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Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) under NEP 2020 for Sustainable Development in Society

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Abstract

Education is one of the most important and crucial determinants for social change, development and upliftment. Through education human mind can be molded in such a way that an effective standard of living can be attained. Keeping that in mind 'New Education Policy 2020' approved in Indian Cabinet on 29th July, 2020, aimed to bring holistic development in all aspects of the children. Children are the future of India and to ensure their better future the Indian Government emphasized on revival of good age-old practices along with sustainable development. The Government of India launched their mission 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' (Self-reliant India) to make India independent in all spheres of life. In the same tune NEP 2020 emphasized on IKS (Indian Knowledge System) for protecting and preserving cultural ethos, our rich heritage, traditional knowledge system etc. and thus to ensure the sustainable future of young generation. Presently as we can see the Govt. of India is focusing on the AYUSH Mantralaya, Yoga, Panchakarma, Art and Craft, Cottage industry, unsung heroes of freedom struggle, value education, mother tongue etc. to implement NEP 2020's mission and vision. The present paper is intended to discuss all these things. The paper is based on secondary sources.

Keywords: Atma Nirvar Bharat, Education, IKS, NEP 2020, Sustainable development

Introduction:

India is one of the oldest civilizations. It has been taking giant steps almost in all aspects because of her emphasis on education along with some good practices deeply rooted in Indian society from ancient time. Education is one of the crucial determinants for building a steady and elite society. In broader sense, education is an equipment for social change. Development, and upliftment can be brought about by imparting both formal and informal education. Proper Education can mold the minds for generations, ignite the young minds intellectually and help them in decision making. Therefore, right form of education is important for a balanced and sustainable society. For a greater change to bring in larger number of aspects, the focus should be on individual change and learning leading to the all-round development of the countrymen.

The growth and development of a country depends on hassle free systems and to eradicate problems in all systems, proper education is one of the major weapons. The process

lies on identification of the problems and obstacles in the path of progress. The major issues of Indian education started since the drastic shift from traditional learning system to modern learning system during the British rule. Due to colonization, many age-old significant practices, which were the essence of India, were lost in the name of modernization including the native languages which were seen as inferior at that time. But after threadbare logical and scientific analysis done by scholars, it appears that many age-old traditions like Yoga, Ayurveda, local handicrafts, metallurgy etc. actually can help to mitigate today's economic, psychological and social challenges. As it is the duty of every conscious citizen to pass our traditions to the next generation to ensure themselves to be culturally deep rooted, it becomes paramount need to preserve and protect those traditions by incorporating in curriculum. With this aim view, Government of India initiated and approved NEP 2020 in the cabinet. It was a much-needed change, a paradigm shifts from institutional education to a holistic development. It emphasized on obstacles of education and practical solution to it. To deal with the issues like drop out, lack of funding, lack of pedagogy training, outdated curriculum, neglecting traditional knowledge etc. NEP 2020 focuses on internationalization of education, promotion of Indian language and Indian Knowledge System, multidisciplinary and holistic education, digital empowerment and online education, skill development and employability, research Innovation and entrepreneurship etc. to prepare young minds for the challenges of the modern world.

Objectives:

The present paper intends –

- i. To bring the importance of IKS (Indian Knowledge System) into light so that age-old practices can be restored and protected and thereby ensured a sustainable life.
- ii. To highlight how NEP 2020 act as a powerful medium for fulfillment of Govt. of India's mission and vision of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'.
- iii. To show the importance of paradigm shift in education policy to cope up with the challenges of modern world.

Methodology:

The current study employs descriptive method here. The paper is based on secondary sources like articles, research papers, journals, GOI policies and project reports etc.

IKS at a glance:

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) represents a vast, organized spectrum of indigenous knowledge, developed over millennia. This includes foundational knowledge, sciences, engineering, technology, humanities and social sciences, philosophy and spirituality found across ancient texts and folklore in languages like Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, and various regional and tribal languages. Despite its richness in areas like astronomy, Ayurveda, mathematics, linguistics, metallurgy, public administration, and management science, much of this knowledge which has had a long-lasting effect for shaping 'Indianness' in true sense of the term, somehow has remained unexplored for decades. Hence, promotion of Indian languages and restoration of Indian Knowledge System is a game changing visionary step for giving India a strong identity through the 'Indian way' of doing things to the world. The Indian Knowledge System comprises of 'Jnan' (knowledge), 'Vignan' (Science), 'Jeevan

Darshan' (life philosophy) that have evolved out of experience, observation, experimentation, and rigorous analysis.¹

Ancient Indian education, including the Eighteen Vidya Sthanas or schools of learning, flourished in renowned centers like Nalanda and Takshashila, covering fields like art, architecture, science, technology, craft, engineering, and philosophy. This rich knowledge base brought both admiration and invasion, as it was India's source of power, wealth and identity. Today, this legacy is crucial for "knowledge diplomacy," which is set to shape global relations, showcasing India's enduring intellectual wealth that has enriched its civilization for millennia.

