

Novel Insights

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Multidisciplinary Research Journal

STARTING YEAR: 2024

E-ISSN: 3048-6572

P-ISSN: 3049-1991

DOI Prefix: 10.69655



VOLUME-I

ISSUE-IV, MAY, 2025

SUBJECT:
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCE

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

Published by:



UTTAR SURI

ROYNAGAR, SRIBHUMI, ASSAM, 788711

NOVEL INSIGHTS (NI)

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Multidisciplinary Research Journal

E-ISSN: 3048-6572

P-ISSN: 3049-1991

DOI Prefix: 10.69655

Starting Year: 2024

Volume-I, Issue-IV, May 2025

Website: <https://www.novelinsights.in>

Article Submission Link: <https://www.uttarsuri.com/uttarsuri>

Subject: Humanities & Social Science

Language: English

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Bishwajit Bhattacharjee

Printed at:

Scholar Publications

Raj Bunglow Road, Karimganj, Assam, India

Office Management:

Amrika Das Purkayastha

Soumili Dhar

© Uttarsuri, Roynagar, Sribhumi, Assam, India, 788711

Rs. 600.00

Disclaimer

The authors are the sole responsible for the opinions/comments expressed in the articles/papers. The members of the Editorial Board/Reviewer or publishers of Novel Insights do not take the responsibility of the opinions/comments made by the authors. In case of plagiarism also absolute responsibility lies with the author.



Novel Insights, *An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal

E-ISSN: 3048-6572

P-ISSN: 3049-1991



Published by Uttarsuri, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <https://novelinsights.in/>

Article published in the previous issue:

Volume-I, Issue-I, August 2024

1. **Contesting the 'Masculine' Domain: Assessment of Women's Role in Sports Through Selected Films**
Dr. Trayee Sinha
2. **From Summit to Valley: The Centennial Journey of Assam Secretariat's Metamorphosis**
Dr. Mohd. Shakir Hussain Choudhury
3. **Towards Inclusive Societies: Leveraging IoT for Community Development and Education**
Dr. Sudip Suklabaidya
4. **Issues of Eternal Jīvātmā: A Review Based on Nyāya Philosophy**
Debashis Ghosh
5. **Creepypasta and Internet Literature: Unmasking Digital Horrors and the Evolution of Contemporary Storytelling**
Parthiva Sinha
6. **Blood in Partition Trains: An Everlasting Emblem of Communal Violence and Massacre in Railway**
Sudipta sardar
7. **Understandably, the 'barbed-wire wound' has not yet cured!**
Dr. Sabyasachi Roy

Volume-I, Issue-II, November, 2024

8. **Odia Bhāgabat by Jagannath Dāsa: An Odia Literary Classic with Universal Knowledge**
Dr. Pratap Kumar Dash
9. **Ethics and Education: Its Impact on Society**
Dr. Mohammad Yousuf Mir
10. **Growth of Agricultural Labour in Bankura District: Colonial Experiences**
Sovan Ghosal
11. **Conflict and Conflict Resolution for Peace in Tripura: An Overview**
Dr. Surojit Sen Gupta
12. **Proportions of Societal, Religious and the Spiritual Elements in the Music & Culture of Tripura: A Close Review**
Dr. Tripti Watwe
13. **Modern and Postmodern Philosophies and Associated Feminist theories related to Religious Symbols: Sindoor- As a case**
Amitava Kanjilal
14. **The Philosophical Foundations of Indian Ethics: An Exploration of Its Core Principles**
Gitashree Mondal

Volume-I, Issue-III, February, 2025

- 1. Fundamental Rights in The Indian Constitution and Modern-Day Challenges**
Moumita Saha Roy, Page No: 137-153
- 2. A Philosophical Study of Advaita Vedānta's Perspective on the Nature of Brahman**
Dr. Amit Kumar Batabyal, Page No: 154-161
- 3. Drawing the Line: The Radcliffe Commission, Punjab Boundary Force, and the Turbulent Partition of India**
Dr. Hareet Kumar Meena, Page No: 162-171
- 4. Dr. Ambedkar and the Notion of Society, State, and Governance**
Dr. Hareet Kumar Meena, Page No: 172-181
- 5. Left Behind: The Impact of Incarceration upon the Mental well-being of Dependents**
Ms. Nazmin Sultana & Dr. Deepom Baruah, Page No: 182-189
- 6. Swami Vivekananda's Role in Women Empowerment in Today's Society**
Nilava Patra, Page No: 190-195
- 7. Beyond Boundaries: Transforming Gender Ideologies in Patriarchal Societies in Laapataa Ladies and Thappad**
Bhumika Choudhary & Dr. Sheehan S Khan, Page No: 196-203
- 8. Jury Trial: A Comparative Legal Analysis between Bangladesh, India and Europe**
Niladry Paik & Mitali Rani Das, Page No: 204-223
- 9. The Relevance of Vedic Knowledge in Modern Science and Technology**
Santu Kandari, Page No: 224-230

Contents

Volume-I, Issue-IV, May, 2025

1. **Culinary Cartographies: A Postcolonial Analysis of Indigenous Foodways in Arunachal Pradesh**
Dr. Subhashis Banerjee, *Page No: 231-238*
2. **Sudhir Chakravarti and Folk Song: Opening Up a Different Way in the Field of Research on Folk Culture and Literary History**
Dr. Rakesh Kaibartya, *Page No: 239-244*
3. **Hyde and Seek: The Psychological Depths of Evil in Stevenson's Classic Tale**
Dr. R. Abeetha, *Page No: 245-250*
4. **The Perennial Denial and Tormented Self: Delineation of Transwomen's Struggle for Space and Social Validity in Megha Majumdar's 'A Burning'**
Auro Prasad Parida, *Page No: 251-260*
5. **A Study on the Rigvedic Society**
Rima Barman, *Page No: 261-266*
6. **Contextualizing India-Sri Lanka Relations under Modi 2.0: A Framework of Continuity and Change**
Nourin Siddique, *Page No: 267-276*
7. **Bhakti-Sufi, Mysticism and Feminist Consciousness in Medieval India**
Annapurna Sinha Das, *Page No: 277-283*
8. **Immanuel Kant's Metaphysical Perspectives: Innovative Insights**
Baby Mondal, *Page No: 284-289*

Editorial Board, *Page No: 290-291*

Aim & Scope of the Journal, *Page No. 292*

Guidelines, *Page No: 293*

Review Process, *Page No: 294*

Publication Ethics, *Page No: 295*

Publication Charge, *Page No: 296*

Copyright Transfer Form, *Page No: 297*



Novel Insights, An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies
A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal
ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) 3049-1991 (Print)

Volume-I, Issue-IV, May 2025, Page No. 231-238

Published by Uttarsuri, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsights.vol.1.issue.04W.024



Culinary Cartographies: A Postcolonial Analysis of Indigenous Foodways in Arunachal Pradesh

Dr. Subhashis Banerjee, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Kohima Campus, Nagaland University (A Central University), Nagaland, India

Received: 04.05.2025; Accepted: 14.05.2025; Available online: 31.05.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Abstract

This paper explores how indigenous cuisine functions as a vital cultural marker and a site of postcolonial resistance in Arunachal Pradesh, a region rich in ethnic diversity and culinary traditions. Framed within the lens of postcolonial theory, it investigates the symbolic, performative, and epistemic functions of food among tribal communities such as the Nyishi, Apatani, Adi, and Monpa. Indigenous food practices in Arunachal Pradesh are not merely matters of sustenance; they are deeply embedded in rituals, ecological consciousness, kinship structures, and identity formations. Through oral histories, ethnographic records, and literary representations, this study reveals how colonial disruptions and contemporary globalisation have threatened traditional foodways while also prompting cultural resilience. Drawing on theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the paper argues that food becomes a powerful medium through which marginalised voices assert autonomy, memory, and heritage. By examining fermented bamboo shoots, smoked meats, millet brews, and foraged herbs, the study situates cuisine as an archive of indigenous knowledge and as a living testimony to cultural continuity in the face of epistemic violence. Ultimately, this research affirms the role of food in reclaiming agency and decolonising identity within the Northeast Indian context.

Key Words: Postcolonialism, Indigenous Cuisine, Arunachal Pradesh, Cultural Identity, Foodways.

Introduction:

The politics of food, particularly in postcolonial societies, transcends the boundaries of consumption. It becomes a signifier of cultural memory, resistance, and rootedness. In Arunachal Pradesh, the northeastern most state of India, indigenous food traditions remain deeply connected to geography, ancestry, and spiritual praxis. These traditions serve not only nutritional purposes but also reinforce kinship structures, spiritual ideologies, and ecological ethics, thereby resisting the impositions of colonial and global homogenisation. This research seeks to critically examine how traditional cuisines of Arunachal Pradesh function as cultural markers, especially within the framework of postcolonial theory, where the local resists the homogenising tendencies of the global and the colonial.

In postcolonial discourse, foodways are increasingly acknowledged as a terrain where identities are articulated and contested. In Arunachal Pradesh, the ritual preparation of dishes, the seasonal variation in ingredients, and the oral transmission of recipes all constitute a living cultural heritage. The ongoing encroachment of fast-food culture, commercial farming, and modern dietary practices threatens the survival of these indigenous practices. Yet, the people of Arunachal Pradesh continue to inscribe their cultural autonomy through the everyday act of cooking and eating, transforming their cuisine into a site of political resistance and cultural affirmation.

Theoretical Framework: Postcolonialism and the Edible Archive

Postcolonial theory, as advanced by Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, focuses on the marginalised voices and epistemologies suppressed by colonial domination. The theory investigates how cultural hegemony is constructed and how resistance emerges through everyday practices. Bhabha's concept of hybridity (Bhabha 112) becomes pertinent when we consider how indigenous food has been appropriated, modified, or erased in the wake of colonial and modernist interventions. Food, as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai contends, serves as a medium of cultural expression and identity assertion (Appadurai 5).

The term 'edible archive' encapsulates the idea that food practices serve as repositories of communal memory and subaltern knowledge. Spivak's notion of the subaltern (Spivak 283) is crucial here, as indigenous cuisine offers a platform for those silenced by dominant historical narratives to reclaim their agency. Recipes, ingredients, and methods preserved by oral tradition become testimonies to a history of endurance, ecological wisdom, and cultural ingenuity.

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, although primarily applied to the Middle East and Asia, also resonates in the way North East India has been represented in culinary terms. Indigenous diets were often depicted as strange, repugnant, or unsophisticated. In this light, reclaiming traditional foodways becomes a counter-hegemonic act that reconfigures the gaze imposed by colonial modernity.

Indigenous Communities and Culinary Practices in Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh is home to over 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub-tribes, each with distinct culinary traditions. These foodways are not mere gastronomic curiosities; they are deeply rooted in the natural world, governed by ritual cycles and environmental ethics. The Nyishi community, for instance, consumes bamboo shoots (eko) and smoked meats, which are not just food items but embodiments of ecological symbiosis and ancestral lineage. Such practices reflect a spiritual cosmology in which the forest and the household coalesce into a continuum.

The Apatani people, settled in the ecologically sensitive Ziro Valley, are known for their unique paddy-cum-fish farming system. Here, fermented foods like tapyo (fermented rice paste) are more than culinary artefacts; they signal a historical continuity of sustainable living. The preservation of these foodways also contributes to biodiversity conservation, as local ingredients and seeds are cultivated through indigenous farming techniques.

Among the Adi community, the diet includes foraged greens, smoked pork, and boiled herbs, all of which are consumed with opo, a rice-based local beer. Meals are typically prepared communally, reinforcing social bonds and collective identities. For the Monpa

tribe, culinary practices include butter tea, yak meat, and barley dishes that are influenced by Tibetan Buddhism but retain distinct local variations. These practices are integrated into religious festivals like Losar, Nyokum, and Solung, where the preparation and sharing of food becomes a cultural performance that reaffirms communal solidarity.

In these contexts, cuisine becomes a marker of identity, an environmental act, and a cultural expression all at once. It is in such seemingly mundane practices that the politics of identity are negotiated, internalised, and passed on to successive generations.

Colonial Disruption and Culinary Suppression:

British colonial administration in Northeast India was primarily concerned with cartographic control, trade routes, and resource extraction. Yet, the cultural and dietary habits of the indigenous peoples were not immune from colonial scrutiny. In the ethnographic documentation produced during the Raj, indigenous food practices were often exoticised or infantilised, branded as 'primitive' or 'uncivilised' (Elwin 94). The colonial discourse constructed a dietary hierarchy that valorised wheat, tea, and processed sugar while denigrating millet, tubers, and fermented products.

Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, observed that food customs were among the first elements targeted by colonisers seeking to erode indigenous autonomy (Fanon 210). In Arunachal Pradesh, traditional food practices were viewed through a lens of moral superiority. Missionaries, particularly during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, actively discouraged the consumption of local brews and ceremonial meat offerings, labelling them as pagan or demonic. As a result, the community's culinary expressions underwent either suppression or forced adaptation to align with colonial and Christian moralities.

Moreover, colonial medical discourses deemed fermented foods and indigenous brewing practices as unhygienic, thus creating a medicalised rationale for cultural erasure. These scientific justifications were undergirded by a civilisational logic that sought to replace indigenous foodways with European models of nutrition and discipline. In doing so, colonisation not only robbed people of their land but also sought to displace their bodily and spiritual nourishment.

Postcolonial Resistance Through Culinary Practice:

Despite such disruptions, communities in Arunachal Pradesh have preserved and revitalised their culinary heritages. Postcolonial resilience is evident in the continued use of traditional fermentation methods, the preservation of food lexicons in indigenous languages, and the documentation of recipes as oral archives. This aligns with Dipesh Chakrabarty's notion of 'provincializing Europe' – resisting Eurocentric epistemologies through the re-centring of local knowledge systems (Chakrabarty 16).

Indigenous culinary practices have become potent forms of symbolic resistance. During festivals and community gatherings, traditional cuisine is foregrounded as a marker of pride and authenticity. These occasions serve as performative enactments of heritage, affirming a sense of collective identity that defies homogenising narratives.

Youth-led initiatives have emerged that document and disseminate traditional recipes using digital platforms. Social media pages, YouTube channels, and community cookbooks are not only archiving endangered recipes but also transforming culinary practices into political statements. These efforts recontextualise indigenous food as a subject worthy of academic inquiry, artistic representation, and cultural pride.

In addition, indigenous women – traditionally the custodians of food knowledge – are now actively participating in regional food festivals, culinary entrepreneurship, and agro-ecological initiatives. Their expertise is being reclaimed as a form of intellectual and cultural labour, challenging both patriarchal invisibility and colonial silencing. This shift reflects Spivak's call to 'let the subaltern speak' (Spivak 308), here enacted through the medium of food.

The act of cooking itself becomes a political act – a ritual of survival, a mnemonic invocation, and a proclamation of identity. Through such practices, the indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh contest the epistemic violence of colonial narratives and reassert their autonomy. In reclaiming the kitchen as a space of memory, resistance, and creativity, they chart a future rooted in ancestral wisdom.

Thus, in the broader postcolonial discourse, the foodways of Arunachal Pradesh exemplify how everyday acts of sustenance become extraordinary acts of resistance.

Culinary Hybridity and Globalisation:

Contemporary Arunachali cuisine is a vibrant tapestry woven from the threads of ancestral wisdom and modern innovation. In the urban culinary landscapes of Itanagar and Ziro, dishes such as smoked pork momo, nettle soup with tofu, or bamboo shoot pasta exemplify this blend. These are not mere fusions for novelty's sake but are reflective of cultural metamorphosis. The inclusion of pasta – a symbol of Western culinary identity – alongside bamboo shoot, an indigenous staple, signals a gastronomic dialogue. This act of culinary negotiation resonates with Homi Bhabha's theorisation of cultural hybridity, wherein the colonised subject creates a "third space" that is neither entirely native nor colonial but a new cultural expression forged through tension and negotiation (Bhabha 122).

This evolving foodscape might be interpreted by cultural purists as a departure from authenticity. Yet, the postcolonial reading of hybridity recognises that such amalgamations are often born from resilience rather than loss. As Arunachal Pradesh experiences increased connectivity and tourism, food becomes both a symbol of identity and a commodity. The new forms reflect not erasure but adaptation – a form of culinary diplomacy, where the past is neither abandoned nor preserved in amber, but consciously carried forward in new avatars.

However, this hybridity is not without its dilemmas. The increasing commercialisation of indigenous dishes risks diluting their original contexts. Traditional fermentation methods, once conducted within communal frameworks tied to ecological cycles, are now industrially mimicked to meet urban demand. As these foods enter the hospitality and tourism industries, they are often rebranded to cater to non-native sensibilities. This echoes what scholars describe as the neoliberal repackaging of indigeneity – where cultural artefacts are detached from their social roots and sold as exotic experiences. The violence of colonial consumption, once enacted through epistemic erasure, now reappears through commodification under capitalism. Thus, the postcolonial subject, caught between self-representation and market forces, must navigate the fraught terrain of cultural preservation versus adaptive transformation.

Food and Memory: The Role of Oral Traditions:

Among the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh, food is far more than a material necessity – it is a vessel of memory, belief, and moral instruction. Recipes, when examined

closely, resemble narrative scripts. They are not stored in cookbooks but inscribed in the oral tradition—transmitted through lullabies, work songs, seasonal chants, and myths. The Nyishi tale of the hunter who learns to tame the forest through fermented bamboo is emblematic of this tradition. On one level, the story entertains and instructs. On another, it encodes ecological ethics—valorising sustainable harvesting and fermentation not as techniques, but as sacred acts of living in sync with the land.

Such culinary myths are performative archives. They do not simply preserve the past; they enact it. Each telling, each repetition of the recipe during seasonal rituals, becomes a moment of collective remembrance. Through food, tribes transmit not only their culinary preferences but their cosmologies—of how to treat the forest, how to harvest fish with respect, or how to share harvests within the clan. These narratives hold within them a form of ecological knowledge that resists reduction to scientific categories.

Temsula Ao, writing from the neighbouring Naga cultural context, captures this essence when she refers to the ‘aroma of memory’ that lingers in tribal kitchens (Ao 65). The smell of smoked meat or wild herbs, she argues, is often the first conduit through which memories of childhood, family, and cultural belonging are retrieved. Among the Adi, Apatani, and Tagin communities, similar sensorial connections emerge. For instance, the act of slow-roasting river fish wrapped in banana leaves may recall the harvesting festivals of one’s youth, replete with chants and communal eating. These culinary acts become rituals of remembrance—reaffirming identity in a rapidly changing world.

In this sense, indigenous food functions as a mnemonic device. It enables a community to locate itself in emotional geography—a map not marked by political borders but by flavours, aromas, and shared meals. This form of culinary memory, rooted in the oral, also acts as a counter-archive. It preserves those aspects of history and identity often erased in written records, particularly during colonial rule when indigenous ways of knowing were dismissed as primitive.

Food, Gender, and Labour:

A deeper postcolonial analysis of food in Arunachal Pradesh must inevitably turn towards the gendered dynamics of culinary labour. Across the diverse tribal communities of the state, it is women who bear the primary responsibility for food production, preservation, and distribution. Yet their role in this crucial cultural transmission is seldom recognised beyond the domestic sphere. From selecting the right wood for smoking meat, to knowing which seasonal herbs heal or harm, indigenous women are repositories of knowledge—what might be termed eco-cultural capital.

This aligns with Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s critique of the erasure of Third World women’s agency within both colonial and nationalist discourses. In *Feminism Without Borders*, Mohanty emphasises that native women are not mere victims of tradition but are active agents in sustaining, modifying, and challenging cultural practices (Mohanty 69). In Arunachal, women’s engagement with food illustrates this vividly. The task of fermenting bamboo shoots or crafting millet beer is not mechanical labour—it involves precise timing, spatial understanding, and spiritual discipline.

Yet these contributions often remain undervalued because they fall outside textual authorship and institutional frameworks. Tribal culinary knowledge is rarely documented in formal publications, which contributes to the marginalisation of women as knowledge

bearers. Their absence in the 'record' reinforces a form of gendered epistemic injustice. Reclaiming their role, therefore, is not only an act of feminist affirmation but also an ethical imperative in decolonising food histories.

Moreover, in many communities, the kitchen is a site of informal apprenticeship. Young girls learn by watching and doing, often under the guidance of mothers or grandmothers. These acts of intergenerational transmission are deeply political. They ensure cultural survival in the face of external threats—from state displacement projects to climate-induced loss of biodiversity. Cooking, in this context, is not just nourishment but pedagogy and resistance.

In the age of rapid urbanisation, where processed food and instant mixes are gaining popularity, these practices are under threat. Many younger women migrate to cities for education or employment, often returning with altered dietary habits. The challenge then is to retain respect for traditional foodways without restricting women's autonomy or mobility. Hence, culinary labour becomes a site of negotiation—between rootedness and mobility, preservation and change.

