Olivelle, P., Trans.). (1996). Upaniṣads. Oxford University Press.
8. Taittirīya Āraṇyaka. (Keith, A. B., Trans.). (1920). The Aitareya and Kausitaki Brāhmaṇas. Harvard Oriental Series.
9. Yajurveda. (Griffith, R. T. H., Trans.). (1899). The Yajur Veda. E. J. Brill.

Survival and Struggle under PMAY-Urban: A Study of Slum Communities in Delhi

Dr. Sunita Meena¹⁵, Nidhi Kumari¹⁶

Department of Political science, Kalindi College, University of Delhi

ABSTRACT

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U) is a major government initiative which aims to address the housing issue of urban poor with its goals of "Housing for All". In metropolitan cities like Delhi, where a large number of people live in slums, therefore, this policy plays a crucial role in shaping the daily lives and living conditions of slum dwellers. This article examines the living condition of slum dwellers in the context of PMAY-Urban. This study examines the lived experiences of slum dwellers in relation to PMAY-Urban through a qualitative research design based on interviews, field observations and analysis of policy documents. It explores issues of housing insecurity, access to basic services, livelihood disruption, and displacement risks. It also critically analyses the objectives of PMAY-Urban and its role in fulfilling the housing needs of slum populations. The findings highlight major gaps in policy implementation and reveal a significant disconnect between the promise of "Housing for All" and the realities experienced by slum residents on the ground.

Keywords: PMAY-URBAN, Slum, Survival, Struggle, Housing Policy, Delhi, Urban Poverty

1. INTRODUCTION

In India, industrial growth has contributed in rapid acceleration of urbanisation over the past years and also enlarging the rural urban migration because of the employment opportunities in megacities (UN Habitat, 2016). Megacities often experienced drastic population shifts because they offered employment, infrastructural growth and quality lifestyle which mainly attracts the migrants from rural regions. Delhi, as the national capital, has witnessed intense population pressure, resulting in the expansion of informal settlements and slum clusters. Slum dwellers are largely migrant workers engaged in informal occupations such as construction work, domestic services, waste picking, and small-scale manufacturing. Due to the unaffordability and inaccessibility of formal housing, they often settle in slums located near employment centres. (Mitra, 2015). These slum settlements are characterized by uncertain tenure, overpopulation, poor housing, inadequate access to basic needs and sanitation facilities, unavailability of healthcare services (Roy, 2005). Moreover, the informal status of slum dwellers caused to be evicted, excluded and faces demolition from the urban planning processes and also emphasizes the poverty and marginalisation in urban landscape (Kundu, 2014). Following these issues of housing distress, many policies have been brought up in Delhi to deal with housing and urban poverty. These policies have included The Jawahar Lal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), Basic Services for the Urban Poor (BSUP), Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana (VAMBAY), Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) and newly introduced Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana- Urban (PMAY-U). PMAY-U introduced in 2015 aimed to provide affordable housing to Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Low-Income Groups (LIG) with the help of measures such as In- situ Slum Redevelopment, Credit Linked Subsidies, Affordable Housing Partnerships and

¹⁵ Dr. Sunita Meena works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Kalindi College, University of Delhi.

¹⁶ Nidhi Kumari is an undergraduate student in the Department of Political Science at Kalindi College, University of Delhi.

Beneficiary led Construction (Government of India, 2015). Beyond providing housing, the scheme seeks to promote tenure security, social stability, and access to basic urban services.

Scholars such as Sen and Hobson (2016) argue that housing schemes often focus only on providing physical houses and do not give enough attention to the social life of slum dwellers. In slum areas, people depend heavily on each other for daily needs such as childcare, borrowing money, finding work and emotional support during difficult times. These strong community relationships form an informal support network that is very important for their survival. When housing schemes relocate people to new areas or buildings, these networks often break because families are separated from neighbours, workplaces and familiar surroundings. As a result, even if people receive better housing, their daily life can become more difficult due to the loss of community support. Supporting this, Yadav and Kumar explain that relocation-based redevelopment programmes often disturb employment because these people are moved far from their workplaces, which creates job insecurity (Yadav and Kumar, 2019). Roy also explains that redevelopment policies can create new forms of exclusion if the government sees informality only as a problem, instead of something that should be properly managed and governed. In relation to PMAY-U, that there are many challenges in implementation, such as problems in identifying the right beneficiaries, complex documentation and paperwork, and bureaucratic hurdles that affect access to housing benefits (Sharma and Bhide, 2020). Despite these insights, they provide only a limited understanding of how PMAY-U is actually working at the ground level in metropolitan cities like Delhi. Most of the literature mainly focuses on the policy framework and administrative performance, but does not discuss much about everyday survival and the coping mechanisms followed by slum dwellers. There are also very limited studies on the impact of PMAY-U on women, children, and elderly residents within slum communities. To fill these gaps, this study adopts a ground-level approach using qualitative methods to examine and analyse how PMAY-U is reshaping housing needs, livelihoods, and access to basic services.

2. PMAY-URBAN IN DELHI: POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION CONTEXT

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Urban (PMAY-U) was launched in 2015 by the Government of India to achieve the goal of “Housing for All.” The scheme aims to provide affordable housing to the urban poor, especially those belonging to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Low-Income Group (LIG). PMAY-U tries to reduce the housing shortage in cities with the support of state governments, private sector participation, and involvement of beneficiaries. The scheme is based on four main components: In-Situ Slum Redevelopment (ISSR), Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS), Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP), and Beneficiary-Led Construction or Enhancement (BLC) (Government of India, 2015). The mission was originally planned until 2022 but has been extended to complete sanctioned houses. The scheme promises houses equipped with water supply, sanitation, electricity and kitchens to ensure dignified living conditions¹⁷.

In Delhi, in situ slum redevelopment is very significant because slums are often located near employment centres. The ISSR aims to restructure prevailing slums by providing stable housing in the same location without displacement, this will minimise the struggle related to livelihood. However, the uneven implementation faces challenges of achieving this aim (Yadav and Kumar, 2019). In Delhi the implementation process of PMAY-U involves many government agencies to operate at different administrative levels. The nodal agency is the central level played by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). It is responsible for policy formation, monitoring and funding (Government of India, 2021). At the city level the Delhi urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the

¹⁷ Government of India. (2015). Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Urban: Housing for All (Urban) mission guidelines. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) plays very important roles such as Project Findings, Selection of Beneficiary, Land Allocation and Execution of Project. The involvement of multiple agencies often leads to coordination problems, procedural delays, and administrative complexities, which ultimately affect beneficiaries. (Sharma and Bhide, 2020). According to government reports, approximately 1.2 lakh housing units have been sanctioned in Delhi under various PMAY-U components (Government of India, 2021). In these permitted households, the improvement of infrastructure is very apparent, they also have access to separate toilets, electricity and proper water supply which eventually limits vulnerability. Security of tenure has ensured stability and limits eviction threats and this fulfils the sense of belongingness of the city for slum dwellers (Sharma and Bhide, 2020). Regarding these complexities, PMAY-U has its own contribution for the improvement of the lives of slum dwellers. For beneficiaries, this scheme offers well-structured houses with safety and availability of basic needs such as sanitation, supply of water, proper electricity (Government of India, 2021). Through secure housing the sense of dignity and stability has also been enhanced mainly for the women and elderly residents who go through the prevailing condition of slum (Mitra, 2015). Kundu says that the main reason behind why housing policies often fail in India is its structural inequalities which vastly lies in Indian urban societies. These policies are initiated for welfare but eventually ignores basic needs and sustenance of the slum residents (Kundu, 2014).

3. STRUGGLE UNDER PMAY-URBAN

Although PMAY-U is designed as an inclusive housing scheme, structural limitations have reduced its effectiveness in practice. It has particularly reshaped the housing challenges of slum dwellers, the everyday struggle and slum's condition uncover the limits of this policy. These struggles are a product of weak policy design and its implementation. Kundu analysed that slum dwellers share a considerable percentage of Delhi and they mainly depend upon informal sectors for their livelihood. This livelihood is mainly connected with the location of markets and the informal works sector. When the policy of PMAY-U relocated these residents for the purpose of redevelopment livelihood got disrupted because of location sensitivity (Kundu, 2014). PMAY-U provides facilities of housing but with this new expenditure have also been introduced for poor families. Slum dwellers often manage basic needs such as water, electricity and sanitation with the help of community shared arrangements that costs them very low whereas in houses which are provided under PMAY-U policy needs daily expanses of electricity water and maintenance that are impossible for the family to fulfill because they are only dependent upon daily pay works and this eventually expand the financial hardships (Government of India, 2021). For families dependent on irregular daily wages, these expenses can intensify financial hardship and even lead to indebtedness.

Relocation also weakens social networks that are essential for survival. Slum communities rely on neighbourhood ties for employment opportunities, childcare, and mutual support (Dutta, 2012). The loss of these networks can increase social isolation and vulnerability. The impacts are particularly severe for women, children, and elderly residents. Women as slum residents are mainly involved in the informal working sector and relocation can cause problems with commuting distance and this may enhance their safety concerns (Mitra, 2015). Not only women, children and elders were also affected with the process of relocation as children lost their education because it disrupted the functioning of Anganwadi and Schools. It also affects the continuity of education (Yadav and Kumar, 2019). Most elders face difficulties to adopt relocated houses because of the disruption of healthcare facilities as they are more comfortable with familiar networks (Sen and Hobson, 2016). Large-scale redevelopment projects can also raise environmental concerns, including loss of green spaces and increased pressure on urban infrastructure (UN Habitat, 2016).

4. POLICY GAPS AND RECOMMENDATION

After evaluating all concerned literature, it suggests that physical improvement of housing does not meet the overall well-being of these slum dwellers. Sharma and Bhide underline the documentation process and housing allotment delays limits PMAY-U to reach among beneficiaries. Slum dwellers mainly lived in informal settlements of slums and short of permitted living tenure escalated the unavailability of required documents. Due to informal employment, they also lack income certificates. Migrant residents have documents but that is from their home not from where they currently work (Sharma and Bhide, 2020). PMAY-U has capability to improve the housing related issues but because of its weak implementation practises its growth remains slow. PMAY-Urban policy requires a lot of official documentation process including Aadhaar cards, Income certificates, PAN Cards and Voter IDs. However migrant workers, residents are not able to meet these requirements sometimes and that resulted in them being excluded from the scheme's benefits (Kundu, 2014). PMAY-U provides ownership of houses to establish stability but in Delhi most of the workforce are covered by migrant workers who have temporary jobs that make them rely on rental houses and accommodation. The temporary and irregular employment and its specific locality make migrant employment's pattern very unstable and regional and this forces the resident to arrange their lifestyle accordingly. To arrange this lifestyle, migrants often rent houses for their accommodation and this can help them in easy shifts. Some migrant workers have planned only to live in the city for a short term because they share strong native connections. In this manner, owning a house may not be affordable and suitable for their conditions. This shows a big door standing between the objective of housing ownership and the actual circumstances of migrant residents (Dupont, 2008). These gaps can be seen in the comprehensive course of urban planning which is followed in India. According to Sameer Sharma in "*A Textbook of Urban Planning and Geography*", presiding urban development mainly focused towards only infrastructural development and physical housing growth but ignores everyday maintenance, economic and social aspects that talks about people's experience of detachments. In consequence, the policy only performs in quantitative goals but strives to achieve significant improvements in the standard of life of the poor (Sharma, 2020).

To address and fulfil all distinguished gaps, policy engagements must be focused towards In situ Redevelopment with closeness to their schools, workplace and social networks, Rationalize Documentation process and combined housing and livelihood scope. This will help them to remain in connections with older ones without breaking the close ties. Significant Community involvement in the process of planning and implementation can improve clarity and liability. An inclusive perspective that unites housing with opportunities, accessible services and community networks will present the model of urban development. To deal with these listed gaps and challenges PMAY-Urban must follow a rights-oriented framework. Policy should be redesigned to address community-based struggles such as safety measures for women, education and its continuity for children, healthcare facilities for elders (Sharma and Bhide, 2020).

5. CONCLUSION

This study illustrates that PMAU-U was introduced to address housing shortage in urban areas but the result in Delhi remains uneven. Housing policies focused solely on physical construction cannot adequately address the complex socio-economic realities of slum dwellers. The factors such as relocation, exclusion, displacement often causes vulnerabilities that are not solved through only physical housing. The findings emphasise the need for more efficient implementation, stronger in-situ redevelopment strategies and policies that recognise the lived experiences of urban poor communities. For housing programmes to be truly effective, policymakers must understand and incorporate the everyday realities of slum residents. Giving importance to their voices can help

design more inclusive, practical and fair urban housing policies that move closer to the goal of “Housing for All.”

REFERENCES (INDICATES PRIMARY SOURCES)

1. *Government of India. (2015). *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Urban: Housing for all (urban) mission guidelines*. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. https://pmaymis.gov.in/PDF/HFA_Guidelines/hfa_Guidelines.pdf
2. *Government of India. (2021). *PMAY–Urban: Operational guidelines and progress report*. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. <https://pmay-urban.gov.in/guideline>
3. *UN-Habitat. (2016). *World cities report: Urbanization and development – Emerging futures*. United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Accessed on 25 Jan2026 Retrieved from <https://unhabitat.org/world-cities-report-2016>
4. Bhan, G. (2016). *In the public’s interest: Evictions, citizenship, and inequality in contemporary Delhi*. University of Georgia Press.
5. Dupont, V. (2008). Slum demolitions in Delhi since the 1990s: An appraisal. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(28), 79–87.
6. Kundu, A. (2014). Exclusionary urbanisation in Asia: A macro overview. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49(4), 38–43.
7. Mahadevia, D. (2011). Branded and renewed? Policies, politics and processes of urban development in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46(31), 56–64.
8. Mitra, A. (2015). Migration, livelihood and slums: A study of informal settlements in Delhi. *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 58(2), 245–262.
9. Roy, A. (2005). Urban informality: Toward an epistemology of planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2), 147–158.
10. Sen, J., & Hobson, J. (2016). *Cities without slums? Housing and urban poverty in India*. Oxford University Press.
11. Sharma, K., & Bhide, A. (2020). Gendered experiences of resettlement colonies in Indian cities. *Environment and Urbanization*, 32(2), 531–548.
12. Sharma, S. (2020). *A textbook of urban planning and geography*. PHI Learning.
13. Yadav, R., & Kumar, S. (2019). Slum redevelopment and livelihood displacement in Indian cities. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 41(6), 813–829.

The Constitution of Egypt: Origin and Evolution

Dr. Manila Narzary

Department of Political Science,
Kalindi College, University of Delhi

ABSTRACT

For the systematic functioning of any country and to maintain law and order it is necessary to have a strong constitution. Constitution also reflects the society, culture, and people of the country, because constitutional provisions are for addressing the issues and concerns of a modern society. Constitution is required to check and balance state and social institutions. A country cannot sustain for long without a strong constitution. This article engages with the evolution of modern constitution in Egypt, under what circumstances it was framed and how different regimes used and manipulated the constitution by making arbitrary changes in the laws therein. Citizens of Egypt were denied to participate freely in the political activities and express their opinions even as Egypt became a free country to form a republican government through electoral system. As one of the richest ancient civilizations, it went through multiple shades of socio-political and economic crisis post-independence.

The purpose of the article is to understand the subjectivities and conditionings in the making of a constitution. Constitution being the most powerful document across democratic states, how this document failed to uphold the legal rights of the citizen is the subject matter discussed here.

Key-words: *Constitution, fundamental rights, political party, democracy, citizens.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Constitution is the highest and supreme law of the State. All the rules and guidelines regarding the institutions, organisation, powers and functions of government are laid down in the constitution. According to political thinker Jellinek, “Constitution is a body of judicial rules which determine the supreme organs of state, prescribes their modes of creation, their mutual relations, their spheres of action and the fundamental place of each of them in relation to state” (Deejay Sam, 2014). The term constitution has two different meanings. “In the first sense when applied to the state may connote both a physical and a legal conception. In the former sense the word refers to the nature of the country with reference to the totality of constituent elements which enter into the physical make-up of the state like land, people, institutions, government machinery etc. In the latter sense it has reference to a legal instrument, an “instrument of evidence,” it has been called a fundamental statute of charter, a document or collection of documents, which embodies the more essential parts of the organic public law of the state” (Garner, 1951: 455-456). Consequently, the first definition refers to an empirical or descriptive constitution and second one is normative and prescriptive concept. “Empirically, constitution reflects the political conditions that in fact prevail in a specific region at a particular given period of time. In the normative sense, constitution establishes the rulers by which political rule should be exercised under law. Whereas constitutions always existed in empirical sense, but the normative constitution is a relatively modern phenomenon. Normative sense of constitution came in to existence during the American and French revolutions and has propagated throughout the world. This does not mean that before the emergence of normative constitution legal rules relating to political rule and binding on the holders of the ruling function did not exist, it was always there. There is a distinction between legalization and constitutionalization. The constitution represents specific type of legalization of political rule that is linked to historical conditions which did not

always exist and which could also disappear over the course of history” (Dieter Grimm, 2016: 3).

The constitution has rightly been called an evolutionary achievement. It did not happen overnight, it emerged gradually. “It restored the legal bonds on political rule that had been lost with the collapse of the medieval order under the altered conditions of the modern state, the attendant positive nature of law, and the transition to the functional differentiation of society. By means of the constitution, political system and rule was structured according to a new legitimating principle of popular sovereignty and made compatible with the need of the functionally differentiated society for autonomy and harmony. By such means, the constitution making it possible to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate claims to rule and acts of rule. In fulfilling this function, it might fail or lose its acceptance. But the character of the achievement became apparent in the fact that its function in this case could only be assumed by another constitution, and it cannot be maintained independent of the constitution” (Dieter Grimm, 2016: 16).

Since the very beginning the constitution was as universal as it was limited. Universal in the sense the powers of the constitution could be exercised only within the framework of its provisions and accepted by all. “It was limited in the sense that the public power subject to its provisions was limited to a specific territory which was demarcated from other territories by borders. Constitution of the state can be applied only within the territory of the state it constituted, while the other rules with the same claim to exclusively applied in the neighbouring state” (Dieter Grimm, 2016: 16-17). These rules were drafted to protect the rights and interest of the citizen of the country. Constitution gradually developed its importance and popularity. No liberal democratic country can survive without rule of law, so it is very much important to have constitution. Constitutional law cannot be invariant law. It comes in to being through a political decision of the country and can be modified and amend number of times by the same type of decision. “Even prohibitions of change enshrined in constitutional law, which create a further gradient within constitutional law, are effective only as long as the constitution containing such a prohibition remains in force and is not annulled by contrary resolutions. But this does not harm the legalization function because with the aid of the constitution decisions regarding the premises of political decisions are separated from the political decisions themselves. Constitution fulfills its function as the fundamental legal order of the state by removing those principles of social coexistence that rest on a broad consensus across all opponents from the ongoing political debates” (Dieter Grimm, 2016: 17).

2. CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN EGYPT

The constitution of Egypt initiated and developed during the last periods of the British protectorate. Movement against British started during that period and the desire to challenge British influence was the primary motivation for drafting a constitution. “Building upon the Egyptian nationalism of the late 1800s, another popular nationalist movement emerged in the aftermath of World War II and began to demand more autonomy over domestic affairs. This nationalist movement evolved into a political party, the Wafd, who gained mass support amongst Egyptians for demanding independence. In 1922, Britain officially ended the protectorate, but retained de facto control over the country until 1952. Formal independence from Britain created a need for Egypt to define its political system. Writing a constitution offered an opportunity for the country to assert its independence and establish a measure of parliamentarianism. Wafd called for a constitution to be written by a popularly elected constituent assembly. However, the king ignored this demand and appointed a committee to draft a constitution, thus excluding the largest and most popular movement at the time from the drafting process. This political snub resulted in enormous controversy and discontent. Thus, like its 1882 predecessor, this constitution was drafted in a period of significant social and political unrest” (Lunde D., 2015: 24).

2.1 The Constitution of 1923

History of modern Egyptian constitution can be traced back to the 1919 Egyptian revolution. “Following rising agitations against Britain, which had governed the territory as a protectorate since 1914, and increasing demands for independence, British rule over the territory was formally terminated under the terms of a joint declaration between Britain and Egypt in 1922. This declaration provided for the establishment of a 30 member legislative committee, made up of political parties and members of the revolutionary movement, with the responsibility to draft a constitution for an independent Egypt”(Constitutional History of Egypt, 2016). Constitutional monarchy was established in 1923 with the King as the head of the executive. The 1923 Constitution allowed personal freedoms and liberties to the citizens.

“Elections were held in January 1924 and their outcome was a forgone conclusion, a landslide for the wafd which won 151 seats, leaving 7 for the liberals. Saad Zaghlul became Prime Minister, the first Fallah Egyptian to occupy the position. By so doing he had displaced the old Turco-Circassian elite in favour of a new elite of native Egyptians, who from then on became the main ruling element in the country. Zughlul who was dubbed ‘the king of hearts’, as opposed to the real king sitting in the palace at Abdin, and the uncrowned king, the British High Commissioner, sitting in his palace at Qasr al-Doubara- had to toe a fine line in that tripartite power setting. Zughlul was fighting real constitutional battles and had to resort to threats of resignation, or worse, to get the king to rule according to the terms of the constitution. He used the power of the mob to threaten the king with outbreaks of violence if the king did not abide by his legal interpretations, and on several occasions the king was forced to accede to his premire. Zughlul believed that his most important mission was to negotiate and Anglo-Egyptian treaty that would settle the four reserved points and free Egypt from continued British interference in its political life. But he failed to negotiate such a treaty” (Marsot, 2007: 99-100). Zughlul died in 1927, he had been admired by the common people of the country and respected by the king and the opposition. His influence on political life, though strong, but was not always for the better. “He had introduced system of patronage into political life, and a system of violence and of public demonstrations as a weapon against the opposition. Throughout his autocracy he had alienated the most brilliant brains, and had set up a personal form of rule. He had sown many of the public ills that have beset political life to the present day. He had served his country by his devotion to parliamentary procedures and to the constitution, and by his battle for a democratic form of government, when the king wished to impose an autocracy. Since he had to give battle to both king and British representative, the card were stacked against him but he fought against them till the end of his life” (Marsot, 2007:102). During his lifetime he had dominated the political scene by virtue of his political acumen and the force of his personality, but “the system he set up was flawed, and in the hands of lesser man like his successor Mustafa al- Nahhas. Even after number of attempts a treaty with Britain met with little success. Zughlul’s successors who wanted the glory of negotiating a treaty finally destroyed it and here personal animosities and jealousies became more important than principles and the country’s interest. Zughlul died before the treaty was ratified” (Marsot, 2007:102). The king was always ready to dangle the lure of premiership to any politician. “While the leader of the Wafd, Nahhas, was an inept parliamentarian who allowed parliament to degenerate into an instrument of party obstruction, had little control over his followers and was too easily swayed by his companions. Though the 1923 Constitution created a bicameral parliament with powers to convene itself in case it was not called into session in accordance with the schedule. This Constitution has served as the model for all Egyptian constitutions that have followed. The 1923 Constitution gave much power to the king but sought to a limited extent to empower the people” (Conatitutional History of Egypt, 2016).