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) guides inquiry by teaching us how, in what way, and to what extent to question, using fundamental sutras to reshape our thinking. Rooted in principles like "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the world as one family) and "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah" (may all be happy), IKS offers a worldview centered on unity and well-being. Integrating IKS involves introducing its nature, history, and concepts into modern education, building Indian thought models, and applying these to solve contemporary problems. IKS should not be taught in isolation for mere preservation purpose. Instead, it should be made part of larger missions of the country like 'Space Science', 'Svasta-Bharat', 'Atma-Nirbhar-Bharat', 'Skilled India', 'Make in India' missions. This Mission-mode IKS integrity will serve the purpose. Change of mode "from Preservation to Utilization" will accomplish our goal to create Bharat as hub of emerging knowledge.

Importance of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in NEP 2020:

NEP 2020 is designed to overhaul the existing education system in India, focusing on making education more inclusive, interdisciplinary, flexible, and relevant to real-life situations. It places a strong emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy, vocational education, and critical thinking, while aiming to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical skills. The policy advocates for a curriculum that reflects India's rich cultural heritage and knowledge systems, fostering pride in the nation's intellectual history and traditions.

One of the policy's core tenets is to promote holistic education by breaking down the rigid silos between different streams of learning. By introducing interdisciplinary learning which is evident in advanced countries, it encourages students to develop knowledge and skills that are applicable across various fields. NEP 2020 envisions an education system that prepares individuals to adapt to global changes while staying rooted in their culture, values, and traditions.

Mere enacting education system to a more mechanical, artificial rather than avoiding interconnectedness with ancient traditions, ethos and values will lead to dehumanized individual. Hence, NEP 2020 focuses on incorporation of IKS including promotion of language, understanding diversity, honouring diverse religious philosophies, medicinal practices, techniques of agriculture, forest management etc. India is a linguistically diverse country. According to 2011 census report, there are 22 official languages, 270 mother tongue with at least 10,000 speakers and over 19,569 dialects. According to UNESCO several reports on educational psychology found that children learn and understand better in their mother tongue but due to lack of resources, teaching in most of the languages is not possible. It creates a language and literacy barrier. To solve this, NEP2020 focuses on effective use and

promotion of mother tongue which brings a ray of hope for minority language speaking communities and boost their confidence.

The diversity of India is a gift but also at the same time lack of understanding of it and not knowing how to utilize the diversity is a problem. But NEP 2020 envisions bridging the gap between different cultural, ethnic and religious groups. Incorporating collaborative engagements, outreach programmes, cultural exchange programmes in NEP 2020 enables young minds to develop a sense of respect and brotherhood and thereby fostering a healthy and vibrant environment.

IKS reflects an ancient, holistic worldview and includes practices like Ayurveda, yoga, traditional crafts, sustainable agricultural techniques, and the philosophical teachings of unity and compassion. Ancient literatures of India are replete with innumerable examples of such ethical and philosophical teachings regarding environment which is now very much discussed in environmental ethics. In ancient India, earth was regarded as mother and it can be found in Prithvisukta of the Atharvaveda when it says- '*mata bhumiḥ putruḥ Prithivya*' i.e 'Earth is my mother, and I am her son'. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad also says- '*Iyam Prithivi Sarvesam bhutanam madhu*' i.e 'This earth is the honey of all beings. It is the essence and milk of all beings'. [Br. Upa. 2.5]

The Rishis sang song for the glory of water, forest, medicines etc. In fact, all Rishis taught the values of having good relationship with the natural world. The great Rishis like Vyasa, Valmiki and others also wrote scriptures of eternal values under the trees and beautiful surroundings. Actually, the Vedic Rishis saw harmonious movement everywhere. They interpreted the harmony of nature as the law and order of the universe i.e Rta (the cosmic order). The concept of Rta was a governing or regulating principle and the whole of nature and the cosmos worked according to this principle. This principle which has been continuing since time immemorial stood for all regular phenomena. According to the ancient Rishis, a little disturbance in one sector would result in disturbance in the whole system. So, human beings must follow the eternal principles for the sake of their own welfare and to avoid destruction, misery and poor life. Moreover, a kind of holistic world-view is also found in ancient Indian ethics in which concept of **R̥na** (debt) to Gods, ancestors, fellow human beings was formulated. Thus, according to Hindus, we are born with certain debts which we are supposed to owe. These are – debts to nature (Devaṛna), to parents and forefathers (pitriṛna), to the great teachers (rishiṛna), to humanity at large (nriṛna) and to all living beings (bhutaṛna). Of these five debts of the Hindus, Devaṛna and bhutaṛna have ecological implications. Accordingly, we are indebted to the Sun, the air, the trees, and the mother earth and so on. Every bit of nature is responsible for our sustenance. Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, Kautilya's Arthashastra etc. have propounded sermons and methodology to keep environment pure and soothing. Bhagavad Gita also propounded mutual cooperation and interdependence as the key to preserve environment in its pure form.