Towards a Decolonial Culinary Future:

The renewed engagement with indigenous food practices in Arunachal Pradesh signals far more than a passing trend; it is a radical act of cultural reclamation and resistance against the twin legacies of colonialism and globalised capitalism. This revival is intricately linked to the broader decolonial project, which seeks to dismantle dominant epistemologies imposed through historical subjugation and to reassert the validity and richness of local knowledge systems. At the heart of this movement lies the principle of food sovereignty—a community's inherent right to determine its own food policies, agricultural methods, culinary narratives, and systems of distribution without the imposition of external control. Unlike models that treat food as a global commodity driven by market demands and monocultural efficiency, food sovereignty reaffirms the relationality between people, land, memory, and seasonal rhythm. Organisations such as the North East Slow Food and Agrobiodiversity Society (NESFAS) have been central in documenting and reviving hundreds of indigenous plant species, along with their corresponding culinary applications, thereby challenging the idea that progress lies in standardisation or imported agricultural logic. This process is not one of mere preservation—which often connotes static museumisation—but of revitalisation, where ancestral foodways are reanimated through daily practice, intergenerational transmission, and community celebration. Food festivals organised at the grassroots level do not merely exhibit regional dishes but create participatory platforms for elders to share knowledge, for youth to re-learn heritage, and for culinary methods to evolve in continuity rather than rupture. Community seed banks, for instance, serve not only as storage units for biodiversity but as archives of collective memory and ecological intuition, embodying a politics of care and sustainability that resists the extractive ethos of industrial agriculture. Organic farming cooperatives emerging across tribal regions of Arunachal are rooted in principles of reciprocity and cyclical regeneration, aligning more with indigenous cosmologies than with Western linearity. These practices constitute a culinary activism wherein everyday acts of cooking, foraging, fermenting, and seed-saving transform into political expressions of autonomy. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of 'unlearning privilege,' often invoked in postcolonial discourse, finds practical expression here as both scholar and practitioner are urged to recognise and defer to

embodied, oral, and gendered forms of indigenous wisdom—forms which have historically been excluded from academic or state-sanctioned domains. The act of acknowledging women's culinary labour, the communal ethics of food distribution, or the ritualistic dimensions of planting cycles, all demand a shift from the consumer-centric gaze to one of epistemic humility. The rejection of imported food ideals—such as uniform packaging, frozen storage, and chemical processing—also underscores a deliberate departure from the Western fixation on efficiency and spectacle. Instead, the emphasis in decolonial food cultures remains on seasonality, localised taste, spiritual harmony with the ecosystem, and respect for each ingredient's temporal integrity. Within this matrix, the concept of hybridity—so often trivialised in global cuisine as mere fusion—takes on a critical valence. It becomes less about superficial novelty and more about creative continuity: a negotiation that honours the indigenous culinary grammar even while absorbing new influences in a culturally grounded manner. This nuanced hybridity allows communities to adapt without surrendering their core ethics, crafting dishes that are not betrayals of tradition but extensions of it. Arunachali food systems, thus, stand as defiant alternatives to the monocultures of both agriculture and thought—epistemic monocultures that reduce food to calorie, soil to commodity, and eating to transaction. The rhythms of millet cultivation, the rituals of fermentation, the collective preparation of festival feasts—all reveal how food is not just an act of consumption but a living archive of cosmology, identity, and resistance. As global pressures escalate—from climate change to food insecurity—such indigenous practices offer more than symbolic inspiration; they provide concrete models of resilience, adaptability, and ethical sustenance. To eat in accordance with these traditions is to engage in a daily act of remembering: not just recalling a lost past, but asserting a living present built on relational integrity and ecological balance. It is also an act of resistance, defying homogenisation and asserting the legitimacy of ways of knowing that have long been dismissed or suppressed. Therefore, the culinary future envisioned in Arunachal Pradesh is not one of passive revival but of active remaking—where food becomes a language through which communities reclaim authorship of their stories, revalue their ecosystems, and resist the epistemic violence that sought to erase them. In this context, the kitchen emerges not merely as a domestic space but as a decolonial theatre—where ingredients are not just selected but invoked, where meals are not just prepared but performed, and where the act of eating itself becomes a cultural and political affirmation. The aroma of indigenous rice, the careful slicing of wild yam, the patient brewing of herbal teas—these are not incidental rituals but expressions of autonomy, history, and futurity, each mouthful charged with ancestral resilience and visionary hope. Thus, the evolving culinary practices of Arunachal Pradesh are emblematic of a larger struggle for dignity, memory, and cultural sovereignty, asserting through taste what centuries of domination have tried to suppress—that indigenous life, knowledge, and cuisine not only endure but flourish when reclaimed on their own terms.

Reference:

1. Ao, Temsula. *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone*, Zubaan, 2006
2. Appadurai, Arjun, 'How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1988, pp. 3–24
3. Bhabha, Homi K, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, 1994

4. Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton UP, 2000
5. Elwin, Verrier, *The Art of the North-East Frontier of India*, North-East Frontier Agency, 1959
6. Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Translated by Richard Philcox, Grove Press, 2004
7. Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Boundary 2*, vol. 12/13, 1984, pp. 333–358
8. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, U of Illinois P, 1988, pp. 271–313



Novel Insights, An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies
A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal
ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) 3049-1991 (Print)

Volume-I, Issue-IV, May 2025, Page No. 239-244

Published by Uttarsuri, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsights.vol.1.issue.04W.025



Sudhir Chakravarti and Folk Song: Opening Up a Different Way in the Field of Research on Folk Culture and Literary History

Dr. Rakesh Kaibartya, Asst. Teacher, Palsa Jr High School, Gurupally West, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India

Received: 05.05.2025; Accepted: 21.05.2025; Available online: 31.05.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Abstract

We know that India is a country of spiritual understanding. There are different layers of meaning imposed regarding religion. Sudhir Chakravarti chose this field for his research work, which did not focus on the people and life of mainstream society. Instead, the people and their songs are of prime interest. In the initial stages, it was not very easy to communicate with the people. This journey was actually very challenging. He stepped out of his circle and immersed himself in a group of ordinary people. The search for man is, in fact, a search for 'manush ratan dhan' (man is most valuable). This critical approach not only helps us understand spiritual understanding and the multiple layers of religion but also allows us to think deeply about the social, political, economic, and cultural history of that time. It brings out the voice of protest against the upper class of society. These artists, along with their songs and performances, were totally neglected by the ruling power of the time. He has worked with the communities of Sahebhdhani and Bala Hari. After 1970, Sudhir Chakravarti has travelled through various districts of West Bengal, namely Nadia, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Burdwan, Bankura, and Purulia. The focus of this article is to illustrate the literary lapses and contributions of Sudhir Chakravarti in the field of literature.

Keywords: Folk culture, Multiple layers, Community, Peripheral position

In the tradition of Bengali song, we could not recognize the hidden position of certain types of songs. From Charyagaan to Rabindranath, a line of this hidden song has been expressing itself in a very secretive way, but its subtle glimmers have not been taken seriously by music connoisseurs. In his book *Bangla Gaaner Char Diganta* Chakravarti elaborately discussed the origin and development of Bengali song. Once upon a time in this country, the need for 'Lokayat Guhya Dharmasadhana' (hidden religious practices) required hiding the 'Tatta' behind the words. However, an introspective consideration shows that the trend of secret songs, from Charyagan to Nathpanthi songs, Vaishnava Sahajiya songs, Shaktagaan, and Baulgan, also touched Rabindranath's music (Chakravarti 21). It is called a metaphorical song, which has one meaning outside and another meaning inside. It takes a different kind of hearing mentality and requires perception. It probably takes a bit of insight too. The darkness of many unspoken words, the sound of deep footsteps, and the beauty of many

elusive sweetnesses are caught in the innermost nature of this vision and hearing. From this mentality, the invisible hidden in the heart becomes visible.

A deeply hidden identity has remained unnoticed by the streams of Bengali songs for thousands of years. If we dissect the body of Bengali songs from Charyagan to Baulgaan, covered in metaphors, we shall find an undercurrent. It is true that the 'Dehatattva' (related to the body) song is a folk song that has been going on for a long time in our country. There has been no identification or thematic analysis of the physical characteristics and diversity of the songs of the body, which have been mixed in the flow of many kinds of Bengali songs for many days (Chakravarti 35). During his research Chakravarti have identified only those songs that contain body-related words as body-related songs, and as a result, the prophetic-educated society has a somewhat negative perception of these songs.

At same time it was not believed that only the Bauls wrote the songs of Dehatattva. In fact, the very original source of Bengali songs, from the Siddhas' Charyagiti to the songs of the Sahajiya Vaishnavas of the Middle Ages, the songs of the Yogi community, and even Ramprasad's Shaktagan, clearly mention 'Dehasadhana' (body related religious practices). However, the term 'dehasanket' is most widely found in Baul, Murshida, and Marfati songs, Kartabhaja songs, Sahebhdhani, Balrami, and various types of folk Bengali songs. His book named *Lakayater Antarmahal* is written to establish these issues. The reason is that these sub-religious sects are not only materialistic but also believe in guru-directed kayasadhana (Chakravarti 17). These songs are mainly born at the end of 'Kayasadhana' (related to the body) or for the correct guidance of that 'Dehasadhan'.

Socio-political background and its significance:

Spirituality is a fundamental aspect and omnipresent in our country. Searching for God is the basic purpose of people in all the different religious communities of this country. In 1896, Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya (1850-1899) wrote his book titled *Hindu Caste and Sects* in which he defined Bauls as low-class men and dirty people. Books on this subject include Paul Brunton's *a Search in Secret India* (1934) and Pramod Kumar Chatterjee's *Tantabilashir Sadhu Sanga* (1958). Later, Akshay Kumar Dutta (1820-1886), in his book *Bharatbarshiya Upasak Sampraday* (1911), depicted the socio-cultural and economic conditions of the time. This research is not very commendable (Mukhopadhyay-31). That's why we have to wait to get the actual picture until Sudhir Chakravarti's love and dedication reveal the folk cult in West Bengal. The originality of Sudhir Chakravarti lies in the fact that he has sought to find the history of people's lives through music. It must be remembered that before Sudhir Chakrabati, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Kshitimohan Sen (1880-1960), Mansuruddin (1904-1987), Upendranath Bhattacharya (1899-1970) and Ashutosh Bhattacharya (1909-1984) were all involved in this work. The book entitled *Songs of Lalon Fakir collected by Rabindranath Tagore* is an important document regarding the subject matter. The Baul Fakirs and the people belonging to these religious sects were abused outright. Jogen Bhattacharya has depicted all these in his book. Another Muslim writer named Rewajuddin book entitled *Baul Dhangsa Fatwa* he declares fatwa (verdict) urging the people to annihilate the Bauls. Before Sudhir Chakravarti entered in this field, we two important and famous books. One is *Banglar Baul O Baul Gaan* by Upendranath Bhattacharya and another is *Obscure Religious Sects as Background of Bengali Literature* by Dr. Shashibhusan Dasgupta. Originality of their works were limited with in the analytical perspective and theory of Baul Gaan and philosophy of Vaishnavisms.

It is interesting to note that the style and manner of collecting the songs of Sudhir Chakravarti were something unique. As he came into close contact with various people, sects, and folk songs, he understood the subtle symbolism that bears a deeper meaning of life, the beliefs of particular “sub-religions,” the behaviour, and a stratified interplay of history in society. He has not only evoked the ethos of the literariness of “folk” songs; rather, he has brought to light the hidden secrets and tricks of their devotional life (*gupto sadhana marg er rohoso*). It can be considered that he explored the lives of people who were equally exploited and deprived. Society is full of sin but left protesting through songs of sin. In his book *Baul Fakir Katha* he highlights the issue of *kayasadhana* and protest. Their way of life is a form of resistance, and songs play a vital role. He is looking for those hidden sub-religious people who share a self-reliant yet defiant life in a rigid social structure (Chakravarti 65-66). Chaitanyadev’s generous Vaishnavism, Sufis, and Bauls like to identify as the main impetus for the development of these Guru-disciple sub-religious sects. These religions were developed out of chauvinistic particularism. Sufis and Bauls have been mixed together based on the hatred of the royalty of Brahmins and distrust of mullahs in the lives of the minor sects. Kuber Gosain was the main lyricist of the Sahebadhanis. Jadubindu Gosain was a disciple of Kuber Gosain (Mukopadhyay38).

Life and Work: A Brief Overview:

Sudhir Chakaravarti was born in Shibpur, in the Howrah district. Chakravarti was known for his research works on Folk religion, Lalan Fakir and Cultural Anthropology in Bengal. He spent thirty years researching the folk culture by traveling to different villages all over the West Bengal. He was a professor of Bengali literature from 1958 to 1994. Cultural anthropologist Sudhir Chakravarti passed away on 15 December, 2020 (Saha 4). He was noted for his research on folk religion and music, especially Lalan Fakir’s songs. He wrote in detail about communities and sub-religions. His book *Bratya Lokayat Lalon* on Lalan Fakir is highly regarded. He taught Bengali literature at Krishnagar Government College and was guest lecturer at Jadavpur University. He wrote and edited books. He edited the Bengali magazine *Dhrubapada*, which was received with much enthusiasm. His friends remember him for his kindness and grace. He received the ‘Ananda Purashkar’ in 2002 for his book *Baul Fakir Katha* and the ‘Sahitya Academi Award’ 2004. He got the awards of the eminent teacher from Calcutta University in 2006. His notable books include *Gabhir Nirjon Pathe*, *Sadar Mafassal*, *Bangla Flimer Gaan o Satyajit Roy*.

Chakravarti conducted research on the theory based on man and religion. This relationship highlights the urge for a meeting between God and the devotee. Obviously, the medium of attending to the self depends upon the performance of their songs. Another point that comes to mind in this context is that the songs of Kuber Gosain are not widely known among the numerous audiences in our country, although his songs hold a distinct and definite place in our cultural life. The songs have double meanings and follow symbolic interpretations. It really takes time to realize their meaning and language. However, it must be admitted that the local people are able to understand the songs; they can perceive them. It is noteworthy that the songs sung by Kuber Gosain are aimed at developing human relationships because he wanted to free the soul from bondage. His songs possess genuine vigour. In the book *Gabir Nirjon Pathe* he delineates all these issues elaborately. We should remember that the subject matter of the songs relates to *Dehatattava* (Chakravarti 33-35). Baul Faki's doctrine is not a religion or a community; it is a life philosophy and practice. This

doctrine highlights the message of great humanism (Chakravarti 135). One truth, however, emerges from the analysis of Sahedhani Srampodoy: it is not only a reaction from the upper class of society, but it is also the main opposition to the ruling class of the time and their oppression. The songs of Kuber Gosian are not merely songs; unique meanings and symbols are embedded in them. He also says in his edited book titled *Bangla Dehattava Gaan* "Je bastu jbaner kran/tai bula kare sadhan" (The thing that is the cause of life is / therefore, accomplished by the Bauls) (Chakaravarti 10). Venus is symbolized here. This Venus is born from a combination of different objects. There are seeds of life within Venus.

Why Chakravarti's Work and Analysis Are Important in the Context of Literature and Cultural History

Constantly affirms and doesn't validate existence of these religious people. This is not an attack on the lower-class man; rather, it is an attack on the ruthless behaviour in our society. They stand in stark contrast to the display of magnified need. It was Sudhir Chakravarti's unique zone of interest and exploration of the folk cult. He used to teach at Vivekananda College, Kolkata, around 1958-59. He had a profound interest and eagerness about Bengali folk songs. He got a job at Krishnagar Government College in 1960. At the primary level, he received a fellowship from the University Grants Commission. He chose the topic "Folk Songs of Nadia." The subject was absolutely unprecedented for him. He knew little about the folk songs and singers but nothing about the intricacies of the said discipline. He used to go to different parts of Nadia on different days. Gradually, he became accustomed to the village people. Slowly, he started to collect and endeavour to listen to their way of life. He developed the habit of staying with the villagers, having meals with them, and sometimes sharing their beds. Most of the people belonged to the poor class of society.

He perceived the village-based world through such songs to understand the profound, solitary ways of life. It was only Sudhir Chakravarti who had perceived the world through the songs. This became possible because their actual communication was done through songs. The most important aspect of his work is that he highlights the significance of literary history along with the exploration of "periphery". Although there has been some work on this topic, gaps in the analysis remain. He has been able to uncover the true meaning of the words used in their songs, delving deep into life. This work was not easy at all. As a result of this effort, the creation of the people on the edge opens a new horizon in the writing of literature. The exchange of literary elements immediately captures the connection with other forms of literature. He has tried to identify the literary lapses, and he has dedicated his entire life to this work. Thus, he has made a great contribution to literature.

Critical Thinking: A New Perspective on Folk Performance and Identity

Sudhir Chakravarti is known for his research on folk religion, Lalan Fakir, Sahebhdhani sampraday, Balahari sampraday, and cultural anthropology in West Bengal. In the course of quotidian interactions, we normally tend to think of our identity as the central core of our 'being' or the 'essential self.' This self is a product of the demands of a particular situation. We know that "identity and selfhood are constructed through a complex and continuous process of negotiation between the individual and society" (Mukherjee Tutun158). What is the initial stage of identification for a baby? The implications of male and female identities get registered and begin to consolidate through various cultural and societal codes. This then leads to the routine behaviour of everyday life, relating to the practice of the body, shaping mental attitudes, and habits of thinking. Thus, the self is a subject that necessitates the study

of the environment as well, within the space where identities are created and enacted. Therefore, a different role is played by the self, and the specificities of time and place become more important here. As Pierre Bourdieu has stated, this expresses the concept of habitus. Simply put, the self will change when history and socio-cultural circumstances change. Thus, the self is neither static nor stable; it contains platitudes and excess.

This article explores the representations of the performance of the arts and the self. The artist receives no work and is extremely poor. They do not gain recognition during their lifetime and are cast out of society because of their 'Guhya Sadhana' (secret spiritual lifestyle). To somehow negate the harsh realities of his life, he accepts the situation. In actuality, his dream world is rudely shattered as reality intrudes. Sudhir Chakravarti's success lies in giving his book depth and analytical details, especially with the use of Baul Fakir songs from the artist. My purpose here is to locate the context and the journey of the researcher. I consider it a stroke of genius. Before Sudhir Chakravarti, his teacher had done the theoretical analysis and provided deep insight into Baul philosophy but did not conduct fieldwork, limiting his reading merely to printed books, which I have mentioned earlier. The performing body of the artist encapsulates the dynamism of the man-woman continuum, where there are both possibilities for emergence and fusion. What is stressed is the construction of the performing body and identity in the performing space. This emphasizes the understanding that identity or gender is not a single option but opens up a range of possibilities and ways of thinking. We know that in time meditation, each Sufi sports a veil and meditates on his Lord as a woman would. They believe that Allah, the Almighty, is the one man, and the rest are all women. The same thing can be found in Vaishnavism, for Shakhibhava (the posture of a woman devotee) (Sarkar 58).

Chakravarti, in his book *Baul Fakir Katha* (2001), discusses how the baul artists are marginalized people and that their economic condition is miserable (Chakravarti 38). The baul songs play a deep and profound role. The main objective of Baul is "Kathar pithe katha o gaan er jababe gaan" (a question followed by an answer through the medium of songs that poses another question) (Chakravarti 48). As he states in his book *Gabir Nirjorn Pathe*, "Shruti o shmruti er parampara banchiya rake gaaner dhara loko yaithirjuo" (Chakravarti 48). Another notable aspect of the Sahebhdhani Samproday is the feeling of mind (bhaber paramparai) (Chakravarti 50). Sahebhdhani is a mixture of Allahdhani and Raidhani. The song of Kuber Gossain has a double meaning: one is the surface meaning, and the other is the deeper level of meaning. To attain God's grace, according to the belief of Sahebhdhani Samproday, we should control our libido. In the book *on folk-Cult and Rabindrasangeet* Pranesh Sarkar clearly depicted the inner meaning and interior of "folk" people. As he says "the song of Lalan Fakir asks one to bolt the room of Kama(libido) with the lock of Bhaba (realisation), and next unlock the said room with the key of Prema (love)" (Sarkar 66). Simply, one who is real love no longer gets involved in the act of sex (Sarkar 68). The work "Chakravarti" clearly explains that it is only through love that one can reunite with the Supreme Being. True love for humankind is equally valuable as love for God.

Conclusion

We have to understand the Sahebhdhani community through the key of the song. Emancipation is possible only through loving people because it is only through song that one can permanently resist and feel, ever after, in the core of the heart of man. The main purpose of the people or community is to be a man and do what men do: become a human

being, listen to a human being, and know a human being. Why Chakravarti is remarkable in this field of research is that he is the man who has done his work more carefully, with dedication and culmination throughout his life. One who is a perfect connoisseur of love does not distinguish between the self and the other. He has come out of the circle or Institutionalized framework method of research. So, he was able to think from new and different perspectives for these so-called “marginal” religious sects. Therefore, his work has opened up a new horizon. He highlighted the subject of literary exchange. On the other hand, he created a research methodology that became an educational subject for future researchers. At the same time, his work has shown a new way in the field of literary history and cultural studies. That is why his work is also a fundamental document of social history.