Despite moving to the right direction towards democratization, the Constitution of 1923 still had many problems. “First the King could single-handedly disband parliament, appoint up to two-fifths of the Senate, and veto parliament bills. The Constitution protected the image of the king and he had absolute power to ratify laws.

Furthermore, successive kings frequently ignored or violated the Constitution” (Marsot, 2007:103). It was considered that 1923 constitution was a gender biased; supported only male interests. It mainly focused on the rights and liberties of male and women’s rights and liberties were not discussed clearly. Very rarely women’s issues were discussed by the government. “The Constitution 1923 also did not mention women, except once: requiring primary education for boys and girls. Exceptions, conditions, and qualifications within the Constitution made it easy for the government to infringe on the personal liberties listed in the constitution. Intermittent interference by the British into the politics of Egypt and policy making also hindered the march towards democratization. A new constitution was drafted in 1930 briefly replaced the 1923 constitution for five years. This new Constitution, unlike the 1923 Constitution that enfranchised all adult males, limited the franchise to those owning a certain amount of property” (Marsot, 2007:103). The king managed to bring down a Wafd government in 1929 “when Zughlul’s successor Nahhas was accused of improper behavior in a legal case he had defended. Though he was innocent in the charge, but the king used it as an excuse to bring down the government and appoint a liberal cabinet, which promptly requested parliament be suspended for three years. After that King Fuad started controlling the government and used powers arbitrarily. The new government was unpopular for its rule and its aloofness from the masses. The new cabinet came at the time as socio-economic crisis swept the rest of the world, ushering in years of depression that lasted in Egypt until 1933” (Marsot, 2007:103). A Free Officers Revolution which took place in 1952 abolished the constitutional monarchy and set up a republic under a new constitution.

2.2 The 1952 Constitution and Developments between 1952 and 1971

“In 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Free Officers carried out an almost bloodless coup d’état. This revolution abandoned the 1923 constitution, which had essentially formed a constitutional monarchy. The 1923 constitution had created an elected parliament, known as the Chamber of Deputies, as well as a cabinet headed by a prime minister” (Perry, 2004:76). The 1923 constitution extended suffrage to all adult males with the exception of brief periods when land ownership was required while citizens enjoyed the freedoms of speech, of press, to form political parties, and even, to contest elections. However, “two main aspects of the 1923 constitution thwarted democracy in Egypt: intermittent British interference in Egyptian politics and policymaking, and the overwhelming power to the king. The king was able to singlehandedly disband Parliament, appoint up to two-fifths of the Senate, and veto any of Parliament's bills. Furthermore, King Fu'ad, and later his son King Faruq, frequently ignored or even abrogated the constitution” (Perry, 2004:76).

By the time Nasser and the Free Officers declared Egypt a republic in 1953, “a new constitution was long overdue. In 1956, Nasser established a new constitution which is also known as Nassir’s constitution, which would remain the underpinnings of the current constitution despite his successor enacting a new constitution in 1971. Nasser's constitution was reminiscent of most socialist constitutions, “promising a welfare state that would provide: (i) the eradication of all aspects of imperialism; (ii) the extinction of feudalism; (iii) the eradication of monopolies, and the control of capitalistic influence over the system of Government; (iv) the establishment of a strong national army; (v) the establishment of social justice; and (vi) the establishment of a sound democratic society” (Feuille, 2011:240). Nasser was very much influenced by the socialist ideology of Russia. His main intention was to bring equality in the Egyptian society. “During the monarchical constitution though people had political rights but did not have economic rights there was so much class division in the society. “Nasser's constitution strove for the eradication of the control of capitalistic influence over the government by providing for a state-run economy and a national welfare system. It also attempted to live up to its promise of establishing social justice by guaranteeing freedom of religion, freedoms of press and of speech, freedom of association, and free elections” (Perry, 2004). However, all these promises made by the Nasser would not be met and fulfilled. “From 1956 to 2011, if a sound democratic society existed in Egypt, it was unrecognizable. While Article 47 of Nasser's constitution stated that

Egyptians have the right to set up associations, it qualified that right by saying it was subject to the provisions prescribed by law” (Perry, 2004). This qualification allowed Nasser to ban all political parties. Particularly religion based group Muslim Brotherhood was oppressed by Nasser for many years, “though he could not fully outlaw the Brotherhood because of its status as a religious organization” (Perry, 2004). Nasser believed in socialist ideology and wanted administration to be based on socialism. He was influenced by the USSR model of development. He opposed development of any organization and groups. Everything was controlled by the government. Often, “Nasser used his police powers to imprison Brotherhood members and, for all intents and purposes, prohibited any Brotherhood activities that could be seen as political, and also a ban on political parties was extended to the Muslim Brotherhood in January 1954” (Jankowski J., 2002). One of the main reasons of Nasser banning political parties was he did not want any kind of interference from pressure groups and other organisations, but for proper functioning of democracy it is important to have political parties. Political parties are the essence of the democracy. Nasser also ignored his promise to establish a democratic society in other ways. “While Nasser's constitution provided six-year terms for the president, it did not provide term limits, essentially permitting a presidency for life. Furthermore, while Nasser was "re-elected" several times during his reign and was indeed extremely popular, he was unopposed in each election, and the National Union, which replaced political parties, prevented any potential candidates from running. After Nasser's death from a heart attack in 1971, Anwar Sadat enacted a new constitution and reversed many of Nasser's policies, but did not reverse Egypt's socialist and dictatorial underpinnings”(Feuille, 2011:240).

2.3 The Constitution of 1971

After Nasser’s death in 1970 Sadat became the president of Egypt and a new constitution was drafted in 1971, and he used Nasser's constitution as a foundation which continued in operation with new amendments in year 1980, 2005 and 2007, until its dissolution in February 2011. “Newly drafted constitution focused on four main goals: world peace, Arab unity, national development and freedom of humanity and all Egyptians. The socialist constitutional elements were reflected in this constitution. The preamble, of constitution of 1971 also begins with general promises of justice, social progress, freedom from exploitation, national development and freedom and humanity” (Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1971). But despite having all those provisions government of Egypt failed to deliver and give justice to its citizens according to the constitution. There was no rule of law people were denied their constitutional rights, regime arbitrarily governing the country. “Sadat tempered the quasi-socialist language of previous constitution in the 1971 constitution. For example, Article 3 recognized that the sovereignty and authority of the government came from the people, instead of the state” (Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1971).

Significant constitutional amendment took place in 1980, and Sharia (Islamic law) was made the basis of all laws. “This differs from previous constitutions that were secular in nature and did not require laws to conform to principles of Islamic law. Article of the 1971 Constitution however, declared Islam the state religion and Arabic its official language. Article 2 also establishes the principles of Islamic Sharia as a main source of legislation. A 1980 amendment changed the article to declare Sharia as the main source of legislation” (Constitutional History of Egypt, 2016). After assassination of President Sadat in 1981, Hosni Mubarak became the president of Egypt and continued the legacy of authoritarian rule. Under Mubarak regime the Supreme Court read article 2 narrowly, this angered certain Islamic groups.

“Mubarak functioned according to the Constitution 1971, during his three-decade presidency however, he manipulated the Constitution number of times to his own ends. The Mubarak presidency is indeed largely defined, particularly in retrospect, by self-perpetuation: by the turn of the millennium the institution of the presidency was by far the country's most influential political player, with no supervision over its actions.

Mubarak used this influence, and this lack of meaningful supervision, to consolidate power and impose himself on other government institutions. By the end of his presidency the parliament and the cabinet had become nothing more than varied representations of the executive bodies of president rather than the pillars of a balanced political system. For many, moves taken in his final years to ensure that his son Gamal Mubarak would succeed him as president represent the most salient example of this entrenchment”(Marwa Awad, 2011). Unlike president Nasser and Sadat, Mubarak did not have ideological background and political experiences. In the initial years of his regime president Mubarak used the gradual political development. Later on successfully capitalized on Sadat’s political and economic policies and at the same time developed a clientele system to generate support for his regime. Initially he did not have concrete ideology so Mubarak mainly focused on strengthening the National Democratic Party (NDP). Majority of Egyptian citizens were attracted toward NDP party’ (Hasanen and Nuruzzaman, 2013:139). After becoming the president Mubarak became the supreme patron of the country and all major Egyptian political actors became his clients.

During the final years of his tenure Mubarak amended the 1971 Constitution twice, in 2005 and in 2007. “These amendments represent, perhaps, the peak of his ability and power to manipulate the legal landscape to his own advantage. In effecting amendments to the basic legal document of the country, Mubarak was ostensibly responding to demands from critics that he take steps toward real reform. Mubarak was slightly more liberal than President Sadat. During the Mubarak regime Political parties were tolerated to an extent. Even Muslim Brotherhood members began to participated in the parliamentary election as independents in 1984, and opposition parties were free to express and growing in the form of opposition publications. But the government would routinely censor and confiscate these books or articles” (Marwa Awad, 2011). The 1971 constitution created the SCC as an independent body and granted some powers to protect its independence by giving its judges irrevocable and special status as members of the SCC. “The SCC was even granted authority to interpret the constitution. However, SCC judges were appointed by the president. The SCC, never holding much power, became even more of a rubber stamp for Mubarak” (Marwa Awad, 2011).

During Mubarak regime constitution of Egypt was amended number of times. The early years of the Mubarak regime were a time of relative prosperity, which facilitated his steady consolidation of power, as it was affected against the backdrop of a fairly contented populace. “The economic crisis experienced by people of Egypt during the 2000s, however, led to unrest and intense demonstrations in the years leading up to the Arab Spring. The inability to deal the economic woes of the country by the Mubarak regime was a key factor in the advent of the protests that led to the overthrow of his government” (khairi Abaza, 2006). People were extremely unhappy with the economic policies adopted by the government.

“The Egyptian presidents of the twentieth century have much in common, and their various constitutional experiences provide common lessons. Most of them were fundamentally military men. This shared background served both to legitimize their stature with the Egyptian population. Because of their military background and power Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak was able to manipulate constitutional documents to their own advantage” (khairi Abaza, 2006). This pattern of the use of constitutional documents to consolidate presidential power, rather than to serve as a check on it is perhaps the most important constitutional legacy of their respective presidencies. “Since the late 1970s, the Egyptian state has used religion as an instrument to pursue political ends. In the 1970s the aim was to counter the left; in the 1980s there was an attempt at co-opting Islamist political groups within the fringes of formal politics; and in the 1990s there was an attempt at containing the Islamist challenge (of both violent and nonviolent groups), as well as legitimizing authoritarian politics” (khairi Abaza, 2006).

3. POST ARAB SPRING CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN EGYPT

Since the removal of President Mubarak in February 2011, “Egypt has seen a flurry of constitutional declarations, elections and popular referenda aimed at reconstituting a functional political state, ideally one free of the flaws of the Mubarak regime that inspired the 2011 uprising. During this period of reorganization the Egyptian people have twice approved new constitutions by popular vote. The first was the Egyptian Constitution of 2012, after the 2011 revolution approved by popular referendum and signed into law in December of 2012 by then-President Mohamed Morsi. The second is the Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the current constitution adopted by popular referendum in January of 2014” (Heliotis and Nicolas, 2014). After a two week long mass protest between 25 January and 11 February 2011 finally Egyptian witnessed stepping down of President Hosni Mubarak, “the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took over the state, dissolved state institutions, suspended the Constitution and announced the establishment of an eight man constitutional committee (there were no women members in the committee), with a ten day deadline to prepare a technical report to review certain articles of the Constitution. A referendum, on March 19, 2011, approved the draft proposed by the Committee ratified. This was followed by parliamentary and presidential elections in January and May of 2012, respectively and Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) backed by the Islamic Muslim Brotherhood emerged as the dominant political force in Egypt after winning 70% of the seats in parliament and while their presidential candidate Mohammed Morsi won the presidency” (Michael Meyer-Resende, 2014: 6). For the first time in the history of Egypt an Islamist was elected for the post of president. For many years political parties based on religion were not allowed to participate in the election.

The process of drafting constitution however, took almost a year because the stakeholders could not agree on its composition and boycotted the meeting. Finally, the 100 members assembly dominated by the members of Islamists drawn the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) established provoking public outrage. The assembly was criticized for want of diversity and representativeness. The body was constantly under legal challenges seeking to dissolve it as it worked on the constitution. Members from Christian community continued to complain about the distribution of seats, and most of their representatives protested and boycotted the meetings. The first constitutional draft completed in October 2012. After that a public awareness campaign was conducted to educate citizens about the new constitution. Eventually, the assembly finalized the drafting process of the new constitution on November 29, 2012” (Constitutional History of Egypt, 2016). Many questions were raised whether the Mubarak regime’s 1971 Constitution need to be reformed or entirely rewrite new constitution became a major dispute in the aftermath of January 2011. “The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) which assumed power in February 2011, issued on 13 February a constitutional declaration suspending the 1971 Constitution it also appointed an eight-member committee of legal experts to amend eight articles of the 1971 Constitution, notably relaxing the conditions for presidential candidacy, introducing a fixed two terms for presidents, and abolishing the state of emergency which was in effect since 1981” (Michael Meyer-Resende, 2014:6). The 2011 revolution brought a new wave of constitutional experimentation. Citizens took to the streets, demanding democracy, dignity, and the rule of law. After the fall of Mubarak, Egypt saw the adoption of new constitutions in 2012 and 2014. Each promised greater accountability, protection of rights, and a new beginning (Lombardi & Brown, 2012). But just like before, the struggle for genuine constitutionalism was hampered again by divisive politics, and allowed military to control power and civil society activities were restricted.

3.1 Constitution under the Mohamed Morsi Regime (2012)

Egyptian constitution of 2012 lasted not more than six months. Various sections of the society opposed “the increasing hold of the FJP and the president Morsi on the state and his control over the executive powers. He argued that it was necessary to ensure the transition of the country and the implementation of the Constitution.

This resistance eventually took violent forms with regular clashes between Islamists and secularists. During the anniversary of the revolution against Mubarak on 25 January 2013, clashes erupted between pro and supporters. Violence between the various groups continued as the society increasingly became divided between the ruling Islamists and the secularists who resisted their rule. Events escalated on 30th June as millions took to the street demanding Morsi's resignation" (Constitutional History of Egypt, 2016). Finally in 1st July 2013, the military gave the 48 hours ultimatum to both pro-Morsi and anti-Morsi factions to reach a solution or face military intervention. Following the Morsi government failed to find a political solution, the military deposed Morsi on July 3, 2013, suspended the Constitution and set up an interim government headed by the Supreme Constitutional Court President, Adli Mansour"(Constitutional History of Egypt, 2016).

After taking charge of the president's office on 8 July 2013, the interim President Mansour issued a new Constitutional Declaration outlining a new transition process and interim governing structures. The 2012 Constitution lived for very short period, and was abolished by the military coup. "The growing economic crisis and concerns about a power concentration by the President triggered significant discontent leading the army to step in. On 3 July 2013, the SCAF removed the first democratically elected President of Egypt, Mohammed Morsi, and suspended the Constitution, establishing a new government headed by Interim President Adly Mansour, the chairman of the Supreme Constitutional Court" (Michael Mayer-Resende, 2014:6).

Military always played important role in the politics of Egypt. Since Nasser all the president belong to the military services. "It is the most powerful government entity in Egypt and was the power behind all previous presidents. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) ruled the country after the fall of Hosni Mubarak, but it was pushed aside in August by President Morsi. The generals stayed out of the limelight at the beginning of this crisis, but on 8 December they urged the government and opposition to resolve their disputes via dialogue, warning that they would not allow the country to be dragged into a dark tunnel"(BBC, 24 December 2012). A statement said the solution should not contradict legitimacy and the rules of democracy, and that the military realised its "responsibility to preserve the higher interests of the country and secure and protect vital targets, public institutions and the interests of innocent citizens" (BBC, 24 December 2012).

Mr Morsi's decree of 22 November gave the 100-member panel to complete the draft constitution by January. After the Supreme Constitutional Court decision that it would soon rule on the lawsuits, supporters of the president Morsi on the general assembly decided to pass a rushed draft. "A large number of members boycotted the vote or had earlier resigned in protest over what they said was the failure of Islamists to compromise on key issues, including the place of religion in affairs of state. Human Rights Watch says the draft provides for basic protections against arbitrary detention and torture, but fails to end military trials of civilians or to protect freedom of expression and religion" (BBC News, 2012).

3.2 The Constitution of 2014

The 2014 constitution has also recovered most of the authoritarian features of the 1971 constitution which the 2012 constitution had reversed only half-heartedly. "The new constitution has kept the requirement of parliamentary approval for a presidential declaration of the state of emergency, but reduced the period for which the initial declaration is valid to three months. Extensions require a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives instead of popular approval in a referendum, as prescribed by the 2012 constitution. There is no absolute limit on how often the emergency period may be extended (New Article 154). Even more disconcertingly, the 2014 constitution gives the public authorities broad powers in the fight against terrorism" (**Rainer Grote, 2014**). The 2012 constitution had eliminated references to antiterrorist laws together with the power to create special courts for the trial of suspected terrorists. By contrast, "the new Article 237 obliges the state to fight all types and forms of terrorism. Although the provision indicates that this fight shall be

accompanied by guarantees for fundamental rights and freedoms, but it does not specify the relevant guarantees. Instead, the constitution leaves wide discretion to the legislature in adopting the legislation organizing the provisions and procedures of fighting terrorism. In addition, the new Article 86 has introduced a potentially far-reaching duty to safeguard national security; this duty is no longer limited to the security apparatus of the state, but is incumbent on all citizens “as a national responsibility ensured by law” (Rainer Grote, 2014). The constitution of 2014 follows the model of the 1971 and 2012 constitutions. “The directly elected President appoints a Prime Minister, whose government will need the backing by the House of Representatives. If the House does not back the government, the President will appoint a new Prime Minister based on a nomination by the majority party or coalition” (Michael Meyer-Resende, 2014: 8). President had discretionary power to appoint prime minister and other ministers according to his own choice.

4. CONCLUSION

Constitution is the foundation of any modern nation state. It is considered as the back bone of a country. Historically constitution developed from the conflict between the liberal bourgeoisie and absolute monarchy. Constitution, which regardless of how it came to be in each individual case, had a contractual behavior. “Constitution contains the principles of basic rights to define social sphere of liberty, on the one hand, and rules to regulate the holders and modalities of the exercise of state power on the other. Constitution provided for representational bodies to communicate civic interests to the state and a guarantee that the state with the decisions of representational bodies, together with the establishment of the independent courts safeguard and protect the interest of the citizens. The end and means corresponded. The political demands were of such a nature that they could be fulfilled only through constitutional law. As the just social order was anticipated as flowing from an absence of legal obligations, the only task of constitution was that of drawing parameters. The constitutional idea has moved beyond its countries of origin. Constitution becomes a globally accepted concept. The most remarkable aspect of the constitution is that even the socialist states, which consider themselves the radical antithesis of the bourgeois rule of law state have dispensed with constitution. The need to organize public power has increased rather than decreasing since the early nineteen century. The challenge is no longer to restrict an already existed subject of rule that is deemed legitimated by divine right, but rather to create legitimate bearers of rule and assign them their authority. Constitutions have established the country as a unit of action. Constitutions contain provisions that establish the bodies and processes for the formation and assertion of political will among the citizens” (Dieter Grimm, 2016: 128-131). Developing constitution in any state is a major exercise. Constitutionalism has played an ever increasing role since the revolution of France and United States in nation building and also developing rule of law. “The fight for new constitutions in multi-party politics in Africa attests to the significance civil society and the general population attach to constitution making, as a constitutive part of national reconciliation and political development. Constitution articulates for the development of new society, defines the fundamental principles by which the country is to be organized and redistribute power within the country and also it can play an important role in the consolation of peace, justice, human rights, human dignity, participation, accountability manage diversity constructively inclusivity, democratic governance and overall development of citizens. Enjoying constitutional rights is not an easy job, and the way constitution is drafted is also important. It is also important to recognize that the process of development of constitution is as important as its subject. Constitution making process is always context driven. There are certain factors such as effective public participation, transparency and inclusiveness which are crucial for the establishment of constitution that is long lasting, durable and legitimate and accepted by all the citizens” (Nic Cheeseman, 2018: 117-120). There are many countries despite having constitutional provisions citizens are denied their constitutional rights. Egypt is one of those countries. Constitution of Egypt is drafted number of times by successive regime. Having constitution alone does not guarantee for welfare state, for that it is

important to have rule of law, strong leadership, strong opposition parties, decentralization of powers and active political participation by the citizens. These all were missing in Egypt. In Egypt after becoming Republic whoever controlled the regime failed to deliver good governance because most of them wanted to fulfill their personal interest and ignored citizen's interest. It was the deprivation of rights entitled according to the constitution of the Egypt as democratic country that eventually led to the outbreak of public anger and which laid the foundation for revolution of 2011.

REFERENCES

1. Afaf Lutfi, Al-Sayyid Marsot (2007) A History of Egypt from the Arab Conquest to the present, Cambridge University press.
2. Adam Cygan, John McEldowney (2013) The Role of Parliament in the Egyptian Constitution. <http://www.gpgovernance.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Publication-1-Full-EN.pdf>: Accessed on 14/9/2016.
3. BBC News, 24 December 2012 Egypt constitutional crisis. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20554079>; Accessed on 16/9/2018.
4. Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 11 Sept. 1971, as amended. May 22, 1980, May 25, 2005, March 26, 2007, proclamation.
5. Comparing Egypt's constitutions. <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Comparing-Egypt-s-Constitutions.pdf>; Accessed on 30/9/2016.
6. Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 1971. http://www.palatauruscentro.studi.eu/doc/EGY_Constitution_1971_EN.pdf; Accessed on 24/9/2018
7. Constitutional History of Egypt, 2016. <http://www.constitutionnet.org/country/constitutional-history-egypt>; Accessed on 30/9/2018.
8. Constitution of Arab Republic of Egypt 1971. <http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=54917e9c4>; Accessed on 14/9/2018.
9. Daily News Egypt (Dec. 7, 2016) Cabinet Approves Modifying Controversial Article in 2013 Protest Law, <https://dailynewsegypt.com/2016/12/07/603429/amp/>
10. Dieter, Grimm (2016) Constitutionalism: past, present, and future, Oxford University Press, United Kingdom.
11. David, Lunde (2015) Constitutions and Democratic Consolidation: Comparing Egypt and Tunisia, Center for Middle East Studies, university of Denver. <https://www.du.edu/korbel/media/documents/lunde-david-thesis.pdf>; accessed on 30/9/2018.
12. DeeJay, Sam (2014) Constitution: Meaning, Types and Importance of Constitution. <http://www.preservearticles.com/2014051433461/constitution-meaning-types-and-importance-of-constitution.html>; accessed on 22/10/2018.
13. Garner, J.W. (1951) Political Science and Government, The World Press Private Limited, Calcutta.