The Jaina aphorism found in Tattvarthasutra '*Parasparagrahajanam*' also explains this very concept of mutual cooperation and interdependence. In ancient times, there was a close relation between human beings and nature. They preferred harmonious living with nature. They believed in the existence of divine spirits in all the elements of nature. So, even for religious purpose, trees were not uprooted, only the leaves and branches were used. Many things and beings of Nature are worshipped as deities. Further, Indian people advocate the idea of oneness that is all beings and things of this universe as members of one family

(*Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*). Ancient Indian scriptures prohibited men from disturbing biodiversity and ecosystem as it is against the tenets of religion. Isha Upanishad, one of the shortest Upanishads says, "Let no one species encroach over the rights and privileges of other species."² So, man has no right to encroach over other's rights and privileges. Everything is the property of God; and we have no right to destroy it.

In Ṛg Veda, tree worship was very popular and common. The tree worship is still popular today. It is believed that every tree has *Vrikṣa devata* 'tree deity' who is worshipped with prayers and offerings of water, flowers, and sweets and encircled by threads. The *Vṛkṣāyurveda* says that planting a tree is just as useful as having ten sons – "*dasakūpa sama vāpi dasa vāpi sama hradaḥ dasahrada samah putro dasaputra sama drumah*" [*Vṛkṣāyurvedah-5*] In our culture, *Tulshi*, *Pippala* and *Vataṛkṣa* are very significant. Throughout the *Vedic* literature, there are numerous *slokas* that discuss the importance and significance of *Tulashi*, *Vataṛkṣa*. Some of them are- "*jābadināni tulashi rūpitāpi jad grīhe. tābadoarṣha sahasrāni vaikunthe samahīyate*" [*Vṛkṣāyurveda-9*]

(i.e 'He will stay in Heaven for so many years as long as the *Tulsi* Plant will be in his home.') Similarly, plants and vegetables are addressed as mother in the *Oṣodhisukta* of *Ṛgveda*, -- 'O mother! Hundreds are your birth places and thousand are your shoots'.

"*śatan bu ambā dhāmoni sahashramuttu tu ruhaḥ*" [*Rgveda 10/97/2*]

Similarly, Ayurveda and yoga emphasize harmony with nature and physical and mental well-being. Ayurveda and yoga are now being internationally recognized and strengthening the economic wealth of the country and identity as well. During the time of Covid period also, many people were seen opting for traditional health practices like panchakarma (detoxification mechanism as per Ayurveda), Siddha therapy and naturopathy.

IKS and Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development calls for a balanced approach to economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight the need to develop societies in ways that are economically viable, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable. IKS, with its long-standing principles of sustainability and harmony, aligns naturally with these goals. As per UNDP report, India's HDI (Human Development Index) rank is 134 out of 193 countries³ and territories which is a major setback for us and there is lots of scope for improvement provided that SDGs are met properly. Here, IKS can act as milestone for improving India's HDI value.

Environmental Sustainability: Many aspects of IKS promote environmental sustainability by encouraging harmony with nature. For example, traditional agricultural practices, which are less resource-intensive and more bio diverse, can help reduce the environmental impact of modern agriculture. Concepts like "ahimsa" (non-violence) and "prakriti" (nature) reinforce a sense of responsibility toward protecting natural resources. Classical texts are replete with innumerable examples for environmental sustainability which is already discussed in the preceding paragraph.

Health and Well-being: The traditional Indian medical system, Ayurveda, emphasizes preventive healthcare and holistic well-being. It includes practices such as balanced diets, herbal remedies, and lifestyle adjustments that can alleviate the burden on modern healthcare systems while promoting a culture of wellness. By incorporating Ayurvedic principles, NEP 2020 can support the SDG of "Good Health and Well-being." Govt. of India

took initiative to promote Ayurveda under the banner of Ministry of AYUSH with a significant theme 'Har Din Har Ghar Ayurveda' and launched it on 23rd October, 2022 along with the celebration of 'Ayurveda Day'. The principal aim of this mission was to popularize and regenerate the Ayurveda among the masses.