Reference:

1. Adhikari, Susovan, “Tar Lekhai Lukeya Thakta Golpo”. Anandabazar Pratika. 10th December, 2022
2. Bandyopadhyay, Panchkari, *Tantrashatra O Banglar Shaktisadhanar Aitijhya*. Ed. Naskar, Sanat Kumar, Kolkata: Aruna Prakashan, 2020. Print
3. Chakravarti, Sudhir, *Lokayater Antarmahal*. Kolkata:Gangchil, 2008. Print
4. *Gabhir Nirjon Pathe*. Kolkata: Kamini Prakashalay, 1962. Print
5. *Baul Fakir Katha*. Kolkata:Ananda publisher, 2001.Print
6. *Bangla Ganer Char Diganta*. Kolkata: Prativash, 2013.Print
7. *Bangla Ganer Sandhane*. Kolkata:Prativash, 2013. Print
8. *Rabindranath Anekanta*. Kolkata:Patralekha, 2012.Print
9. *Gaan Hote Ganne*. Kolkata: Patralekha, 2020. Print
10. *On Folk-cult and Rabindrasangeet*. Trans. Pradesh Sarkar. Kolkata: Sopan, 2012

Print:

1. Das, Bibekananda, *Banger Jati Gosthi*. Kolkata:Nandanik, 2021, Print
2. Mukopadhyay, Debashis, Ed. *Sudhir Chakaraborti er Boi Nana Maner Choke*
3. Kolkata: Sudhir Chakarabarti Samnbardhana Somiti, 2004, Print
4. Mukherjee, Tutun, *Angdrogyny and Female Impersonation in India nari bhab*
5. New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2016. Print
6. Saha, Sushil, “Asharaier Chhaya, Prashyer Maya”. Anandabazar Pratika. 25th December, 2020
7. Tagore, Rabindranath, *Lokosahitya*. Kolkata: Visva Bharati Granthan Bibhag, 1907. Print



Novel Insights, An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal

ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) 3049-1991 (Print)

Volume-I, Issue-IV, May 2025, Page No. 245-250

Published by Uttarsuri, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsights.vol.1.issue.04W.026



Hyde and Seek: The Psychological Depths of Evil in Stevenson's Classic Tale

Dr. R. Abeetha, Asst. Prof, Dept. of English, Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Received: 09.02.2025; Accepted: 26.02.2025; Available online: 31.05.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Abstract

The paper offers a thorough examination of the writer's work "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," highlighting its lasting significance in addressing both sides of human characteristics and human psyche's negative sides, while also connecting the novel's themes to modern-day issues. In this work, Stevenson crafted not just a chilling portrayal of consciousness but also a framework for understanding what both psychology and literature have recognized as distinctly modern and profoundly unsettling. The paper delves into the medical and psychological elements present in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." Initially, Stevenson conceived "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" as a "chilling shocker," but after burning the first draft and heeding his wife's advice, he reimagined it into the intricately dark narrative we know today. This compelling novel skilfully navigates the complexities of human character through the peculiar case of Dr. Jekyll, a benevolent scientist who transforms into his repressed evil counterpart, Mr. Hyde, at night. Anticipating the developments of modern psychology, "Jekyll and Hyde" stands as a remarkably original exploration of humanity's dual nature, alongside being a timeless tale of suspense and horror. Released in 1866, "Jekyll and Hyde" quickly became a success, granting Stevenson his initial taste of fame. While sometimes regarded as merely a mystery, the book has garnered significant literary acclaim.

Keywords: Medical and psychological elements, Psychology, Humanity's dual nature, Mystery

Introduction:

This Victorian fiction which was published in 1886 sent shock-waves through the minds of its readers. It gained popularity fast in the literary world and beyond, as people struggled with the disturbing notion that evil is not an external force like the Devil but rather exists within people. This occurred decades before Jung presented the idea of the shadow and nine years before Freud started his first psychoanalysis. Stevenson was already well-known for his children's poetry and *Treasure Island*, but he had long yearned to delve deeper into the weird "Other" that had plagued him from his early nightmares. He attributed a large portion of his literary achievement to the "Brownies," the "small people" from his inner world and dreamland, who served as the direct inspiration for *Jekyll and Hyde*. [1] His complicated love-hate relationship with his father, who supported him financially during Stevenson's lifetime

struggle with a serious respiratory disease that finally resulted in drug addiction as a coping mechanism, can also be interpreted as reflected in the novel. Stevenson saw the Other as the antithesis of the appropriate Scottish culture of the late 19th century and his father's rigid Calvinistic views.

Since he was a young boy, Robert Louis Stevenson had been fascinated with the tale of William Brodie, one of Scotland's most notorious outlaws. Although Brodie was a well-respected deacon, an accomplished cabinetmaker, and a city council member in Edinburgh, he had a covert and vile other life. Under the pretense of civic duty, he planned a series of break-ins, taking advantage of his wealthy clients' trust and using their keys to loot their residences. For years, he was shielded from suspicion by his charm and stature until his criminal activities were finally brought to light. Stevenson was intrigued by Brodie's duality, seeing in him not merely a criminal but also a symbolic transgression against the stifling moralism of Victorian England.

Having been raised in a strict Calvinist household, Stevenson was able to identify with Brodie's rebellion. Seventeen-year-old Stevenson grew more and more bitter at what he saw as hypocrisy on the part of his parents and society at large. Stevenson ridiculed these strictures and took on a bohemian existence in college. In a shocking display of rebellion, he began frequenting the same sleazy establishments Brodie had frequented, including opium dens, brothels, and taverns. Stevenson continued to identify with the outlaw figure he so highly admired by dressing in flashy, crime-suggestive attire. These pursuits not only marked a departure from his childhood, but they also prefigured the concerns that would come to define his greatest work.

But Stevenson's revolt was short-lived. A near-fatal relapse at 22 was precipitated by a lifetime battle with respiratory disease, probably tuberculosis. Thus, Stevenson was compelled to live off his father's wealth and a course of powerful narcotics. He needed drugs highly addictive combination of alcohol and opium, to survive the physical and emotional agony of his illness. Although these drugs provided him with temporary respite, they also involved him in a complicated psychological game of dependency, which had a deep impact on his portrayal of the main characters.

It is possible to interpret both characters as a confessional allegory. Similar to how an addict loses control of their addiction, Jekyll's ability to revert to his previous personality diminishes as he gives in to Hyde's cravings more and more.[2] Many academics think that Stevenson's lifetime usage of opioids contributed to his early death at the age of 44 from a brain haemorrhage, as he himself battled with such loss of control. As a result, the story presents a terrifying realization: darker instincts are not only exposed but take control when societal conventions and moral constraints are lifted.

This duality is relevant today, especially in the context of the American opioid epidemic. The similarities between Stevensons Jekyll and Hyde and the real case of the Sackler family are shaking. Sacks, owner of Purdue Pharma, introduced Oxycontin and actively sold highly addictive opioid pain. Like Jekyll, they introduced themselves as benefactors. However, the company's practices show a destructive ability like Hyde. Internal documents show sales employees encouraged doctors to reduce pressure, even if addiction and mortality rates increased. [Merri]Political lobbying and donations ensured the attention of regulators, allowing Purdue to hide damn data on drug addiction.

The consequences have been catastrophic. Since 1999, nearly one million Americans died which has devastated families, overwhelmed healthcare systems, and led to an estimated \$631 billion in economic losses over just four years. The case illustrates a modern form of "white-collar evil", as described by psychologist Mark Saban (2019) – a calculated, profit-driven manifestation of the same moral conflict Stevenson explored in his novella. Here, the Jekyll persona embodies a socially respectable, ostensibly moral corporation, while the Hyde reveals a hidden drive for unchecked gain at any cost.

Ultimately, both Stevenson's life and his fiction warn of the dangers lurking beneath the polished surfaces of respectability. Whether through Victorian Edinburgh's deacon-thief or contemporary America's corporate profiteers, the story remains the same: when ambition and desire are given free rein without ethical restraint, destruction is inevitable. The monstrous is not always a separate entity – it often begins as a reflection of ourselves.

The legend of two characters endures not only for its gothic tension but for its profound psychological and social insight. Stevenson's story captures the sinister reality that good and evil are not necessarily external but internal that the capacity for darkness lies within the most upright of individuals and institutions. For Jekyll, his descent into Hyde is not a transformation into something other but an unleashing of what has always existed. Stevenson's own life struggles with illness, addiction, and social conformity gave him firsthand knowledge of this duplicity, and his fiction has an almost prophetic power.

In our modern era, when public images are carefully managed and profit interests are masked behind moral facades, the themes of the novel are timelier than ever. The Sackler family's exploitation of the opioid crisis shows the very risks Stevenson cautioned against. Their cold calculation to value profit over well-being were not mistakes or acts of ignorance, but conscious decisions hidden behind a well-spun cloak of goodness and status. Sackler-named institutions – the Louvre, Harvard – were eager recipients of their largesse, unaware or unconcerned about the moral price. This is the dynamic of Jekyll wanting to do good while allowing his darker half to indulge in private, believing he could keep the repercussions at bay.

In addition, the opioid epidemic itself is a symptom of broader social breakdown. It shows how systems – health, political, and legal – are susceptible to being manipulated when they are inadequately controlled and where money is more valuable than regulation. As Jekyll cannot control Hyde, governments and health agencies lost control of the outbreak as addiction gained its foothold. The message of the novel is clear: ambition unchecked, disguised as respectability, can wreak havoc if unrestrained.

This is not only a cautionary tale of the duality of the self but a social critique of the ethical hypocrisy of society. The very same institutions, which are so placed so that the common good can be guaranteed, can become tools of destruction once ethics are forsaken at the altar of power or money. Stevenson's description of Jekyll and Hyde forces the reader to confront the ulterior motives in themselves and institutions. When good is a facade and evil hides in the shadows, the result is not only personal tragedy but social collapse.

Here, Stevenson's life and work take on a hauntingly contemporary relevance. His deep understanding of pain, of oppression, and of the allure of escape through addiction lent his fiction an ageless authenticity. The dualism he probed is not limited to 19th-century Edinburgh but can still be heard echoing in the boardrooms of drug companies, in the offices

of politicians, and even in people's everyday choices between self-interest and the greater good. Through *Jekyll and Hyde*—and the looming shadow of real-world horrors like the opioid epidemic—Stevenson bestows upon us a lasting lesson: evil does not come with a monstrous face. Usually, it smiles, speaks in elegance, and glides silently through power's corridors, poised to strike.

The structure of the novel sets the persons who read up as a detective, the task of which is to unravel an odd case that ends up commenting on themselves and humankind in general. It challenges us to think about how we conceal the darker half of ourselves in an effort to maintain an acceptable and morally upright image. The novel is about a proper Victorian doctor from the turn of the 19th century, a man who is a Calvinist and is experimenting with a medicine that will divide and keep separate his darker half. This will allow him to live openly while presenting a purer face to society. As Mr. Hyde grows more powerful through these successive transformations, he descends into unrestrained evil, eventually overwhelming Dr. Jekyll's conscience. When his secret truth is revealed by a friend, the "good" doctor, driven by the fear of public shame, commits suicide. The novella ends on a confessional letter written by Jekyll prior to his death, explaining why he conducted the experiment and how it got beyond his control. The discovery brings home a deep insight into the evil that lies within all of us and emphasizes the necessity of building a persona that is better aligned with the values and moral principles of the archetypal Self. In his suicide note, Jekyll expresses the belief that all humans embody a blend of good and evil, identifying Edward Hyde as "the lethal side of man." Jekyll's life lacked vitality and freedom, in stark contrast to Hyde's electrifying existence. What initially seemed like "undignified" pleasures for Mr. Hyde quickly escalated into "vicarious depravity." He transformed into "a being inherently malign and villainous," entirely self-absorbed and "drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another"; his mind became engulfed in fear and hatred, twisting him into a "child of hell." [3]

What astonished readers in the 19th century were that this book came from the renowned author of cherished children's poetry and the adventure tale, *Treasure Island*. Even more unsettling for a society deeply rooted in conservative Christianity was the disturbing idea that evil resided within us: the Devil we envisioned as "out there" was actually a reflection of our own inner struggles. This marked a significant shift in the perception of gods, evolving from powerful entities in nature and the external world to psychological forces within ourselves. Nietzsche famously declared in 1882, "God is dead. And we have killed him." The most alarming question he posed was, "What water is there for us to clean ourselves?" The evident evil in the world did not vanish simply because people ceased to believe in a deity beyond our realm, along with his earthly counterpart, the Devil.

A literary genius created both characters in a way that foreshadowed the emergence of contemporary psychoanalysis by nine years, starting with Freud's first psychoanalytic case, "The Dream of Irma's Injection", in 1895. With his gripping descriptions of self-analysis and in-depth examinations of his clients' thoughts, he astounded the world by exposing the most sinister facets of our conscious existence and our self-presentation. [4] He described the psychological processes that underlie duality, including the negative aspects of undesirable characteristics, the projection of our darker selves onto other people and subsequent hostility toward them, and the somatization—the conversion of psychological problems into physical symptoms.

The main finding is that the novel *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* goes beyond merely depicting a split personality; it actually illustrates the psychology of addiction. Dr. Jekyll is portrayed not just as a man with conflicting traits, but as someone grappling with the "ravages of addiction" and "chemical dependency." His transformation into Mr. Hyde stems from his "repeated consumption of the undisclosed psychoactive substance" to which he is addicted. This analysis delves into Robert Louis Stevenson's use of the dual themes of infection and ingestion in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. These themes are framed within the nineteenth-century focus on managing psychological and physiological health, the threat of invasive contagion, and the risks associated with urban food production.[5] By looking at Victorian sources discussing invisible chemical impurities in tainted food, along with physicians' views on the conscious monstrosity of contagion through the medical theories and practices of that era, this discussion proposes that Stevenson intertwines two distinct forms of ingestion-related terror into a complex interplay of moral and medical disgust in *Strange Case*. However, the history of *Jekyll and Hyde* criticism indicates that many readers have interpreted the story as merely a straightforward exploration of duality in the human experience.

Conclusion:

This Norton Critical Edition of R.L. Stevenson's *"Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"* offers a variety of background materials, performance adaptations, and critical essays that dive into the story's themes of morality, allegory, and self-alienation. The section labelled "Backgrounds and Contexts" includes considerable information on the tale's publication history and its relevance within Victorian culture. It features excerpts from his essay "A Chapter on Dreams," in which Stevenson describes the genesis of the plot, and twelve of his letters in 1885-1887. Ten of the contemporary reactions by authors like Henry James, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Julia Wedgwood also shed light upon the original reception of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Stevenson's 1885 story, "Markheim," which foreshadows *Jekyll and Hyde* and sheds light upon the Victorian sensation fiction market, is also featured in this book. Literary forms key to the reception of *Jekyll and Hyde* are analysed by scholars Judith Halberstam, Jenni Calder, and Karl Miller. Victorian theories of atavism, multiple personality disorder, drug addiction, and sexual perversion are discussed by four scientific articles, one of which was written by Stephen Jay Gould. Walter Houghton and Judith R. Walkowitz analyse the wider social significance of Victorian political fragmentation and moral homogeneity. Articles by C. Alex Pinkston, Jr., Charles King, and Scott Allen Nollen in the "Performance Adaptations" section discuss the ways in which *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has been staged in the past century and its continuing relevance as a filter through which to view changing social and psychological issues.

References:

1. Stevenson, Robert Louis, and Katherine Linehan, editors. *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Performance Adaptations, Criticism*. W.W. Norton, 2003
2. Merritt, Deborah, Kang Lu, and Frank Merritt. "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Revisited." *Psychological Perspectives*, vol. 65, no. 3-4, 2022, pp. 350-359

3. Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde & The Suicide Club*. Fall River Press, 2015
4. Gish, Nancy, "Jekyll and Hyde: The Psychology of Dissociation." *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, no. 2, 2007
5. Wright, Daniel L, "'The Prisonhouse of My Disposition': A Study of the Psychology of Addiction in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1994, pp. 254–267



Novel Insights, An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies
A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal
ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) 3049-1991 (Print)

Volume-I, Issue-IV, May 2025, Page No. 251-260

Published by Uttarsuri, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsights.vol.1.issue.04W.027



The Perennial Denial and Tormented Self: Delineation of Transwomen's Struggle for Space and Social Validity in Megha Majumdar's 'A Burning'

Auro Prasad Parida, *Research Scholar, Fakir Mohan University, Balasore, Odisha, India*

Received: 11.05.2025; Accepted: 18.05.2025; Available online: 31.05.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Abstract

Indian English Literature has seen various representations in the past few years and the remarkable progress it has made in reflecting the society and its way of living is to be acknowledged. Literature has always been a cornerstone in not only reflecting, sharing the point of views of different stakeholders of the society. The elites as well as the underprivileged find a space in the literature. Literature has been recognizing, establishing and acknowledging their identity, their thoughts, aspirations, thus making the society more inclusive in nature. Indian literature with its multiple languages, cultures and rich thinkers and visionaries brings a nuanced understanding of the dispossessed, disadvantaged groups, their needs, contributions to the society. The third gender is also represented by Indian literature. Third gender has been previously represented in classical Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. But concerning the contemporary times, there has been a dearth of talks and discussion on third gender and their roles in the society. Third gender, a community encounters unforeseen pains, pressures, humiliations and mistreatment. They are socially excluded and struggle for a space to speak up as a stakeholder of the society. They are ignored, misunderstood and criminalized and labelled as useless to the society. Their marginalization knows no limits as most of the times they are not considered as human beings. They struggle for a space to stand and raise their voice as they do not conform to the binary genders. The society fails to grant them positions of respect and give them acceptance. In the heteronormative world they are ignored and marginalized which makes their life meaningless. There has been many autobiographies, memoirs and non-fiction writings but Megha Majumdar's novel 'A Burning' is perhaps the first Indian fiction to have a transgender woman as a main character and she gives her a central place in this narrative. Here, transwomen are portrayed more empathetically and their struggle for space, dreams and success makes this literary piece a unique one. Far from the stereotypical description, here Majumdar brings a freshness to this character with his unique ways of fighting and succeeding. The transwoman Lovely, who wants to become a film actress in Bollywood makes a statement that she is not worthless, rather by her talent she can reach anywhere. The main objective of the paper is to demonstrate the transwoman's struggle for basic human rights, social standing and the impact of social marginalization on their mental condition and personhood.

Keywords: Transgender, India English Literature, Third Gender Narratives, Marginalization

Introduction:

“Transgender is an umbrella term referring to a range of gender identities and expressions different to those assigned at birth. This can include those who conform to the notion of a gender binary and wish to transition from one gender to another, or those who reject this idea (e.g., genderqueer, nonbinary, etc.). Some transgender people can experience discomfort or distress relating to the discrepancy between their gender identity and that which they were assigned at birth this is referred to as gender dysphoria.” (Marshall et al., 2016)

“Because “transgender” is a word that has come into widespread use only in the past couple of decades, its meanings are still under construction. I use it in this book to refer to people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth; people who cross over (trans) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender.” (Stryker 5)

“Why the current obsession with all transgender things, when transgender phenomena seem to be a pretty persistent part of human cultures across time and around the world? Although the mass media have paid nonstop attention to transgender issues since at least the 1950s, the past several years certainly have witnessed a steady increase in transgender visibility, and the trend has been toward increasingly positive representation.” (Stryker 24)

“Globalization brings us all into increasingly frequent and extensive contact with people from cultures different from our own—including people who have different experiences of gender and sexuality.” (Stryker 25)

The term ‘transgender’ denotes a range of gender experiences, subjectivities and presentations that fall across, between or beyond stable categories of ‘man’ and ‘woman.’ ‘Transgender’ includes gender identities that have, more traditionally, been described as “Transsexual and a diversity of genders that call into question an assumed relationship between gender identity and presentation and the ‘sexed’ body.” (Hines 1)

“Similarly, Sandra Anderson writes: “many [LGBT individuals] have internalized hostile treatment [...] resulting in guilt, shame, low self-esteem, depression and substance abuse.” (Anderson, 2009)

Eli Clare offers an interesting account of how shame may be the root of many predicaments associated with gender variance, and makes an intriguing comparison between the stigma associated with disability and the stigma associated with gender variance. (Clare, 2013)

A Historical and Literary overview of Transgenders in India

Transgender writings have been existing since times immemorial. But the perspective changes according to the time and space. India is not far behind in this matter. Trans literature has been enriched by a number of writers of this century and their efforts to give the third gender a voice is to be praised and they create beautiful literature with such characters that will remain immortal. While the mainstream literature has been far away to deal with this subject matter, few writers are coming forward to talk on this issue while others dismissed it as insignificant, some new writers find it more refreshing and relevant in these days. Transgender history has been dating back to the ancient texts such as Rigveda, classic epics such as The Ramayana and The Mahabharata. These writings had featured characters beyond the binary gender of men and women. The concept of ‘Napumsaka’ was there. Their strong presence has been felt in Hindu mythologies and Puranas.

“The literature named Kama Shastra the ancient Hindu text in which they have been referred as ‘tritiyapakriti’ or third gender has been an integral part of Vedic and puranic literatures, it categorizes men who desire other men as a ‘third nature.’” (A Brief History of Transgenders in India)

According to Devdutt Pattanaik “Contrary to the western world, queerness and gender diversity are very natural in Hindu world.

“... in the Hindu World, culture (Sanskriti, in Sanskrit) remains an artificial imposition on nature (prakriti), enabling humans to discover their humanity by offering a chance to make room for, or reject, diversity.” (Pattanaik 9)

“Transgenders of India who have been marginalized and decentered for decades have taken to writing to let their unheard voices echo in the ears of society. Their writings are impregnated with their ordeals to be recognized as mere human beings let alone to be treated equal.” (Dasari et al.)

“Eunuchs in India were often accorded respect in the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal courts, holding positions of eminence especially under the Khiljis of Delhi in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and under the Mughals from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.” (Dasari et al.)

“Although many eunuchs were initially brought as slaves into the houses of Muslim nobility in principalities such as Awadh and Hyderabad, they were accorded respect and trusted with sensitive positions, including guarding the harim, or inner/female spaces within the palace.” (Reddy 8)

“Transgenders were well treated and adorned with respectful positions during Mughal rule.” (Dasari et al.)