14. Glenn, E. Perry (2004) The History Of Egypt 89-90, in Frank W. Thackery & John E. Finding eds., 2004.
15. Heliotis, Nicolas (2014) A Textual Analysis of Presidential Power under the 2014 Egyptian Constitution, *International Lawyer*, 00207810, Fall2014, Vol. 48, Issue 2.
16. James, Feuille (2011) Reforming Egypt's Constitution: Hope for Egyptian Democracy?, *Texas International Law Journal*, September 1. www.tilj.org/content/journal/47/num1/Feuille237.pdf; accessed on 30/9/2016.
17. James, Jankowski (2002) *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and The United Arab Republic*, Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
18. Khairi, Abaza (2006) Political Islam and Regime Survival in Egypt, *Policy Focus #51 | January 2006*, Patrick Clawson, Series Editor, The Washington Institute for near east policy. [https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/Policy Focus51.pdf](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/Policy%20Focus51.pdf); Accessed on 30/9/2016.
19. Kelly, Buchanan (2014) Perspectives on Egypt's 2014 Constitution, February 19. <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2014/02/perspectives-on-egypts-2014-constitution/>; Accessed on 30/9/2016.
20. Marwa, Awad (2011) Egypt's Constitution Committee Meets Army Saturday, Reuters February 2.
21. Michael, Maggie (17 January, 2014) The international monitoring group claimed that there was a "clampdown on free speech ahead of the charter." Official: Egyptian voters have backed new charter. <http://news.yahoo.com/official-egyptian-voters-backed-charter-100856281.html>; accessed on 30/9/2016.
23. Michael, Meyer-Resende (2014) Egypt: In-Depth Analysis Of The Main Elements Of The New Constitution, Directorate-General For External Policies Of The Union, European Union, Isbn: 978-92-823-5749-1. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2014/433846/EXPO-AFET_NT\(2014\)433846_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2014/433846/EXPO-AFET_NT(2014)433846_EN.pdf); Accessed on 30/9/2017.
24. M. Dunne (2014) Egypt's Evolving Governance is No 'Democratic Transition, Op-Ed Washington Post. <http://egyptelections.carnegieendowment.org/2014/01/28>.
25. Michael, Meyer-Resende (2014) Egypt: In-Depth Analysis of The Main Elements of The New Constitution, Directorate-General For External Policies Of The Union, European parliament. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>; accessed on 30/9/2018.
26. Mohammed M. Hasanen, Ph.D and Mohammed Nuruzzaman Ph.D. (2013) The New Egypt: Socio-political Dynamics and the Prospects of the Transition to Democracy, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Published by MCSER-CEMAS-Sapienza University of Rome, Vol 4 No 4 March 2013 : accessed on 22nd June 2018.
26. N. Brown (2014) Egypt has Replaced a Single Dictator with a Slew of Dictatorial Institutions, Op-Ed, The New Republic <http://egyptelections.carnegiendowment.org/2014/01/28>.
28. Newton and Van Deth (2010) *Foundation of comparative politics: democracies of the modern world*.
29. Powel, Dalton, and Strom (2015) *Comparative politics today: A World View*, Pearson, England.
30. Rainer Grote (2014) Constitutional Developments in Egypt: The New 2014 Egyptian Constitution, Edinburgh. oxcon.ouplaw.com/.../egyptian-constitution/constitutional-developments-in-egypt-the-; accessed on 28/10/2018.

31. Saxena, S.C. (1988) Political science, Macmillan's India Limited, Delhi.
32. Sarah, El-Sheikh (2016) Prime Minister Confirms Amendment of Protest Law, Daily News Egypt, December 4.
33. The National Geography, [.https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/egypt/#egypt-pyramids.jpg](https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/egypt/#egypt-pyramids.jpg); accessed on 30/9/2018.
34. Thomas, E. Baker (2004) Constitutional Theory in a Nutshell, William & Mary Bill of Rights Journal, Volume 13.
35. WorldAtlas. <https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/egypt/egland.htm>; Accessed on 30/9/2018.
36. Yolande, Knell (2013) The complicated legacy of Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, BBC News, 25 January 2013. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-21201364>: Accessed on 14/9/2018.

Know What They Say: An AI-based Communication Bridge Between Hearing/Speech Impaired and Normally Aabled

Manju Bhardwaj¹, Vishwa Bharti¹, Shweta Sankhwar^{1*}

¹ Department of Computer Science, Maitreyi College, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

*Corresponding author: ssankhwar@maitreyi.du.ac.in

ABSTRACT

A person with hearing or speech disability tends to use sign language for communication, but the normally abled individuals find it difficult to grasp this language. This leads to a communication gap for the hearing-impaired community, the gap can be bridged by using a mechanism to convert the sign language gestures to text. This research work focusses on Sign Language Recognition (SLR) and aims to address the critical issue of communication gap between the hearing/ speech impaired, and normally abled individuals. We propose an AI-based mechanism to translate sign language gestures into text so as to facilitate communication between users using sign language with those unfamiliar with sign language. The proposed model-cum-translator "Sign-Text AI Bridge" aims to translate sign language gestures into textual or verbal output in real-time. The proposed model performs gesture detection & classification in the first phase followed by language translation in the second phase. Finally, we build words and sentences from gestures, and employ an auto-correction mechanism to generate words and sentences. An accuracy of 91.2% is reported by the model, which is promising given the complexity of sign language, which is required to handle dynamic hand shapes, orientations, and movements.

Keywords: Sign Language, Sign Language Recognition, CNN, Deep Learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is an important activity for humans, making them understand and interact with the people around them. While spoken language is the most common form of communication, not everyone in the universe is capable of using this mode of communication. As per World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 430 million people across the world are estimated to have a significant hearing loss deficiency in 2024, which places an estimated prevalence of 5% in the world population (WHO, 2025). This includes a large proportion of children, nearly 34 million, who suffer from significant hearing loss. India has observed an increase in the incidence of individuals with hearing impairment from 63 million in 2016 to nearly 100 million in 2018 (Varshney, 2016; Haile et al., 2019; Verma et al., 2021). An even larger percentage of our population have a milder degree of hearing loss and unilateral hearing loss. For so many young Indians with hearing loss, this means a serious loss of productivity, both physically and economically. For such individuals who are hearing or vocally impaired, auditory language is unsuitable for communication. As a result, the hearing-impaired individuals tend to disconnect from the world of common man and feel marginalized due to their inability to communicate.

Sign language provides a powerful non-verbal way for people who are hearing and vocally impaired. But its impact is not universal because not everyone can understand it. Hence, a communication gap persists for individuals with hearing or speech disabilities. While interpreters can help bridge this gap, they are not always available, which can leave parts of the community at a disadvantage.

To tackle these important challenges and bridge the communication gap for people who are hearing/ vocally impaired, this research proposes an AI-based system that translates sign language gestures into text. This would ease communication of sign language users with normal individuals who do not understand sign language. This AI-based communication system will enhance the accessibility and inclusivity for the hearing-impaired individuals, helping them to communicate and connect easily with everyone around them.

In this research, we employ a Kaggle dataset based on the Indian sign language (ISL) proposed by Indian Sign Language Research and Training Center (ISLRTC) (ISLRTC, 2025). The selected dataset was appropriately preprocessed and Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) employed for gesture classification.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 1 introduces our research topic and motivation behind the research. Section 2 reviews related works on sign language recognition, covering the different types of approaches followed for this task. Section 3 describes our proposed approach “Sign-Text AI Bridge”, the dataset used and the two-layered approach followed for gesture classification. The implementation details are presented in Section 4, covering the steps from gesture classification to sentence formation. Section 5 reports the results obtained and compares the performance with an existing state-of-the-art work. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper and suggests directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sign Language recognition (SLR) systems are being developed for many languages around the world (Table 1). Researchers have tried a variety of algorithms with impressive results. For example, Shenoy and colleagues explored an approach that combines hidden Markov models (HMM) with k-nearest neighbors (k-NN) for Indian Sign Language, reporting an overall accuracy of 99.7% (Shenoy et al., 2018). In another study, Pigou and team used a CNN-based model for Italian Sign Language, working with a dataset of 6,600 images and achieving 95.68% accuracy on the test set (Pigou et al., 2014).

Sign Language recognition (SLR) has seen strong results across languages and approaches. For Arabic Sign Language, a model based on CNN and MobileNet achieved 94.46% accuracy (Aldhahri et al., 2023). In Indian Sign Language, a SURF model combined with SVM and CNN was tested on a dataset of 36,000 images, yielding 99.14% accuracy with SVM and 99% with CNN (Katoch et al., 2022). For American Sign Language, a deep convolutional neural network was trained on 34,627 images and reached an impressive 99.9% accuracy (Abhiyev et al., 2020).

Table 1. *Summary of Related Work.*

Reference	Sign Language used	Algorithm used	Data size	Obtained Accuracy
(Aldhahri et al., 2023)	Arabic	CNN & MobileNet	47,697	94.46%
(Katoch et al., 2022)	Indian	SURF with SVM and CNN	36,000	SVM- 99.14% CNN-99%
(Abiyev et al., 2020)	English	Deep CNN	34,627	99.9%
(Shenoy et al., 2018)	Indian	HMM & k-NN	24,624	99.7%.
(Pigou et al., 2014)	Italian	CNN	6,600	95.68%

CNNs are increasingly popular among researchers working on sign language recognition. They have demonstrated strong performance for Arabic Sign Language (Ismail et al., 2021; Aldhahri et al., 2023), Chinese

Sign Language (Jiang et al., 2020), and Indian Sign Language (Katoch et al., 2022). Although various technologies have been employed to automate the American sign language recognition but CNNs and SVMs are the most commonly used techniques (Ardiansyah et al., 2021). Research community has witnessed the progression from the use of foundational Hidden Markov Models (Starner, 1995) to the state-of-art deep learning techniques (Jalal et al., 2018; Grandhi et al., 2021; Kannoth et al., 2021) for American sign language translation.

In this research paper, we propose a CNN-based model for Indian Sign language. After gesture classification using CNN, this work proposes an additional novel step to convert the gestures into textual or verbal output in real-time.

2.1 Sign-to-Text Conversion Techniques

Last two decades have witnessed a significant growth in the field of sign-to-text conversion. Researchers have employed techniques ranging from wearable sensors (Kudrinko et al., 2020; Papastratis et al., 2021) to deep learning techniques (Pigou et al., 2014; Aldhahri et al., 2023; Katoch et al., 2022; Abiyev et al., 2020). A variety of techniques have been used, each with its own strengths and limitations. Table 2 provides a comparative overview of the major approaches currently in use.

The survey indicates that although gesture recognition has been quite accurate (approx.. 99%), end-to-end systems that transform gestures into sentences and perform spelling correction have not been created for ISL. This shortcoming motivates the Sign-Text AI Bridge introduced in this work.

Table 2. Comparison of Current Sign-to-Text Conversion Techniques.

Approach	Technique Used	Key Strength	Limitation
Wearable Sensors (Kudrinko et al., 2020; Papastratis et al., 2021)	IMU / flex sensor gloves	Captures 3D motion precisely	Requires specialised hardware
HMM-based (Starner, 1995)	Hidden Markov Models	Models temporal gesture sequences	Limited vocabulary; needs handcrafted features
CNN-based (Pigou et al., 2014; Katoch et al., 2022; Abiyev et al., 2020)	Convolutional Neural Networks	Learns spatial features end-to-end	Mostly static signs; no sentence output
CNN + MobileNet (Aldhahri et al., 2023)	Lightweight CNN	Suitable for mobile devices	Accuracy trade-off vs. full CNN
Transformer-based (Papastratis et al., 2021)	Attention mechanisms	Context-aware, handles sequences	High compute cost; needs large data
Proposed (Sign-Text AI Bridge)	Two-layer CNN + Hunspell autocorrect	Full gesture-to-sentence pipeline	No background subtraction; ISL alphabets only

2.2 Deep Learning Techniques

Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN): Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) is a deep learning network architecture. Multiple layers make up CNN, which processes and transforms inputs into outputs. A CNN model is trained to do image analysis, classification, processing, object detection and segmentation. CNN have neurons with weights and biases the values of which are learned by the model during training and updates those accordingly during training process. The activation stage of CNN uses activation functions to apply an alteration to each neuron's output. A neuron's output is mapped to the maximum positive value using this method. An additional phase of pooling is applied to further modify the activation stage's output. The dimensionality of the featured map is decreased through pooling, which involves consolidating the output of small regions of neurons into a single output. The above process simplifies the subsequent layers and decreases the parameter count that the model needs to learn.

Activation functions: The activation function in neural networks is a mathematical equation, it performs an operation or calculation to determine the output of a single neuron. It outputs the output to some non-linear transformation, so between these inputs and weights plus bias, it takes a sum of that multiplied by weighted correlated with perceptible pixel. The activation function really has a lot of impact on the learning capacity and performance for your network. An activation function is chosen based on the type of problem, neural network model in use and properties that are needed for its outputs. There are pros and cons to each activation function, one may work better than another depending on your particular problem at hand so researchers tend to experiment with different ones performing hyperparameter searches for the best performance:

- *SoftMax.* SoftMax activation function, typically softmax(z), is applied in the output layer of neural networks for multi-class classification problems. Mathematically expressed as:

$$\sigma(z_i) = \frac{e^{z_i}}{\sum_{i=1}^k e^{z_i}} \quad (1)$$

To put it differently, the SoftMax function is used to assign the logits (raw predictions) x into a probability distribution $\sigma(x)$ over k different classes. Perhaps the most common use of SoftMax is for neural networks trained with categorical cross-entropy loss, where these SoftMax outputs are compared to one-hot encoded target labels in a straightforward fashion. Note, that using SoftMax in hidden layers flattens the activations which makes your network barely learnable, as that would flatten the activations and lose the necessary non-linear representational power. For hidden layers, there are non-linear activation functions such as ReLU and tanh.

- *ReLU.* ReLU, which stands for Rectified Linear Unit, is a popular activation function in neural networks, especially in deep learning. It is mathematically defined as:

$$\text{ReLU}(x) = \max(0, x) \quad (2)$$

ReLU introduces nonlinearity into the network, allowing neural networks to approximate complex tasks. This wireless is important for networks to learn and model data that cannot be separated linearly. If yes, the input will print correctly otherwise, it is 0 and the computer will work fine. This flexibility makes ReLU very attractive for training deep neural networks. ReLU activations are few (many activations are zero), for better visualization and calculation, especially in large networks.

2.3 AutoCorrect Feature

Hunspell_suggest. Hunspell_suggest is a function associated with Hunspell, which is an open-source spell checker and morphological analyser commonly used in many applications, including web browsers and word processors. The Hunspell_suggest function is designed to generate a list of suggested corrections for a misspelled word based on the language dictionary and rules it is using. When a word is flagged as incorrect, Hunspell_suggest analyses the word against the available dictionary and provides alternative words that are close in spelling, allowing the user to choose the correct one. The suggestions are typically based on various algorithms, including edit distance, phonetic similarity, and morphological properties.

3. PROPOSED MECHANISM – “SIGN-TEXT AI BRIDGE”

A model for a Sign Language Translator that leverages deep learning techniques, primarily focusing on gesture recognition and symbol classification, to bridge the communication gap for users who rely on sign language is proposed. The proposed model-cum-translator “Sign-Text AI Bridge” aims to translate sign language gestures into textual or verbal output in real-time.

3.1 Methodology

The proposed method employs a two-stage approach for predicting a symbol by identifying the gesture. Gestures are analyzed using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), followed by a dedicated classifier to accurately recognize and predict the symbol. Figure 1 shows a straightforward, step-by-step workflow for converting sign language into text using the CNN model. In the following subsections, we describe how the sign-language data is used during training phase, how gestures are combined to form words and sentences, and how an autocorrection feature is incorporated.

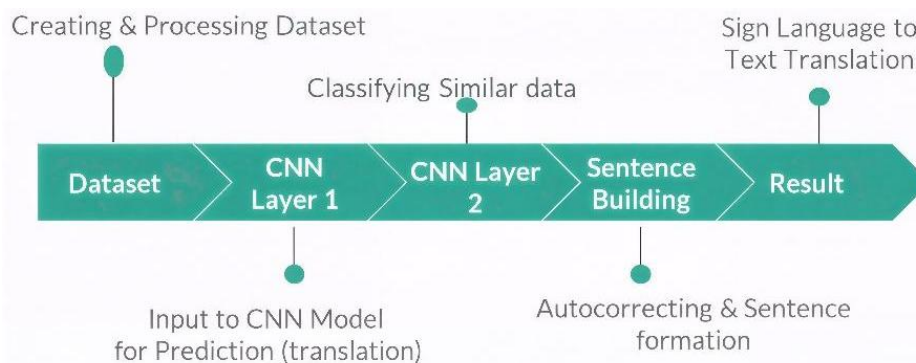


Figure 1. Flow chart depicting the methodology of Sign-Text AI Bridge.

The workflow begins with cleaning and preprocessing the dataset of sign language images for training. The prepared dataset is then fed into CNN Layer 1, where the model learns key visual features and produces a first set of predictions. CNN Layer 2 builds on this by distinguishing between similar symbols and further enhancing recognition accuracy. Once the signs are recognised, the Sentence Building phase ensures proper word sequencing, applies autocorrection, and forms grammatically structured sentences. Finally, the Result stage outputs the translated text, effectively converting sign language into readable text.

3.2 Dataset Description

In this work, the ISL dataset was retrieved from Kaggle (Dumbre, 2025), which is an image dataset consisting of images pertaining to 26 alphabets. The dataset consists of 26000 images divided into 26 classes. For each

character, multiple images have been captured under different lighting conditions, angles, timings, and backdrops. All the images in the dataset were preprocessed by scaling them to the appropriate dimensions as per CNN requirements and transforming RGB images to grayscale images for efficient image recognition.

3.3 Symbol Identification

We present a two-layered approach designed to anticipate the user's final symbol through gesture classification. The model processes gestures with Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) and a specialized classifier to reliably detect and predict the correct symbol.

3.3.1 Gesture Classification.

The first layer of the model utilizes a CNN-based approach to classify gestures and predict symbols. The CNN, implemented using Keras, a high-level Python-based neural networks library (which serves as a wrapper for TensorFlow), processes the input image of the gesture. The classification is performed under the following conditions:

- If a particular letter is detected in over 50 frames, it is considered sufficiently confirmed and is printed. This confirmed symbol is then used in the construction of the word.
- The empty symbol is introduced to account for spaces between words, helping the model distinguish different words in the sequence of gestures

3.3.2 Symbol Set Classification.

The second layer of the model addresses the issue of symbol variation by classifying sets of similar symbols that are detected as yielding the same result. To achieve this, we:

- Identify and group different sets of symbols that, when detected, lead to equivalent outcomes (e.g., similar or alternative representations of the same symbol).
- A dedicated classifier, trained specifically for these symbol sets, is employed to distinguish between them, ensuring accurate classification within the defined sets.

This two-layer approach allows for more reliable gesture recognition by first ensuring the accurate detection of individual symbols and then refining classification within sets of visually similar gestures.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

In this section, we present the details of the two-layered CNN approach and the autocorrect feature for sentence generation.

4.1 CNN for Symbol Identification

For the two-layered algorithm approach, the details of both layers— Layer1 CNN for Symbol identification and Layer 2 Classifier for distinguishing between visually similar symbols are described here.

4.1.1 Layer 1 CNN.

The resolution of the input image is 128x128 pixels. Using 32 filter weights of 3x3 pixels per pixel, it is first processed in the first convolution layer. This results in an image of 126 x126 pixels, one per filter weight. The images are down sampled using the maximum pooling of 2x2 i.e. preserving the greatest value in the array's 2x2 square. Consequently, the image is sampled to 63x63 pixels. Now, 63 x 63 of the output from one pooling layer is being used as an input to a 2nd convolution layer. It is processed via 32 filter weights (3x3 pixels per pixel) in

the second convolution layer. That results in an image of 60 x 60 pixels. The resultant image will be sampled again using a maximum number of 2x2 images, with the resolution cut to 30 x 30 pixels. The image is currently input to a fully aligned layer of 128 neurons, and output from the second convolution layers are distorted into an array of 30x30x32 =28800 values. A row of 28800 values is an input to this layer. The second Densely connected layer receives the output of these layers. To avoid overfitting, we use the decrease layer of value 0.5. Output from the 1st Densely Connected Layer is currently being used as input into a fully connected layer with 96 neurons. The final layer will contain neuron numbers that correspond to the classes of neurons we have specified and its output from the second dense connected layer will be used as its input, (alphabets + blank symbol).

Activation Function: For each layer, we used the ReLU (Rectified Linear Unit) (Convolutional and fully connected neurons). For each input pixel, ReLU will calculate the $\max(x,0)$ value. This adds unpredictability to the formula, which enables us to understand more complex elements. By shortening the computation time, it helps to eliminate fading gradient problems and speed up training.

Pooling Layer: With the ReLU activation function, we use Max pooling for an input image that contains a pool size of 2 x 2. This results in a reduction of parameters, which reduces computation costs and ensures that there are no overfittings.

Dropout Layer: In the case of overloading, network weights are so tuned after training that when given new examples they fail to perform well. By setting their values to zero, this layer “drop outs” a set of random activations in that layer. Even if some activations have been deleted, the network should be capable of providing appropriate classification or output data for a particular example.

Optimizer: In response to the output of the loss function, we were able to update our model using an optimizer named Adam. Adam combines the benefits of the adaptive gradient algorithm (ADA GRAD) and root mean square propagation (RMSProp) extensions of two stochastic gradient descent techniques.

4.1.2 Layer 2.

To enhance the accuracy of symbol recognition, a specialized classifier is further employed to distinguish between visually similar symbols. During testing, certain symbols were consistently misclassified, prompting the inclusion of a specialized classifier to improve detection reliability. Table 3 lists the symbols and their visually similar counterparts categorized into 4 groups, handled by the classifier.