Cultural Sustainability: Embracing IKS helps preserve India's diverse cultural heritage, which is a form of sustainable development in its own right. The NEP's focus on language preservation, traditional art forms, ancient architecture and cultural history ensures that future generations retain a connection to their roots, fostering a society that values cultural diversity and continuity. Collaborative engagements, outreach programmes, different cultural exchange programmes etc. can help not only developing a sense of belongingness and pride but also boosting avenues for tourism sector.

Resource Conservation and Innovation: Indigenous knowledge includes time-tested approaches to water conservation, sustainable architecture, and resource management. Practices like rainwater harvesting, traditional irrigation methods, and architectural techniques for climate-responsive buildings are examples of how IKS can offer sustainable alternatives to modern practices. India is a host of diverse indigenous communities and they have deep ecological understanding, local bio-diversity, medicinal, nutritional and species' knowledge. This knowledge can be utilized through research and innovation to preserve endangered species and bio-diversity and to bring the people back to healthy lifestyle. Traditional irrigation methods of Bodos, Ahoms and weather forecast of tribal people can play a vital role for sustainable agriculture and resource management. It also results in less use of pesticides in the farming land and increase soil fertility without diminishing the land quality.

Govt. Initiative for Integration of IKS in Education:

Incorporating IKS into education encourages students to draw on traditional knowledge while exploring innovative solutions for current challenges. NEP 2020 aims to introduce IKS in a structured way across different levels of education:

Curriculum Content: Including Indian history, literature, philosophy, and scientific achievements in school curricula will deepen students' understanding of IKS and develop pride in Indian intellectual traditions. This integration also encourages critical thinking and promotes sustainable practices inspired by indigenous wisdom. In order to realize these goals of NEP 2020, a number of activities have been undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Regulatory Bodies (UGC & AICTE) and HEIs. Some of the initiatives are-

- guidelines for Incorporating Indian Knowledge in Higher Education Curricula has been issued on 13.06.2023 - It emphasizes on the promotion of Indian Languages, Arts and Culture, and tries to remove the discontinuity in the flow of Indian Knowledge System (IKS) by integrating IKS into curriculums at all levels of education. It prescribes that every student enrolled in a UG or PG programme should be encouraged to take credit courses in IKS amounting in all too at least 5% of the total mandated credits (interested students may be allowed to take a larger fraction of the total mandated credits).
- Guidelines for the introduction of courses based on Indian heritage and culture have been issued on 08.05.2023 - to make people familiar with the rich cultural and intellectual heritage of India and offer short term multi-tier credit based modular programme with multiple entry and exit based on Indian heritage and culture. It

includes dissemination and imparting of knowledge of various dimensions of learning in the spheres of Universal human values, Vedic Maths, Yoga, Ayurveda, Sanskrit, Indian Languages, sacrosanct religious regions located in the Indian subcontinent, Archaeological sites and monuments, Heritage of India, Indian Literature, Indian Sculpture, Indian Music and dance forms, Drama, Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Crafts and Craftsmanship etc.

- Around 5200 internships on IKS have been offered.⁴

Research and Development: NEP 2020 envisions the establishment of research centers focused on IKS to validate, document, and promote traditional knowledge. These centers can foster innovation by blending traditional wisdom with modern science, creating sustainable technologies and practices applicable to contemporary life. GOI has already established 32 IKS Centres to catalyse original research, education, and dissemination of IKS.

Teacher Training: Training educators to understand and teach IKS is essential for its successful integration. Teachers can then communicate its relevance to sustainability and guide students in applying traditional knowledge to modern challenges. Guidelines for Training/Orientation of Faculty on Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has been issued on 13.04.2023 – it enables the faculties to generate a positive attitude towards IKS and promote interest in knowing and exploring more through induction programs and refresher courses. Conducted 50 faculty development programs, workshops, and National/International conference. 8000+ HEIs have started adopting IKS in their curriculum and worked on digitization of 1.5 Lakhs book.⁵

Community-Based Learning: Collaborating with local communities for experiential learning opportunities allows students to learn directly from practitioners of traditional knowledge. This approach not only strengthens the learning experience but also supports the preservation and dissemination of IKS. The HEI and universities may consider multidisciplinary course designing keeping in mind the international relationship and goodwill exist between different countries. For example, NCERT is undertaking inclusion of text highlighting historical ties between India and Indonesia at school level. Existing IKS courses may be linked to digital learning platforms (SWAYAM, NPTEL) and via ODL for learners across geographies.