“India has more than 200 years of colonial past. Colonialization has left paralyzing effects on the psyche of Indians. The advent of colonization made the transgenders of India ‘others.’ ... In addition to that the mere sight of transgenders and the importance they were given in Mughal courts was so infuriating for the British.” (Dasari et al)

“Accounts of early European travelers showed that they were repulsed by the sight of Hijras and could not comprehend why they were given so much respect in the royal courts and other institutions. In the second half of the 19th century, the British colonial administration vigorously sought to criminalize the hijra community and to deny them the civil rights. Hijras were considered to be separate caste or tribe in different parts of India by the colonial administration.” (Michelraj 18)

“Later British criminalized hijras of India and introduced the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. According to the act the hijras are the section of people who don sarees and dance on streets and are involved in kidnapping and castrating children. This wrong notion about hijras was so strongly etched on the minds of Indians that even after the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952; the prejudicial attitudes prevail against hijras in India till date. They are seen as criminals and their presence is scared by many.” (Dasari et al)

However, the Sahitya Akademi’s journal, Indian Literature, edited by Sukrita Paul Kumar dedicated the March-April 2024 issue entirely to trans writing. In her editorial note, Kumar states that,

“The current issue of Indian Literature has endeavored to create a space for trans writing by trans writers, from different Indian languages, that call for a

sincere reckoning with a world usually dismissed by most people as inconsequential.” (Farhan)

“Much of the work deals with the experience of being stigmatized with varied personal divulgements and snippets of conversations with trans writers reflecting an undertow of despair. Dissecting their trauma and sense of loss while also offering some hope, the issue shows that trans people first experience disappointment and alienation within their own homes. With time, as their freedom is curtailed, they confront increasing disrespect.” (Farhan)

Manipuri writer Santa Khurai says in her author's note,

“My father constantly expressed his displeasure at my feminine nature, while my mother felt humiliated in front of neighbors, relatives and friends. Not many interested in listening to my problems and frustrations. This suppressed pain and anger led to a feeling of relief and bliss the minute I started relieving those moments and writing this memoir.” (Panda)

Manobi Bandyopadhyay says in her memoir,

“I write with the belief that it would help society understand people like me better. We are slightly different outwardly, but we are humans just as you are and have the same needs physical and emotional- just as you have.” (Panda)

Editor Sukrita writes,

“The gender binary and the system of normative sexual relations that is built upon it are so deeply embedded in the psychology that the implementation of new laws that recognize the rights of LGBTQI people may not be possible. So, they continue to be subjected to mockery and an unending saga of dehumanization by an insensitive society surrounding them.” (Panda)

“Hijras were an integral part of the courtly traditions of Muslim kings. But when they were overthrown by the British, the hijras landed on the street. Today, hijras beg in shops and other public places, and do sex work, not out of choice, but out of necessity. How, otherwise, can we keep body and soul together.” (Tripathi 178)

“For many Indians – both upper- and middle-class – hijras exist (and to some extents have always existed) at the periphery of their imaginaries, making themselves visible only on certain circumscribed ritual occasions.” (Reddy 3)

Thus, the process of marginalizing the transgenders which was initiated by European imperial aggression is still continued in India till date. It can be said that transgenders of India are appallingly affected and destroyed by ‘cultural denigration’ meaning

“The conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model.” (Ashcroft 9)

“Transgender people are marginal group in the society. They suffer from the lack of continuity in their identity, lack of self-esteem, overemphasized and unwanted distinctiveness and injustice at every turn.” (PP and Nishanthi)

As nearly all people are categorized as male or female, those who express characteristics ordinarily attributed to the other gender are stigmatized and seen often as social deviants. Inconsistency in the performance between biological sex and gender expression is usually

not tolerated by others (Gagne & Tewksbury, 1996). Because these individuals violate conformist gender expectations, they become targeted for discrimination and oppression.

"Therefore, they turn out to be members of a marginalized and vulnerable population that experiences more psychosocial and health problems than other social groups." (Lombardi, 2001)

Marginalization and Tormented Self of Indian Transgenders: Analysis of 'A Burning'

"To say that the Indian constitution claims to provide equal opportunity and rights to every citizen. But in the context of Transgender, this does not seem to be reality. It is a matter of the recent past decades that if a Transgender baby was born in a family, then his family members could not keep him/her in their house even if they wanted too so. After all, what is the fault of the baby for being born Transgender? But due to social unacceptability, the Transgender baby had to abandon his parents' house. Since they were not provided with the means of education and employment, they were forced to live their lives by doing the job of a sex worker, begging, dancing etc." (Suman)

"The transgender community in India has historically been marginalized and discriminated against, socially, economically and politically. Trans individuals are viewed by many as abnormal or deviant, and face physical and emotional violence and abuse, including sexual assault. Many incidents go unreported due to fear of retribution or lack of legal recognition." (Mugloo and Rafiq)

"In particular, the trans community struggles to access affordable and quality healthcare. When it comes to gender-affirmation surgery, "the process is punishing and burdensome," said Abhina, and expensive, costing from 300,000 to 800,000 rupees (about £3,000 to £8,000), a prohibitive sum for many trans individuals." (Mugloo and Rafiq)

"Since the transgender communities lack education and employment opportunities they are looked upon as a lower class by society resulting in exclusion. Their self-esteem and self-confidence hit really hard because of this exclusion and they end up taking undesirable jobs." (Unacademy)

In her debut novel Megha Majumdar has tried to capture the most realistic image of modern India. Here we find the entanglement of three major characters, one is Jivan a Muslim girl, Lovely, the transwoman and the unnamed PT sir. Here our focus is on Lovely, the transwoman also called a hijra. She plays a major and it would not be inconsiderate to mark her as one of the central characters of the story. With her the writer touches one of the rarely talked topics of the life of a transgender, their perceptions, thoughts and their vision of life. Lovely, her name and she narrate her life in the story, her struggle since childhood and she asks for a social space to breathe peacefully. But that is also not granted to her in the beginning of the novel. But towards the end she becomes a successful transwoman fetching a film of Sonali Khan a big director of Bollywood. The positive and empathetic portrayal of her character is one of the strongest points of the novel. In a handful writings of the transgender people, Majumdar's 'A Burning' is a new thing. The novel puts questions about how power and circumstance can influence individual lives and their choices and to what extent individuals can be free in real sense when facing systemic oppression and suppression and choking of their voices.

Human being is a social animal as Aristotle says. If anybody living outside the society then he is either God or beast. A human being always lives in a society and his identity,

personality is shaped by a society in which he lives. A man or a woman or a transgender always needs a society to live in. But due to the social and cultural construct of gender a transgender is often excluded from the society and looked upon as a stranger or alien. This society is made of individuals. And transgenders are also a stakeholder of the society. In the hegemony of gender binary, they are ignored and remain invisible to the society. Human society needs to be more inclusive for which there shall not be any kind of discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, sex, gender or religion. The exploration and expression plights, psychological damage has been trending in the literary landscapes of the world. They protest being marginalized from the society. They show resistance and they want to be included in the society as a full-fledged member.

She faces double marginalization one due to her non conformity to the gender binary, second her financial condition and poverty. She is thrown away by her family as her gender identity is something different, she does not get a respectable life and dignified life. She struggles for it. She is socially and politically disenfranchised from the society. Systematic oppression has just made it normal for such people to tolerate and bear everything they have undergone. She faces social marginalization and ostracism. Lovely's character is a striking depiction of the challenges faced by transgender people in India, who are often seen as "third gender" and their problems are considered as peripheral as they are not in the center and face discrimination and social ostracism. Her dreams of becoming a successful movie star, despite the odds, hardships highlight her resilience and stout determination to overcome adversity and establish an identity in the billions. Showcasing their complexity, humanity she gives voice to the Hijra character. Amplifies her voice by making her a chief character, she addresses the socio-political issues of the contemporary times surrounding the non-binary, non-conforming people. Representation of the internal struggles, monologues, the search for identity, self-acceptance, their experiences in the society, the society fails to recognize their unique identities rejecting as otherness. They should be considered as human beings, they have unique talents, what they need is opportunity to showcase, exhibit their talent they need support, they need guidance they have highlighted their intelligence, resilience emotional stability and depth better understanding quality.

'*A Burning*' by Majumdar captures the marginalized by the Indian society or by a dominant class. Here three characters have been entangled. But the primary objective of the paper is to show what it means to be a transgender in Indian society. How they fare in the society. What are the challenges they face to assert themselves. They want to establish their identity but the society is not accepting them. They are undergoing pressures from the dominant classes and they are subject to humiliation, emotional breakdown and often with suicidal tendencies. After all they are human beings. Lovely, tells her story thus expressing her dislocation and painful life.

The hijra, Lovely does not get a place in the society. Wherever she goes she gets insulted, hate and she has been looked upon as lifeless animal. People never consider her as a human being. She is ignored, humiliated only because of her gender variance. The local guava seller, who is a poor man insults her. When she asks him time, he at first did not respond at all thus hurting the sentiments of Lovely.

"Eight thirty he is grumbling, because he is not wishing to share with me the fruits of his wrist watch." (Majumdar 7)

Her life revolves around humiliation and social hatred. When she enters into the lady's compartment of the train, there ladies also do not treat her well. A lady says-

"This hijra could not find a different compartment to hassle?" (Majumdar 7)

She has been living a very difficult life as all the ways are blocked for her. Her life as a hijra is not simple at all as there are lack of opportunities in employment, education and many more. She is not respected rather endured by all.

"Nothing is simple like me, not even one hour on train." (Majumdar 7)

As she is a hijra, she does not belong to anywhere. Even her classmates make fun of her gender thus pushing her to the margin.

"Uff! Don't make me say it, Lovely. I can't do this marriage scene with a half man." (Majumdar 10)

Who wants to live a life full of insults. But there is no other way left for Lovely and she has to get habituated with this way of living.

"Oh! I am used to this, on the road, on the train, at the shops (Majumdar 10)."

When she comes to meet Mr. Debnath, her acting teacher she is not allowed to enter to his house and he gives the excuse that the house is recently painted and there is nothing to sit on/ But lovely knows the truth and this bitter truth makes her life worse/

"The truth was that Mrs. Debnath was not wanting a hijra in the house." (Majumdar 12)

The transgender people are considered to be sorceress who traps man and they are often mistaken as criminals. Lovely is in love with Azad. Azad is also committed to her. But his brother comes, pleads and threatens Lovely to get away with him, because the society cannot accept it.

"Whatever curse you have given him, let him go, witch!..... You have trapped him"

" Now you have to free him! Let him get married like a normal person." (Majumdar 18)

As Lovely is trapped in a different body she feels very miserable and helpless. She often annihilated herself and torments her soul. She cannot love herself as she thinks she is having certain defects. This type of self-awareness makes her life more painful.

"..... I am thinking, because he is not having no defects unlike myself." (Majumdar 61)

Her feeling of marginalization is so heavy when she sees a woman washing her hands after getting the touch of the her. She feels so upset and cannot express to others.

"She is washing her hands; she is washing her hands of us." (Majumdar 61)

She feels ostracized from the society as the sweet shop owner is not ready to serve her.

"He is unhappy that he is having to serve me I know." (Majumdar 62)

The society makes their life miserable and they seek little space to share their pain and express their agony.

"This is how my life is going forward some insult in my face, some sweet in my mouth." (Majumdar 63)

Her position in the society is so invalid that she is not getting help from either of the gender.

"In life many things are happening for no reason at all, you might be begging on the train and getting acid thrown on your face. You might be hiding in the

women's compartment for safety and getting kicked by the ladies."
(Majumdar 64)

She is facing such a cruel life. Nobody supports her, not even her family members. Everyone scares her away. She is not getting recognition for her uniqueness rather all reject her by her otherness. She feels marginalized when she grows up. She tells her early childhood story. As she grows up and gets conscious with her sexuality she feels estranged from her body. As a child she gets very good treatment from her parents as they take her to the cinema with her cousins. But things take a drastic turn as she grows up; she faces the gender trouble.

"In the outside world, I was wearing boy's shorts and a boy's haircut and playing cricket. But, secretly at home. I was trying lipstick. I was wearing my mother's saris once, twice, thrice. The fourth time my uncles were persuading my father to kick me out of the house." (Majumdar 124)

The impact of exclusion is so heavy and as rightly put by a transgender activist.

"For many years, I tortured myself. I was afraid of what it would do to my life to finally come out and embrace who I really was. The impact on my mental health was profound. I found ways to bury or numb my innate drives and desires that were destructive. I struggled for years with heroin addiction and attempted suicide several times. Shame and self-loathing were my constant companions. Society and family told me back then that trans and gay people were freaks or abnormal, so I internalized that transphobia."
(Cadger)

Hijras do not have equal opportunities thus earn their livelihood by begging and through sex works. She torments herself being in a helpless situation where she earns money by begging and by giving blessings. After thrown out of the house, finding no other way she takes shelter in a hijra house and learns dancing, singing, luring and charming strangers only to fill her stomach. She never gets educational opportunities like boys and girls get. Her education stopped once the NGO's funding is over. In Azad's wedding she feels tortured by the villagers as they push and pull among themselves to take photos with her and she feels embarrassed. There is no escape from this life and she thinks she can never earn respect through this cheap job. She is psychologically broken due to her position in the society.

Hijras are continuously pushed to the margins even in getting the medical facilities. They never get good medical facilities due to their position in the society. In this novel *Lovely*, the hijra expresses her pain and grief as her community fails to receive proper medical facilities. Her fear has been aggravated as she sees her best friend Ragini gets operated without anesthesia by a local dentist. Her operation is so carelessly done that she dies and nobody has the power to question the wrong. Hijras fear to go to the real doctors as they may charge higher fees which they cannot afford. It is due to fear of mistreatment *Lovely* never gets operated.

Only because she is a hijra, that people around her makes fun of her and think she is not worthy of a human being, or her dreams. She is cheated by the production houses. Nobody is prepared to see a human being made of flesh, blood, emotions beyond a hijra. The production houses even offer her roles of hijra only as if she cannot justify other roles. Mr. Jhunjhunwala a. a film producer says that she would be fit for the hijra part. The roles offered to her is very undermining like a hijra is thrown away by the society, or chased by a broom.

But Lovely wants to be a heroin only. The society makes her a prey to humiliation, character assassination and too much mental agony. The society stands as the barrier in her path to happiness and fortune. She is ready to marry Azad but the society cannot accept it so she has to endure the heartbreak.

Conclusion: Now it is high time to bring transgender people into the fold of society, they should be provided with all kinds of opportunities to excel in life. More and more transgender writings should be mainstreamed. Megha Majumdar's debut novel brings this issue to limelight. Transgender people should go ahead. This novel brilliantly displays both the physical difficulties as well as mental pressures of the transgender. The society should be more inclusive in nature and help each stakeholder to go ahead with all courage, conviction. Nobody sees the internal pain of others. And Hijras as a community live in oblivion for the society. Their welfare, their contribution to the society should be more and more acknowledged. They should be validated more and more only for the betterment of the society and hijra lives. The society is not bigger than the constitution and the hijras should be more empowered by the virtue of it. Lovely, her friend Ragini and other hijras of the hijra house have different stories but all stories tell the humiliation, mental turmoil, negligence of the family members and marginalization of the society as well as the government.

References:

1. "A Brief History of Transgenders in India." Indian institute of Legal Studies Vol 12, Issue 02, 2021. <https://www.iilsindia.com/blogs/brief-history-transgenders-india/>
2. Cadger, Mikayla. After years of rejection and self-loathing, a devastating attack galvanized me into becoming a trans activist for CBC First Person · Posted: Jul 10, 2021 10:00 AM EDT | Last Updated: April 1, 2023
3. Catherine Butler, Richard Joiner, Richard Bradley, Mark Bowles, Aaron Bowes, Claire Russell, Veronica Roberts. "Self-harm prevalence and ideation in a community sample of cis, trans and other youth" International journal of transgenderism. May 16, 2019 ;20(4):447–458. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2019.1614130>
4. Farhan, Mohammad. "Review: Indian Literature' s issue on Trans Writing" 5 Jun,2025. Hindustan Times.
5. Hines, Sally and Sanger, Tam. Transgender Identities: Towards a Social Analysis of Gender Diversity. Routledge.2010
6. Michelraj, M. "Historical Evolution of Transgender Community in India." Asian Review of Social Sciences. Vol. 4, No. 1, 2015, pp. 17-19
7. Mohammed Atheequ PP and Rajathurai Nishanthi. "Marginalization of transgender community: A sociological analysis. International Journal of Applied Research 2016; 2(9): 639-641
8. Mugloo, Saqib and Rafiq, Shefali. 'They thought I was a curse': The struggles of India's trans community'. OpenDemocracy Apr 7. 2023, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/author/saqib-mugloo/>
9. Panda, Durga Prasad. "'Indian Literature' Breaks New Ground with Transgender and Non-binary Voices." Culture & Society. Outlook India. Aug 3.2024 <https://www.outlookindia.com/culture-society/indian-literature-breaks-new-ground-with-transgender-and-non-binary-voices>

10. Pattanaik, Devdutt., Shikhandi and Other Queer Tales, They Don't Tell You. Penguin Books, 2014
11. Reddy, Gayathri., With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India. The University of Chicago Press, 2005
12. Simona, Giordano Giordano. Understanding the emotion of shame in transgender individuals- some insight from Kafka. *Life Sciences, Society and Policy* (2018) 14:23 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40504-018-0085-y>
13. Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History*. Seal Press. 2008
14. Suman, Ajay Amitabh. Transphobia: Acceptance of Third Gender in Indian Society." *Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/ajayamitabhsumanspeaks/transphobia-acceptance-of-third-gender-in-indian-society-30696/>
15. "Transgenders in India." Unacademy. [https://unacademy.com/content/upsc/studymaterial/indiansociety/transgenders/#:~:text=Transgenders%20have%20a%20gender%20identification,India%20\(UOI\)%20and%20Ors.](https://unacademy.com/content/upsc/studymaterial/indiansociety/transgenders/#:~:text=Transgenders%20have%20a%20gender%20identification,India%20(UOI)%20and%20Ors.)
16. Tripathi, Laxmi. *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi*. Translated by R. Raja Rao and P.G. Joshi, Oxford University Press, 2015
17. Twinkle Dasari, Dr. Anitha Pulagara, Mr. Venkateswarlu Lingala. Transgender Literature of India – An Avant-Garde Arrow in The Quiver of Postcolonial Literature *International Journal of Aquatic Science* ISSN: 2008-8019 https://www.journal-aquaticscience.com/article_132056.html



Novel Insights, An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies
A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal
ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) 3049-1991 (Print)

Volume-I, Issue-IV, May 2025, Page No. 261-266

Published by Uttarsuri, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsights.vol.1.issue.04W.028



A Study on the Rigvedic Society

Rima Barman, Independent Researcher, West Guwahati College of Education, Guwahati, Assam, India

Received: 12.05.2025; Accepted: 21.05.2025; Available online: 31.05.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Abstract

There is a significant need to understand our ancient literature, such as the Vedas, to cultivate a positive attitude toward our surroundings. The *Rigveda* is not only the oldest *Veda* among the four Vedas but also serves as a vital source of ancient knowledge and wisdom. The mantras of the *Rigveda* may not appear as refined or lyrical as the verses of Kalidasa, yet when we read them with the intent to discover our truth, traditions, and ancestral heritage, they begin to resonate with us. The *Rigveda* offers a vivid portrayal of ancient Indian society. Its hymns shed light on the social structure of the Rigvedic era and provide deep insight into the social, economic, and religious life of that time. This research paper explores various aspects of the Rigvedic period, including its holistic education system, the cordial teacher-student relationship, economic conditions, dignified marriage customs, and the equal status of women in society. Women actively took part in religious ceremonies and rituals alongside their husbands. People of that era worshipped deities who primarily represented natural forces. Through a careful analysis of the *Rigveda*, this paper presents detailed information about Rigvedic society. In today's fast-paced world, focusing on ancient texts has become increasingly difficult due to constant distractions. However, this research paper aims to offer at least a basic understanding of the Rigvedic age to the readers and also reflects how the morals and ethics conserved in the *Rigveda* stay appropriate even today.

Keywords: Rigveda, Society, Mantra, Family, Varna, Hymns, Vedic Period, Education, Marriage, Ancestors, Religion

Introduction:

The word *Veda* originates from the Sanskrit root *vid*, which means "to know," and therefore, *Veda* essentially means "knowledge." It is regarded as the most sacred and ancient text in Hindu literature. Many scholars have defined the *Veda* in various ways. For example, in *Rigveda Bhasya Bhumiya*, Swami Dayananda Saraswati explained that the term *Veda* can be derived from four different meanings of *vid*: to know, to exist, to discriminate, and to obtain or acquire.

In Aitareya Brahmana, there is a verse-

*"Pratyakṣenānumityā vā yastupāyo na vidyate /
Enam vidanti vedena tasmād vedasya vedatā //"*

(*Rigved ki Shankhyān Shakha*, Prof. Amal Dhari Singh, Page no. 2)

This means that knowledge which cannot be acquired through direct perception or inference can be attained only through the *Veda*. Similarly, Manu declared, "*Vedokhilo dharmamūlam*," implying that *dharmā* (righteous duty) has its roots in the Vedas.

The Vedas are referred to by several names, including *Śruti*, *Trayi-vidyā*, and *Āgama*. Traditionally, there are four Vedas: the *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda*, and *Atharvaveda*. Among them, the oldest *Veda* is *Rigveda*. The *Rigveda*, *Samaveda*, and *Yajurveda* together are collectively known as the '*Trayi*' or '*Veda Trayi*', meaning the threefold *Veda*. The *Atharvaveda*, sometimes called *Atharvāṅgiras* in its oldest form, was added later.