Table 3. Groups of similar symbols.

Group No.	Similar Symbols
1	{D, E, P}
2	{I,1}
3	{V,2}
4	{L,7}

4.2 Sentence Building

The gesture recognition process operates under a simple set of rules to ensure accurate symbol detection. First, when the count for a detected letter exceeds a defined threshold (50) and no other letter is within 20 units of that

count, the letter is considered confirmed: it is printed and appended to the current word string. To avoid mispredictions, if several letters end up with similar counts, the system resets the detection dictionary to prevent errors from ambiguous signals. Spaces are not detected when the background count (the blank, plain background) exceeds the threshold and the detection buffer is empty. In practice, the system predicts the end of a word by inserting a space and then appending the completed word to the overall sentence.

4.2.1 Autocorrect Feature. For each incorrect input word, Hunspell_suggest library in Python is used to generate suitable alternatives, which are presented to the user. The user makes an appropriate choice to replace the erroneous word. This feature not only reduces spelling errors, it is also a useful tool for predicting complex/long words.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed model achieves an accuracy of 91.2%, which is quite encouraging given the inherent complexity of sign language—where gestures made by varying hand shapes moving at different angles need to be captured and predicted. Using a CNN is advantageous because it captures spatial relationships in the input images, allowing the system to learn gesture-specific visual features. As shown in the confusion matrix (Fig. 2), most errors happen between symbol groups that look alike, these symbols are effectively processed in Layer 2. Overall, the strong accuracy indicates the model is well-trained and has a good generalization capability, thus performing well for new, unseen samples in similar settings.

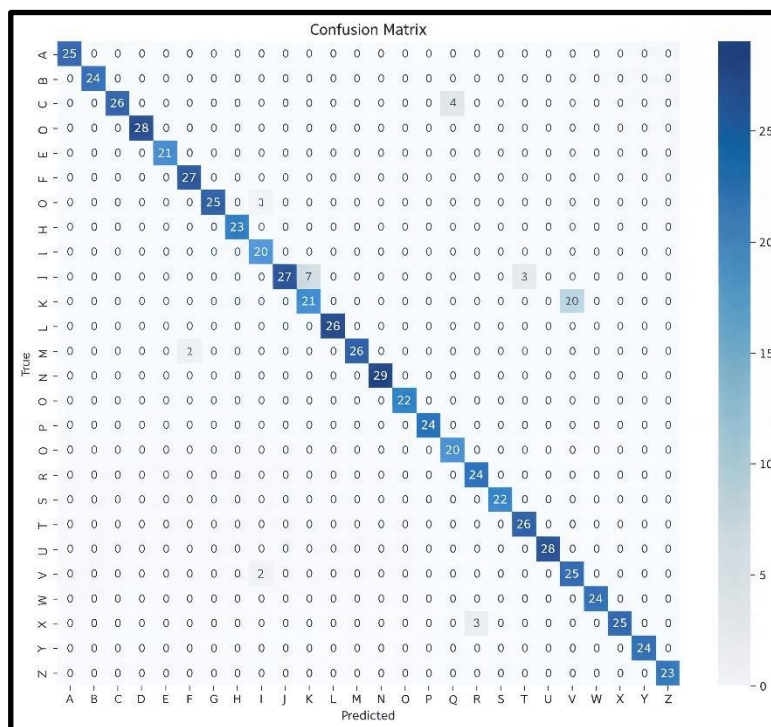


Figure 2. Confusion Matrix.

Although the model works well with the provided dataset, its accuracy may drop with different lighting conditions, background noise, or any partial blocking of gestures. Moreover, since the dataset covers only alphabet and number gestures, the model can't reliably handle full sentences or more complex expressions that depend on context.

5.1 Comparison with State-of-the-Art Method (SURF-CNN)

As noted in the literature review, an accuracy of 99.14% (SVM) and 99% (CNN) was reported on the same 36000-image ISL dataset using SURF-based handcrafted features combined with SVM and CNN classifiers respectively (Katoch et al., 2022). However, our proposed system “Sign-Text AI Bridge” reports a lower accuracy of 91.2% as compared to the SURF-CNN method proposed by Katoch et al. As can be seen from Table 4, this reduction cannot be attributed to any architectural shortcoming.

The accuracy difference can be explained by three factors. First, SURF-CNN uses SURF before classification. Since SURF is a handcrafted feature extractor, it explicitly finds interest points and generates descriptors, making the subsequent classification task easier. The proposed method instead relies on an end-to-end CNN with no handcrafted preprocessing, which keeps the model simpler but may reduce accuracy while improving generalization. Second, SURF-CNN applies background subtraction to focus on the hand region. The proposed system skips this step to remain hardware-agnostic, so some background remains in the input during inference, which can lower performance. Third, the proposed system provides more than symbol recognition. It converts recognized symbols into words, combines words into sentences, and uses an autocorrect step to fix invalid outputs. This gesture-to-sentence communication pipeline is not part of SURF-CNN approach and is the main contribution of this work.

A 91.2% accuracy score is best viewed as the result of optimizing for accessibility and real-world deployment, not as the highest possible benchmark classification result. Ongoing work that adds background subtraction and uses transfer learning should narrow the accuracy gap while keeping the system’s accessibility benefits.

Table 4. Comparison of Proposed System with SURF-CNN (Katoch et al., 2022).

Aspect	SURF-CNN (Katoch et al., 2022)	Proposed Sign-Text AI Bridge
Dataset	36,000 ISL images	36,000 ISL images (ISLRTC-referred Kaggle)
Feature extraction	SURF (handcrafted) + SVM/CNN	End-to-end CNN; no handcrafted features
Accuracy	SVM: 99.14%, CNN: 99%	91.2%
Background handling	Background subtraction applied	No background subtraction
Output	Gesture class label only	Full sentences with autocorrect
Hardware	May need depth sensor / Kinect	Standard webcam or smartphone camera
Deployment scope	Research prototype	Designed for real-world accessibility

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

In this study, we proposed a novel model for sign language translation that distinguishes itself from existing systems by not utilising background subtraction algorithms, a technique commonly employed in many current models. While background subtraction is often used to improve gesture detection accuracy, its omission in our model may result in differences in performance when compared to models that incorporate this approach.

However, our primary objective was to design a system that is adaptable to readily available resources, without the need for specialised hardware or software. Unlike many current approaches that depend on specialized hardware such as Kinect, our model is designed to be more flexible and widely usable, with support for a broader range of devices. This also simplifies implementation and enables easier deployment in real-world environments with little configuration. A key contribution of this work is the end-to-end gesture-to-sentence functionality with autocorrect, which is not included in the state-of-art method SURF-CNN or any other gesture recognition system.

Looking ahead, there are several avenues for future development. First, expanding the dataset to include a broader range of gestures, words, and phrases is essential for improving the robustness and accuracy of the model. We also plan to enhance the system by incorporating gestures that require complex motions or combinations of multiple gestures to convey a single phrase or meaning, allowing the system to capture more nuanced expressions in sign language. Moreover, future work will explore the integration of motion tracking, optical flow, and context-aware translation techniques to better handle dynamic and context-dependent signs. Incorporating background subtraction as an optional preprocessing step, activated when hardware permits, could also help close the accuracy gap with state-of-the-art systems while keeping the system accessible by default. In conclusion, while the current model lays a solid foundation for real-time sign language translation using readily available resources, continued refinement, dataset expansion, and integration of motion-based techniques will significantly enhance the system's effectiveness and versatility.

Acknowledgements: We express our sincere gratitude to the Centre for Research (CFR), Maitreyi College, University of Delhi, for providing us the opportunity to work on the Summer Internship Project, SIP 2024. We are also deeply thankful for the valuable resources and support provided throughout this research project, which significantly contributed to its successful execution.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abiyev, R. H., Arslan, M., & Idoko, J. B. (2020). Sign language translation using deep convolutional neural networks. *KSIIT Transactions on Internet and Information Systems*, 14(2), 631–653.
- [2] Aldahri, E., Aljuhani, R., Alfaidi, A., Alshehri, B., Alwadei, H., Aljojo, N., Alshutayri, A., & Almazroi, A. (2023). Arabic sign language recognition using convolutional neural network and mobilenet. *Arabian Journal for Science and Engineering*, 48(2), 2147–2154.
- [3] Ardiansyah, A., Hitoyoshi, B., Halim, M., Hanafiah, N., & Wibisurya, A. (2021). Systematic literature review: American sign language translator. *Procedia Computer Science*, 179, 541–549.
- [4] Dumbre, A. (2025, January 20). Indian Sign Language (ISLRTC referred). Kaggle. <https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/atharvadumbre/indian-sign-language-islrhc-referred>
- [5] Grandhi, C., Liu, S., & Rahoria, D. (2021). American sign language recognition using deep learning. In *Proceedings of International Conference on Emerging Trends in Computing*.
- [6] Haile, L. M., Kamenov, K., Briant, P. S., Orji, A. U., Steinmetz, J. D., Abdoli, A., Abdollahi, M., Abu-Gharbieh, E., Afshin, A., Ahmed, H., & Rashid, T. A. (2021). Hearing loss prevalence and years lived with disability, 1990–2019: Findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019. *The Lancet*, 397(10278), 996–1009.

- [7] Indian Sign Language Research and Training Center (ISLRTC). (2025, January 20). Indian Sign Language dictionary launched on website. <https://islrhc.nic.in/video/indian-sign-language-dictionary-launched-on-website>
- [8] Ismail, M. H., Dawwd, S. A., & Ali, F. H. (2021). Static hand gesture recognition of Arabic sign language by using deep CNNs. *Indonesian Journal of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science*, 24(1), 178–188.
- [9] Jalal, M. A., Chen, R., Moore, R. K., & Mihaylova, L. (2018, July). American sign language posture understanding with deep neural networks. In 2018 21st International Conference on Information Fusion (FUSION) (pp. 573–579). IEEE.
- [10] Jiang, X., Satapathy, S. C., Yang, L., Wang, S. H., & Zhang, Y. D. (2020). A survey on artificial intelligence in Chinese sign language recognition. *Arabian Journal for Science and Engineering*, 45(12), 9859–9894.
- [11] Kanno, A., Yang, C., & Larice, M. A. G. (2021, September). Hand gesture recognition using CNN & publication of world's largest ASL database. In 2021 IEEE Symposium on Computers and Communications (ISCC) (pp. 1–6). IEEE.
- [12] Katoch, S., Singh, V., & Tiwary, U. S. (2022). Indian Sign Language recognition system using SURF with SVM and CNN. *Array*, 14, 100141.
- [13] Papastratis, I., Chatzikonstantinou, C., Konstantinidis, D., Dimitropoulos, K., & Daras, P. (2021). Artificial intelligence technologies for sign language. *Sensors*, 21(17), 5843.
- [14] Pigou, L., Dieleman, S., Kindermans, P. J., & Schrauwen, B. (2014, September). Sign language recognition using convolutional neural networks. In *European Conference on Computer Vision* (pp. 572–578). Springer.
- [15] Shenoy, K., Dastane, T., Rao, V., & Vyavaharkar, D. (2018, July). Real-time Indian sign language (ISL) recognition. In 2018 9th International Conference on Computing, Communication and Networking Technologies (ICCCNT) (pp. 1–9). IEEE.
- [16] Starner, T. E. (1995). Visual recognition of American Sign Language using hidden Markov models (No. AFRLSRBLTR980441). Air Force Research Laboratory.
- [17] Varshney, S. (2016). Deafness in India. *Indian Journal of Otolaryngology*, 22(2), 73–76.
- [18] Verma, R. R., Konkimalla, A., Thakar, A., Sikka, K., Singh, A. C., & Khanna, T. (2021). Prevalence of hearing loss in India. *National Medical Journal of India*, 34(4), 213–217.
- [19] World Health Organization (WHO). (2025, February 26). Deafness and hearing loss. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss>

Women as the Foundation of Viksit Bharat: Ancient Ideals and Modern Imperatives

Dr Devender Bhardwaj

Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism, Delhi College of Arts & Commerce, University of Delhi

devender.bhardwaj@dcac.du.ac.in

ABSTRACT

This study details the changing status of women in India from Vedic and Epic ages to the present context of development policy inspired by Viksit Bharat 2047. It explores how the status of women has transformed from agents of their own intellectual, spiritual, and economic life to under the strictures of paternalism, and how contemporary governance seeks to restore justice and equity through certain social schemes. The study utilises historical, literary, and policy analysis, and it contends that the notion of empowerment is not disconnected from India's civilizational roots in which women symbolized knowledge, strength, and moral authority. The contemporary schemes - including Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Mahila Shakti Kendra - are not simply welfare schemes, but an extension of premised employment that develop justice, dignity, and inclusion which are the ideals that India strives towards based on its ancient institutions. By placing contemporary policy into a broad historical and continuum, this research illuminates the ongoing interrelationship between tradition and change. This research ultimately suggests that any realization of Viksit Bharat will not happen without a gendered reimagining of development that valorises women's labour and leadership as part of the moral and economic progress of the nation.

Keywords: *Women's Empowerment, Viksit Bharat, Gender Equality, Indian Civilization, Social Policy, Historical Continuity*

1. INTRODUCTION

"From financial inclusion to social security, quality healthcare to housing, education to entrepreneurship, many efforts have been made to put our Nari Shakti at the forefront of India's development journey. These efforts will continue with even greater vigour in the coming times."

-Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Over the last decade, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a clear, audacious goal for India. By 2047, the centenary year of its independence, India, will be a *Viksit Bharat* — fully developed country based on the pillars of GYAN- Garib (the poor), Yuva (youth), Annadata (the farmers) and Nari Shakti (women empowerment). It is an entirely new vision of development in India that includes social justice, cultural confidence, and tremendous technological advancement. Within the framework of this development vision, Nari Shakti is not just a token and empty symbolism; it is one of the main preconditions for any other development in the nation. A country striving for balanced development—economic, social, and cultural—cannot afford to exclude half of its citizens. Nearly half of the Indian population, as Census 2023 data notes, are women. To deny them the opportunity to participate fully is to forfeit a significant share of the country's potential talent and economic workforce, as well as its future leadership and invaluable perspectives. The advantages of women's empowerment are social, economic, and political, and they extend well beyond the individual. When women fully engage in economic activities, receive quality education, are in good health, and are in positions of decision-making, social equity is reinforced, growth is rapid, and democracy is deepened, bringing India closer to an inclusive Viksit Bharat (Singh & Gupta, 2022). Most of all, India's present cannot be understood without

considering the weight of its past. For the last several millennia, the roles and status of women in the subcontinent have been defined and redefined, and not in a linear fashion. Engaging with the ancient Vedic and epic texts and classical literature can illuminate the many ways women's agency and autonomy were celebrated and, even more, the ways they were curtailed. Such insights can provide valuable lessons for contemporary policy focused on the women's empowerment (Sharma, 2021).

2. WOMEN IN ANCIENT INDIA: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The condition of women in ancient India displays a rich and nuanced fabric of roles and status defined by cultural, religious, and social changes. Status of women in ancient India varied greatly across periods and regions, revealing society's changing structure and values.

2.1 *The Vedic Period (c. 1500–500 BCE)*

The Vedic period illustrates the considerable respect and recognition women received and the roles they occupied. The hymns of the Rigveda and later Vedic texts praise women not only as idealized wives, but also as independent thinkers, philosophers, and poets. Gargi, Maitreyi, and Lopamudra are a few women who prominently participated in intellectual debates (Sharma, 2021). The presence of women in rituals of the sacrifice and, in some cases, the performance of the Upanayana rite was a clear indication of the open learning and rituals available to them (Sharma, 2021). Women also had acknowledged rights to economic property. Stridhana provided the legal right to own and keep the married couple's wealth, including gifts received at the time of marriage or thereafter (Singh, 2020). Marriage was a significant social institution in ancient Vedic society but varied forms of marriage were possible, including 'love marriages' (Gandharva marriage) and 'arranged marriages' (Verma, 2019). The wife's crucial contribution to household rituals and her honourable status in the family indicate the comparative egalitarian aspects of Vedic society (Sharma, 2021).

The role and status of women in Vedic period can be gleaned through the following points:

A) *Social Role and Status*

Education and some form of intellectual pursuits were available to women, at least, to some women. Lopamudra was recognized not only as a philosopher and poet but also a hymn writer of the Rigveda, along with her husband sage Agastya, and exchanged some philosophical ideas (Sharma, 2021). Philosophical texts tell of Gargi Vachaknavi who dared Yajnavalkya to a debate at King Janaka's court, a feat not performed for ages by a woman, and posed him some texts of the most difficult nature (Singh, 2020). In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Verma (2019) presents Maitreyi as a serious seeker of rational truth for having engaged Yajnavalkya in a debate on immortality and the nature of the Self.

In marriage and family life women were seen and expected to ensure that the desired order was maintained, or far and beyond. The Swayamvara system, where women chose a husband from a particular set of candidates, indicates that female choice, at least in elite strata, was valid (Sharma, 2021). The narrative of Savitri and Satyavan, in which Savitri, through intelligence and unwavering devotion, persuades Yama to restore her husband to life, crystallizes the ideal of the devoted articulate wife (Singh, 2020).

The contributions of women extended to the economy outside the household as well. They worked in the fields, tended to cattle, spinning and weaving, and in the administration of the household. The Rigveda even speaks of women ploughing the fields, a testament to the essential labour they provided for the socio-economic framework of the society (Sharma, 2021).

B) Religious and Spiritual Role

Women were not sidelined in the sphere of religion. Apala is remembered as a woman who had performed healing and prosperity rites and composed hymns dedicated to Indra (Sharma, 2021). Romasa is named as another female Rishi linked with Vedic hymns (Singh, 2020).

Gargi, and Maitreyi, did not only participate but also mentored in the spiritual and philosophical discourse, providing the questions, insights, and challenges that defined the intellectual climate of their era (Verma, 2019; Sharma, 2021).

C) Legal and Property rights

The legal status of women, not equal to that of men, was not negligible. Under Streedhan and in certain circumstances, women were able to acquire property and wealth (Singh, 2020).

Subsequent Vedic legal literature reveals that women were able to access the legal branches of the state and were afforded civil protective rights (Verma, 2019; Sharma, 2021).

The Vedic epoch points to a reality in which women were active and visible in the family, the economy, and in scholarly and ritual traditions of the religion. In the course of time, and especially in the later Vedic age, there was the inception of more rigid and punitive patriarchal order to the order in the preceding centuries that was even purer (Singh, 2020).

2.2 The Epic Age (c. 500 BCE–200 CE)

The narratives present women as significant and a site of power, both personal and in the narrative itself. Each narrative is embedded in patriarchy. Draupadi in the Mahabharata, for example, is not a silent or passive character; she is powerful and speaks, she maintains an understanding of the precarious nature of justice. The testimony and humiliation in the Kuru court, her willingness to speak fearlessly against the elders, exposes the skeletons that lie buried in the bowels of many in power (Desai, 2021; Sen, 2020). Similarly, in the Ramayana, Sita is portrayed as the “perfect wife” (loyal, devoted, pure, etc.) but even in the story of Sita, we witness the trials and public scrutiny, and how the burden of women’s honour often took on greater meaning (Rao, 2019). There are multiple dimensions to this:

A) Social Role and Status

Women were still at the centre of family and kinship structures. Sita’s devotion during time in exile with Rama and her behaviour during difficult situations solidified her role as self-sacrificing virtuous queen (Rao, 2019). Draupadi as an assertion for justice and will not accept humiliation demonstrates a powerful ethical presence (Sen, 2020).

Women also exercised power in the political and diplomatic dimensions. Kunti offered the Pandavas direction and purpose, and her decisions, especially the decisions to be either open or secretive about certain truths, determined the political fate of the Pandavas (Desai, 2021). Kaikeyi’s influence, in succession politics, is evident when she demanded Bharata be crowned king and Rama be exiled, indicating the kind of power royal women had (Rao, 2019).

The absence of women’s education and intellectual capabilities was clearly not the case. In later epic traditions, Savitri displays remarkable courage, skillful reasoning, and depth of thought when she outsmarts Yama and

regains her husband's life (Sen, 2020). Although suffering tragic circumstances, Gandhari is characterized as wise and discerning, and her counsel is frequently ignored, leading to dire consequences (Desai, 2021).

B) Religious and Spiritual Role

Women in the epics are frequently depicted as being of deep spirituality. Kunti's instances of praying for her sons and the divine help integral to their survival and victories is abundant (Desai, 2021). Sita's unwavering devotion to dharma and her faith in the divine are essential to her characterization (Rao, 2019).

Women, like Mandodari, who attempts to turn Ravana away from his self-destructive path, show that women act as moral and ethical stabilizers within their families (Sen, 2020).

C) Economic Role

1. Women still oversaw the management of households and that associated with their role, resources continued to be utilized and organized. Draupadi's effective handling of the Pandavas' household—whether in the palace or in the forest—is indicative of the economic and organizational roles of women (Desai, 2021).

2. Property and Legal Rights

The stories from the Epic Age, when examined, will indicate the status of property and legal rights. The character of Madhavi, who is given away repeatedly for political purposes, is an example of how women could be used as resources in these political systems and also raises questions surrounding agency and autonomy (Desai, 2021; Rao, 2019).

While there were legal provisions in some cases, the extent of those provisions was mostly governed by the principle of patriarchal law (Sen, 2020).

In the Epic Age, women were depicted as central to the narrative— not only as moral and emotional centers of their families and political actors, but as people who carried heavy burdens in an increasingly restrictive system of male hegemony.

2.3 The Classical Age (approximately 200 CE to 1200 CE)

During the Classical Age— especially during the Gupta dynasty and subsequent rulers— the consolidation of empire was underway along with robust literature and artistic production to augment and codify the social and religious order. References to women in inscriptions and texts attest to their status as dependants, rulers, patrons, and spiritual figures.

Prabhavati Gupta, for instance, governed as regent and commanded considerable power after the death of her husband Rudrasena II, showing that women were capable of active participation in political power within the empire (Desai, 2021). The association of Lilavati with the mathematics of Bhaskara II indicates that women were affiliated with scholarly activities as well (Desai, 2021). Nonetheless, the Manusmriti and other texts of the period codified the patriarchal order, underlining the dependence of women on fathers, husbands and sons, which makes this period a mixture of recognition and considerable restriction (Rao, 2019; Sen, 2020).

A) Social Role and Status

1. The institution of marriage remained the central social institution, and with the declining practice of swayamvara, arranged marriages became dominant (Rao, 2019). Political significance also accompanied the

marriages of royal women, as in the case of Prabhavati Gupta, whose marriage alliance politically consolidated the Guptas and the Vakatakas (Desai, 2021). In literature, women were featured both as ideals and as multifaceted characters. In Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, Shakuntala represents the tenderness of love and fidelity and the moral strength of a wife, but she also suffers a great deal of misunderstanding and trial, reflecting the rigid expectations that society placed on women.