Conclusion:

Thus, NEP 2020's focus on integrating the Indian Knowledge System into education marks a forward-thinking approach to sustainable development. By promoting an appreciation for India's indigenous knowledge, the policy empowers students to think globally while remaining rooted in their culture. The incorporation of IKS in education encourages sustainable living practices, environmental responsibility and a holistic worldview, which are essential for building a resilient and sustainable future.

India is a young country. According to the ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) 2023 more than 86.8 % of young people aged 14-18 years are enrolled in educational institutions. To bring long lasting generational development and change into the society these young minds are to be handled very carefully. Proper training and learning should be imparted to make them fully aware of their potentialities so that their contributions and innovative works can ensure the restoration of 'essence of India' to hold a peculiar identity in the global map of knowledge. By integrating IKS in NEP 2020 an attempt is made to arrive at 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) making India independent in all aspects.

Thus, NEP 2020 is a very methodical, thorough, forward-thinking, and sustainable strategy that, if properly executed, will undoubtedly pave the way for Atma Nirbhar Bharat. The NEP2020 strives to link academic and moral excellence with the welfare of humanity as a whole while fostering trust, compassion, and support. The NEP2020 is fully equipped to meet national objectives. Enshrined revolutionary changes will create young people who are Bharat Centric, capable of restoring the ancient educational system's lost glory and reestablishing Bharat as the Vishwa Guru.

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Women Entrepreneurs in Green Businesses: Breaking Barriers in Sustainability

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Abstract

Today's women leaders are performing tremendously in the business world. Even with their tremendously performance their valuable offering in the field of green business is highly unrecognised. An attempt has been made to explore the contribution of female handle and empowering business concerning mainly ecological and social context. Their strategy and problems have also been pointed in the study. The objective of this study to examine case studies of successful women entrepreneurs in green enterprises also examine how they deal with major problems such as lack of finance, limited access to markets and social discrimination.

This research has adopted qualitative exploratory approach, where cases of two Indian social ventures (Eco Femme and Phool). Co has been selected. Eco Femme women manage enterprise situated in Tamil Nadu producing washable cloth pads made with GOTS certified organic cotton. Its main objective is to promotes better menstrual health in an eco-positive and comfortable way while developing a favourable lifestyle and livelihood for underprivileged women. Based in Uttar Pradesh, India, Phool.co is a pioneering start-up that turns tons of discarded temple flowers once destined to pollute the Ganges into eco-friendly incense and "Fleather", a sustainable, vegan leather alternative.

The study is purely based on secondary data. Mainly organization websites, social enterprise reports, media interviews, academic literature and impact evaluations has been used to collect required information. To interpret the data, this paper used thematic analysis centred on three main objectives: (a) entrepreneurial experience and sustainable business model, (b) challenges encountered and strategies utilised and (c) impacts and learning for potential female entrepreneurs in the future.

The study reports that Eco Femme and Phool.co have succeeded in providing green alternatives to popular products. Furthermore, they have changed the dialogue regarding women and our role in the sustainability conversation.

By venturing into the overlooked sectors of menstrual hygiene and floral waste, Kishore and Ankit transformed stigmatized industries into leading examples of sustainable

entrepreneurship. In spite of many challenges these entrepreneurs have learned to overcome the challenges through a variety of means including cross-subsidies, provider engagement, digital marketing, skill building and community-based mobilization.

As per the research a more holistic strategy is required to improve women empowerment within the green business environment. Financial aids for women-led innovation, vocational training in environment sectors; developing market linkages, support for sustainability certificates, and encouraging community based decentralized green enterprises is much needed. Also, to get more women leading in sustainability, we need to focus on education, storytelling, digital technology, and supportive policies. At the end, this research highlights that women empowerment in green entrepreneurship is not only gender equity imperative; it is also a strategic route towards environmental and social sustainability.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurs, Green Business, Sustainable Development, Economic Empowerment

Introduction:

Women entrepreneurs are growingly being recognized as key players in improving sustainable development, especially in developing countries. Their businesses not only contribute to economic growth but also handle critical environmental issues by developing eco-friendly solutions. Most of the women are focusing on green businesses, but they are not fully aware about the factors which can lead their business success. In the field of emerging economies how women entrepreneurs work in eco-friendly sectors, the study was undertaken. It also highlights different opportunities that women entrepreneur found and the challenges they faced while running their business in this sector.

Women are taking a great part in forming eco-friendly businesses all over the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Converting waste material into useable product they have designed innovative products which are eco-friendly. Their innovative offering in the market has minimised environmental pollution also. These days, creative approaches have been adopted to solve the problems like plastic waste and deforestation. Instead of throwing waste material, they convert it in to useful products which people can use on regular basis. Their green business initiatives have shown favorable impact to the environment as well as to the society. Eco-friendly transportation project has also undertaken which reduce environmental problems and at the same time it works local community development also. These efforts showed how women entrepreneurs are using sustainable business models to deal crucial environmental issues.