Among these, the *Rigveda* holds a prominent place as the earliest and most revered text, offering insights into early Vedic civilization. The hymns of the *Rigveda*, along with those in the other three Vedas, were not merely religious chants—they also reflected the social, cultural, and economic aspects of that era. The *Rigveda* serves as a mirror to ancient Indian society, revealing details about family structures, economic practices, occupations, rituals, education, marriage customs, and the status of women. It provides valuable glimpses into how our ancestors lived, thought, worshipped, and organized their communities. For students and scholars alike, studying the *Rigveda* is essential for developing a clear and informed understanding of India's ancient civilization.

Rigvedic Literature:

The *Rigveda* is known as the earliest *Veda* and it is called as '*Apaurusheya*', meaning, the Vedas are not composed by human beings. Though the western scholars do not believe this, yet they accept that this is the earliest book in ancient India. Macdonell said about it in his book '*A Vedic Reader for Students*' that-

"The *Rigveda* is undoubtedly the oldest literary Monument of the Indo-European Language."

Jaimini defined "*Rik*" as - '*Tesam rik arthavasena padabyavastha*', meaning, '*Rik*' are the mantras of the Vedas that have *chhanda* (meters) and lines according to their meaning.

The *Rigveda* is traditionally classified into two structural systems. The first system organizes it into *Maṇḍala*, *Anuvāka*, *Sūkta*, and *Ṛk*; the second system arranges it into *Aṣṭaka*, *Adhyāya*, *Varga*, and *Mantra*. The *Rigveda* is composed of 10 *Maṇḍalas*, 85 *Anuvākas*, 1,028 *Sūktas*, 8 *Aṣṭakas*, 68 *Adhyāyas*, 2,006 *Vargas*, and a total of 10,552 Mantras. Over the centuries, many recensions have been lost. According to the *Charaṇavyuha* attributed to Śaunaka, five primary recensions were once known: *Śākala*, *Bāṣkala*, *Aśvalāyana*, *Śāṅkhāyana*, and *Maṇḍūkya*. According to the *Śākala* recension, the *Rigveda Samhitā* contains 1,017 *Sūktas*, while the *Bāṣkala* recension includes 1,028, with 11 additional hymns known as the *Bālakhilya Sūktas*. Today, only the *Śākala* recension has survived in complete form.

Amid the four Vedas, the *Rigveda* deserves to be called as the most important of the Vedas, as it is the most extensive collection of Vedic hymns. Each of the four Vedas is further divided into four parts: the *Samhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka*, and *Upaniṣad*. *Samhitā* means a collection of the hymns. Each *Veda* except *Yajurveda* has one *Samhitā*, while *Yajurveda* has two, they are *Shukla* and *Krishna*. Similarly, each *Veda* possesses its own *Brahmans*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*. *Rigveda* has two *Brahmanas*—*Aitareya Brahmana* and *Kaushitaki Brahmana*; Two *Aranyakas*—*Aitareya Aranyaka* and *Kaushitaki Aranyaka*; and Two *Upanishads*—*Aitareyopanishad* and *Kaushitaki Upanishad*.

The *Rigveda* consists of many types of hymns, such as –Devastuti, Samvada Suktas, Apri Hymns, The Wedding Hymns, Didactic Hymns etc. In the *Rigveda*, we came across various mantras praising the Gods, like Agni, Indra, Savitri, Soma etc; these mantras are called as Devastuti. The *Rigveda* begins with Agni hymns-

*“Agnimille purohitam yajnasya devamritvijam /
Hotaram ratnadhatamam //”*

*(The New Vedic selection, Part-1,
Telang Braj & Bihari Chaubey, Page no-2)*

The *Rigveda* has twenty dialogue hymns (*Samvada Sukta*) and among these hymns, *Pururava* and *Urvasi* hymn is famous. The *Rigveda* has also some philosophical Hymns and some of these hymns are- Vac hymn, Purusa hymn, Hiranyagarbha hymn, Nasadiya hymn, Bhava hymn etc.

Society Reflected in The Rigveda:

The society which is reflected in the *Rigveda*, presents a picture of early Vedic society, which was very rich from all the aspects. Although concrete evidence about the people of the Vedic period is limited, the mention of the word ‘Ganga’ in the final *Maṇḍala* of the *Rigveda* suggests that settlements may have existed along the banks of the Ganga River. References to settlements such as “villages” and “cities” also appear in the *Rigveda*. Notably, the term *Grāma* (village) is found in the first *Maṇḍala* of the text.

*“Ima rudraya tavase kapardine ksayadviraya prabharamahe matih /
Yatha samasaddvipade chatuspade viswanm pustam
grame asminnanaturam //”*
(Rigveda, Mandal-1, Sukta-114, Mantra-1)

In the Rigvedic period, cattle rearing was the main occupation of the Aryas. But gradually it shifted to agriculture, as they lived near the Ganga River, so it could be easy to grow crops and harvest them. Other than this, they also engaged in chariot making, road construction work, gold making, rope making, iron making, weapon making etc. for their living. People used meat as their food in that period and they also offered meat in some sacrifices.

During the Rigvedic period, families were known as ‘kula’. The family structure was primarily patriarchal, where the head of the family was the eldest member of the family. He made every decision of the family. He also controlled over the family properties. From the various stories, we came across that the father had all the power over his children. And one very interesting thing is that, caste division in that period was based on their professions, not on their birth. Actually, *Brahamans* divided the people according to their professions. But in later period, caste system increased in society and people were divided on the basis of their birth. This caste system (*varnas*) is classified into four sections; they were- *Brahmanas*, *Ksatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shudras*. In *Purusha sukta* of the *Rigveda*, the name of these *Varnas* were mentioned in this way-

*“Brahmano asya mukhamasid bahu rajanya kritah /
Uru tadasya yadvaishya padmyam sudro ajayatah //”*
*(New Vedic Selection, part 1,
Telang Braj & Bihari Chaubey, Page no- 231)*

Role of women:

During the Rigvedic era, women held an important place in society. Except the *Sudras*, other three *Varnas* got the chances to read the Vedas and educate themselves. Therefore, these women became highly educated and knowledgeable. During the Rigvedic period, women obtained equal opportunities like men to go to the public occasions, festivals, and they even actively participated in such occasions. One particularly interesting point is, women in that period of time were also permitted to perform sacrifices along with their husband. 'Patyurnah yajnasamyoge' in this *sutra*, Panini says that a sacrifice cannot be performed without his wife. So, from this evidence, we can assume the importance of women during that period. The term '*dampati*' referred collectively to both husband and wife, reflecting their equal roles and shared responsibilities in managing household affairs.

During that time, women from the three upper *varnas* were also granted the '*lagun*' and participated in Vedic rituals, chanting the *GayatriMantra* alongside men. These learned women were known as *Vidusis*. Vedic literature mentions several such knowledgeable women. Among them, Gargi stands out as a prominent scholar of that era. Renowned for her intellect and learning, she was often regarded as a leading female figure in the spiritual and philosophical discourse of her time. In the *Rigveda*, numerous names of women scholars were mentioned who composed many verses of the *Rigveda*, such as, Apala, Romasha, Lopamudra, Ghosa, Biswabara, Kamayani etc. These women were called '*Brahmabadini*' in '*Brihat-Devata*' and '*Rishikas*' in the '*Rigveda*'. Women in that period, mainly choose 'Teacher' as their profession and other than these, they engaged in needle work, flower arrangement, dancing, sewing etc. We also found many heroic women who went to war and fought against the enemy by arming themselves In the *Rigveda*. So based on these evidences, it can be assumed that women in that era were at the forefront of everything.

If we look at the marriage customs in that period, we can say that there was understanding and harmonious relationship between the married women and their in-laws. There were various *mantras* in the *Rigveda*, where we see the respect towards the newlywed bride

"Samrajni swasure bhava samrajni swasram bhava /
Nanandari samrajni bhava samrajni adhidevesu //"
(*Rigveda*, Mandal-10, Sukta-85, Mantra-46)

Women as also control over their '*parinayya*' which referred to the gifts they received at the time of marriage. However, they did not have ownership rights over the family property, as it was considered to belong to their husbands. It has been proved from the *Brahmana* and the *Samhita* books that polygamy was accepted in that time, but polyandry was not. But the most remarkable thing is that, they accepted widow remarriage. They strictly prohibited 'child marriage' and '*sati pratha*' in that period.

Education system:

In the era of *Rigveda*, education aimed at overall development of an individual. Besides teaching of the Vedas or any other texts, they also provided practical training to the students to build their skills. The pupils were also asked to go begging. First, they have to go to the wife of their guru and then to their mother. Through this practice, they teach students to be humble. It is described in detail in the '*Satapatha Brahmana*'. It is apparent that, in the period of Rigvedic civilization, education was compulsory for all the three upper *Varnas*, except *Sudras*. After the *Upanayana* ceremony, students had to go to the *Gurukulas* for learning,

where they learn everything. *Upanayana* was considered as their second birth; hence they were called as '*Dwija*' meaning, two times birth. The holy verses of the Vedas were passed down orally from one person to another. This process was mainly Hereditary. The study of the Vedas is called '*Swadhyaya*'. The relationship between the teacher and the disciple was very pure. The disciple regarded the teacher as his father and the teacher loved and advised the disciple like his son. Before starting the class, the teacher always uttered a verse,

“Om saha navavatu saha nou bhunaktu saha virjyam karavahai /
Tesusvi navadhitamastu ma vidvisavahai //”
(Kathopanishad, Dr. Ramranga Sharma &
Dr. Malati Sharma, Chapter-1, Verse-1, Page no- 2)

After completing their education, the disciples returned to their homes – a ceremony known as *Samāvartana*. After that, the students got married and started their household life. In the Vedic literature, several disciples' names were found, namely, Aruni, Nachiketa, Narada, Saunaka, Indra, Satyakama etc.

It has been observed that, during the Rigvedic age, there were no temples. They mainly worshipped the natural forces like *Agni*, *Indra*, *Vayu* and *Soma*, through fire offerings. So, from the above discussion, there is no doubt that, the Rigvedic society is rich from various aspects.

Conclusion:

It has been established that Rigvedic society was highly dynamic, with flourishing social norms and values. It has been established that the Aryans represented one of the most advanced civilizations of their time, especially in terms of knowledge, strength, and cultural development. In the introductory section, the meaning and significance of the Vedas were discussed, particularly why the *Rigveda* holds a prominent place among the four Vedas. During that era, professions were not determined by birth, as the caste system was still flexible and lacked rigid boundaries. In the Rigvedic period, cattle rearing initially served as the primary livelihood, but over time, agriculture gradually became the dominant economic activity. The educational practices of that era were aimed at fostering the all-round development of children. The teacher-student relationship was based on mutual respect and warmth. Their rituals, centered largely on natural elements, highlight a deep-rooted spiritual outlook. Nature held a special place in their lives, being regarded as a trusted companion and integral part of their existence.

The marriage system of that time reflected mutual respect and understanding between women and their in-laws. Women were highly educated, on par with men, and held strong positions in society. Despite the patriarchal nature of the period, women were respected and offered various opportunities. The study of Rigvedic society unveils many aspects of life during that time. However, after the Rigvedic period, significant changes occurred, especially in the caste system and the status of women.

From this study, we can learn valuable lessons about how to live and behave in society. Although there were certain limitations, the *Rigveda* continues to hold a special place in the hearts of citizens. This study not only highlights our history but also connects us to our roots by describing the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the time. The Rigvedic society offers numerous insights, as reflected in texts like the *Satapatha Brahmana*, *Gopatha Brahmana*, and *Chandogya Upanishad*. Through this study, we can compare the society of that era with

contemporary society and observe the changes over time. Each mantra of the *Rigveda* provides new information about the period, and a deep engagement with these texts enriches our understanding of the heritage and culture that continue to shape us today.

References:

1. Bhattacharji, Sukumari. (1984), '*Literature in the Vedic age*' (vol. 1). K.P. Bagchi.
2. Joshi, Kireet. (2006), '*Glimpses of Vedic literature*', Standard publishers (India) New Delhi.
3. Winternitz, M. (1927), '*A history of Indian literature*' (vol. 1), University of Calcutta.
4. Bose, Dr. Jogiraj. (2012), '*Vedar parichay*', Publication Board Assam.
5. Goswami, Harmohan Dev. (2016), '*Sanskrit sahityar buranji*', Jyoti Prakashan, Panbazar, Guwahati-1.
6. Aiyar, T.K. Ramachandra. (1989), '*A short history of Sanskrit literature*', R.S. Vadhyar & sons.
7. Sastri, P.P.S. (1927), '*A history of Vedic literature*', R. Subrahmanya Vadhyar.
8. Macdonell, Arthur A Anthony. (1900), '*A history of Sanskrit literature*', New York, D. Appleton.
9. Ghate, V.S. (1915), '*Lectures on Rigveda*', Self-published by the author at Poona.
10. Sharma, S.N. (2000), '*A history of Vedic literature*', Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi.
11. Griswold, H. D. (1923), '*The religion of the Rigveda*', Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press.
12. Tamhankar, D.K. (1932), '*Essays on the Rigveda and other topics*', Self-published by the author at Deccan College, Poona.



Novel Insights, An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal

ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) 3049-1991 (Print)

Volume-I, Issue-IV, May 2025, Page No. 267-276

Published by Uttarsuri, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsights.vol.1.issue.04W.029



Contextualizing India-Sri Lanka Relations under Modi 2.0: A Framework of Continuity and Change

Nourin Siddique, *Research Scholar, Dept. of Political Science, Diamond Harbour Women's University, West Bengal, India*

Received: 20.05.2025; Sent for Modification: 20.05.2025; Received: 24.05.2025; Accepted: 28.05.2025;
Available online: 31.05.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Abstract

This study analyses India-Sri Lanka relations during the second term of the Modi government, with a focus on the dynamics of continuity and change in bilateral engagement. It examines key developments such as India's response to Sri Lanka's 2022 economic crisis, the deepening of strategic and economic ties, and the challenges posed by China's growing presence in the region. While enduring issues like the Tamil question and fisheries disputes remain, the period is marked by India's enhanced regional outreach under the 'Neighbourhood First' policy. Through a descriptive-analytical approach, the study argues that India's policy reflects a pragmatic balance between traditional concerns and emerging strategic imperatives, contributing to a nuanced understanding of regional diplomacy in South Asia.

Keywords: NDA, Modi 2.0, Neighbourhood First, Strategic diplomacy, Economic crisis, Maritime security, Continuity and change

Introduction:

Analyzing foreign policy between two sovereign states within the timeframe of a specific government poses methodological challenges, given the inherently continuous and cumulative nature of bilateral relations. Governmental transitions may introduce policy shifts or strategic emphasis, yet they often operate within established institutional and diplomatic frameworks. This study specifically focuses on the second term of the Narendra Modi-led 'National Democratic Alliance' (NDA) government, which commenced in May 2019, and examines how India-Sri Lanka political and economic relations have evolved during this period. The analysis seeks to identify elements of both continuity and change in bilateral engagement, with particular attention to strategic diplomacy, economic cooperation, and emerging regional dynamics. The foreign policy trajectory of the NDA-II government largely reflects a continuation of the strategic orientations established under its predecessor, with a sustained emphasis on the 'Neighbourhood First' approach that was central to the NDA-I administration. This framework aimed to enhance regional cooperation and foster more amicable ties with neighboring states. In this context, the formation of Sri Lanka's National Unity

Government (NUG) in 2015 marked a significant opportunity for renewed diplomatic engagement with India. Both New Delhi and Colombo demonstrated a mutual willingness to address longstanding concerns and revitalize bilateral relations, particularly in the wake of a strained history marked by three decades of mistrust. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proactive diplomatic outreach toward Sri Lanka signaled a deliberate effort to reset and reconstruct the relationship. This led to an uptick in bilateral cooperation, evidenced by the signing of numerous Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) across diverse sectors such as economic development, science and technology, agriculture, education, nuclear energy, connectivity, and cultural exchange. Nevertheless, while these initiatives indicated political intent, several MoUs—particularly those related to trade and investment—have not yielded the desired outcomes. Structural challenges persist, including the delayed implementation of Indian development projects, strategic anxieties over China's expanding influence in Sri Lanka, and the unresolved issue of maritime disputes involving fishermen from both countries. There are a lot of factors that has become the roadblock to improve the relationship between these neighbour countries. In this study Political and economic factors or relationship has been taken mainly to examined the present status of relationship between these countries under the Narendra Modi government since 2019. This study aims to investigate the policy direction adopted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in engaging with Sri Lanka and to assess its influence on the evolution of bilateral ties. It further explores the key contemporary obstacles that are limiting progress and constraining the potential for enhanced collaboration between the two nations. This study has been done the help of descriptive and analytical method for the convenience of the study author has first taken political relationship and then economic relationship and ended with conclusion.

Strategic Diplomacy and Political Engagement: India–Sri Lanka Political Relations since 2019

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has consistently emphasized the enhancement of political and diplomatic ties with India's immediate neighbours through the articulation of the 'Neighbourhood First' policy, rooted in principles of multilateral engagement, reciprocity, and strategic interdependence. This policy orientation has notably influenced the trajectory of India–Sri Lanka relations. Following his re-election in 2019, Prime Minister Modi undertook an official visit to Sri Lanka in June of that year, signalling India's intent to reaffirm regional solidarity, particularly in the aftermath of the devastating Easter Sunday attacks. His presence was widely viewed as a gesture of support and a reaffirmation of India's commitment to its neighbourhood diplomacy (The Economic Times, June 2019). From a regional geopolitical standpoint, Prime Minister Modi's government has demonstrated a renewed urgency in recalibrating India's relations with smaller South Asian states, driven in large part by strategic concerns over China's increasing engagement in the region. This was further reflected in the swift diplomatic outreach by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who visited Colombo shortly after President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's electoral victory, as well as in India's extension of a \$400 million currency swap facility to Sri Lanka. These actions underscore the Modi administration's prioritization of India's security and strategic interests over normative concerns related to domestic governance or human rights within Sri Lanka. During a high-level meeting with then Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in New Delhi in

February 2020, Prime Minister Modi reiterated India's long-standing position on the importance of addressing the aspirations of the Tamil population. He emphasized the need for equality, justice, peace, and dignity within a united Sri Lanka, and underscored the significance of fully implementing the 13th Amendment as a pathway to reconciliation. Through these diplomatic engagements, Prime Minister Modi has sought to balance strategic imperatives with normative expectations, reflecting a pragmatic approach to regional diplomacy. In response, President Gotabaya assured that Sri Lanka would not undertake any actions that could threaten the security of the Indian Ocean region. (ORF, September, 2020). In 2021, despite the change in government in Sri Lanka, the release of the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) paper by the Sri Lankan High Commission in India in August marked a significant development. Designed as a roadmap for the period 2021–2023, the ICS addresses ongoing bilateral issues while also proposing new avenues for cooperation. It offers insight into Sri Lanka's perspective on the current state of India–Sri Lanka relations. The document outlines seven key objectives for Sri Lankan missions in India, including: elevating bilateral ties to a strategic level through political engagement; increasing foreign investment and export revenue; expanding collaboration in strategic affairs, defence, and Indian Ocean security; strengthening partnerships in culture, education, and science and technology; and promoting a more favorable image of Sri Lanka in India through public diplomacy (Dr. Samatha Mallempati, 2021). In 2022, Sri Lanka has been hit by an economic crisis, worst in several decades. With both political and economic challenges in hand, the 22 million population of the island has been going through hard times. There has been emergency declared in the country by the president Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The various antigovernment protest by the demonstrators including attack on the Rajapaksa's ancestral home, have forced Sri Lanka's prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksha to resign and make way for unity govt (Shriya Mishra, 2022). In 22th July, 2022 Dinesh Gunawardena has been elected as PM after Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn in as the president. The appointment of President Ranil Wickremesinghe is viewed as a promising moment to deepen and stabilize ties between India and Sri Lanka. India's swift and consistent provision of essential supplies – such as food, fuel, and medicines – during Sri Lanka's economic turmoil has significantly boosted its image and goodwill among the Sri Lankan population. President Wickremesinghe acknowledged that India was the sole country to offer unwavering support throughout the crisis. Given the circumstances, and as India has repeatedly emphasized, it may need to continue assisting the Sri Lankan people until the International Monetary Fund (IMF) finalizes its bailout program, which is contingent upon debt restructuring agreements with multiple international lenders. Meanwhile, India is expected to closely follow developments in Sri Lanka's political landscape and broader efforts involving bilateral cooperation and multilateral aid to address the ongoing economic crisis. In international forums such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Sri Lanka has faced criticism for its handling of human rights violations affecting its minority ethnic groups. In 2022, India chose to abstain from voting on a draft resolution at the UNHRC in Geneva concerning the promotion of reconciliation, accountability, and human rights in Sri Lanka, though the resolution was ultimately adopted. Despite its abstention, India emphasized its commitment to collaborating with Sri Lanka and the international community to achieve the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil population alongside the overall prosperity of all Sri Lankans (PTI, 2022).

The diplomatic relationship between India and Sri Lanka—two geographically proximate nations with shared cultural, social, and economic ties—has experienced growing tensions in recent years, particularly due to the recurring issue of Indian fishermen being apprehended or allegedly attacked by Sri Lankan security forces (Deccan Herald News, January 2022). The fishermen issue remains a longstanding and sensitive point of contention between the two countries, despite numerous bilateral efforts to address it. Several rounds of dialogue have been held at both official and community levels to seek resolution (Sultana, 2017). In 2016, under the leadership of Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Maithripala Sirisena, both governments acknowledged the urgency of the matter and institutionalized diplomatic mechanisms such as the ‘Joint Working Group’ (JWG) on fisheries and a dedicated hotline between the Indian and Sri Lankan Coast Guards. The JWG was mandated to meet quarterly, while biannual meetings between the Fisheries Ministers and maritime security officials were also planned (Chahal, 2022).