2. Educational opportunities for women were uneven. Elite and royal women had more opportunities for learning, but most women probably had more restrictions (Rao, 2019). Women in religious communities, for instance, Buddhist nuns, were able to study and teach, and some women are recognized in religious texts as teachers and debaters (Sen, 2020).
3. Women maintained their active role in the economy, particularly in terms of agriculture, craft goods, and household finance. Some of the women's inscriptions from Ajanta indicate donations from merchant families, suggesting that they had access to sufficient resources to be patrons (Desai, 2021).

B) Religious and Spiritual Role

1. Women also took part in worship in temples, contributed to religious organizations, and, with their husbands, shaped each families place in Indian history. Queens and noblewomen endowed temples, donated land, and financed rituals, which also entrenched their positions (Desai, 2021; Rao, 2019). In the Bhakti tradition, women like Andal (among the Alvars) and Karaikkal Ammaiyar (among the Nayanars) composed devotional poetry and reshaped spiritual discourse. Their lives and words still resonate as religious leadership (Sen, 2020).

C) Legal Rights and Property

1. Legal texts of this period, including the Dharmashastras, were primarily focused on sustaining the dependence of women on male guardians. There were also acknowledgments of Streedhan and, in certain situations, widows were given some rights over property (Rao, 2019; Sen, 2020).
2. Kautilya's Arthashastra addresses, among other things, the dowry, inheritance, and the punishments for certain crimes against women, suggesting that the law regarded the protection of women, at least in the theoretical sense (Sen, 2020).

In the subsequent periods, the tightening of rigid constructions of "honour" and "purity" and the emergence or intensification of child marriage, purdah, and in some areas and traditions, Sati, further constrained women (Sen, 2020). Once more, the situation was not uniform. Epigraphic and literary testimony from South India, for example, documents women in the property owning, trading, and the performing of important functions in the religion (Desai, 2021). The whole of the ancient period offers a panorama in which women oscillate between boundaries of control and freedom. The canonical texts and the epics, along with the narratives of women in religion and the culture of the women, proclaim the presence of women and the agency and the intellect, that has been gradually erased by the development of a more rigid patriarchy. If we want to learn from the past and make policies for the future, we need to understand this layered history (Rao, 2019).

3. CONTEMPORARY POLICY LANDSCAPE AND GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Recent actions taken by the Indian government. Taking this history into account, present-day India has responded to policy and welfare initiatives to address the long-standing issue of gender inequality. Many of

these initiatives directly address concerns around women's education, health, economic security and dignity, albeit through contemporary institutions, legal structures, and budgets.

The 2015 Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) campaign responded to declining child sex ratios and rooted son preference. The program's objective is to ensure the survival, protection, and education of the girl child, and it does this by combining large awareness campaigns, district-level service convergence, and considerable monitoring (Government of India, 2015). The involvement of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and Ministry of Education emphasizes the multi-sectoral nature of the issue.

The 2017 Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) program provides cash incentives to pregnant and lactating women for the first live birth. The objective is to aid women around childbirth by supporting their wages, promoting better nutrition, and incentivizing women to pursue institutional care during pregnancy and post-delivery. This is likely to aid in reducing maternal and infant mortality (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2017).

Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK), which was started under the National Mission for the Empowerment of Women, provides rural areas with a support structure. Women are educated about the different schemes, helped in obtaining entitlements, and motivated to create self-help groups or get registered as self-help groups in enterprises. The guidance, training, and livelihood promotion geared to MSKs aim to transform the pledge made in the policies to real change in women's lives (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2018).

The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) (2016) promotes safe motherhood by offering free and comprehensive antenatal care at government facilities on scheduled days. Attention is mostly paid to high-risk pregnancies in poor and marginalized women (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2016).

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (2016) acts at the household level. The government has recognized the dignity and safety of women from below-poverty-line families by providing them LPG connections (Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, 2016). It also knows the value of time and health by providing LPG burners instead of collecting firewood, which reduces the chances of indoor pollution as well.

To combat the distress and violence, Women Helpline (181) assists women by providing 24-hour support and connecting them with police, medical, legal and shelter services (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015).

The One Stop Centre (OSC) scheme simplifies the process by offering these services in one place per district, so violence survivors do not have to run from one office to another in search of help (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015).

The National Creche Scheme caters to working women, particularly in the unorganized or low-paid employment sectors. By providing essential childcare, nutrition, early education, and children's enhanced emotional and social development, the scheme helps mothers work more confidently (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2017).

The Digital India Initiative (2015), as well as dedicated digital literacy initiatives that help women to become digitally literate, creates more possibilities for women's empowerment. Women's living, work, and experience of the state can change with mobile phones, internet connection, online banking, telemedicine, and e-learning (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, 2015; Government of India, 2018).

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY) (2015), with a very good rate of return and also tax-shelter on deposits, encourages parents to set up savings accounts in their daughters' names, and in doing so, parents invest in a daughter's future. With the SSY's rate of return and tax saving, parents can justify setting money aside for SSY's intended purposes of funding an education or marriage, indicating that the future of girls is worthy of investment (Ministry of finance, 2015).

The National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan) (2018) seeks to combat malnutrition with a life-cycle approach to nutrition for pregnant women, lactating mothers, and young children. The mission aims to mitigate intergenerational poverty and poor health by improving nutrition (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2018).

Collectively, these initiatives portray a state that understands the multi-faceted and structural character of gender inequity and seeks to address it across multiple domains of survival and safety, health and nutrition, education, economic opportunity, and digital inclusion.

4. CONCLUSION

Various professionals work in different fields of public service and community activities: science, law, business, journalism, public administration, and politics (Government of India, 2015). Kiran Bedi, Kalpana Chawla, Indira Gandhi, Nirmala Sitharaman, and Indra Nooyi are some of the figures who have shaped the image of women's leadership and competence in the fields of police administration, space development, politics, and women's leadership in corporate management (Rao, 2017). Other challenges, of course, remain. Gender-based violence is only the most egregious of the issues; discriminatory wages, the feminization of poverty, and the lack of women in top leadership roles across industries are persistent challenges (World Economic Forum, 2021; World Bank, 2022). To effect transformative change in these areas, social and cultural change must instead be integrated with the schemes, strong and well-implemented laws, economic policies on and recognition of unpaid care work, women's leadership pipelines, and valued unpaid care work (UN Women, 2020). Women are still the primary contributors to the development of India. If Viksit Bharat is to be not just a slogan, but a truly confident, just, and prosperous India, the economic development of India must be inclusive, with Indian women's rights, dignity, and aspirations positioned at the forefront. Ideally, every woman, irrespective of caste, class, region, or religion, will be able to define and partake in the advancement of the country (Agarwal, 1994).

REFERENCES

1. Agarwal, B. (1994). *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
2. Chakrabarti, D. K. (2016). *The Ancient Routes of the Deccan and the Southern Peninsula*. Oxford University Press.
3. Desai, A. (2021). Women in the Epic Age: Power, Influence, and Patriarchy. *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, 34(2), 90–110.
4. Government of India. (2015). *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*. Ministry of Women and Child Development.
5. Government of India. (2016). *Stand-Up India*. Ministry of Finance.
6. Government of India. (2018). *Digital Literacy Program for Women*. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

7. Government of India. (2018). *Viksit Bharat Vision*. NITI Aayog.
8. Jain, D. (2006). *Women, Development, and the UN: A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice*. Indiana University Press.
9. Kumar, R. (2007). *The History of Education in Ancient India*. Lotus Press.
10. Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers. (2008). *Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana*. Government of India.
11. Ministry of Education. (2008). *National Scheme for Incentive to Girl Child for Secondary Education*. Government of India.
12. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. (2015). *Digital India Initiative*. Government of India.
13. Ministry of Finance. (2015). *Sukanya Samridhi Yojana Guidelines*. Government of India.
14. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (2005). *National Health Mission*. Government of India.
15. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (2016). *Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) Guidelines*. Government of India.
16. Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. (2016). *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana*. Government of India.
17. Ministry of Rural Development. (2011). *National Rural Livelihoods Mission*. Government of India.
18. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (1986). *Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)*. Government of India.
19. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (1993). *Rashtriya Mahila Kosh*. Government of India.
20. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2015). *One Stop Centre Scheme*. Government of India.
21. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2015). *Women Helpline (WHL) – 181*. Government of India.
22. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2017). *National Creche Scheme*. Government of India.
23. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2017). *Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) Scheme*. Government of India.
24. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2018). *Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme Guidelines*. Government of India.
25. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2018). *National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan)*. Government of India.
26. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2023). *Empowerment Initiatives for Women in India*. Government of India.
27. Modi, N. (2023). *Speech on India's 2047 Vision*. Prime Minister's Office.
28. Nair, J. (1990). *Women and Law in Colonial India: A Social History*. Oxford University Press.

29. Rao, A. (2017). *India's First Women Leaders: Breaking the Glass Ceiling*. Penguin Books.
30. Rao, N. (2019). The Epic Women: Sita and Draupadi in Cultural Context. *South Asian Studies Review*, 29(3), 115–130.
31. Sen, R. (2020). Patriarchy and Agency: Women in the Mahabharata and Ramayana. *Indian Cultural Review*, 18(1), 55–70.
32. Sharma, A. (2014). *Women in Ancient India: A Study of Their Role in Religious and Philosophical Texts*. Harvard University Press.
33. Sharma, R. (2021). Women in Ancient India: A Historical Perspective. *Indian Historical Review*, 48(2), 150–170.
34. Singh, P. (2020). The Role of Women in the Vedic Period: Social, Religious, and Economic Perspectives. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 35(1), 112–130.
35. Singh, P., & Gupta, A. (2022). Gender Equality and Economic Growth: The Case of India. *Journal of Development Economics*, 145, 102–110.
36. Thapar, R. (2002). *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*. University of California Press.
37. UN Women. (2020). *Changing Societal Attitudes towards Women: A Global Perspective*. UN Women.
38. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2021). *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*. UNDP.
39. Verma, S. (2019). Gender Roles and the Status of Women in Ancient India. *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, 32(1), 45–60.
40. World Bank. (2022). *Gender Equality in the Labor Market: Challenges and Opportunities*. World Bank.
41. World Economic Forum. (2021). *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. World Economic Forum.

Conflict, Nonviolence, and Peacebuilding: Relevance of Gandhian Methods

Dr. Anjani Kumar

Associate Professor

Department of Political Science, Kalindi College,

University of Delhi

Email: kranjanijnu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Conflict results from differences in opinions and interests and is an inevitable part of human history. While it often causes destruction, loss of life and property, and damaged relationships, conflict has also spurred social and historical progress. Conflict resolution aims to end disputes peacefully, acknowledging that true human values thrive only in peace. The repeated failure of violence and the success of nonviolent resistance demonstrate the limits of force. Gandhi firmly believed in nonviolence as a powerful and enduring method for resolving conflicts, dedicating his life to promoting techniques such as Satyagraha. In the modern world, Gandhian principles remain highly relevant for achieving social justice, harmony, cooperation, and peace through peaceful means rather than violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a natural part of human life, and people constantly try to resolve conflicts through both violent and nonviolent methods. Conflict resolution can be defined as the process where conflicting parties agree to settle their disputes. The approaches to conflict resolution highlight strategies that help parties move away from chaos and destruction and aim for a satisfying solution for all. Gandhi is well known for his use of nonviolent methods to resolve conflicts. His technique, called Satyagraha, is centred on passive resistance. Gandhi was aware of how materialistic culture and modern lifestyles were affecting societal bonds. The term satyagraha is based on the idea of truth and was created by Gandhi to promote passive resistance. According to Gandhi, the main difference between resistance and other forms of opposition lies in how resistance is posed.

Satyagraha was essentially a positive and active form of resistance, whereas the other is passive in nature. In Gandhi's words, 'Satyagraha and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. I have therefore ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice.'¹ Gandhi was well aware of the rigorous process through which one can adopt the tactics of Satyagraha. Thus, he laid down different ideas for the perfect satyagrahi and the average satyagrahi. In addition to this, Gandhi advised the masses that it was enough to follow their leaders faithfully and make a possible effort to inculcate such ideals in their lives. Mahatma Gandhi's model of conflict resolution is unique. Conflict resolution without war is a distant dream without applying Gandhian norms and values. Gandhi used to resolve conflict by incorporating the method of negotiation, meditation, and arbitration.

2. GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY: A BRIEF OVERVIEW:

Gandhian philosophy encompasses many relevant concepts. He was born on October 2, 1869, and went to London to complete his studies. In 1980, Gandhi returned to India as a lawyer. His conflict resolution efforts began in South Africa and were based on nonviolent Satyagraha. Gandhian methods of conflict resolution have

had a significant impact on peace research and conflict resolution techniques. He is often hailed as the Father of the Nation. Gandhi believed that any conflict could be resolved peacefully through mutual trust and bilateral negotiations. Besides conflict resolution approaches, Gandhi promoted related concepts such as truth, non-violence, and faith in human goodness. His overarching goal throughout his life was Sarvodaya, which means the welfare or upliftment of all. Three principles guided his writings and actions: Satya (truth), Ahimsa (non-violence), and Tapasya (self-suffering). The first principle, Satya, is the foundation of Gandhian Satyagraha and involves understanding others' viewpoints in similar situations. Secondly, an essential part of Gandhian philosophy is the concept of Ahimsa. It was crucial to Gandhi's efforts at peacebuilding because it does not intend to harm others and is dynamic and positive. Gandhi insisted on achieving just ends through nonviolent means throughout his life. The last principle, Sarvodaya, is Tapasya or self-suffering. Gandhi saw self-suffering as a viable way to confront violence and remove social injustices, preferring the willingness to endure suffering over violent retaliation.ⁱⁱ

The modern world faces violence, terrorism, ecological crises, and wars. Gandhi demonstrated the practical application of non-violence in all fields to eliminate such crises worldwide. In Gandhian terms, the concept of non-violence has ecological significance and allows people to coexist with nature without exploiting it. It offers an alternative to violence and terrorism. The technique of non-violence is essential for restoring humanity and achieving lasting global peace. Gandhi's views on non-violence evolved over time. In his immediate domestic, social, and political circles, he sought to overcome opposition through persuasion and love. In 1906, after enacting the humiliating Asiatic Registration law, he developed the idea of Satyagraha more deeply and used nonviolent methods to address social and political injustices. Gandhi applied this approach to defend the Indian minority in South Africa. However, he had not yet considered using non-violence to resolve conflicts between nation-states. By 1914, Gandhi's perspective on non-violence had matured to the point where he could no longer condone killing and war. At the same time, he recognised that most of his compatriots did not share this attitude. Indian political leaders were divided into 'moderate' and 'extremist' groups. But Gandhi strongly opposed political bargaining with the British, hoping that Britain would grant India her due once World War I ended. During the two decades spanning the First and Second World Wars, Gandhi's belief in the potential of non-violence grew through deeper reflection and experience. Such emphasis was evident when Gandhi prioritised means over the end goal. In November 193, Gandhi emphasised the strength of non-violence by stating that he would buy the country's independence at the cost of non-violence.

Gandhi proposed a moral alternative to violence. The current methods of violence and physical force for resolving conflicts are ineffective. Scientific and technological advancements have shown that war is futile. In fact, today, war leads to total destruction. These flaws in violent strategies have raised concerns and sparked the search for conflict resolution methods that do not cause disaster. Gandhian methods can bridge this gap. Gandhi applied his principles of unity and purity of means to achieve a just goal. Even if people engage in war to seek justice, it can not be accomplished through impure methods. Therefore, he rejects the idea of just war as a way to settle conflicts. Even nuclear weapons cannot prevent war. In Gandhian view, atomic weapons might create a temporary aversion to war, but once that feeling fades, violence would resume. Consequently, Gandhi opposes war as a conflict resolution method and promotes Satyagraha based on non-violence. He recommends nonviolent action in conflict situations. Success in conflict can be achieved through nonviolent methods in three ways. The first is accommodation of opponents. In this approach, the opponent might not believe in the change but considers it best to give in. The second is nonviolent coercion. Here, the opponent wishes to continue the struggle but cannot because they have lost sources of power and control. The third is conversion. In conversion, the opponent changes internally enough to want to fulfil the desires of the nonviolent activist.

Satyagraha is Gandhi's technique of nonviolent activism. The term has been variously translated as 'passive resistance,' 'nonviolent resistance,' 'nonviolent direct action,' and even 'militant non-violence.' For Gandhi, it was not only a method of conducting conflict but also a way of life. Galtung summarises Gandhi's conflict norms in terms of integrative conflict resolution, which consists of three important criteria. The first norm pertains to the goals of conflicts and how states should act during conflicts. Additionally, this norm defines common and compatible goals and emphasises understanding the opponent's objectives. It views conflict as an opportunity to meet opponents and transform society and oneself. The second norm relates to conflict struggle. Here, the primary aim is to act non-violently, avoid damaging property, and refuse to cooperate with evil. The final norm emphasises resolving conflicts without delay. It strongly advocates for negotiation and positive social transformation rather than prolonging conflicts. Parties should always demonstrate a willingness to compromise on non-essential elements and admit mistakes. One should be generous toward opponents, never coercive, and instead seek to convert them into believers of the cause.

Gandhian theory of nonviolent power offers a necessary perspective to critique dominant contemporary views of power based on violence. His understanding of power provides both a theoretical and practical approach to peacebuilding in today's global society. The most significant contribution of this theory is its critique of mainstream discourses that equate power with violence. Gandhi emphasised the moral dimension of power. According to the Gandhian perspective, nonviolent direct action is the most effective method to challenge power structures. Gandhian approach to peacebuilding involves using nonviolent means to achieve sustainable solutions. Additionally, such solutions can promote satisfaction, security, and an improved quality of life.

3. GANDHIAN APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION: SATYAGRAHA

Conflict can be defined as a psychological condition in which two or more individuals begin fighting over any issue of mutual interest. Conflict has four different types depending on the level of interaction among the parties or actors. It can be classified into categories such as interpersonal, intrapersonal, intragroup, and intergroup. Interpersonal conflict refers to conflict between two individuals. Such conflict occurs due to differences in people's nature and personalities, leading to differing choices and opinions. The second category is intrapersonal conflict, which occurs within an individual and manifests in the person's mind. This conflict is psychological, as the individual struggles with their inner thoughts and value system. It is often difficult to handle because it happens within a person's mind. The next category is intragroup conflict, which occurs within the same group of people. This type of conflict arises from incompatibilities and misunderstandings among group members. When members of the same group have differences in ideas and thoughts, conflicts can occur. The last category is intergroup conflict, which arises between different departments within the same organisation.

Conflicts are recognised as a constant aspect of human interaction. It is more about managing or resolving such disputes than eliminating them. Research indicates two approaches to conflict: the subjectivist and the objectivist approaches. The objectivist approach attributes the origin of conflict to society's social and political structures. This approach believes that goals can often be compatible. Conversely, the subjectivist approach mainly emphasises the incompatibility of goals and differences among the parties involved. The degree of incompatibility is a key factor in various stages of conflict resolution. Additionally, conflict can be resolved in two ways. The first involves violent methods such as weapons, destruction, and denial of truth. The nonviolent methods include accommodation and transforming opponents. Gandhi developed Satyagraha as a highly effective and practical technique for resolving conflicts. Conflict resolution through Satyagraha relies on three principles: (a) some shared interests always exist among disputants; (b) appeals to the heart and mind are essential; and (c) Satyagrahis are capable of persisting until the end. The concept of Satyagraha encompasses multiple related ideas and principles.

The word Satyagraha is made up of Satya, meaning truth, and Graha, meaning insistence or firmness. According to Gandhi, it is a form of soul force that includes elements such as truth and non-violence. Satyagraha seeks the relentless pursuit of truth rather than victory. It is also described as nonviolent resistance, but Gandhi emphasised that it differs from passive resistance. Satyagraha can be used to resolve conflicts, including interpersonal and intrapersonal disputes. The fundamental unit is the individual. Training for all types of Satyagraha begins with resolving intrapersonal conflicts peacefully. Gandhi highlighted the importance of non-violence, which begins at one's own home. Satyagraha is ethical; its main goal is to persuade, not to coerce. It aims to transform opposing elements to reach a mutually acceptable situation. Additionally, it seeks to eliminate hostility, not the opponents themselves. As Bondurant states, the primary aim of Satyagraha is not to assert propositions but to open up possibilities. Furthermore, Satyagraha is gentle and never wounds. It must not stem from anger and should never be fussy, impatient, or loud. Satyagraha stood in opposition to coercion and was designed as a complete alternative to violence. In this process, satyagrahis remain patient with both the opponent and themselves.

Conflict resolution refers to solving conflicts without war. Gandhi practised various methods for resolving any type of conflict. He dedicated his life to improving society and promoting its welfare. He adhered to the principles of peace and non-violence and believed in the potential of non-violence to achieve a peaceful world order. Gandhian approaches to conflict resolution include different strategies such as non-cooperation, civil disobedience, fasting, negotiation, persuasion, conversion, self-suffering, and nonviolent actions. Non-cooperation is a key tool of Satyagraha, which prepares the satyagrahi to accept any consequences in their fight against injustice. Gandhi initiated his non-cooperation movement in India in 1920. Nonviolent non-cooperation, as Gandhi proposed, involves refusing to participate in the opponent's activities, including boycotting their economic, political, social, and educational institutions. Non-cooperation has two forms: in the first, opponents can achieve their objectives without the satyagrahi's cooperation, aiming at the self-purification of the satyagrahi; in the second, opponents cannot succeed without the satyagrahi's cooperation. All these movements aim to uphold the value of non-violence and to convert adversaries. The next step is the civil disobedience movement. When the non-cooperation movement failed, Gandhi started the civil disobedience movement, which involves violating government laws and refusing to pay taxes. A notable example of civil disobedience in India is the salt Satyagraha of the 1930s. Fasting is one of the most effective weapons used by satyagrahis against injustice or evil forces; it involves self-sacrifice and results in self-purification. Gandhi undertook seventeen fasts on various occasions, with the first public fasting happening during the Ahmedabad mill workers' strike. Fasting is a severe form of resistance that requires qualities like discipline, stamina, courage, and fearlessness of death. Negotiation, another Gandhian conflict resolution method, is a primary step. Gandhi established specific ground rules for smooth negotiations to resolve conflicts. Mutual respect is essential for successful negotiations. If negotiations fail, the next step is persuasion, wherein both parties are willing to accept settlement but are initially reluctant. Persuasion succeeds by addressing ignorance or removing selfishness. Conversion is highly valued in Gandhian conflict resolution; it involves motivating both parties to change their conflicting interests so they can understand each other's perspectives. Self-suffering is also important; Satyagraha aims to convert opponents by appealing to their better selves through self-sacrifice, without inflicting pain on others. The final approach involves adopting nonviolent action in conflict resolution.