In many times women faced difficult period in terms of funding requirements, technological inefficiency also faced gender-based discrimination. Women's active participation in the workforce becomes questionable due to some societal and political limitation. Many of them faced challenges to convert their green business idea into sustainable business due to lack of financial, technical and other institutional support. Cooperative approach is much needed to support women in green entrepreneurship.

This study highlighted the challenges faced by women entrepreneur by understanding the success stories of many women led green business. It has also pointed out the measures they adopted to overcome these challenges. The findings of this study will give valuable insights to policy maker, Government and other related organization showing in order to

women in the world of green business. This study focused the importance to develop a comprehensive and encouraging surrounding for women entrepreneurs.

Literature review:

Most of the researchers have viewed at how women become entrepreneurs and what helps or holds them back; particularly when it comes to running businesses that are environment and society friendly. Earlier study reported support from the government, access to money and equal opportunities are very important for women to succeed in business. In this section what past research says about the challenges women face, the support they need, and how their businesses can grow in a sustainable way is discussed?

Alzamel (2024) assessed how e-entrepreneurship can contribute to sustainable economic growth, focusing on Saudi women entrepreneurs. The study examines how the uses of digital tools have benefited women in Saudi Arabia overcome traditional obstacles to business by using e-commerce platforms to create green and sustainable businesses. The findings show that e-entrepreneurship is an important driver of women's economic and business growth.

Al-Qahtani et al. (2022) studied how women entrepreneurs contribute to sustainable development and help diversify the economy in countries rich in natural resources, with a focus on Qatar as an example. With the help of a systems-thinking approach and a validated conceptual framework, they explore key barriers cultural constraints, skill gaps, limited funding, and procedural hurdles and propose five integrated policy solutions.

Barrachina Fernández, García-Centeno, and Calderón Patier (2021) undertaken a systematic review of 28 peer-reviewed articles from 1980 to 2021 to examine the link between women's entrepreneurship and sustainability. The study explored four main areas i.e. gender differences, entrepreneurial impact, sustainable tourism and emerging perspectives. It also found that women entrepreneurs are more willing to socially and environmentally responsible ventures, especially in areas like tourism and community development.

Celestin and Vanitha (2018) studied how eco-entrepreneurs are developing businesses that balance both profit motive and environmental protection. To examine the factors, they have conducted many interviews in renewable energy sector, sustainable farming and waste management.

Gochhayat and Rout (2025) undertaken a study to examine the success of government initiatives to develop women entrepreneurs in manufacturing sector. The study found government support initiatives has formed a favourable impact of women-based businesses. It has reflected in their sales turnover.

Kimuli, Sendawula and Nagujja (2022) took a closer look at how women-owned microenterprises in Uganda's Owino market are actually tackling sustainable business. Rather than just looking at numbers, they sat down for in-depth interviews with ten different business owners to get the real story. By filtering these conversations through the lenses of Triple Bottom Line and Bricolage theories, the researchers highlighted how these women are making sustainability work on the ground focusing on everything from waste recycling and energy efficiency to keeping their employees motivated despite the hurdles they face.

Pérez-Morón, Thoene, and García Alonso (2023) examined how micro franchises can support women's entrepreneurship and sustainability in post-conflict Colombia. The study focuses on TechOil, a business run by women who have survived violence. It shows that starting this business out of necessity helps these women become independent.

Rahayu (2024) studied what motivates women in Indonesia to start eco-friendly businesses after COVID-19 pandemic. The results show that the pandemic increased women's awareness of environmental issues and boosted their confidence in starting green businesses. It highlights how both personal beliefs and the environment influence women's decisions to start sustainable ventures.

Mwesigwa et al. (2024) studied how institutional support like financial support, government policies and programs affect the sustainability of female-owned businesses in Uganda. The study found that all three dimensions of institutional support are significantly and positively associated with female business sustainability across economic, social, and environmental indicators. The research also focuses the importance of an enabling ecosystem including accessible finance, favourable regulations and targeted programs for enhancing the long-term viability of women-led enterprises.

Mahajan and Bandyopadhyay (2021) studied how women entrepreneurs help promote sustainability through their work in the energy sector. After reviewing existing literature, the authors analyze eight women-led enterprises across Asia, Africa, and the US.

Naguib and Barbar (2025) in their study used a three-level framework individual (micro), organizational (meso), and societal (macro) to examine the factors that support or restrict women's entrepreneurial participation. These factors were further interpreted through cognitive, normative, and regulative dimensions.