Despite a series of structured diplomatic engagements and policy efforts, concrete outcomes in resolving key bilateral issues have remained limited. The matter of concern—particularly the fishermen's dispute—has continued to occupy a central place in India–Sri Lanka diplomatic discourse. Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought up the issue during the Virtual Bilateral Summit with the Sri Lankan leadership in September 2020. This was followed by India's External Affairs Minister raising similar concerns during his visit to Colombo in January 2021, emphasizing the need for cooperative solutions. The dialogue persisted in October 2021 during the Indian Foreign Secretary's visit, where New Delhi urged Sri Lanka to adopt a compassionate stance and abide by pre-existing bilateral agreements. Furthermore, both virtual discussions in January 2022 and a ministerial visit in March 2022 reiterated India's call for the safety and swift release of its detained fishermen, underscoring the humanitarian aspect of the issue (Ministry of External Affairs, July 2022). Simultaneously, strategic tensions in the bilateral relationship have intensified, largely due to China's expanding presence in Sri Lanka. Specific incidents have heightened Indian apprehensions, including the death of four Indian fishermen in an encounter with the Sri Lankan Navy in January 2021, Colombo's decision to allow a Chinese firm to implement a hybrid energy project near India's maritime boundary, and the abrupt cancellation of a trilateral ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ (MoU) involving India, Sri Lanka, and Japan for the development of the East Container Terminal at the Colombo Port in February 2021 (Singh, 2021). These events underscore the evolving complexities in India–Sri Lanka relations, highlighting how shared cultural ties and diplomatic engagements are increasingly challenged by strategic and security-related concerns.

Nonetheless, in the face of these emerging tensions and shifting regional dynamics, India recalibrated its approach towards Sri Lanka by deepening defence cooperation, intensifying maritime engagement, and reinforcing humanitarian and multilateral efforts. Since 2019, India–Sri Lanka defence cooperation has deepened significantly, reflecting both continuity in longstanding military ties and strategic adaptation to emerging regional dynamics. Defence engagement included high-level visits, joint military exercises, and naval collaborations. Bilateral mechanisms such as cadet exchanges, capacity-building programmes, and annual staff talks (e.g., June 2019 Army and Air Force talks) remained

crucial in maintaining regular defence dialogue. Symbolic initiatives, such as the familiarization visit of 160 Sri Lankan Armed Forces personnel to Bodh Gaya, reaffirmed India's use of civilizational diplomacy alongside military cooperation (Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2019–2020*, p. 51).

Joint military exercises were central to strengthening interoperability. Bilateral drills included Cormorant Strike and Mitra Shakti in 2019, and continued in 2021 and 2022. Notably, Mitra Shakti 2021 marked the largest-ever exercise by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces with Indian participation. Exercises also extended to naval platforms, as seen in SLINEX-19, SLINEX 2020, and SLINEX 2022, showcasing increasing operational synergy and naval outreach in the 'Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean'. India's deployment of a Dornier aircraft and agreement to establish a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Sri Lanka further signaled a qualitative upgrade in maritime surveillance collaboration. In the maritime domain, fisheries-related issues continued to be both a point of cooperation and contention. From January 2019 onwards, coordinated repatriation of detained fishermen and boats was undertaken by both countries. However, the recurring arrests of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy – especially those from Tamil Nadu – remained a sensitive issue, drawing political attention in India, such as the Lok Sabha debate in January 2023. Indian appeals for humane treatment and diplomatic resolutions underscored the limits of bilateral engagement on this recurring transboundary concern. Humanitarian operations significantly enhanced India's image as a responsive regional partner. Operation Samudra Setu in 2020, which evacuated 686 Indian nationals from Sri Lanka, demonstrated India's logistical capability and its role as a first responder (Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2020–2021*, p. 130). India's assistance during maritime emergencies—including the deployment of INS Sarvekshak under Operation Sagar Aaraksha II to assess environmental damage from the MV Xpress Pearl incident—illustrated growing cooperation in maritime environmental security (Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2021–2022*, p. 130). In April and May 2022, Indian Naval Ship *Gharial* delivered 760 kg of lifesaving medicines, 15,750 liters of kerosene, and 27 tons of medical supplies to Colombo, demonstrating India's timely support to Sri Lanka during its economic and health crises and reinforcing bilateral goodwill under Mission SAGAR, reinforcing India's position as a reliable neighbour (Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2022–2023*, p. 90).

India–Sri Lanka ties also included multilateral collaboration. The India–Maldives–Sri Lanka Trilateral Table-Top Exercise in 2021 focused on anti-narcotics and maritime rescue, situating the bilateral defence partnership within a wider regional security architecture (Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2021–2022*, p. 131).

Cultural and youth diplomacy added further layers to the relationship. Though certain exchanges (e.g., Shivaji Trail Trek) were disrupted due to COVID-19, high-level visits such as the Indian Air Force's participation in the 70th anniversary of the Sri Lankan Air Force in 2021 emphasized cultural solidarity and symbolic power projection (Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2021–2022*, p. 25). According to Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, during his statement in Lok Sabha on 27 July, 2023, informed that India had emerged as Sri Lanka's key strategic partner in the Indian Ocean. During Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe's visit in July 2023, comprehensive bilateral dialogues covered maritime, air, energy, and financial connectivity. Agreements on development in

Trincomalee, digital payments (UPI), and renewable energy marked a shift toward multi-dimensional cooperation. India also raised critical concerns about the Tamil community and advocated implementation of the 13th Amendment, reaffirming its commitment to democratic reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

The evolving geopolitical environment of 2024, particularly growing Chinese activity in the Indian Ocean, further reshaped India–Sri Lanka maritime relations. In a significant policy move aligned with Indian security concerns, Sri Lanka suspended all foreign research vessels from operating in its EEZ for a year. This decision, reportedly unsettling to Beijing, signified Sri Lanka's cautious rebalancing. Subsequent high-level engagements, including Foreign Minister Tharaka Balasuriya's visit to New Delhi and the outreach by JVP leader President Dissanayake, indicated a pragmatic recalibration of Sri Lanka's foreign policy—seeking closer ties with India in trade, infrastructure, and maritime security (Hazarika, 2025). India's timely financial assistance during Sri Lanka's economic crisis, combined with its sustained naval and developmental engagement, has solidified a relationship marked by continuity, increasing strategic convergence, and a shared commitment to regional stability in the Indian Ocean.

Economic Convergence and Developmental Partnership in the Modi Era

India and Sri Lanka have developed a robust and expanding economic and commercial relationship, marked by steady growth across multiple sectors. A key milestone in this progression was the implementation of the 'India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement' (ISFTA) in 2000, which played a pivotal role in boosting bilateral trade volumes (Department of Commerce, n.d.). Beyond trade, the economic engagement between the two countries has evolved into a comprehensive development partnership encompassing critical sectors such as infrastructure, connectivity, transportation, housing, healthcare, education, livelihood, rehabilitation, and industrial development. India not only stands as Sri Lanka's largest trading partner but also ranks among its top sources of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Indian companies have made significant inroads into the Sri Lankan market, with investments spanning various industries. According to data from Sri Lanka's Board of Investment (BoI), Indian FDI totaled approximately US\$ 1.7 billion between 2005 and 2019. In addition to trade and investment, tourism has also served as a vital link in India–Sri Lanka economic relations. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, India was the leading source of international tourists to Sri Lanka, with 355,002 Indian tourists visiting the island nation in 2019 alone—accounting for nearly 18.2% of the total tourist arrivals that year (Consulate General of India, Hambantota, 2021). This multi-dimensional economic engagement underscores the depth and resilience of bilateral ties between the two countries. India has significantly expanded its developmental and strategic engagement with Sri Lanka, particularly during times of economic hardship. In 2020, the Modi government extended a US\$ 328 million line of credit for railway infrastructure, renovation of 27 schools in the Northern Province, supply of medical equipment, and the establishment of a surgical unit in Vavuniya's teaching hospitals (Sultana, 2017). Furthermore, India provided financial support through a US\$ 1.1 billion currency swap with the Reserve Bank of India to stabilize the Sri Lankan Rupee and disbursed an additional US\$ 73 million for the acquisition of two offshore patrol vessels, the restoration of the Northern Railway services, the Greater Dambulla Water Supply Project, and other railway lines such as Omanthai-Pallai, Madhu-Talaimannar, and Medawachchiya

(Sultana, 2017). India's strategic presence was further bolstered when the 'Sri Lanka Ports Authority' (SLPA) signed an agreement in October 2021 with India's Adani Group to jointly develop and operate the 'West Container Terminal' (WCT) at Colombo Port—a location where nearly 70% of shipments are bound for Indian ports (Hindustan Times, December 2021). In response to Sri Lanka's severe economic crisis in 2022, India extended assistance amounting to nearly US\$ 3 billion. This aid included a US\$ 400 million currency swap, a US\$ 1 billion credit line for essential imports such as rice and fuel, and the deferment of US\$ 1 billion in loan repayments under the Asian Clearing Union framework. Additionally, under a US\$ 500 million credit facility, India delivered 400,000 metric tonnes of fuel (The Hindu, May 2022). This multidimensional support, reflecting the principles of 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Security and Growth for All in the Region', underscored India's commitment to regional stability and humanitarian assistance. Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe publicly acknowledged India's role during this crisis, expressing deep gratitude: "The Government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given us a breath of life... I convey the gratitude to Prime Minister Modi, the government and the people of India" (Business Standard, August 2022).

India continues to be a major economic partner for Sri Lanka, maintaining its status as one of the island nation's leading sources of trade. Reciprocally, Sri Lanka occupies a prominent place in India's trade dynamics within SAARC, underscoring the mutual significance of their bilateral commercial ties. In 2023–24, bilateral merchandise trade reached USD 5.5 billion, with Indian exports at USD 4.1 billion and imports from Sri Lanka at USD 1.4 billion. This robust trade relationship has been supported by Indian Lines of Credit and credit facilities, particularly during Sri Lanka's economic crisis. To broaden economic engagement, talks on the 'Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement' (ETCA), aimed at covering goods and services, resumed in July 2023 after a five-year break, following the visit of former President Ranil Wickremesinghe (Ministry of External Affairs, November, 2024). By July 2024, fourteen rounds of negotiations had been completed, the latest in Colombo, indicating a strong political intent to deepen economic cooperation beyond the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) (Press Information Bureau, 2024). India's role in Sri Lanka's economic recovery also includes cumulative 'Foreign Direct Investment' (FDI) of around USD 2.2 billion by 2023, primarily in sectors like energy, hospitality, telecommunications, real estate, manufacturing, and banking. According to the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (2022), Strengthening people-to-people ties, direct air connectivity between Chennai and Jaffna resumed in December 2022, and a ferry service between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai was launched in October 2023, with plans for a Rameswaram–Talaimannar route under discussion. Energy and financial collaboration are also expanding, with proposals for a multiproduct pipeline and power grid linkage under review, and a key digital milestone was marked by the launch of India's 'Unified Payments Interface' (UPI) in Sri Lanka in February 2024, jointly inaugurated by Prime Minister Modi and President Wickremesinghe (Press Information Bureau, 2024). Tourism remains a vital pillar, with India being the largest source of tourists—approximately 300,000 in 2023 (20% of total arrivals) and 320,000 by October 2024 (19.3%)—reflecting the resilient and people-focused nature of post-pandemic bilateral ties (Ministry of External Affairs, November, 2024).

Conclusion:

At the end of this study, it could be said that the bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, political, economic, and strategic factors. Persistent challenges such as the marginalization of Indian-origin Tamils, the unresolved fishermen issue, and more recently, the strategic encroachment posed by China's 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI), including port-building activities in close proximity to India's maritime boundaries, have emerged as critical concerns for New Delhi. On the other hand, India has exhibited a sustained and sensitive interest in Sri Lanka's internal developments, including its economic and political crises. As the 21st century is often heralded as the "Asian Century", it is imperative that Asian nations resolve their differences through peaceful and cooperative mechanisms. India's approach to the Sri Lankan crisis, particularly in recent years, reflects a departure from the strategic missteps of the 1980s. Instead, it embodies a constructive and harmonious engagement strategy aimed at regional stability. India's proactive support during Sri Lanka's economic downturn—through financial aid, humanitarian assistance, and diplomatic support—underscores this shift. However, despite notable improvements in mutual understanding over the past three years, key irritants in the bilateral relationship persist. These stem from narrow domestic political calculations, economic competition, and divergent long-term strategic visions. Therefore, while India–Sri Lanka relations have shown a degree of continuity and positive transformation under the Modi Government 2.0, achieving sustainable bilateral harmony will require constant dialogue, trust-building, and a shared commitment to regional peace and development.

References:

- 1) Business Standard. (2022, August 3). *Sri Lankan President Wickremesinghe thanks PM Modi for India's support*. Retrieved October 28, 2024, from https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/sri-lankan-president-wickremesinghe-thanks-pm-modi-for-india-s-support-122080300582_1.html
- 2) Chahal, H. (2017). *Sri Lanka: 3 years of the Modi government*. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 55–56
- 3) Deccan Herald News. (2022, January 16). Fishing turns into a diplomatic issue between India, Sri Lanka. Retrieved December 10, 2024, from <https://www.deccanherald.com/amp/story/world%2Ffishing-turns-into-a-major-diplomatic-issue-between-india-sri-lanka-1071560.html>
- 4) Department of Commerce. (n.d.). *Indo–Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA)*. Government of Sri Lanka. Retrieved November 25, 2024, from https://www.doc.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43&Itemid=154&lang=en
- 5) Economic Times. (2021, December 26). India–Sri Lanka ties tested in 2021 due to persisting fishermen issue, investment impasse. Retrieved October 19, 2025, from <https://m.economictimes.com/news/india/india-sri-lanka-ties-tested-in-2021-due-to-persisting-fishermen-issue-investment-impasse/articleshow/88502257.cms>
- 6) Haidar, S., & Srinivasan, M. (2021, December 3). It is possible for India, Pakistan to resolve issues: Ranil Wickremesinghe. *The Hindu*. Retrieved November 22, 2025, from <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/interview/it-is-still-possible-for-india-pakistan-to-resolve-issues-ranil-wickremesinghe/article6>

- 7) Hazarika, D. (2025, January 15). Neighbourhood First: Redefining India–Sri Lanka relations. *Diplomatist*. Retrieved February 14, 2025, from <https://diplomatist.com/2025/01/15/neighbourhood-first-redefining-india-sri-lanka-relations/>
- 8) Consulate General of India, Hambantota. (2021, July). *India–Sri Lanka Bilateral Relations*. Retrieved December 23, 2024, from <https://www.cgihambantota.gov.in/page/india-sri-lanka-bilateral-relations/>
- 9) Jaishankar, S. (2020). *The Indian Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*. HarperCollins Publishers.
- 10) Kanduadahew, H. (2014). Indo-Sri Lanka bilateral relations: Analytical review on political and cultural relations since 2005. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 80–84.
- 11) Malone, D. (2011). *Does the Elephant Dance? Contemporary Indian Foreign Policy*. Oxford University Press.
- 12) Mallemapati, S. (2021). Sri Lanka's Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) for enhancing India–Sri Lanka relations: Main goal and future prospects. *Indian Council of World Affairs*. Retrieved January 17, 2025, from https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=6402&lid=4404
- 13) Menon, P. (2022, July 19). Modi said Neighborhood First. Sri Lanka crisis is India's chance to prove it. *The Print*. Retrieved November 26, 2025, from <https://theprint.in/opinion/modi-said-neighbourhood-first-sri-lanka-crisis-is-indias-chance-to-prove-it/1044153/?amp>
- 14) Menon, S. (2021). *India and Asian Geopolitics: The Past, Present, and Future*. Brookings Institution Press.
- 15) Ministry of Defence. (2019). *Annual report 2019–2020* (p. 51). Government of India. Retrieved February 20, 2025, from https://mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/Annual-Report-2019-20-final-web-version_compressed_0_0.pdf
- 16) Ministry of Defence. (2020). *Annual report 2020–2021* (p. 130). Government of India. Retrieved April 16, 2025, from https://mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/2020-2021_Annual%20Report.pdf
- 17) Ministry of Defence. (2021). *Annual report 2021–2022* (p. 131). Government of India. Retrieved March 12, 2025, from https://mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/AR_0.pdf
- 18) Ministry of Defence. (2022). *Annual report 2022–2023* (p. 90). Government of India. Retrieved January 09, 2025, from <https://mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/DEFENCE%20AR%202022-23%20LOW.pdf>
- 19) Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. (2024, November). *Brief on India–Sri Lanka bilateral relations*. Retrieved December 19, 2024, from https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Sri_Lanka-2025.pdf
- 20) Mishra, S. (2022). Sri Lanka in dire straits: What it means for India–Sri Lanka relations. *Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies*.
- 21) NDTV. (2022, May 13). Sri Lanka's new prime minister thanks PM Modi, says 'Want a closer relationship' with India. Retrieved March 11, 2025, from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/sri-lankas-new-pm-takes-charge-says-want-to-thank-prime-minister-narendra-modi-2971525/amp/1>
- 22) Panda, A. (2019, June 11). Modi's second term foreign policy kicks off with a neighborhood focus. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved December 12, 2024, from

- <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/modis-second-term-foreign-policy-kicks-off-with-a-neighborhood-focus/>
- 23) Pande, A. (2015). *From Chanakya to Modi: Evolution of India's Foreign Policy*. HarperCollins Publishers.
 - 24) PTI. (2022, October 7). UNHRC adopts resolution against Sri Lanka's rights record; India abstains from voting. *The Indian Express*. Retrieved October 10, 2024, from <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/sri-lanka-human-rights-record-unhrc-india-voting-8194460/lite/>
 - 25) Press Information Bureau. (2024, February 12). PM jointly inaugurates UPI services with Mauritius PM & Sri Lankan President. *Prime Minister's Office, Government of India*. Retrieved from <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2005218>
 - 26) Press Information Bureau. (2024, December 26). 2024 yearend review for Department of Commerce. *Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India*. Retrieved February 10, 2024, from <https://www.pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=2088048>
 - 27) Revi, V. (2020). Sri Lanka, India and changing political dynamics. *Observer Research Foundation*. Retrieved March 20, 2025, from <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/sri-lanka-india-and-changing-political-dynamics?amp=>
 - 28) Sappani, V. (2021). Charting a new trajectory in India–Sri Lanka relations. *Observer Research Foundation*. Retrieved November 20, 2025, from https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/charting-a-new-trajectory-in-india-sri-lanka-relations?fbclid=IwAR077sff49iHid8n0Mjz55FRyyNMskxR161EmXMgUYkwkZ_MYuTFSmiiMO4
 - 29) South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation. (2022, December 12). India, Sri Lanka reopen Chennai–Jaffna flights. Retrieved from <https://www.sasec.asia/index.php?page=news&nid=1451&url=chennai-jaffna-flights-reopen&enews=106>
 - 30) Sultana, G. (2017). India–Sri Lanka relations in the context of India's 'Neighbourhood Policy'. *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, 12, 227–230
 - 31) Sultana, G. (2019). India–Sri Lanka relation: New issues, novel perspective. *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, 14, 44–48
 - 32) The Indian Express. (2022, July 27). PM Modi: India will continue to support Lanka. Retrieved January 17, 2025, from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/pm-modi-india-will-continue-to-support-lanka-8053616/lite/>
 - 33) World Bank. (2022, October). *The World Bank in Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka overview of development news*. Retrieved December 29, 2024, from <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/6c87e47ca3f08a4b13e67f79aec8fa3b-0310062022/original/Sri-Lanka-Development-Update-October-2022-final.pdf>



Novel Insights, *An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal

ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) 3049-1991 (Print)

Volume-I, Issue-IV, May 2025, Page No. 277-283

Published by Uttarsuri, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsights.vol.1.issue.04W.030



Bhakti-Sufi, Mysticism and Feminist Consciousness in Medieval India

Annapura Sinha Das, *Independent Researcher, Kolkata, West Bengal, India*

Received: 15.05.2025; Sent for Modification: 15.05.2025; Received: 22.05.2025; Accepted: 28.05.2025;
Available online: 31.05.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Abstract

The Bhakti and Sufi movement in Medieval India brought about a spiritual and social change in which the direct relationship between God and man was given primacy. The movement challenges caste, class and religious customs, and it manifested itself mainly through hymns, sermons and speeches written in vernacular language. In this way, the Mysticism movements became a sensitive and inclusive spiritual process in which the contribution of women is very important. Saints-Poets like Anal, Mirabai, Jinabai, Akka Mahadevi, and Bibi Fatima showed in their songs a personal and social protest along with spiritual love. These women not only praised the male-dominated religious system but also chose a spiritual path for themselves, away from it. They gave sacred and spiritual value to physical freedom, their agency in devotion and the daily work of women. Although these poets did not use the word 'Feminist', their lives and creations were a reflection of a natural Feminist consciousness-where a new identity was created by breaking the barriers of gender, caste and religion. In this way, devotion and mysticism gave birth to the concept of a primal female liberation in Medieval India, whose impact is still a subject of study and inspiration.