Gandhi developed Satyagraha as an effective alternative to conflict resolution. It is a method of action characterised by its commitment to truthful and nonviolent means, including self-suffering. It aims to operate within a conflict situation. The power of satyagraha methods is fundamentally different from violent approaches during conflict. Satyagraha may employ any form of nonviolent measures. The most commonly used nonviolent methods during India's nationalist movement were non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Satyagraha was

recognised as an effective approach. The techniques of Satyagraha can be broadly categorised into four groups: purificatory and penitential devices, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, and the constructive programme. The purificatory and penitential devices include pledges, prayers, and fasts. A pledge involves a declaration by satyagrahis to avoid uncovering truth and to oppose injustices. A pledge can also take the form of a prayer. The second group includes non-cooperation tactics such as hartal, boycott, strikes, and fasting unto death. Civil disobedience includes picketing, marches, non-payment of taxes, and deliberate defiance of specific laws. The final category focuses on constructive programmes, which are essential; without these, the concept of civil disobedience might be paralysed.ⁱⁱⁱ

The fundamental concepts associated with Satyagraha are truth, non-violence, self-suffering, faith in human goodness, among others. The first essential concept is truth. Truth is the core of Satyagraha. The more truthful we are, the closer we are to God. God is the absolute truth and all-pervading reality. It is wrong to coerce others. Differences can be bridged through discipline and humility, and conflicts can be resolved through non-violence and self-suffering. In seeking truth, Satyagraha requires public admission of mistakes. The second key concept is non-violence. Non-violence, or Ahimsa, emphasizes the means because the end will ultimately be reached. Violence only leads to more violence and is closely linked with hatred. Justifying violence is impossible. In conflict, violence harms the sinner more than the sin. Gandhi believed violence was not a cleansing force. He asserted that those practicing non-violence must be prepared to sacrifice everything except their honor. Nonviolent resistance enhances conflict resolution and promotes greater peace. The Gandhian concept of Ahimsa is not merely a passive state of harmlessness but a positive state rooted in love and doing good even to the evil-doer. However, it does not mean tolerating wrong or enabling wrongdoers to continue in their ways. Active Ahimsa requires resisting the wrong-doer. The first step to non-violence is cultivating it in everyday life. Non-violence is not a method of coercion but of conversion. Nonetheless, acts like boycotts, strikes, and fasts may involve implicit moral coercion. Therefore, Gandhi emphasized that the righteousness of the cause and the means is more important than the end. Creative self-suffering is also vital in understanding Satyagraha better, as it deepens inner understanding. Self-suffering does not mean submitting passively to an evil-doer's will. Instead, it involves confronting the tyrant with one's whole soul. In self-suffering, only the person suffering bears the pain. It avoids causing suffering to others and keeps resistance nonviolent. By doing so, Satyagrahis aim to transform the opponent's conscience and to convert them indirectly. Another foundation of Satyagraha is faith in human goodness. It holds that opponents are open to reason and have a conscience that can respond to noble and friendly actions. Everyone has both good and bad traits, so opponents should be given the same chances. Even if an opponent errs repeatedly, a Satyagrahi remains willing to trust them each time. Belief in human goodness is the essence of Satyagraha. Additionally, the means and ends are important. Gandhi believed that means are everything; if the means are pure, the end will be good. Progress towards the goal depends on the purity of the means. The final element of Satyagraha is fearlessness. Gandhi viewed arms as a sign of fear and cowardice, which are morally unacceptable. A violent person might become nonviolent someday, but a coward cannot. Non-violence opposes cowardice. Even using violence in self-defense or to defend others can be seen as brave, and sometimes better than cowardly submission.

The principles of Satyagraha can be applied to various conflict situations and their resolution. Each type of conflict has specific characteristics and may require a tailored approach. The key features of applying Satyagraha across different conflict categories vary depending on the nature of the conflict. In interpersonal conflicts, Satyagraha relies on how its values are internalised rather than on deliberate tactics. Gandhi advised that one should ceaselessly strive to realise Ahimsa in every aspect of life and act most naturally in a crisis. Moreover, non-violence is based on the idea that nobody is unjust or evil in their own eyes, and therefore, it is unfair to hate them. Non-violence can be practised initially in personal relationships. It is important to replace

fear with trust. Most conflicts stem from both parties wanting to dominate due to fear and insecurity. Therefore, non-violence aims not to harm opponents or impose decisions but to help both parties develop a creative and truthful relationship. When resolving legal disputes, Satyagraha provides a primary institutional method for conflict resolution. Compared to Western conflict resolution methods, Gandhi's Satyagraha is rooted in the Indian tradition of dialogue, mediation, and compromise. In contrast, Western approaches tend to focus on articulation, confrontation, and victory over the adversary. Courts may sometimes fail to perform their intended role, which can lead disputants to resort to violence if effective alternative dispute mechanisms are lacking. It is necessary to reform many traditional dispute settlement processes. Satyagraha techniques are also employed in resolving industrial conflicts. Such disputes often lead to strikes and protests, affecting workers. The goal is to reach a sustainable agreement between management and employees. Gandhi believed that labour should have the same status and dignity as capital to prevent industrial disputes. He advised workers to organise themselves for better outcomes. Maintaining good relations requires that neither side dominate. Satyagraha is also used against the state, known as civil disobedience. In politics, nonviolent struggles generally oppose unjust laws. Gandhi emphasized that civil disobedience must be sincere, respectful, restrained, and based on well-understood principles. A Satyagraha practitioner exhausts all other options before resorting to Satyagraha, remaining open to negotiations, appealing to public opinion, and calmly presenting their case. Only then does one turn to Satyagraha. Finally, Satyagraha can be applied to inter-nation conflicts. Internationally, conflicts among nations are common. During World War II, Gandhi stated that all violence is terrible and must be condemned universally. A believer in Ahimsa must distinguish between aggressors and defenders. Supporting the defender nonviolently is the next step. A Satyagrahi fights without weapons, aiming to convert the opponent. In today's world, modern war technology makes the idea of defence obsolete, as nations rely on arms to eliminate sources of conflict. Gandhi, however, advocated for complete unilateral disarmament.

Gandhi introduced the philosophy of Satyagraha a hundred years ago. It is crucial to understand his concept of Satyagraha so that we can use such methods in our daily conflict resolution. Non-violence is both a science and an art. It has a long history and a rich philosophical background. As practised by Gandhi, Satyagraha was a technique of action designed to initiate a process aimed at achieving lasting peace. It arose from the understanding that violence breeds more violence. Satyagraha replaced brute force with soul force, using self-suffering as the means and aiming to awaken the opponent's inherent capacity.

Nonviolent actions invite parties to dialogue to resolve issues mutually. Non-coercive conflict response means allowing or encouraging opponents to realise their human potential. The basic principles and rules of a Satyagraha campaign, as opposed to a Duragraha, can be summarised in ten points. First, violence is likely if opponents are humiliated or provoked. A satyagrahi must appeal to their heart, not induce fear. Second, a violent attitude should be avoided by a would-be satyagrahi. The sincere practice of conflict along Gandhian lines requires affirming this. Third, opponents are less likely to use violence if they understand the satyagrahi's case and are conducted better. Fourth, common vital interests should be identified, and cooperation established on this basis. The central principle of Satyagraha in conflicts is to seek validity in the opponent's position. Fifth, opponents should not be judged harsher than oneself. The golden rule here is mutual toleration, considering Truth from different perspectives. Since conscience varies for everyone, it is advisable not to impose uniform conduct, as it might interfere with individual freedom of conscience. The sixth basis of Satyagraha is trusting opponents. It relies on making a person trustworthy by trusting him first. The satyagrahi need not wait endlessly for conversion; when limits are reached, they will take risks and plan active Satyagraha. Seventh, unwillingness to compromise on non-essentials reduces the chance of converting opponents. A satyagrahi never misses or cannot miss respectful compromise opportunities. Gandhi himself believed in compromises. The next principle involves the conversion of opponents, who are more likely to use violence if they lose in the cause. Therefore,

genuine Satyagraha cannot endorse an unjust cause, as it seeks the truth. Ninth, the best way to convince an opponent is to demonstrate the satyagrahi's sincerity and willingness to make sacrifices for the cause. Lastly, a satyagrahi never exploits opponents' weaknesses. Manipulation and intrigue should be rejected, and advantages taken of their weak moments should be avoided.^{iv}

Satyagraha is a method for addressing grievances and establishing political order. The process involves several steps to challenge unjust laws and policies. It begins with efforts to resolve conflict through established channels and accepted protocols. This is followed by active propaganda campaigns involving demonstrations, parades, and a final appeal to the opponent to make them aware of subsequent steps if no agreement is reached. The last step includes actions such as boycotts, strikes, and other forms of non-cooperation. The success of Satyagraha depends on the intent of satyagrahis. Gandhi advocated for the abolition of all violence and duplicity in human and national affairs. He stated that truth and non-violence benefit all of humanity. Gandhi believed there was no safer or better approach to conflict resolution than through innocence, non-violence, and love. Furthermore, he warned against being dogmatic about one's version of truth. He embodies non-violence; his dedication to it manifests in service, suffering, and sacrifice for others. Consequently, he dedicated his life to seeking truth through service and sacrifice.

4. CONCLUSION

Gandhi's conflict resolution methodology was based on non-violence and peace. According to his approach, both parties willingly accept each other's standpoints and promise not to create a hostile situation in the future. The present era we are living in is full of competition. Such competitiveness in human beings leads to conflict-like situations. Individual lives are full of worldly ambitions and competitions, and to preserve their interests, they end up promoting conflict, which erupts in violent situations. Conflicts create imbalances in society. To resolve disputes, Gandhi adopted the method of Satyagraha. Satyagraha is a way of conflict resolution that helps individuals solve conflicts peacefully while upholding good values. For Satyagrahis, non-violence was the most critical weapon, as described by Gandhi. He is optimistic about the potential of nonviolent means in resolving disputes of social, economic, and political importance. Non-violence has the power to unify societies and make people grow prosperously. His teachings and thoughts are precursors to developing peaceful ways of responding to conflicts. Additionally, Gandhian norms and values help people gain mutual trust and moral strength.

REFERENCES

- 1 Bandyopadhyaya, J. (1969). *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi*. Pp. 224
- 2 Bondurant, J. V. (1959). *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*.
- 3 Iyer, R. N. (1973). *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*. Pp.305.
- 4 Weber, T. (2001). Gandhian Philosophy, Conflict Resolution Theory and Practical Approaches to Negotiation. Pp. 505-06.

Digital Diplomacy in India: Recasting Foreign Policy in a Hyperconnected World

Dr. Neha Jingala

Assistant Professor

Department of Journalism

Delhi College of Arts & Commerce

University of Delhi

Contact: neha.jingala@dcac.du.ac.in

ABSTRACT

The advent of new technology entails new ways of practicing diplomacy by nation-states. In India, the Ministry of External Affairs has also been innovative in the use of new forms of technology in digital diplomacy and the multilateral governance. This article critiques the digital diplomacy of India in the institutional, cultural and strategic contexts. It analyzes India's digital diplomacy in the context of soft power, platformisation and public diplomacy. It also notes the issues of misinformation, cybersecurity, and exclusion.

Using case studies from Operation Ganga during the Ukraine crisis, India's Vaccine Maitri initiative, and India's upcoming G20 digital agenda, this article argues that India is moving from being a digital actor to aspiring to be a digital rule shaper. By weaving in the global scholarship of digital diplomacy with India's experience, this article reframes and contends that digital diplomacy should be reframed as diplomatic statecraft and discussed as a site of negotiations over values, norms, and power dynamics in a hyperconnected world.

Keywords: *digital diplomacy, India, Ministry of External Affairs, soft power, public diplomacy, social media, multilateral governance*

1. INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy is the art and practice of managing international relations through negotiations, building relationships, dialogues and managing interactions between states, organizations, groups and other global actors. Diplomacy consists of responding to evolving communications circumstances. The telegraph was invented in the nineteenth century, followed by the arrival of the radio, and more recently, television; the way in which states presented themselves to foreign publics and coordinated international relations changed with each new communication technology. The acceleration of these shifts has continued into the twenty-first century with the introduction of the internet and social media. Academics talk about this transformation in terms of digital diplomacy (Bjola & Holmes, 2015).

Digital diplomacy is essentially the increased use of social media, by a state, to obtain foreign policy objectives and manage its reputation proactively (Manor and Segev, 2015). Digital diplomacy has two distinct levels of activity: the foreign ministry and embassies throughout the world. Countries can tailor their branding/foreign policy messaging for audiences based on factors such as history, culture, value systems and traditions at both the levels. This allows a state to facilitate the acceptance of its foreign policy and the brand image it seeks to create.

For India, as the country has engaged externally in the past ten years, digital diplomacy has been an important feature of the environment in which diplomats operate. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) was one of the first government ministries in the Global South to formally include social media in its diplomatic toolkit when it began tweeting through its @MEAIndia Twitter account in 2011. The MEA has since expanded its digital presence across multiple platforms, establishing social media for nearly all Indian missions abroad, along with a few state-of-the-art initiatives such as mobile applications, live press briefings, and interactive campaigns including #AskTheSpokesperson (MEA, 2023).

The shift to digital is both a technical and a strategic standpoint. Digital platforms provide India the means to build and strengthen its narratives, engage with its 32 million strong diaspora, and provide instant responses. Yet, new vulnerabilities emerge for India too--disinformation, cyber manipulation, and reputational threats. Nye (2019) reminds us how "Soft power is a power of attraction, and credibility is its currency." This is especially true in the digital space, where a reputation can be built and destroyed within seconds.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Digital diplomacy, or e-diplomacy or cyber diplomacy, generally refers to the use of digital technologies, especially social media, by states and diplomats to achieve foreign policy goals (Adesina, 2017). Some scholars frame it as a new type of public diplomacy, while others present it as transforming the practice of diplomacy through which new actors, platforms, and narratives are realized (Bjola & Holmes, 2015). Adesina (2016, 2017) argues for a consideration of digital diplomacy as an extension of, not a replacement for, traditional diplomacy, with both a potential site of engagement and a potential vulnerability of states. The perspective fits with the Indian side of reality that the digital platforms provide complementarity to, but not a substitution of, the benefits of closed-door negotiations.

Bjola and Jiang (2015) propose that social media environments are not neutral but strategic arenas where states compete to shape narratives, establish agendas, and mobilise audiences. This is particularly important when studying strategies for India's digital contest with rival states, such as China and Pakistan, especially when flows of information are challenged as much as borders.

Meanwhile, Nye's soft power framework can be critiqued for lack of attention to the structural power of the platforms themselves. Helmond (2015) brought in the idea of platformisation and how the infrastructures of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube shape what kinds of diplomatic conversation is visible or invisible on that platform. Van Dijck, Poell, and De Waal (2018) provided insight into how platforms operate as private gatekeepers of public diplomacy and address issues of monopolisation and algorithmic bias.

For India, this entails projecting narratives through global platforms while being reliant on Silicon Valley firms often at odds with India's strategic interests.

New research has highlighted the importance of digital diplomacy in crisis communication. Fasinu, Olaniyan, and Afolaranmi (2024) discuss the way states use digital tools during crises, suggesting social media facilitates outreach, but can also accelerates misinformation. India's use of Twitter during Operation Ganga (2022) during the Ukraine crisis presented this dilemma: the Ministry of External Affairs used Twitter effectively to communicate with and assist stranded Indian students, whilst mis/disinformation circulated alongside it and hampered efforts to consistently communicate. This article hopes to develop this gaps in attention by taking a case-driven, India-focused approach to studying digital diplomacy and emphasizing attention to both opportunities and risks that accompany it.

3. RESEARCH GAP, QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Despite the abundance of global literature on digital diplomacy and soft power, there is still a substantial India-specific literature gap on the institutional, technological, and strategic aspects of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) digital activities. Most accounts treat India's digital outreach in a descriptive manner and fail to incorporate softer-power, platform governance, and public diplomacy frameworks, whereas literature on digital diplomacy is largely focused on Western countries. This paper aims to address this gap by placing India's digital diplomacy within a Global South context and reframing the nexus of technology, diplomacy, and development.

3.1 Research Questions

- How has MEA of India incorporated digital tools in its foreign policy and public diplomacy approaches?
- How does India's digital diplomacy enhance its global positioning and soft power?
- What are the implications of India's engagement with digital governance and digital infrastructures in terms of opportunities and challenges?

3.2 Objectives

- To explore and critically analyse India's digital diplomacy with case studies of Operation Ganga, Vaccine Maitri, and G20 Digital Agenda.
- To assess the role of digital technology in the articulation of India's soft power and foreign policy.
- To outline the issues of disinformation, cyber-security, and digital diplomacy inaccessibility as emerging challenges in the diplomacy ecosystem of India.

4. METHODOLOGY

This article seeks to address the gaps in scholarship by taking a case-driven, India-centric perspective of digital diplomacy. It aims to draw both the opportunities and the challenges that deserve equal focus. It rests within the interpretive qualitative research paradigm in the context of digital diplomacy. The focus of this research is the MEA's use of digital platforms in diplomacy and how it is integrated in the foreign policy practice of the country. It employs the case study method, and analyzes illustrative case studies of Indian digital diplomacy. The research chose these case studies for their representativeness, recency, and the diversity of domains they cover: crisis communication, public diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and multilateralism. The following case studies were selected:

- MEA's Twitter diplomacy and diaspora outreach.
- Operation Ganga (Ukraine evacuation, 2022).
- India's G20 Digital Agenda (2023).
- Vaccine Maitri

All these cases are selected on the basis that they represent four different strategic layers of India's digital diplomacy: day-to-day engagement (Twitter diplomacy), crisis response (Operation Ganga), global norm shaping (G20 Digital Agenda) and humanitarian projects for soft power (Vaccine Maitri).

The analysis will utilize multiple sources of evidence, including: MEA Annual Reports (2020-2023), Government white papers: Digital India and data protection, Scholarly literature on digital diplomacy (Adesina,

2017; Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Rashid, 2021), Reports from multilateral bodies: the UN (2021) Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, Relevant media reports on specific events (e.g., Ukraine evacuation, G20 meetings).

4.1 Scope and Limitations

The study is exploratory and interpretative in nature rather than statistical in research design. Rather than conducting an audience measurement of perceptions, this study examines ways state-led digital practices portray India in international and domestic digital contexts. Although case studies are selective in nature, they provide indicative interpretations of larger tendencies within India's digital diplomacy.

5. CASE STUDIES OF INDIA'S DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

5.1 Twitter Diplomacy and Diaspora Engagement

India's organized approach to digital diplomacy began in 2010, when the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) launched the @IndianDiplomacy account, followed by the official @MEAIndia account in 2011 (MEA, 2023). At the time, Twitter had emerged as a global communication tool for real-time discourse, and India's use of the medium at that time indicated that diplomacy could no longer be confined to confidential diplomatic cables or pre-scheduled media statements. Since then, those accounts have grown into some of the most followed Foreign Ministry accounts worldwide, representing an early position for India as a pioneer of digital diplomacy.

Credibility and access determine the effectiveness of digital diplomacy (Adesina, 2017). India's engagement validates both. While accounts provided a channel for official communications to the public, credibility was built through the establishment of patterns of empathetic accountability and reliable feedback loops. The institutional connectors developed by former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj provide a clear case to illustrate this. Nicknamed the 'Twitter diplomat', she built structures of affection in the public's mind while also connecting dispassionate institutional authority to warmth and empathy. From SOS requests from Indian workers trapped in conflict zones to routine engagements for citizens seeking a passport, she performed accountability in the public's gaze. During her absence, the state tied the familiarity of the citizenry. This change was a remarkable deviation from the cold distance typically associated with diplomacy, and it won India global admiration for its digital engagement. With an estimated 32 million people of Indian origin living abroad, India has an economic and cultural constituency (MEA, 2023). Digital platforms in the diaspora for India have been pivotal in reinforcing bonds.

Twitter and Facebook have become the direct means to engage with the Indian missions in this case. The Indian missions have developed what might be characterized as a networked public sphere for Indians living abroad where the social media dimensions extend beyond the usual top-down public relations, announcement, and advisory announcements.

The use of digital platforms has moreover also blurred the management of formal and informal diplomacy. Rashid (2021) has pointed out that India has additionally incorporated even private messaging services (e.g., WhatsApp) into its diplomatic toolkit. Missions stationed abroad also share important advisories, announce community events, and circulate crisis alerts to community leaders, students, and workers, through WhatsApp groups as well. In this case, it may wield more influence due to the demonstration of its soft power diplomacy function, but it does exemplify the effective merging of formal statecraft and social and grassroots communication, attaining engagement in more conventional diplomatic settings that may not achieve it. Encapsulation within Indian Twitter diplomacy is the integrating, enculturating, and advancing of global public diplomacy practices within the social media sphere. Having tweaked and attuned its diplomatic communication to the digitally connected citizenry, for the first time, India is using social media platforms that involve

instantaneous, interactive, and expansive outreach to the public. More than anything, Indian Twitter diplomacy exemplifies the country's techno-agility and underscores the state's capability to realign its functionalities with the demands of the intertwined contemporary world. Most significantly, Twitter diplomacy serves India's soft power by providing the global Indian diaspora with the direct and real-time communication that contemporary world globalizations have organized India for multiple times.

Digital avenues for communication and engagement continue to develop, this example demonstrates that diplomacy is no longer contained to the negotiation table and communiqué, now it includes hashtags, timelines, and responses to citizens in real time.

The capacity of digital diplomacy to develop long-lasting relational networks with diaspora communities is evidenced through the relationship between India and their diaspora communities; however, the greatest test of trust, as facilitated through digital media channels, occurs during times of crisis. In urgent situations, states need to communicate quickly and also uphold their credibility in times of uncertainty. Operation Ganga provides a unique opportunity to demonstrate how these communication networks are utilised in high-stakes geopolitics.

5.2 Operation Ganga (2022)

In February 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine presented one of the most pressing diplomatic challenges for India in the twenty-first century: evacuating nearly 20,000 Indian students who were in a war zone quickly deteriorating. Conventional lines of communication became overwhelmed, and new realities on the ground were changing on an hourly basis. The Ministry of External Affairs acted quickly to harness digital channels, especially Twitter, to manage information about the evacuation, stay connected to students, and reassure worried families back home.