Objectives of the study:

The study is based on the following objectives:

1. To examine the success stories of female founders who are leading the way in the green economy.
2. To explore how these founders actually passed through the barriers of limited capital and gender-based biases to sustain in the market
3. To identify meaningful insights from the success stories to help bridge the gap for future female entrepreneurs in the green economy.

Research Methodology:

Through a qualitative and exploratory study, this research studied the important role played by women in the field of green business. Through these approaches comprehensive understandings of how these women entrepreneurs are actively participating and contributing sustainability goals of the nation. The main aim of this study is to analyse real life experiences of women driving enterprises as they face some common problems in the sustainability sector. By looking closely at how these entrepreneurs face and handle financial gaps, limited access to market and gender-based biases. The research also examined the prominent strategies and lessons that can inform future efforts to empower women in sustainable entrepreneurship.

This study adopted case study method to investigate the real-life difficulties of sustainable business. Taking the base of **Eco Femme** and **Phool.co**, the study furnishes a detailed observation at how women-led enterprises manage growth while maintaining an

environmental mission. These two cases form as the heart of our discussion into the 'how' and 'why' of green entrepreneurship

The information for the case studies has been collected through the websites of organizations reports on how they are doing with sustainability, briefs for investors groups that work with social enterprises, media and articles from academic people. The study also looked at what other researcher have written about women who start their businesses.

The case study analysis was divided by three thematic areas as per the objectives of the study:

1. **Entrepreneurial Journey and Business Model**– This aspect looks at how the enterprise began the ideas and innovations that shaped its development, and the ways in which sustainability has been integrated into its business operations.
2. **Barriers and Strategies**– This part examines the major difficulties faced by the enterprise, particularly in obtaining finance, reaching markets, and gaining social acceptance, and explains the practical steps taken to address these challenges.
3. **Impact and Lessons Learned**– This section evaluates the social, environmental, and economic contributions of the enterprise, with special attention to its role in promoting women's empowerment and demonstrating leadership in sustainable practices.

The study undertook **athematic analysis** approach was used to analyse and interpret observed data. Happening themes were studied to find out patterns and insights that sound across both case studies. This method allowed for the creation of a inclusive understanding of the actual realities of women entrepreneurs in the green business and the impacting factors behind their success.

Case Study on Eco Femme:

Eco Femme is women founded social enterprise, based in Tamil Nadu, India. This is sustainable entrepreneurship in menstrual health with re-useable cloth pads that are environmentally friendly and socially responsible. Eco Femme preserves the environment, while also providing avenues for social and economic empowerment. Their pads are made from GOTS-certified organic cotton. They are intended to last about 75 washes, or nearly four years of use. These products are naturally clean and sustainable; they have offered a wide range of products to meet their customer's needs. Eco Femme operates a cross-financing model in which sales volume from the upscale and foreign market helps subsidize the cost of production for women to make the product affordable and sustainable. The company earns revenue through several channels including sales on its website, partnerships with NGOs and retail channel participation.

The effective and ethical Eco Femme model contains various elements of sustainability, such as materials and certification, as well as the principles, for instance, transparency and equality. Eco Femme used numerous elements of sustainability, for instance, natural cotton to represent comfort, durability and gentleness. The initiative contains several repeating practices from the moral collection and the ethical business guidelines. The pads comprise layers of cotton that are slightly thick, contributing to the waste-minimizing appearance of the organization's reach. Eco Femme's circulation has a structured reach as the organization applied ethical principles to deliver an excellent result. The initiative also contains a sense of depth since it is angled on sustainability and ethical practices.

Giving education to the people is also one part of Eco Femme's mission. Eco Femme applied the principles of education while operating, for instance, awareness campaigns and training programs. The scale and proportion of Eco Femme can be explained using traditional programs, which possess a similar distribution. The latter results in distortion of the outreach since it has a massive head to body ratio presenting a child-like figure. The Eco Femme sensitization lies in a well-structured space and is scaled to a reasonable degree. It is a large-scale outreach of more than 110,000 women and girls from schools to NGO collaborations. Eco Femme's mission by the organization implies the elements and principles of health such as education and adoption. The initiative has training programs to indicate knowledge and awareness and a reasonable amount of collaboration for sensitization. It comprises three pillars with the organization occupying the most prominent space and two NGO and school backgrounds, both being at the top. The positioning of the mission is community-centered, exerting weight on one side, thus making it have organizational balance.

Eco Femme's main challenge revolves around the perception of reusable menstrual products by people. Satisfaction as well as habitual behaviour along with certain beliefs makes it quite difficult for many women to switch from disposable pads to reusable ones. Hygiene is also not well understood and accepted, making acceptance more difficult. Keeping this in mind, Eco Femme has invested a lot into education and brand awareness. The organization conducts community-based campaigns to eradicate misconceptions. These initiatives make women understand the importance of reusable cloth pads in long run.