Keywords: Mysticism, Female Mystics, Gender and Devotion, Resistance Literature, Spiritual Agency

In medieval India, where the society was bound by patriarchy and religious bondages, some women raised a new voice through their poetry, devotion and literature- a feminist voice that was way ahead of its time. Both the writings and lives of these women were a kind of protest against social norms. Approximately from the 8th to the 18th century, the medieval period in Indian history was marked by the rich literary traditions shaped by Bhakti, Sufi, and folk movements. These movements gave the women a platform where they connected with their god without any mediator. Through this spiritual freedom, they challenged social restrictions. Her writings become her companions along with her spiritual journey.

Patriarchal norms have historically led to the marginalisation of Indian women writers, whose work has been undervalued in favour of narratives centred on male experiences. But Bhakti and Mysticism movements opened a forum where they could express their feelings, thoughts and emotions for the first time.

Ways in which the Bhakti and Mysticism movements encouraged women's expression:

- 1) **Rejection of caste and gender hierarchies:** Bhakti and Sufi traditions strongly emphasised that all people, regardless of caste or gender, are equal before God. This thought created an inclusive space where women, especially lower-caste women, could express their spiritual voice. For example, Janabai, who was from a Dalit background, openly expressed her caste and gender sufferings through her '*abhang*' (devotional poems). Mirabai is also a powerful example- she not only chose her own spiritual path by breaking away from her royal background, but in her '*bhajans*', She also questioned patriarchal society and marital expectations.
- 2) **Direct relationship with the divine:** These movements promoted mediator-less devotion, meaning a direct connection with God could be made without any priest, pandit or institution. Women could remember God at their own will, without any middlemen. Akkamahadevi is a powerful example of this thought- she rejected marriage and societal expectations and chose the path of spiritual marriage with Lord Shiva. This was a bold move in which she challenged patriarchal control over both her body and spirit
- 3) **Creative expression through poetry and music:** Bhakti and Sufi movements gave women a platform to express their spiritual feelings through poetry, songs and *bhajans*. Their writings openly expressed love, longing, pain and surrender-where women celebrated their inner voice and spiritual autonomy. Andal's poems contain intense love for Krishna, in which she imagines herself to be his bride, a symbolic rejection of arranged marriage and societal roles.
- 4) **Subversion of patriarchal roles and norms:** Bhakti saints repeatedly questioned the roles traditionally assigned to women, such as obedient wife, quiet daughter-in-law, or silent devotee. Even in Sufi traditions, women mystics broke the traditional purdah and gender roles and made their divine journey public, where their focus was only *ishq-e-haqeeqi* (true love for the divine).
- 5) **Spiritual autonomy and reinterpretation of religious texts:** These movements gave women the right not only to worship but also to view and understand religious texts from their own perspectives. Many women saints and poets reinterpreted old religious texts, where they took a more inclusive and gender-sensitive perspective. Chandrabati, a Bengali woman poet, wrote the Ramayana from Sita's perspective. In this version, she highlighted patriarchal injustice, such as Sita's Agniparikrama, her exile, and Rama's cold behaviour towards her. This was a bold feminist critique in which Chandrabati showed that women could question dominant versions of religion and history, and add their voices.
- 6) **Encouragement of collective spirituality:** Bhakti and Sufi traditions promoted community-based spiritual practices alongside individual devotion. Events such as *satsang*, *kirtan*, *bhajan* and *majlis* (Sufi gatherings) gave women a public, collective space to express their devotional feelings. This was a place where gender restrictions were relatively low, and women could freely speak, sing and connect spiritually without fear of judgment. All of these practices created an inclusive environment where devotion and spiritual experience were not the right of any one gender, but of everyone.

- 7) **Breaking of ritualistic boundaries:** Bhakti and Sufi movements openly criticised rigid and show-off rituals. The focus of these traditions was inner feelings, not outer formal rituals or priest-led practices. This was a major shift, in which spirituality was made accessible and personal, especially for women. Traditionally, Hindu and Islamic systems had many religious practices in which the active participation of women was either forbidden or highly restricted, like entry restrictions in temples, purdah norms, or male dominance of the priesthood. But Bhakti-Sufi saints said true devotion or love is with the divine, not any outer form or ritual. The *vaakhs* (poetic sayings) of Lal Deb and the *vachanas* (Spiritual verses) of Akkamahadevi clearly convey that the spiritual journey is an internal journey. In their writing, we see that they reject rituals, external appearances and patriarchal religious rules and say that true divine experience happens through purity of mind and inner surrender. For women, this movement was a liberating experience. Now they did not need to visit the temple or get the priest's approval. Their mind and feelings themselves became their temple.

Prominent feminist voices in medieval Indian literature:

Akka Mahadevi: The Naked Saint and Voice in Feminist Saint: Akka Mahadevi is considered one of the first feminist poets in Medieval Indian literature. She is highly respected in the Lingayat community, and her contribution to the entire Virashaiva Bhakti literature is immortal. It is said that she was married to Raja Kausika, but she left her husband when he did not accept her devotion to Shiva. Her worshipped form was Chenamallikarjuna (a form of Shiva). Akka renounced everything, including worldly life. She roamed around without any Vastra, covered only by her hair, a symbol of self-surrender and liberation from worldly attachment. Like the other Virashaiva Saint (in Lingayat movement), she also gave importance to internal experience rather than external affairs. Akka said that the primal woman's consciousness is more rooted in spiritual experience than in politics.

Akka Mahadevi wrote about 430 Vachanas (in Kannada), which are still available today. Her works are written in the language of love and love, showing a unique confluence of eroticism and mysticism-which was very candid and avant-garde for her time. The works are defined by their opening lines, much like classical Ghazals or Bhajans-

- 1) **Angangolli Rudra Shaktiya Vaasa** (The Rudra/Shiva energy resides in every limb of mine.)
- 2) **Naanu Ellada Nambidennayya** (I believed in everything, oh Lord)
- 3) **Arivu Enthanu Guruvilada Deseyali** (What is knowledge without a true guide?)
- 4) **Muddaada Mujaganada Avenna Kan** (That handsome serpent is my only vision)

In many of her poems or Vachanas, she opposed social bondage and male-dominated thinking, and clearly stated the spiritual rights of women. On the other hand, she attacks social inequalities like caste discrimination, male-female inequalities and religious dogma through her poems. For example, in *Angangolli Rudra Shaktiya Vaasa*, she explained (1) Divine Immanence (means Shiva's power resides in every part of her body, from head to feet. Her whole body is filled with divinity. (2) Non-duality (means Shiva and she are not separate, because her body and soul both have become one with Shiva's power). (3) Sacred Body (means while in many religions the body is considered an object of sacrifice, Akka considered the body to be a sacred place. Rudra Sakti resides in every part of the body, so

the whole body is a temple. (4) Rejection of external rituals (means when God is inside, then what is the need for an external temple or rituals? Devotion and inner-facing are the right path. (5) Feminist voice of Empowerment. Being a woman saint, Akka Mahadevi expressed women's rights and her spirituality in a bold way. She united Shakti (woman) and Rudra (man), where the difference of gender vanishes. So in the deeply patriarchal society of the 12th century, she emerged as a powerful voice of spiritual independence, bodily autonomy, and gender equality. Her speech raised questions like: What is the meaning of worship without love? What is the use of such a rule that does not take us to the truth? With this Akka Mahadevi broke the binary gender divide- for the soul has neither gender nor boundaries.

Andal: Andal or Goda Devi was the only female Saint-poet of South India (8th-9th Century), who emerged as a powerful feminist voice in Medieval feminist literature. She was born in Srivilliputhur, Tamil Nadu, later adopted by a saint Periyarvar. Andal lived in a deeply patriarchal society, where the voice of women was suppressed. But she challenged traditional gender roles through her love for Lord Vishnu and showed that men and women can be equal in the field of devotion. In her creation, female agency, emotional autonomy, and spiritual authority are openly manifested. Andal's devotional poems are clear proof that a woman can have full authority over her mind, body and soul. Her famous poems are-

- 1) Tiruppavai (Sacred vows or Divine observances). It has 30 Padyas (verses) which Andal wrote during Margazhi mass (winter month). Even today, this poem is performed every morning in Tamil Nadu and South Indian temples, especially during the time of Margazhi..
- 2) Nachiyar Tirumozhi (Sacred words of the Goddess). It has 143 Padyas (verses), in which Andal expressed her love, separation, dreams and devotion towards Vishnu.

Through both of these poems, Andal expressed an open manifestation of women's desire and devotion with complete freedom. Andal said she would not marry any human being, but only Lord Raghunath; and started a religious and social rebellion. Andal's language has romantic and sensual images, but this was to show spiritual union. She was a bold, emotional, and freedom-speaking saint poet who made her mark through devotion. Then she laid the foundation of a complete feminist movement with her words.

Lal Deb: Lal Deb, also known as Lalleshwari was a 14th-century mystic poet and saint from Kashmir. She left a deep impact on Medieval Indian literature. She is considered to be the oldest female poet of Kashmir. She was the first to bring deep spiritual matters to the common people in the Kashmiri language. Her 'Vakhs' are small, but contain a wonderful mixture of Shaivism, Sufism and mysticism. 'Vakh' means verse or saying in the Kashmiri language. She wrote more than 200 Vakhs (short, four-line poems). In her verses, people find (1) Shaiva mysticism, (2) Self-inquiry, (3) Spiritual knowledge and inner- spiritual devotion, (4) *Sarvabhumi* Bhakti. Lal Deb believed that true religion comes from within, and feeling God is not done in any temple or through worship, but from within. So, she spread the messages that renunciation of external religions and superstitions, and the experience of God, through the purification of the soul.

So, despite being born in the Shaiva religion, her messages are always universal and religious. Her verses influenced both Hindus and Muslims, Bhakti saints and Sufis. On the

other hand, when women had no voice in the society, Lal Deb expressed her pain, love and knowledge and search for soul through her words. Her perspective was that of a woman, in which the thirst of the soul and the struggle of the body and mind were clearly expressed. She became a revolutionary and a symbol of awakening. Her influence is clearly visible in the literature of saints Kabir, Meerabai, and Nund Rishi. Even her verses were later written in Sharada script (ancient Kashmiri script), Perso-Arabic script (for Kashmiri Muslims) and Devanagari script (in today's translations). One of Lal Dev's Vakh is where she rejects religious division, promotes unity of all beings and stresses self-knowledge over ritual identity- a radical message in Medieval society.

*'Shiv chuy thali thali rozan;
Mo zan hyond ta musalman.
Trukh ay chukh panun paan parzanav;
Soi chay sahibas satyam zan.'*

(Shiva is present in every heart and every being, don't separate Hindu from Muslim. If you are wise, recognise yourself--That alone in the true path to the Divine.)

Mirabai: 16th century prominent Bhakti poet and Krishna devotee, Mirabai made an immortal contribution to Indian literature, religion and women's consciousness. She belongs to a royal family of Rajasthan, but she left royal life and social ties and dedicated her life to the devotion of Krishna. Her devotion has the feeling of Sagun-in which God is seen with form and qualities. Krishna was not just God for her, he was a beloved man, a friend, a husband. Mirabai expressed her devotion and love through bhajans and kirtans. Poems are mostly written in the folk languages of Braj, Rajasthani, and Hindi, which are easily understood by common people. Her poems are not only literary, but are immortal as music. For example---

- 1) *'Payoji maine Ram Ratan dhan payo.'*
- 2) *'Mere to Giridhar Gopal, doosro na koi.'*
'Pag ghunghroo baandh Meera naachi re.'

All of her bhajans were against social bonds and a male-dominated structure. She talked about self-realisation and the liberation of women. Mirabai left all worldly bonds--husband, family and social norms. Even her songs emphasise that there is no need for any mediator or communal bond to reach God. There is a wonderful combination of simplicity, love and spirituality in her poems. She created her own unique identity as a woman in the Bhakti movement. Each bhajan is a reflection of her spiritual journey and feminist voice, where she chooses God for herself and the power of a woman.

Jinabai: Although the word "Feminist" is contemporary, Jinabai's life and creations were full of feminist ideas such as gender equality, rights over one's own body, opposition to patriarchy and self-reliance. Jinabai or Jnanabai (1270-1350 A.D.), who belonged to the Varakari sect of Maharashtra, was a leading feminist saint in the Medieval Bhakti movement. She was the disciple of Namdev. Her *Abhangas* (devotional verses) are characterised by a deep sense of personal devotion to Vithoba (a form of Lord Krishna), social critique and emotional intensity. She wrote in her *Abhangas*---

*'They say a woman cannot chant the name of God---
But, I, Jina, do not listen to them
My Vithoba hears all hearts, not voices alone,
In his court, no caste or gender holds the throne.'*

At the time, women were mostly confined to household chores, and religious and spiritual expressions were banned for them. But Jinabai not only wrote devotional poems, but also clearly expressed her identity as a woman. She used to say, "I, Jani, say...." a powerful sentence that proved both her right to write and existence. Jinabai was born in a Matang caste-which was considered 'chuhoot' at that time. She worked as a maid in Saint Namdev's house. But her poems raise a voice against caste and gender discrimination. She believed that all souls are equal in the eyes of God. She transformed her daily household chores like sweeping, grinding, and washing clothes into sacred devotion. Because she believed that all these works could be done as service to God. Jinabai rejected the male-dominated religious system and priest dominance. She showed that neither caste nor gender is necessary for devotion, nor is there any need for a mediator. This self-reliance was a fundamental principle of her poetry.

Muktabai- Muktabai, a prominent name and an inspiring figure in the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra. Her life and writings (*Abhangas*) represent a leading feminist perspective, with a clear message of women's rights, equality and self-reliance. She said a woman who wanted freedom from the rules of those times, and freedom not just from God, but also from the shackles of society. In her 41 works, she continuously spoke about the detachment from ego, devotion to Lord Vithoba, compassion for the downtrodden, critique of ritualism and pride, feminine wisdom, and strength. Her most famous *Abhangas* is "*Tatiche Abhangas*", in which she supports her brother Dnyaneshwar, when an arrogant yogi Changdev insults him.

Bibi Fatima Sam- A name was associated with the Chishti order in Sufi tradition, Bibi Fatima Sam or Fatima of Samarqand (13th century). At a time when men dominated Sufism, she emerged as a powerful female *murshid* (guru). Though she was associated with Hazrat Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-Sakar. Bibi Fatima did not write any book herself, but her words, teaching, and life character are collected in Sufi-folk tales and *Tazkira* literature. Her messages are- true love is the only way to reach God (*Ishq-e-haqiqi*), self-purification, men and women are all equal in the eyes of God. Bibi Fatima provides a spiritual path to many women, which can be considered a kind of oral spiritual work.

Hazrat Rabia of Basra: Hazrat Rabia or Rabi 'a al-'Adawiyya (8th century) emerges as one of the first and most influential figures in the world of Islamic Sufism, who deeply expressed the theory of divine love (*Ishq-e-haqiqi*)-a phenomenon that is the essence of the vision of the ultimate and the ultimate truth of devotion. Her famous prayer-

'If I worship you from the fear of hell, then put me in hell. If I worship you with a greed of heaven, then keep me away from heaven. But I worship you for your divine pleasure, and then do not deprive me of my happiness.'

She showed that spiritual authority was not confined to gender and set a precedent for female spiritual autonomy in Sufism.

Conclusion:

The confluence of the Bhakti movement, mysticism and Feminist consciousness was a hidden but profound revolution in Medieval India. It gave birth to a spiritual Feminism in which women had full authority over their soul, body and devotion. Their creations were not just songs or poems of devotion but were a great declaration of identity, empathy and liberation. Today, when we try to understand Feminism, the study of these Bhakti and Sufi saints shows us that women's liberation is not only economic or social, but is also inspired

by spiritual consciousness. These voices of Medieval India tell us that inner voice and spiritual liberation are also a kind of struggle, which every woman has owned some time or another, in some form or the other.

References:

Primary Texts and Translations:

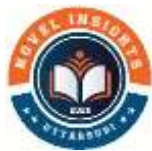
1. Chabria, Priya Sarukkai, and Shankar, Ravi (Translators), *Andal: The Autobiography of a Goddess*. Harper Collins India, 2014.
2. Hoskote, Ranjit (Translator), *I, Lalla (The Poems of Lal Dev)*. Penguin Books, 2003.
3. Ramanujan, A. K. (Translator), *Speaking of Siva*. Penguin Books, 1973.
4. Schelling, Andrew (Translator), *For Love of the Dark One: Songs of Mirabai*. North Point Press, 1993.
5. Tharu, Susie, and Lalita, K. (Editors), *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*. Vol. 1, The Feminist Press, 1991.

Secondary Sources:

6. Bayly, Susan. (1989), *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.
7. Cohen, Margaret. (2010) *The Bhakti Movement and Feminism in India*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
8. Hawley, John Stratton, and Juergensmeyer, Mark (Editors). (1996), *Songs of the Saints of India*. Oxford University Press, 1996.
9. Nagarajan, P. (2007), *Women in Bhakti Literature*, Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan.
10. Kumari, P. (2014), *Gender and Devotion in Medieval India: Women's Role in Bhakti Movements*, Routledge.
11. Subramanian, V. K. (2005), *Mystic Songs of Meera*, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi.

Articles and Journal Publications:

11. Bakker, E. (2015), Challenging Caste and Gender: Women in Medieval Indian Literature, *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 44 (3), 423-39.
12. Sathianathan, E. (2011), Women and Bhakti: Challenging the Patriarchy in Medieval India, *Indian Journal of Feminist Studies*, 25 (2), 102-18.
13. Hoskote, Ranjit (Translator), *I, Lalla (The Poems of Lal Dev)*. Penguin Books, 2003, poem no. 104. Also see, Tharu, Susie, and Lalita, K. (Editors), *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*. Vol. 1, The Feminist Press, 1991, p. 132 and Sanjay Pandita, *Lal Dev and Kashmiri Shaivism: The Voice of Divine Consciousness*, Published on 20th September, 2020.
14. Subramanian, V. K. (2005), *Mystic Songs of Meera*, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, pp. 33, 35, 39. Also see Tharu, Susie, and Lalita, K. (Editors), *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*. Vol. 1, The Feminist Press, 1991, pp. 92-93.
15. Tharu, Susie, and Lalita, K. (Editors), *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*. Vol. 1, The Feminist Press, 1991, pp. 83. Also see, Vivek Vani, *Sant Janabai*, published on 6th August, 2015, and *Forgotten Books*, copyright 2016, www.forgottenbooks.com.



Novel Insights, An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal

ISSN: 3048-6572 (Online) 3049-1991 (Print)

Volume-I, Issue-IV, May 2025, Page No. 284-289

Published by Uttarsuri, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI: 10.69655/novelinsights.vol.1.issue.04W.031



Immanuel Kant's Metaphysical Perspectives: Innovative Insights

Baby Mondal, Asst. Prof, Dept. of Philosophy, Trivenidevi Bhalotia College, West Bengal, India

Received: 28.05.2025; Accepted: 29.05.2025; Available online: 31.05.2025

©2025 The Author(s). Published by Uttarsuri Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Abstract

What is metaphysics? It is not easy to say. If we look to work in metaphysics, we will find different characteristics. Sometimes it seems that metaphysics is descriptive in nature and sometimes they are normative. However, disagreements about the nature of metaphysics are associated with its long history. Metaphysics has been practiced for more than 2000 years. As a result, there is a problem in defining the subject matter and methodology of metaphysics. Similarly, there is ambiguity about the origin of the word 'Metaphysics'. By collecting Aristotle's untitled writings, his later thinker Andronicus accidentally named it Metaphysics. Aristotle called it First Philosophy, Theology. The aim of metaphysics is to attain knowledge or wisdom. From that on time, we understand by Metaphysics whatever is discussed in this book. The subject matter of metaphysics is the search for the first cause of reality. However, this first cause is at the same time the prime being and unmoved mover, which is non-cause itself, the cause of all driving forces. On the other hand, Metaphysics as a general being or being qua being which is the first cause of the world. Aristotle's metaphysical ideas also influenced later philosophers. According to the medieval philosopher Saint Augustine, God is the metaphysical principle. God is Immanent and transcendent in the soul. Everything which is related to God is true. According to Anselm, God is the highest being, which is nothing greater than its thought. He believes that the real existence of God is derived from the idea of God. Aquinas criticizes and says that the existence of ideas can be derived from ideas, not real existence. Like Aristotle, he refers to God as the first cause and unmoved mover of the world. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, metaphysics is not limited to the discussion of first causes or the general being of the world, but also includes the mind-body problem, freedom of will, immortality of the soul, etc. Kant criticizes this type of metaphysics and says knowledge is the result of the combined process of experience and intellect. The aim of my article is to discuss how Kantian metaphysics to open a new door to us.

Keywords: Metaphysics, Being, Substance, Form, Matter, Transcendent, Immanent

In the etymological sense Metaphysics derives from two Greek words Meta and Physics. Literally Metaphysics means after the physics. According to Aristotle,

"The study of being qua being turns out to be the same thing as the study of the primary cause and principles, which has previously been said to be the

tasks of philosophy, because the primary cause and principles are the cause and principal of being qua being.”¹

In other words, Metaphysics is the inquiry for the first cause and discussion of the general structure of the world. Metaphysics does not mean first in terms of text, but rather metaphysics is the discussion of the foundation of all existence or the highest level of being.