The MEA's Twitter handle and the official handles of Indian embassies in Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary were used frequently to send advisories on safe routes, required documentation, and transport. Posts began using #OperationGanga in shorthand for official communication.

Hashtags created a means for students to open up communication and access critical information in situations where the difference between following and not following instructions could lead to safety or danger. Fasinu, Olaniyan and Afolaranmi (2024) correlate this phenomenon with the value and role of digital tools in handling emergencies (The State of South Africa's Disaster Management, 2019), where government responsiveness outpaced traditional bureaucratic frameworks. For students in chaotic situations, especially those for whom Twitter advisories turned out to be vital in the circumstances, the value of real-time communication was clearly pivotal. MEA was perceived as a 'legitimate' information 'provider' for Indian families, especially when communication updates were delivered in a 'non-modern' media style, and 'streamed' pseudo 'traditional' updates. Digital diplomacy in the context of a crisis demonstrated both the advantages and disadvantages of the use of technology to facilitate diplomatic relations and how the credibility of an institution must compete with competing narratives that are developed through the rapid dissemination of information in an environment governed by algorithms. The 'free' social media platforms were flooded with 'official' disinformation 'peddled' in the pseudo 'genuine' videos created by 'unofficial' accounts. These unsanctioned narratives 'peddled' the animated and false 'accounts' of harassed or 'abandoned' Indian students, inciting families and citizens and compromising the credibility of official communication.

The presence of misinformation illustrated that the new and the old in crisis supported each other in a form of digital diplomacy. The instant engagement by means of digital platforms is one thing, but unraveling official context is another matter altogether.

Nye's (2019) reminder that credibility is at the base of soft power reminds the reader that in crisis, credibility is something that could not be manufactured on the spot, and relies on a track record of clear and consistent communication. The MEA's ability to keep confidence amongst students and their families in a crisis, #OperationGanga, was dependent not only on the frequently shared dispatched updates, but also, their ease of verification. Evidence of progress came in the form of photographs of evacuees, videos of buses crossing borders, and confirmations from governments who were our partners. This evidence lessened the consequences of misinformation and indicated that credibility in fact is still at the heart of successful digital diplomacy.

The #OperationGanga case study therefore highlights both promise and peril of using digital tools in crisis. To be clear, on one hand the uses of Twitter and other platforms allowed Indian diplomacy to reach out at scale, coordinate the evacuation across borders, and reassure audiences in India in real time. Conversely, the difficulties that misinformation presents demonstrate that certain structures will always be vulnerable, due to the inherently open nature of social media algorithms, and no state can perfectly manage them. Therefore, for India, the conclusions to be drawn are two fold: digital platforms are essential for the country's public diplomacy, as well as their potential counter disinformation strategies, and the balance that they can uphold with credibility.

Operation Ganga illustrated how digital diplomacy could be used to implement tactical responses in a crisis, while India's G20 Presidency serves as an example for how strategic use of digital diplomacy can be utilised to influence the way in which global governance is discussed.

5.3 G20 Digital Agenda (2023)

India's leadership of the G20 in 2023 marked another chapter in the country's digital diplomacy. While taking the chair, India positioned digital governance at the top of global agenda and shifted focus to India's home achievements while participating in global conversations about the role of technology in development. Through the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and other ministries, India used digital diplomacy to showcase its leadership in the development and installation of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). India emphasized scalable, interoperable, inclusive, and global South friendly models of use as Aadhaar (biometric identification), Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and DigiLocker. The centrality of DPI was no coincidence. Over the past decade, India has positioned itself as a digital disrupter in governance by the use of technology in the distribution of welfare, financial inclusion, and citizen services. By using its DPI at G20, India wants to showcase its domestic innovations as universal public goods. Social media campaigns, public-facing videos, and briefs were prepared to expand the audience of the argument beyond G20 stakeholders to the South in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The United Nations (2021) Roadmap for Digital Cooperation emphasizes inclusive rights-based approaches to digital transformation. While the UN framework upholds developmental principles along with data privacy, digital rights, and global governance standards, India's emphasis remained around development. The dominant narrative of India's digital diplomacy during the G20 summit was that technology, if built as an open, affordable, and interoperable framework, could be a 'prime mover' of inclusive economic growth, financial inclusion, and poverty alleviation, as described in the outline. The example of Aadhaar was described as enhancing welfare targeting, UPI as providing payments in real time, and DigiLocker as helping citizens access secure documents incessantly and pull out their certificates when needed. This reframing serves as an example of the assertion made by Bjola and Holmes (2015) that digital diplomacy concerns more than just the employment of technologies; it is a contestation of narratives with respect to governance and values. For India, data public infrastructure was an ethical as well as a technical infrastructure that the Global South could use to leapfrog development without having to depend proprietary technologies from the West.

In its efforts to show the digital public good status of public infrastructure data, India positioned itself as not only an innovator but also as a global champion for equity in international digital governance. However, it was not without controversy. Concerns were raised about India's focus on "scalability" and "inclusion" as a justification for avoiding a deep engagement on the issues of claiming privacy, surveillance, and data protection as rights and the most vocal critics on these issues globally. Example, the platformization of welfare services, triggered discussions on the trade-off between efficiency and individual rights. The existence of such tension under the G20 of fitting in and standing out suggests that, in this context, digital diplomacy was as much an exercise in working through images and values narratives as it was an attempt to showcase technology. India, showing its digital infrastructure as a testament to inclusive development, expanded its soft power and competitive standing within the normative architecture of global digital governance.

India held the G20 presidency showcasing how they conduct digital diplomacy and by framing technology as a global public good, positioning itself as a responsible partner to the South of the globe. The accentuation of multilateral cooperation, mutual development and social justice extends well past the traditional discourse of global governance into areas of global crises. The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of how India was able to leverage their humanitarian aid through their Vaccine Maitri initiative.

5.4 Vaccine Maitri

The unprecedented pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic placed extraordinary stress and strain upon global health systems and COVID-19 vaccine policies, while bringing into sharp relief deep inequities in access to vaccines. In India, the pandemic provided an opportunity for it to assert itself as a responsible global actor through the COVID-19 Vaccine Maitri (Vaccine Friendship) initiative. From January 2021, India began to provide domestically manufactured vaccines to more than 90 countries, most of which were in South Asia, small island states, and friends in Africa and Latin America (MEA, 2021). While the actual delivery of vaccines was an example of material diplomacy, the initiative gained its global salience from it being performed, narrated, and contested on digital platforms of communication.

Digital tools were a central component in how Vaccine Maitri was expressed and experienced around the world. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the Indian embassy's abroad, and senior leaders relied heavily on non-traditional public relations approaches to announce vaccine shipments and be engaged in real time via Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Hashtags such as #VaccineMaitri, were used in a systematic way to help brand the initiative to make it more easily searchable and shareable. Photos tracking the shipment of vaccine consignments from airport to destination, crates stamped with the words "Gift from the People of India," and officials exchanging images of vaccine shipments became the viral images which circulated widely across various digital platforms. In this way, the digital platform became the stage where India's humanitarian diplomacy was being planned and observed the world over.

Governments and leaders who received the vaccines would also contribute to the digital narrative. Presidents, prime ministers and ministers in their posts thanked Indian officials while posted mutual visibility that functioned to reinforce India's benign image as a partner. Vaccine-related post on twitter about deliveries occurring at airports produces a digital archive full of solidarity. Not only did it increase India's soft power but also extend the symbolic impact of initiative message beyond immediate vaccine recipients. This shows Nye's (2019) point that credibility and attractiveness are the main components of soft power; a continuous series of digital snapshots and videos vaccine deliveries provided further proof that we faithfully executed India's commitments.

These digital platforms gave us visibility and also served as a weak point from which adversaries could attack India. April 2021 saw a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic in India. While the government was exporting vaccines, questions started circulating on social media: was this justifiable with so many people still waiting to get vaccinated? Opposition leaders, NGOs, and ordinary citizens joined the digital critics of Vaccine Maitri, portraying it as humanitarian theater rather than humanitarian assistance. The change in the coverage of events available on the net illustrates the point made by Bjola and Holmes (2015) regarding digital diplomacy, that it is not sufficient to get one's 'voice' out, but rather to seek favor and align interests in the struggle to become (or make others) a relevant 'player' in the contest for control over online narratives. Digital visibility, like digital criticism, is available for capture at all and any moments. All must play the rules well. The rules involve frankness, and the primary rule of a balance between punishment and utter frankness.

The project's digital footprint also illustrates Helmond's (2015) concept of diplomacies being reversassellized when they are algorithmically driven spaces that prioritize popular content, images, and return on investment of attention. Vaccine Maitri also stands out in international discussions, both in the digital space and because it's easy to revert to the narrative when domestic criticism comes in algorithmically. We can observe the potential risks associated with deciding to have diplomacy meetings on commercial platforms. However, the positive aspect is that the Vaccine Maitri initiative demonstrates the importance of digital technology in diplomacy in the 21st century. The significant achievement of the initiative—vaccine delivery—was parallel to the digital narrative, given that both relied on active hashtags, photos, and mutual recognition. It illustrated how humanitarian diplomacy can be depicted within digital informational systems, showcasing the dwindling equilibrium between domestic concerns and international obligations. For India, this means the sustained strategic commissioning of digital diplomacy in the public digital realm must be integrated and resilient.

The above cases highlight a growing body of evidence regarding the increasing reach and prominence of India's digital diplomacy. At the same time, they indicate that digital statecraft presents significant structural contradictions. Issues of credibility, reliance upon technology, algorithmic visibility, and digital disparities create further complications for an otherwise positive story about a seamless transition to digitized diplomacy. The next section will provide a critical analysis of these new and developing challenges.

6. CHALLENGES OF INDIA'S DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

India has the potential to be one of the leaders of the Global South, especially in digital diplomacy, though this comes with complications. Information is currently sent and received faster than it can be verified, making digital diplomacy potentially dangerous. The tools available to the world and India's digital tools for diplomacy are the same tools that can cause confusion. During the evacuation of Ukraine in 'Operation Ganga', information that was unofficial and misleading was spread and amplified during the evacuation, with most of the information overshadowing the updates given by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The case illustrates the problems technology creates in digital diplomacy, especially when it is more advanced than the means to communicate. The weaknesses that come with technology are problems that diplomacy in the digital world must deal with. Disinformation, phishing campaigns against the diplomats, or hacked accounts of diplomats show the problems that come with ICT. The vulnerabilities that come with the use of ICT, especially in the case of countries that are in the Global South, are the problems that modern diplomacy must face in the digital or cyber world.

India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is lauded internationally as a benchmark for more inclusive governance digitalisation but the inclusiveness promised is lopsided. There is a deep-seated digital divide that is inequitable across gender, caste, class, and geography. Feminist scholarship, such as Patel (2025), articulates the

exclusion and surveillance of digitally connected women belonging to poor and marginalised sections of society. For digital diplomacy to achieve real transformative change, it must go beyond mere performative connectivity to display structural inclusiveness that reaches all citizens and not only those already digitally empowered. Most fundamentally, Indian digital diplomacy needs to find and address the paradox of visibility and vulnerability, the dissonance of efficiency and ethics, the discord of innovation and social justice. Only under these parameters will it be possible for digital diplomacy to shift the focus from communication to empowerment, fostering more equitable global relations in the process.

7. THE WAY FORWARD

India's digital diplomacy has to turn its online activities into tangible influence. Just being online is not enough; what's needed is trust, and for that, there needs to be consistency. Hence, India needs to trust systems that translate communication into trust and engagement into leadership. Adesina (2017, as cited in the textbox) points out that the integration of technology in regular diplomatic routines is what makes the technology meaningful. Sentiment analysis to gauge responses and predictive tools to foresee and manage foreign policy crises, for example, AI has the potential to advance India's foreign policy. However, Van Dijck, Poell, and De Waal (2018) caution that unregulated AI, like other emerging technologies, could worsen inequality and biased decision-making. Therefore, there should be diplomatic innovations that do not undermine the diplomatic practice but help strengthen it.

Nation-to-nation trust is fundamental to diplomacy. With misinformation, cyberattacks, and political polarization, India needs to focus on partnerships and international legal frameworks in cybersecurity and cross-border digital governance. Unlike previous generations, today's diplomats are not simply the carriers of messages. They need to analyse data and counter misinformation with persuasive clarity and credible digital narratives. Primary usage of digital infrastructure is no longer the aim. India must seek to determine the norms that govern its use. India, through collaborations with the Global South and its leadership in the G20 Digital Agenda, can advocate for digital sovereignty, inclusivity, and cooperation as a digital diplomacy rule-maker.

8. CONCLUSION

India's digital diplomacy rests on a hybrid framework. Despite being guided by principles of conventional diplomacy, digital diplomacy operates in a hyperconnected diplomacy where influence is determined by alliances and algorithms. The External Affairs Ministry has been harnessing this potential. Sushma Swaraj's world empathetic diplomacy on Twitter and the world digitalisation projection of India during the G20's India-hosted events portray the extent statecraft can be digitalised and soft power can be exercised outside the negotiation tables. Nevertheless, this reality is a work in progress. In times of crises, the rapid disseminating of disinformation, and the exposure of cyber weaknesses, pessimisms on technology optimism, highlight the techno-socio gaps on the elderly and digitally non-empowered. The lack of digital resources on the elderly and non-empowered remind excess innovations on techno-socio gaps. The gap between distrust and credibility in the international arena cannot be filled with a hashtag. India has begun attempting coherence in its public digital relations. The future requires the combining of cyber - geopolitical constructs and AI, and strategic data use. Digital diplomacy can have the greatest influence when its focus shifts from communication to conviction, connection to credibility. India is actively engaged in asserting itself and establishing itself as a responsible digital power. For India's digital diplomacy to become a genuine pillar of its global identity, India must combine transparency and trust, as well as cooperation and capability. In doing so, India communicates its story to the world while redefining the very language of twenty-first-century diplomacy.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adesina, O. S. (2017), Foreign policy in an era of digital diplomacy, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 3(1), 1297175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2017.1297175>
- [2] Bjola, C., & Holmes, M. (Eds.). (2015), *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, Routledge, London.
- [3] Bjola, C., & Jiang, L. (2015), Social media and public diplomacy: A comparative analysis of the digital diplomacy of the EU, US and China, *Global Affairs*, 1(2), 95–106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2015.973634>
- [4] Chaudhuri, S. (2020), India's digital diplomacy and soft power: Engaging the diaspora through Twitter, *Strategic Analysis*, 44(2), 93–108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2020.1713912>
- [5] Hocking, B., Melissen, J., Riabchuk, O., & Riordan, S. (2012), *Futures for Diplomacy: Integrative Diplomacy in the 21st Century*, Clingendael Institute, The Hague.
- [6] Helmond, A. (2015), The platformization of the web: Making web data platform ready, *Social Media + Society*, 1(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115603080>
- [7] Manor, I., & Segev, E. (2015). "America's Selfie: How the US Department of State presents itself on social media," published in the journal *New Media & Society*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 94–108
- [8] Melissen, J. (Ed.). (2005), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- [9] Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). (2021), *Vaccine Maitri: Delivering Vaccines to the World*, Government of India, New Delhi. <https://www.mea.gov.in>
- [10] Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). (2023), *Annual Report 2022–23*, Government of India, New Delhi. <https://www.mea.gov.in>
- [11] Nye, J. S. (2004), *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, PublicAffairs, New York.
- [12] Nye, J. S. (2019), *Do Morals Matter? Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- [13] Rashid, N. (2021), WhatsApp diplomacy: India's use of messaging apps in public diplomacy, *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 14(4), 502–520. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17516234.2021.1874236>
- [14] Seib, P. (2016), *The Global Diplomat: Digital Diplomacy in the Twenty-First Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- [15] United Nations. (2021), *Roadmap for Digital Cooperation*, United Nations, New York. <https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap>
- [16] Van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & De Waal, M. (2018), *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Scientific Perspective of Indian contribution in era of Indus valley Civilization to Vedic ages

Seema Gupta*^a, Pushpa Bindal*^a, , Rachana Kumar*^a, Nutan Pandey^b

^a Department of Physics, ^b Department of History, Kalindi College, University of Delhi

*Equal contribution

Corresponding author: rachnakumar@kalindi.du.ac.in

ABSTRACT

Most of the scientific concepts are taken to be originated in western world and Indian knowledge system is highly underrated. However, history of science and technology in Indian sub-continent started thousands of years back i.e. from pre-historic period itself. Investigation of early Indian civilization reveals applied science in its formative stages. Their achievements highlight how ancient artisans functioned as early experimentalists, applying practical knowledge of material transformation in different ways. The current study analyses the scientific perspective of pottery making, metallurgy and town planning in ancient India. The study also involves the manifestation of the experiment to generate electricity as mentioned in ancient Vedas. Visit to Rakhi gari, a significant archaeological site related to Indus valley civilization (IVC; 3300-1300BC) gives an exposure to relics of the Harappan culture with its drainage system and planned settlements. In this work, the use of advanced concepts of science in ancient India in forms relevant to their era is highlighted. The paper conveys a constructive message for current generation regarding the importance of scientific inquisitiveness, experimentation and need based innovations. This study helps close the gap between historical knowledge system and contemporary science.

Key words: Indus valley Civilization, Scientific perspective, Harappan culture

1. INTRODUCTION

History of science and technology in Indian sub-continent started thousands of years back i.e. from pre-historic period itself. Many concepts of science and technology originated in ancient Indian civilizations much before they came into existence in Europe. Initiating the use of fire in stone age, making stone tools and weapons, designing plain and decorated earthen ware and terracotta potteries, agriculture, irrigation, town planning using sewage and drainage [1-3] were all based on concepts of science in ancient India. Evidence of pottery making are found in various archaeological surveys of Lahuradewa and the Indus valley civilization[4]. Pottery in India from 7000 B.C. to 322 B.C. evolved from simple, hand-made but sophisticated ceramics[5]. The Indus Valley Civilization (3300 B.C. - 1300 B.C.) produced fine, wheel-made pottery with geometric and animal designs. Study published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* highlights that Harappan pottery was produced using carefully selected raw materials and standardized manufacturing processes [5]. These findings establish that pottery making in ancient India was closely linked to principles of chemistry, thermodynamics, and materials science. The incremental steps from hammering and shaping without heat, controlled smelting, making coins, seals and weapons, alloying copper to make Bronze laid the foundation of the world's most ancient and advanced metallurgical traditions such as coin making [6]. These innovations give a deep insight into thermal processes, corrosion resistance and material behaviour that later became the foundation of modern science and technology [7].

Evidences at various archaeological sites show that our ancestors of Indus valley civilization developed system of uniform weight and measurements[8]. Excavations from Harrapan sites show that people were acquainted with uses of copper, lead, tin and Bronze [9-12].

Technology is practical application of basic science. Our ancestors were great scientists and devised various technologies by the method of need, inquisition, trial, experience and improvement. This is the basic path for all scientific inventions. Indian scriptures have explanations of many concepts of Newtonian mechanics, electricity, astrophysics, mathematics and medicine [3]. These were written long before being discovered in Europe. However, these could not be publicized in western world due to limited modes of availability, communication and connectivity.

Any historical research is based on field visits to archaeological sites, museums and interpretation of established texts. On the other hand, research based on science draws heavily on experimental work and analysis. The present study is a step towards perfect amalgam of the two. Through data obtained from field visits, literature, archaeological remains, and experimental reconstruction, this study explains how ancient Indian technological practices were based on systematic and scientific principles, particularly in physics and chemistry. This shows that early innovations in fields like pottery, metallurgy, urban planning, and electrochemical systems reflect a sophisticated and rational understanding of science. Through methodical analysis and interpretation, the study provides a conceptual connection between contemporary scientific frameworks and traditional knowledge systems. The current work is in context with Indus valley civilization to Vedic ages. The paper also conveys a message to the current generation about the importance of scientific inquisitiveness, experimentation and need based innovations.

2. METHODOLOGY

The current study adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach to examine the presence of scientific and technological knowledge in ancient India. Methodology is mainly based on field visits, observational and interpretive analysis. Primary data were collected through field visits to National Museum of Delhi and literature survey. The collected data were then interpreted using a conceptual mapping approach, wherein practices used in ancient historical times were correlated with modern scientific principles of Physics and Chemistry such as heat transfer, material properties, thermodynamics, and chemical processes.

In addition to observational methods, an experimental approach was incorporated to reconstruct an ancient technological practice. An electrochemical cell was designed using an earthen pot, copper sulphate, Zinc granules and Mercury amalgam, inspired by descriptions attributed to ancient Indian text 'Agastya Sanhita'[13]. The constructed cell was analysed to study its electrical behaviour, and further investigations were carried out by arranging two cells in series and parallel combinations to examine variations in voltage and current, an extension of ancient text matter.

The inspiration drawn from visit to the National museum led to the field visit to the archaeological site of Rakhigarhi which is one of the largest Harappan settlements. Direct observation of structural remains, drainage systems and urban layouts provided a contextual understanding of ancient town planning techniques.

This combination of museum-based evidence, archaeological field observations and experimentation provided a framework to interpret the scientific basis of ancient Indian technologies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Pottery Making

1.1 Historical evidences

Pottery played a crucial role in lives of ancient people. The pieces of potteries obtained during excavations have been preserved in National Museum of Delhi [Fig 1]. The pottery used at that time was earthenware and was mostly man made. The plain pottery was observed to be of red colour. Pots of different shapes and sizes were mostly used for storage and preservation to maintain a sophisticated temperature gradient. Clay was used to make earliest form of pots. They used the clay that was found in their vicinity [9]. Museum display also shows the existence of pots made of terracotta which is clay heated at low temperatures.



Figure1. Pieces of potteries obtained during excavations as preserved in National Museum of Delhi

Clay was fired in fit- fires or bone fires at low temperatures and then hand shaped in different forms. They were mostly with rounded bottom to avoid cracking and totally undecorated [3]. The subsequent excavated pieces of potteries were evolved to be of different colours and decorated with peepal leaves or geometrical pattern [Fig.2].