“... but this does not mean the branch of philosophy that should be studied first. Rather, it concerns issues that are in some sense the most fundamental or at the highest level of generality.”²

The study of being qua being refers three things: first, the study, second, the subject matter of metaphysics or being, and third, the method of metaphysics or qua being. Study means acquiring knowledge and wisdom. The subject matter or being which is not something changeable, not true or false, it is the being of substance and being in actuality and potentially. The Latin word ‘qua’ means as beings in so far as they are beings. Metaphysics studies the nature of being itself. The subject matter of metaphysics is eternal, unchangeable, self-existence substance, which is one or unity. Here, the argument is that there are multiple entities or existences in the world. All these existences have a common ground, which is substance. It is both form and reality, which governs all knowledge and being.

“Metaphysical science is there for concerned with being and it studies being primarily in the category of substance not ‘accidental being’, which is the object of no science, nor being as truth, since truth and falsity exist in the judgment, not in things (it also established the first principle or axioms specially the principle of contradiction which do not of course did you say well is the ultimate principle of governing or being and all knowledge).”³

In other words, the substance is the essence, i.e., which remains after we have eliminated the elements of our experience; the universal predicate, that is, to speak of something else, we must speak of it, but to say something about it, nothing else is needed; it is the genus or the subject. Therefore, other things are predicated it, but itself is not predicated of anything else.

According to Aristotle, substances are categorized into three kinds. The first type is sensible and impermanent, such as plants and animals. The second type of substances is sensible and eternal, such as stars. The third type is non-sensible and eternal, such as the soul and God. Sensible and impermanent substances are typically discussed in the context of physics, whereas non-sensible and eternal substances are the subject matter of metaphysics. Notably, Aristotle's categorization suggests that metaphysics focuses on the study of non-sensible and eternal substances.

¹ Hugh, Lawson, Aristotle the metaphysics, 79.

² S. Marc, Cohen, and Reeve, C. D. C. , "Aristotle's Metaphysics", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2025 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2025/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>, 2

³ F., Copleston, History of Western Philosophy, Vol. I, 291.

"... distinction between the practical, productive and theoretical science and further subdivided the last of these in physics, which is concerned with separately existing entities which naturally have both matter and movement, mathematics, which is concerned with non-separable entities which do not have movement, and the third and highest theoretical science which is concerned with things that are separable but immune to movement and process. This science is called theology, but it is also to be identified with First Philosophy."⁴

Notable,

"... if there is an unchangeable substance then metaphysics studies unchangeable substance, since it is concerned with being qua being, and the true nature of being is shown in that which is unchangeable and self-existence, rather than in that which is subject to change."⁵

Aristotle's metaphysical ideas also influenced later philosophers. According to Saint Augustine, God created the world from nothing. Plato and Aristotle's God are not the creator of the world, but only the architect. He supports the Bible and says that both the matter and the form of the world are created by God. The world as God's creation is dependent on God, but the world and God are not one and the same. God transcends the world. No one can fully know God from the world. In this context, it is notable, all that one can say that he apprehends God, but cannot comprehend Him.

God possesses supreme authority, omnipotent and unrestricted freedom. He is eternal, transcendent being and the supreme good. He creates this world through His will, but all laws of nature are also eternal, unchangeable. Through his creation, He sustains the world. The entire creation points to the living God. Augustine's arguments for the existence of God are internal arguments of thought. The mind always desires the necessary and unchangeable truth. Truth is unchangeable and eternal, which does not vary from person to person. This truth always remains the same regardless of place, time or person. This truth cannot be formed by the mind and cannot be destroyed. Therefore, truth is greater and superior to the mind. The argument here is that if truth were inferior than the mind, then truth could constitute and change by the mind. And if truth were equal to the mind, then the nature of mind or the changeable properties of mind would be in truth. So, truth would change like the mind. Since the mind cannot change truth or truth is immutable, then truth must be said to be superior and absolute than the mind. In this context, it is notable here,

"The mind varies in its apprehension of truth, apprehending it now more clearly now less clearly, whereas truth remains ever the same. Hence if truth is neither inferior nor equal to our minds, nothing remains but that it should be superior and more excellent."⁶

According to Anselm, existence is necessary condition of perfection. Something that does not exist cannot be considered perfect. God is absolute perfection. Therefore, God must exist. In other words, God is that being than which nothing greater can be thought.

⁴ Hugh, Lawson, Aristotle the metaphysics ,153.

⁵ F., Copleston, History of Western Philosophy, Vol. I, 291.

⁶ F., Copleston, History of Western Philosophy, Vol. II, 68.

That which nothing greater can be thought must have real existence. Therefore, God has real existence. It follows from the first premise that anyone who has the idea of God can never deny the existence of God. From the second premise it follows that since the mind can conceive of God as the greatest being. Therefore, God exists not only in thought but also in reality.

Thomas Aquinas rejects the ontological arguments of God. He thinks that an actuality cannot follow from an idea. By having a thought of money, actual money cannot be found in pocket. He presents five arguments for the existence of God. First, God is unmoved mover, the cause of all moving forces. Everything in the world is dynamic, to explain this change and motion, must accept an unchanging, motionless ground, that is God. God is the ultimate source of all change and movement in the universe without being moved otherwise there is infinite regress. Second, every action has a cause, and there must be a primary cause or root cause behind all effects. Therefore, God is the self-existent and primary cause of all things. Third, everything in the world is contingent or dependent, and there must be an uncaused cause, who is the cause of all contingent beings. Fourth, there are less or more perfection in the world. A complete perfect Being is necessary to explain these various forms of perfections. Therefore, that absolute being is God. Fifth, the world's design suggests a final designer, and that designer is God.

From Aristotle to the medieval period, the main concern of metaphysics was to investigate the first cause, an eternal and unchanging being, as the essence of the changing world, and to study being qua being. However, the question arises: How can a being be both the divine substance and the general structure of the world?

“Aristotle is himself aware of the appearance of tension here, and takes pains to show that the tension is only apparent. On the one hand, he suggests that a science of first causes will identify the cause underlying the primary features of things, those features that are presupposed by any other features they may exhibit; and he seems prepared to say that since the being or existence of a thing is primary in this way, the Science that studies first causes will just be the science that investigates qua being. On the other hand, he seems to hold that any discipline that examines everything insofar as it is a being will number God among the items it seeks to characterize.”⁷

However, metaphysics in the 17th and 18th centuries was not entirely like Aristotle's thought. The agreements lay in the fact that the subject matter of metaphysics involves identifying the general structure of the universe and the divine substance in its causal role. The disagreements, on the other hand, concerned topics such as the relationship between living and non-living things and the unique characteristics of human beings, which were considered part of physical science rather than metaphysics. Rationalists, nonetheless, included these topics in metaphysics by applying mathematical and experimental analysis. According to rationalists, the subject matter of metaphysics encompasses not only the existence and nature of God but also the distinction between mind and body, the immortality of the soul, and the nature and extent of freedom of the will. The question arises, however, as to how such different subjects can be related to the concept of metaphysics, given that these discussions seem disparate. In this respect, rationalists argue

⁷ Michael, J., Loux, *Metaphysics a Contemporary Introduction*, 3.
Volume-I, Issue-IV

that it is desirable to have a unique subject matter for metaphysics, which is being. Thus, metaphysics concerns the nature of being, and although discussions of being progress into various sub-disciplines, the main subject matter of each discipline remains being. For example, the discussion about the nature of being is called general metaphysics, while specific fields of metaphysical discussion are referred to as special metaphysics. The investigation of being as the essence of changeable things is called cosmological metaphysics, and the study of human beings as rational beings is termed rational psychology. The metaphysical discussion about divine being is referred to as natural theology. The rationalist views on general metaphysics and natural theology are identical to Aristotle's discussion of being qua being and his systematic discussion of the first cause. In contrast, cosmological metaphysics and rational psychology are entirely rationalist contributions to metaphysics. Although Aristotle's metaphysical thought differs significantly from that of the rationalists, it remains consistent with common sense, particularly his thoughts on God and the causal structure of the world. However, the metaphysical views of rationalist thinkers, such as Spinoza and Leibniz, are abstract and inconsistent with common sense. For instance, Spinoza derives thought and extension from the concept of infinite substance, and Leibniz posits that the world is created by windowless monads. Another goal of rationalist metaphysics is to refute empiricism, which holds that the source of all our ideas is experience and that knowledge must be justified by experience. According to this view, metaphysics cannot be justified by experience and is therefore meaningless, amounting to mere sounds without sense.

According to Kant, metaphysics was once considered the mother of all knowledge. However, it has now become a subject of controversy. The reason is that no one has been able to arrive at a conclusive solution in metaphysics, as philosophers consistently disagree. Since metaphysics cannot be known through experience, it poses a significant challenge. When based on reason alone, metaphysics often leads to skepticism and dogmatism. To avoid these extremes, some adopt indifferentism, which views discussions of metaphysics as a waste of time. Kant thinks that rationalists discuss the theory of knowledge without determining the limits of knowledge. Although empiricists, such as Locke with his physiological perspective and Hume with his psychological perspective, believe that there is a limit to knowledge, they still discuss metaphysics from an empirical standpoint. According to Kant, transcendent metaphysics that goes beyond the world of experience is not possible. He argues that the scope of knowledge is confined to possible experience, and without experience, there is no knowledge. Since there is no experience regarding the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, or the freedom of the will, there can be no knowledge about these topics. This kind of metaphysics is therefore confused and fallacious. When thought ventures into areas beyond experience, it becomes muddled. Kant distinguishes between transcendental and immanent metaphysics, advocating for a more experientially grounded approach. Metaphysics provides knowledge about the world and is a priori. The task of metaphysics is to discuss the a priori conditions of knowledge, aiming to discover the conditions of our thought and experience. Kant approaches this topic from a transcendental point of view, providing a structure of thought equivalent to the Copernican revolution. According to him, all knowledge begins with experience, but it does not follow that all knowledge arises out of experience. In other words, experience initiates knowledge, but the mind also contributes

to it. The first statement indicates that experience precedes knowledge, while the second statement highlights the mind's role in shaping knowledge. By making these statements, Kant shifts away from both the rationalist view of innate ideas and the empiricist view of knowledge about the external world.

Bibliography:

1. Smith, N. K, *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, London, Macmillan and Co Limited, 1929.
2. Loux, Michael J, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, New York and London, Routledge, 2006.
3. Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979.
4. Hume, David, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, USA, Oxford University Press, 2007.
5. Copleston, F, *History of Western Philosophy*, Vol II, IV, New York London Toronto Sydney Auckland, Doubleday, The Newman Press, 1962.
6. Stace, W.T., *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy*, London, Macmillan press, 1982.
7. Das, Rasvihary, *A Handbook to Kant's Critique of Pure reason*, Bombay, Hind Kitabs Limited Publishers, 1949.
8. Cohen, S. Marc, and C. D. C. Reeve, "Aristotle's Metaphysics", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2025 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2025/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Bishwajit Bhattacharjee

Asst. Professor, Karimganj College, Karimganj, Assam, 788710

Mo: +919435750458, +917002548380

Email: editor@novelinsights.in

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBER

1. **Prof. Dr. Soma Bhowmick**, Vice-Chancellor, William Carey University, Meghalaya, India. **Email:** vc@williamcareyuniversity.ac.in
2. **Dr. Rupasree Debnath**, Assistant Professor, Department of Bengali, Gauhati University, India. **Email:** rupasree@gauhati.ac.in
3. **Dr. Kalyan Banerjee**, Associate Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, Kazi Nazrul University, West Burdwan, West Bengal, India. **Email:** kalyan.banerjee@knu.ac.in
4. **Dr. Saugata Kumar Nath**, Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Assam University, Schar, India. **Email:** saugata.kumar.nath@aus.ac.in
5. **Dr. Nilajan De**, Asst. Professor, Dept. of History, Rabindra Sadan College, Karimganj, Assam, India. **Email:** nilanjande@rabindrasadangirlscollege.in
6. **Dr. Swarnima Sharma**, Assistant Professor, Department of Liberal Arts and Humanities, Chandigarh University, Mohali, India. **Email:** Swarnima.uila@cumail.in
7. **Dr. Amitava Kanjilal**, Associate Professor, Dept. of Pol Science, Siliguri College, Siliguri, Darjeeling. West Bengal, India. **Email:** dr.amitavakanjilal@gmail.com
8. **Dr. Chandi Charan Mura**, Assistant Professor, Department of Bengali, Maharaja Manindra Chandra College, Kolkata, India. **Email:** cmbengali@mmccollege.ac.in
9. **Dr. M. Sandra Carmel Sophia**, Professor & RPAC, Department of English, KLEF Deemed to Be University, Green fields, Vaddeswaram, Andhra Pradesh, India. **Email:** sophia@kluniversity.in
10. **Dr. Sheehan S Khan**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Tagore P.G. Girls College (University of Rajasthan), Jaipur, India **Email:** sheehan.shahab@gmail.com
11. **Dr. Shivender Rahul**, Assistant Professor of English & Head In Charge, Department of Humanities, Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur, India. **Email:** shivenderrahul@nlunagpur.ac.in
12. **Dr. Rajakumar Guduru**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Indian Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar, India. **Email:** rajakumarguduru@iitbbs.ac.in
13. **Dr. Sreetama Misra**, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar, India. **Email:** sreetama@iitbbs.ac.in

14. **Muhammad Mahmudur Rahman**, Professor and Chairman, Department of Political Science, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. **Email:** mahmud_polsc@ru.ac.bd
15. **Dr. PG Jangamlung Richard**, Registrar, William Carey University, Meghalaya, Shillong, India. **Email:** registrar@williamcareyuniversity.ac.in
16. **Dr. Md. Shahfiul Islam**, Professor, Department of Public Administration, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. **Email:** shafiul_luk@ru.ac.bd
17. **Dr. Md. Safiqul Islam**, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Chittagong, Chattogram-4331, Bangladesh. **Email:** islamcu@cu.ac.bd
18. **Dr Chander Bhushan Nagar**, Associate Professor & Head, Department of Political Science, Rakesh Sharma Block, National Defence Academy, Ministry of Defence, Gol, Khadakwasla-411023, Pune, Maharashtra, India. **Email:** polsc_instr3@nda.gov.in
19. **Prof. Sri Endah Wahyuningsih**, Professor Faculty of Law, Sultan Agung Islamic University, Indonesia. **Email:** endah.w@unissula.ac.id
20. **Dr. Fakrul Islam**, Professor and Chairman, Department of Public Administration, Islamic University, Kushtia-7003, Bangladesh. **Email:** fokhrulislam264@gmail.com
21. **Dr. Rajarshi Chakrabarty**, Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, The University of Burdwan, West Bengali, India. **Email:** rchakrabarty@hist.buruniv.ac.in
22. **Zhilwan Tahir Hama Faraj**, Doctoral Student, International Islamic University of Malaysia, Malaysia. **Email:** zhelwantahr94@gmail.com

Aim and Scope of the Journal

Aim:

Novel Insights is committed to promoting academic excellence and fostering meaningful dialogue in the humanities and social sciences. The journal serves as a dynamic platform for researchers, scholars, and practitioners to share original, impactful research that explores contemporary challenges, advances theoretical knowledge, and informs practical applications in these disciplines.

Scope:

The journal covers a diverse range of topics within the humanities and social sciences, including but not limited to:

- Literature, language, and linguistics
- Philosophy, ethics, and cultural studies
- History and archaeology
- Sociology, anthropology, and human geography
- Political science, public policy, and international relations
- Psychology and behavioral sciences
- Education and pedagogy
- Economics, development studies, and social policy
- Media, communication, and digital studies
- Law and governance

Novel Insights values interdisciplinary perspectives and actively seeks submissions that bridge the boundaries between disciplines. The journal welcomes a variety of contributions, including original research articles, critical reviews, theoretical explorations, and case studies. With a focus on both local and global issues, the journal aims to engage an international audience of scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, fostering innovation and intellectual exchange across the humanities and social sciences.

Guidelines

The journal Novel Insights is devoted to the publication of original works viz Research papers, Book Reviews, Article Reviews & abstract of thesis from the disciplines of Humanities and Social Science. The submission of aforesaid works to this journal implies that neither it has been published elsewhere previously nor is under communication for publication.

1. Submission of Articles: Authors/Researchers/Writers interested in submitting their papers to the Journal should send their article through Online mood only in English (MS word font- Times New Roman, Font size-12).

i) Title- Should be brief and informative.

ii) Authors Name- Name must be followed by Designation, Postal Address including E-mail ID and Phone Number.

iii) Abstract- Abstract should not more than 250 words.

iv) For compilation of bibliography, the latest edition of APA and MLA format is to be used.

2. Plagiarism: The Authors are requested to avoid plagiarism. In case of detection of plagiarism Authors himself/herself will be solely responsible.

3. Publication: The Publication of the Articles/Write-up will be only after the recommendation of the Editorial Board.

Review Process

All the manuscript will be preliminary examined by the Editor-in-Chief and then forwarded to the Reviewers & other Editors of the Journal.

The papers shall only be published after recommendation of the Reviewers & Associate Editors.

Information regarding the selection or rejection of articles/papers will be only through Email. The journal shall publish the article/papers only after completion of the formalities mentioned in selection letter. The journal will also not take the responsibility of returning the rejected articles.

At every stage preceding publication, the editors of the journal shall have the right to make corrections (if needed) in articles/papers to suit the requirement of the journal.

N.B.: Papers will be accepted only when accompanied with abstract (to be written in English only). Submission of papers without abstract (in English) or mere submission of an abstract without the paper would lead to non-acceptance of the same.

Publication Ethics

Publication ethics are the principles and guidelines that govern the conduct of authors, reviewers, editors, and publishers in scholarly publishing. Ensuring ethical practices is crucial for maintaining the integrity and credibility of academic research. Here are some key aspects of publication ethics of our journal:

Authorship: All authors should have made significant contributions to the research and agree to be listed as authors. Misrepresentation of authorship, such as ghost authorship or gift authorship, should be avoided.

Originality and Plagiarism: Authors should ensure that their work is original and properly cited. Plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, is unethical and undermines the integrity of scholarly publishing.

Data Integrity: Authors are responsible for the accuracy and integrity of their research data. Fabrication, falsification, and manipulation of data are serious ethical violations.

Conflict of Interest: Authors should disclose any potential conflicts of interest that could influence their research or its interpretation. These may include financial interests, affiliations, or personal relationships that could bias the work.

Peer Review: Peer review plays a critical role in ensuring the quality and validity of published research. Reviewers should conduct their evaluations objectively and provide constructive feedback.

Editorial Independence: Editors should make decisions based on the merits of the research and without influence from commercial interests, personal biases, or other undue pressures.

Transparency and Retraction: Journals should be transparent about their editorial processes, including peer review and publication criteria. In cases of serious ethical concerns or errors, journals should issue retractions or corrections as appropriate.

Compliance with Ethical Standards: Research involving human subjects, animals, or sensitive data should adhere to ethical standards and obtain necessary approvals from institutional review boards or ethics committees.

Publication Ethics Policies: Journals should have clear and accessible policies on publication ethics, including instructions for authors, ethical guidelines for reviewers and editors, and procedures for handling ethical issues or misconduct.

Responsibility of Publishers: Publishers have a responsibility to support and enforce ethical standards in scholarly publishing. This includes providing resources for editors and reviewers, promoting transparency, and addressing allegations of misconduct.

Publication Charge

- The authors should note that there is no submission fee; however, there is a reasonable publication fee for each accepted article to meet the cost of manuscript handling, typesetting, office cum admin expenses, web-hosting charges, up-loading charges, internet expenses, website update and maintenance, electronic archiving and other recurring expenses. The publication fee is obligatory for publication.
 - **Indian Authors:** The publication fee for single author per accepted paper is Rs. 1000.00 and Rs. 1200.00 for multiple authors.
 - **Foreign Authors:** The publication fee of the accepted paper is \$25 for single authored paper and \$30 for multiple authored papers
 - **Print copy:** Print Copy of the issue can be supplied on payment of Rs. 600.00 per copy. Annual subscription for the print copy is Rs. 2500.00 per Volume (inclusive of postal charges within India)
- Single print copy (Inclusive Postal Charge) can be supplied outside India on payment of 25\$ (inclusive international shipping charge) per copy.



Novel Insights, *An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*

A Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Research Journal

E-ISSN: 3048-6572

P-ISSN: 3049-1991

Published by **Uttarsuri**, Sribhumi, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://novelinsights.in/>

DOI Prefix: 10.69655

COPYRIGHT TRANSFER FORM

I/We.....
[the author(s) name], having the ownership of copyright of the article
entitled.....
do hereby authorize you to publish the article in the journal published by Uttarsuri,
Karimganj, Assam, India-788711.

I/We hereby declare that:

This article authored by me/us is an original work. It has neither been published nor has
been submitted for publication in any other print or electronic media. The article, in no
ways, infringes on the right of others and is free from any kind of libelous or unlawful
statements.

I/We have taken permission from the copyright holder and acknowledged the source on
necessary fields.

I/We assign the copyright of this article exclusively to this journal.

In case of multi-authored article, I have obtained permission to enter into agreement and
assign copyright from all the co-authors, in writing after they have agreed with the
norms of transfer of copyright of this journal.

I/We authorize editors to publish the article in the journal or in any other means with
editorial amendment, if they deem it necessary for publication. Further, I/We hereby
assign copyright to the publisher for its publication in any form/language including all
media, and exclusive right to use the matter for the life of the work.

I/We solemnly agree to indemnify the Editors/Publisher of the journal against all claims
or action arising from any breach of warranty on my/our behalf in this agreement.

Author/corresponding author's name & designation

Affiliation/name and address of institute:

Correspondence address of author:

E-mail id:

Mob/Ph no:

Place:

Date of Signing Copyright Form:

Signature of the Corresponding Author(S)

Novel Insights

An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies

297