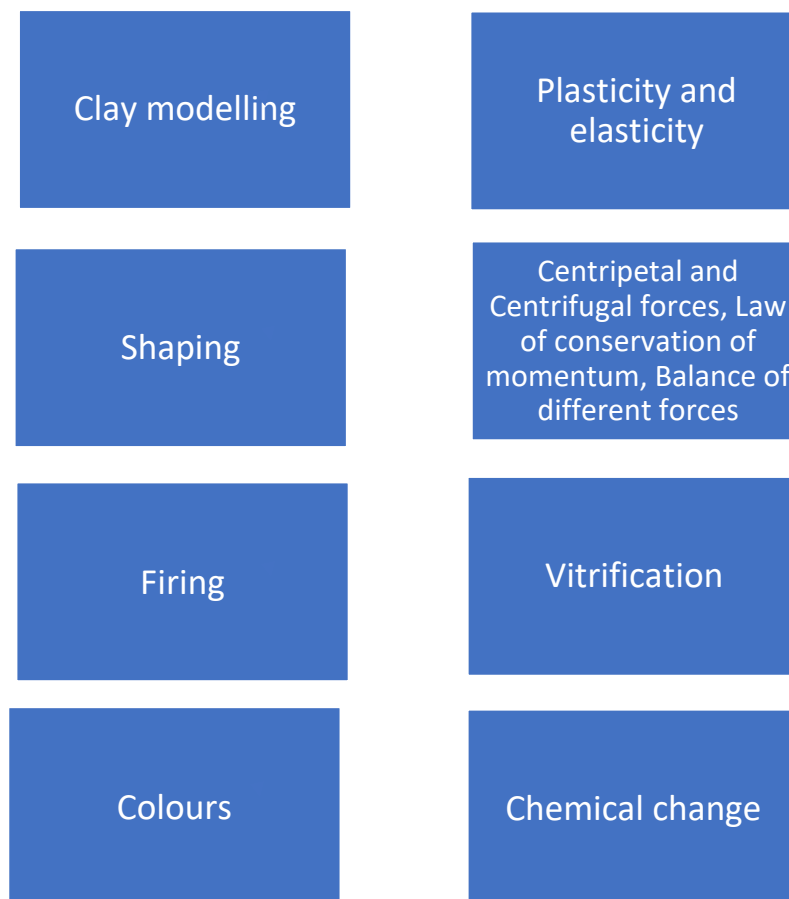


Figure 2. Pots decorated with motifs as displayed in National Museum, Delhi

Use of wheel was recorded in a later chronology. Studies also reinforce the evidence of potter's wheel in major cities of Indus valley civilization namely Harappa and Mohan Jodaro [10].

1.2 Ancient science of pottery making

Choice of clay to make potteries shows the inclination to apply scientific concepts in routine utilities with the available resources. Clay shows two physical phenomenon-Plasticity and Shrinkage. Plasticity is a Physics phenomenon which leads to deformation without breakage. In shrinkage, the particles come closer after evaporation of water. Hence various attractive and repulsive forces also come into picture. Attractive forces lead to plasticity holding particles together, while repulsive forces govern deformation. Physics based concepts such as law of conservation of momentum, centrifugal and centripetal forces, balance of different types of forces were used in wheel- based potteries. Drying leads to diffusion and then evaporation of water to make object strong. Firing the pot at high temperature involves chemical phenomenon called vitrification. Heating at different temperatures lead to chemical changes. Quiang et al [9] observed that different colour changes of clay occur between 20°C and 800°C. They got the colour of clay lighter when temperature was increased from 20° to 250°C, at 300°C the colour was dark grey and above 500°C it turned brick red [9]. The clay was subsequently transformed into terracotta by a refined baking process involving removal of chemically combined water and oxidizing iron within the clay. This led to production of hardened, visually aesthetic earthen wares which were more durable. Various scientific phenomenon involved in pottery making are shown in flow chart 1.



Flow Chart 1: *Scientific principles of pottery making*

Thus, it is observed that pottery of ancient India offered airtight containers that protected food supplies from pests and moisture. It also provided required temperature stabilization with porous nature of clay and layering of utensils. The pottery served as a medium for religious rituals and artistic expression. Decorative motifs and

shapes often had symbolic meanings and were used in various ceremonies. Study also demonstrates their refined understanding of selection of raw material, use of heat in raw material refinement and thermal control to assist chemical transformations.

2. Metallurgy

2.1 Historical evidences

The Indus valley civilization did not show any evidence of coins present in that period. The excavations recovered some “seals”(Figure 3) however researchers couldn't reach any consensus that they were exactly coins. The first punch marked coins [12] documented in the museum were made up of silver and were punched with symbols like sun, animal, fire etc.



Figure 3. Seals of Indus valley civilization (National Museum, Delhi)

Their weight was the measure of the value of the coin. It was in multiple of weight of a seed called “rati” which was around 0.0118 gm [8]. They were rectangular in shape as seen in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Various types of coins (National Museum, Delhi)

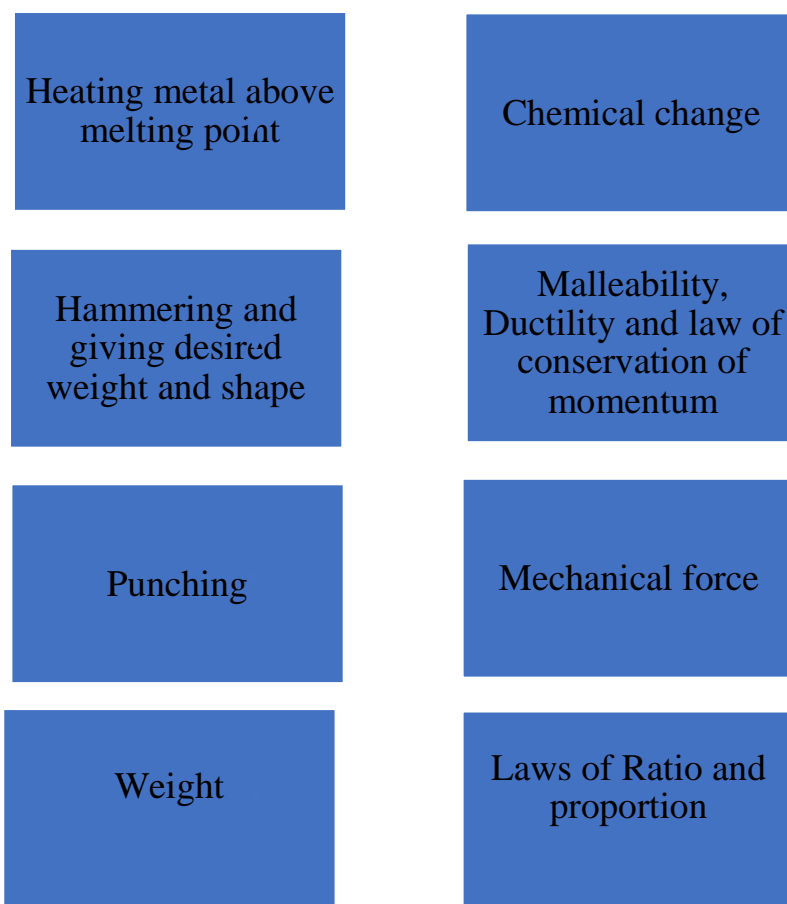
Museum also displays concepts of metallurgy used in weapons exhibiting their knowledge of similar scientific approaches (figure 5).



Figure 5. *Weapons (National Museum, Delhi)*

2.2 Science of coin making

Indus valley civilization people realized the physical and chemical properties of metals and made good use of them. Metals that they chose were malleable and could be drawn into sheets. They heated metals above its melting point and then poured liquids in hand made moulds to give them shape. They used properties of mechanical force and transfer of momentum to beat the prepared coins to convert into thin pieces. Most of the coins used at that time were punched. Punching of coins is a sophisticated combination of arts and science. As per museum records, Harappan people were among the first to develop a system of equal weights and measures. Hexahedron metal weights were prepared and laws of ratio and proportion were used by Harappan people. It is apparent that many scientific concepts were known and intelligently put in practice by people at that time shown in flow chart 2.



Flow Chart 2. *Scientific principles of coin making*

3. Electricity Generation

3.1 Historical Evidences

Indian Vedas, renowned for their wisdom on various subjects, provides a detailed procedure for creating a battery. It also sheds light on the process of electrolysis i.e. the composition of water into hydrogen and oxygen. The following shloka [13] describes the process of making battery:

संस्थाप्य मृण्मये पात्रे ताम्रपत्रं सुसंस्कृतम्।
 छादयेच्छिखिग्रीवेन चार्दाभिः काष्ठापांसुभिः ॥
 दस्तालोष्टो निधात्वयः पारदाच्छादितस्ततः।
 संयोगाज्जायते तेजो मित्रावरुणसंज्ञितम् ॥

This means, “Place a well-cleaned copper plate in an earthenware vessel. Cover it first with copper sulphate and then with moist sawdust. After that, put a mercury-amalgamated zinc sheet on top of the sawdust to avoid polarization (Figure 6). The contact will produce an energy known by the name of Mitra-Varuna. Water will be split by this current into “Pranavayu” and “Udanavayu”. A chain of one hundred jars is said to give a very effective force.

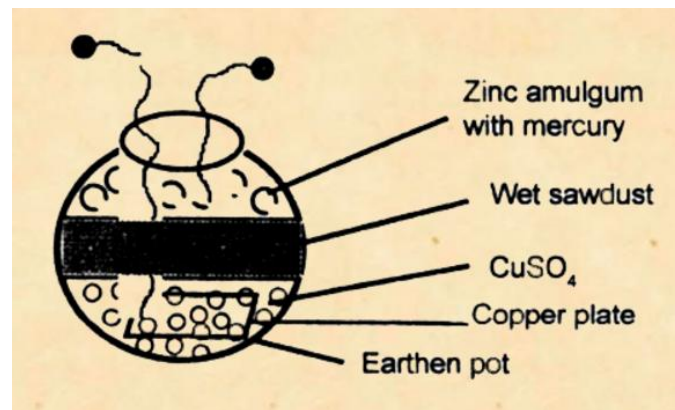


Figure 6. Components of electric battery

Credit: <https://www.puranavedas.com/vedic-physics/>

3.2 Scientific explanation

Drawing inspiration from the ancient text, the Agastya Samhita (written by the great sage Agastya), an ancient method was replicated in laboratory for constructing an electric battery and further extrapolated to design series and parallel combinations of these batteries in the present study. By meticulously following the outlined steps, a fully functional battery was constructed (figure 7) in laboratory which is a testament to the advanced scientific knowledge of our ancestors. Another battery was made using the same steps and the two batteries were joined first in series and then in parallel to verify the laws of series and parallel combinations of batteries (Table 1).



Figure 7. Electric battery assembled in laboratory

Table 1. Value of voltages measured in batteries

Voltage V_1 measured in battery 1 (volts)	Voltage V_2 measured in battery 2 (volts)	Voltage measured in Series combination of batteries (volts)		Voltage measured in Parallel combination of batteries (volts)	
		Theoretical	Experimental	Theoretical	Experimental
		V_1+V_2		$(1/V_1+1/V_2)^{-1}$	
0.56	1.00	1.56	1.513	0.359	0.513

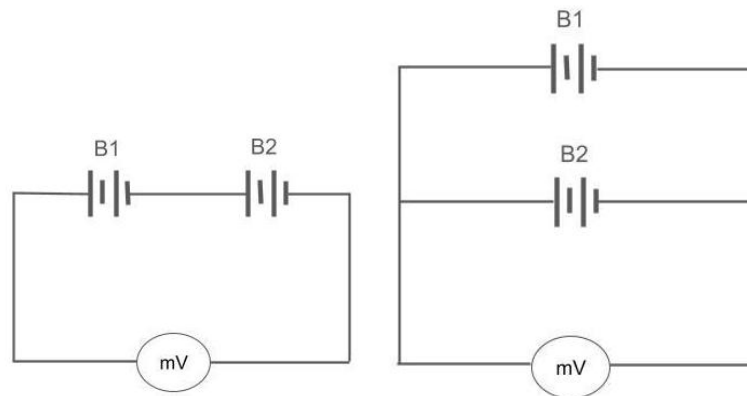


Figure 8. Circuit diagrams for series and parallel combination of batteries

Table 1 shows the measured values of voltages in the two batteries and compares the theoretical and experimental values of their series and parallel combinations. The circuit diagrams are given in Figure 8. This reinforces the advancement and precision of science used in ancient times

4 Advanced level town planning and drainage system at archaeological site of Rakhi gari

4.1 Historical Relevance of visit to Rakhi gari

Rakhi gari is a significant archaeological site located in Haryana (about 150Km Northwest of Delhi) related to Indus valley civilization and is protected by archaeological survey of India(ASI). Rakhi gari gives an exposure to relics of the Harappan culture with its drainage system and planned settlements . Literature survey establishes a meticulous town planning and drainage system in Indus valley and Harappan civilization [1,14-15]. The survey establishes (Figure 9) that Pucca houses were constructed with good quality bricks. Every house had its own bathroom and sewage mechanism which remains an issue even in many of the villages in the current times. A grid pattern was observed in their city planning and houses were seen to be constructed on platforms to prevent flooding. Drains were made at regular intervals for self-cleaning, Reservoirs were seen to be used for water storage. The innovative inclusion of reservoirs is consistent with the water conservation .





Figure 9. *Town planning and Sewage system as observed at Rakhi gari site*

4.2 Scientific Implication

It is easy to comprehend the underlying concepts of science in meticulous town planning and drainage system seen in Rakhi gari which is a reflection of Indus valley and Harappan civilization as well. The usage of fire-resistant and insect proof materials such as burnt bricks - a vivid example of advancement of science even in Harappan era. These bricks were endowed with low insulation value and high thermal mass which helped in heat retention.

The Harappan people were proficient in hydraulic engineering as shown by their efficient drainage system (Figure 9). The grid pattern in the city planning, construction of houses on platforms to prevent flooding and efficient sewage system with efficient sloping showed the scientific bent of mind of Harappan people. The construction of reservoirs aided in water conservation which is an issue of contemporary importance. The houses were designed scientifically with their floor made up of burnt bricks and walls of gypsum mortar providing water insulation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study presents an interesting amalgam of history and science. It explores the evolution of science in ancient India, in particular Indus valley Civilisation (3300 B.C. - 1300 B.C.) and Harappan culture (2600-1900BC). This study demonstrates that technological practices in ancient India were deeply rooted in systematic and empirically derived scientific principles. Observations at the National Museum, Delhi, made it evident that traditional crafts such as pottery making, metallurgy, coin making and town planning embody clear applications of concepts from physics and chemistry. The field visit at Rakhigarhi further reinforced these insights by providing direct evidence of advanced urban planning, efficient drainage systems and construction techniques indicating a high level of scientific and engineering knowledge in ancient settlements. The experimental reconstruction of an electrochemical cell inspired by descriptions in ancient texts such as the Agastya Samhita, offered an additional dimension to the study by linking historical interpretations with modern scientific understanding. The analysis of its behaviour in series and parallel combinations demonstrated the applicability of fundamental electrical principles, thereby highlighting the relevance of experimental approaches in interpreting historical technologies.

The combination of museum-based observations, archaeological fieldwork, and experimental validation offers a thorough framework for comprehending the scientific underpinnings of ancient Indian technologies. The results imply a logical and cohesive comprehension of scientific concepts used in ancient times rather than just being empirical crafts. Thus, while highlighting the significance of interdisciplinary approaches in the study of the history of science and technology, the study may be helpful in relaxing the tight academic boundaries and

encourages interdisciplinary research to establish the importance of Indian knowledge system to young generation.

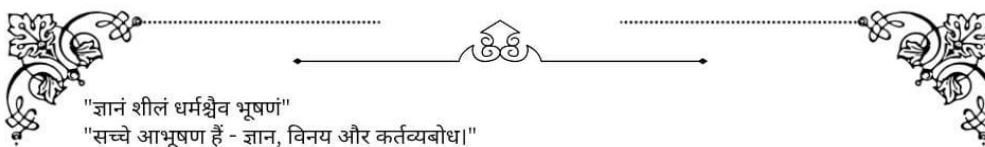
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors wish to acknowledge a grant received from Kalindi college to conduct and complete this research work. Enthusiastic contribution of the Undergraduate Physics and History students involved in this study is appreciated.

REFERENCES

- [1] Dheeresh T. (2025). The Vedic architecture of twin Indus valley civilization cities: Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. *International Journal of History*, 7(5), 93-97. <https://www.doi.org/10.22271/27069109.2025.v7.i5b.409>.
- [2] Deepak J. K; Rahul S; Prasanta S. (2021). The first evidence of controlled use of fire by prehistoric humans during the middle paleolithic phase from the Indian subcontinent. [10.1016/j.palaeo.2020.110151](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.palaeo.2020.110151). [S2CID 229392002](https://doi.org/10.22271/27069109.2025.v7.i5b.409). Retrieved 5 November 2022.
- [3] Getty.edu (2017). Art & Architecture Thesaurus Full Record Display (Getty Research) . Archived from the original on 22 December 2017. Retrieved 30 April 2018.
- [4] Sinha B.P. (1969). Pottery in ancient India. <https://archive.org/details/in.gov.ignca.49292/page/n69/mode/2up>
- [5] Wang F; Yang J.X; Shi L.; Shen J. (2024). Manufacturing technique analysis of Early Harappan painted pottery from the Jhang Bahatar Site, Pakistan, by using a multi-analytical approach. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*, 53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2023.104369>.
- [6] Chattopadhyaya, B. D. (2008). D D Kosambi and the Study of Early Indian Coins. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 43 (30) 97–102. [ISSN 0012-9976. JSTOR 40277774](https://www.jstor.org/stable/40277774).
- [7] Ravi S.; Kamlesh T; Dubey K.K. (2024). Physics in ancient Indian knowledge system. [12\(12\) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387170025](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387170025)
- [8] Hemmy A. S. (1937). The Weight Standards of Ancient Indian Coins. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. 69 (1), 1–26. [10.1017/S0035869X00096106](https://www.jstor.org/stable/25201443). [ISSN 0035-869X. JSTOR 25201443. S2CID 163304500](https://www.jstor.org/stable/25201443)
- [9] Sun, Q., Zhang, W., & Qian, H. (2016). Effects of high temperature thermal treatment on the physical properties of clay. *Environmental Earth Sciences*, 75(7). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12665-016-5402-2>.
- [10] Desai M; Rehren T. (2025). Archaeometallurgical production remains in India: A review. *Journal of Archaeological Science*. 181, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2025.106333>.
- [11] Fábri C. L. (1935). The Punch-Marked Coins: A Survival of the Indus Civilization. *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. 67 (2): 307–318. [10.1017/S0035869X00086482](https://www.jstor.org/stable/25201111). [ISSN 0035-869X. JSTOR 25201111. S2CID 162603638](https://www.jstor.org/stable/25201111).

- [12] Sridhar, N. (2025). Textual evidences of metallurgy in ancient India. *Research Journal of Sanskrit and Sanskriti*, Volume 14, July, 2025 ISSN: 2348-1102
- [13] <https://www.mahakavya.com/formula-for-electric-battery-in-agastya-samhita/>, Formula for Electric Battery in Agastya Samhita
- [14] Parag G.N.; Tanaya C. (2024). Symbolism and ancient Indian town planning. *History Research Journal*.30(03), No.1. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381116941>
- [15] Samirsinh P. (2025). Ancient Ingenuity: A Reappraisal of the Architectural and Social Implications of Indus Valley Town Planning, *Journal of Civil Engineering* ,10-04.



"ज्ञानं शीलं धर्मश्चैव भूषणं"

"सच्चे आभूषण हैं - ज्ञान, विनय और कर्तव्यबोध।"

"The Real Ornaments are Knowledge, Modesty and Sense of Duty"

1967 में अपनी स्थापना के पश्चात कालिंदी कॉलेज ने एक सुदीर्घ यात्रा पूर्ण की है, और आज यह एक ऐसे प्रतिष्ठित संस्थान के रूप में पहचाना जाता है जहाँ छात्राएँ आशा, आत्मविश्वास तथा संकल्प के साथ अपने भविष्य की दिशा निर्धारित करती हैं। दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय के एक प्रमुख महाविद्यालय के रूप में, कालिंदी कॉलेज देश-विदेश से आने वाली छात्राओं को गुणवत्तापूर्ण उच्च शिक्षा प्रदान करता है। प्रबुद्ध संकाय सदस्यों द्वारा संचालित एक समर्पित शिक्षण-संकाय के माध्यम से यह संस्थान न केवल शैक्षणिक विकास में योगदान देता है, अपितु खेलकूद एवं अन्य पाठ्येतर गतिविधियों में उत्कृष्ट प्रदर्शन हेतु भी छात्राओं को प्रेरित करता है। यह महाविद्यालय उन तीन गुणों - ज्ञान, विनय एवं कर्तव्यबोध - को अपने आदर्श वातावरण में मूर्त रूप देता है, जो किसी भी सभ्य जीवन के मूल स्तंभ माने जाते हैं। विगत वर्षों में कालिंदी कॉलेज ने न केवल शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में उल्लेखनीय प्रगति की है, बल्कि राष्ट्र निर्माण में भी अपनी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है। हमारी अनेक वर्तमान एवं पूर्व छात्राएँ विभिन्न प्रतिष्ठित संस्थानों तथा राष्ट्रीय-अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंचों पर विशिष्ट पहचान बना चुकी हैं। यह महाविद्यालय अपनी छात्राओं के भीतर बौद्धिक प्रखरता के साथ आत्मचिंतन की क्षमता को विकसित करने का निरंतर प्रयास करता है, तथा विद्यार्थियों की रचनात्मकता एवं वैज्ञानिक सोच को भी प्रोत्साहित करता है।

इस वर्ष वार्षिक एकेडमिक जर्नल के गत 24 अंकों में भी अकादमिक गुणवत्ता, व अंतर अनुशासनात्मक विषय के साथ समकालीन विमर्श को भी समावेशित किया गया है। पुराने अंकों को पढ़ने के लिए तथा किसी भी अधिक जानकारी के लिए कृपया हमारी वेबसाइट देखें kalindi.du.ac.in।

The College has come a long way since its inception in 1967 and is now seen as a destination where students can embrace their future with hope and confidence. As a constituent college of University of Delhi, Kalindi College strives to cater to higher education to young women with a vision of a new, fulfilling future for all. A nourishing environment supported by a combination of competent infrastructure and a dedicated teaching faculty helps our students to achieve the highest accolades in Academics, Sports and other Extra-Curricular Activities.

Kalindi College's motto conveys three virtues of human life: knowledge, modesty and sense of duty. During all these years, the college has not only made substantial progress in the field of education, but also immensely contributed in Nation building. Many of its students and alumni have reached great heights and achieved National and International recognition. The college strives to provide an intellectual environment for the emancipation of the intellect and spirit that stimulates both critical thinking and imagination.

The Yearly Academic Journal of Kalindi College has released twenty four volumes of Journals previously, with language inclusivity, academic diversity, contemporary debates and multi-disciplinary approaches.

Contact Information.

For more details please visit us at: kalindi.du.ac.in

Email Us at: yearlyacademicjournal24@kalindi.du.ac.in