Financial sustainability is another issue that Eco Femme needs to cope with. Eco Femme has to find the right balance between sustaining the cross-subsidy model and realising its long-term financial objectives. Their business relies on selling in foreign markets to be able to offer its products at a pauper rate for lower income generating Women in India. Income from the international market is crucial for financial stability. Eco Femme also requires consistent funding for product / design, marketing & outreach programs. In order to meet these demands, the enterprise has engaged in crowd funding and strategic partnerships to keep their business afloat whilst creating more opportunities for growth.

Case Study on Phool.co:

Phool. Co – is an Indian green start-up from Kanpur that empowered & enhanced women to transform the floral waste ecosystem in India. Founded in 2017, Ankit Agarwal is its founder. One such company is Phool, an upcycling company that repurposes old flowers from temples and makes handmade Incenses along with Compost and "Fleather", a 100% compostable vegan alternative to cow leather. What started off as a protest against the fallout of hundreds of tons worth of temple waste being released into our water bodies is now becoming an enterprise which not only talks about sustainability but also social empowerment by way of environmental development and societal upliftment.

Phool's co is based on circular economy principles which are one of its major strengths. The company collects raw materials locally; used flowers from temples; and processes them using its own methods. It sells its sustainable products in both domestic and international wholesale markets, e-commerce markets as well as through collaborations with sustainable fashion and wellness lifestyle brands. It has fair for Life - Fair-trade and Ecocert Organic & Natural certifications which increase credibility in the global market for

eco-friendly consumers. Importantly, Phool's co is being developed by women. The initiative has provided a decent livelihood to more than 100 Dalit women who used to engage in Manual Scavenging earlier. The women are trained in flower picking, the manufacturing of products and packaging so that they can become financially independent as well as socially empowered.

Phool. Co faced multiple challenges – mainly funding, market access and stigma. In the beginning, a lot of investor money took time to come in because people were hard-pressed to invest in such an unconventional business-like flower recycling. But, Phool increasing dual environmental and social return on investment by proving them. Co to raised high-profile constituents including IAN Fund, Social Alpha and Alia Bhatt. This also meant that Phool.co could speed up and scale up its R&D operations for products like Fleather. Market entry for Phool was through the unorganized incense and fragrance market with a strategy based on quality, branding and certification. Certifications from Fair-trade and Ecocert provided access to premium markets, both domestically in India and internationally. Initially, recruitment of women from below-the-line castes faced opposition to doing so in the localities. Phool. Co mitigated this by holding monthly community dialogues and preparing a case for how to empower these women. With these women's financial independence and visibility, society started to change. To address these challenges, Phool. Co staying to this tune for those who do educations and research partnerships such as international Partnership such as with IIT Kanpur to promote innovation and credibility. Storytelling through digital media was also very effectively used in communicating the why of the brand which helped pull customers as well as collaborators toward it.

Discussion:

Case studies of Eco Femme and Phool. Ownership in the "Green" Economy business practices of women-led or women-enabling green businesses will have a cascading impact without violating the balance between ecology, economy, and society. They belong to different fields (menstrual health and floral waste management), yet both share examples on how sustainability could be embedded at the core of a business model to yield ecological as well as social returns. But one measure of success all these ventures share is that they have established new standards for the convergence of innovative practice with deep social mission. Eco Femme pioneered in an arena, menstrual health, that has for too long been relegated to the shadows by making reusable organic cotton pads and funnelling menstrual education into its outreach. Phool. Co, in contrast, made what was considered a back seat problem – temple flower waste – into a globally met need through the innovation of "Fleather" and other biodegradable products. These innovations not only help the environment; they also redefine how some consumers think about eco-living.

Both start-ups managed to break financing, market access, and social mores on their way there. Eco Femme accessed a cross-subsidy model and with some effort in education campaigns succeeded in breaking resistance to reusable for menstruating women and girls. Phool.co gathered high-profile support by underscoring the double-edged impact of its environmental and social mission by tackling caste-based prejudices head-on through employment and empowerment of marginalized women. These approaches are indicative of a more general pattern in which socially directed green ventures leverage their stories of impact to establish brand legitimacy and attract external support. These results support

that when we provide women with the right levers, such as educations, financial resources, markets, and networks, they can create businesses that not only do financial well, but also are making real contributions to their societies reaching development goals. Furthermore, the twin emphasis on social inclusion and ecological restoration render such enterprises as replicable models in other cases.

Conclusion:

Eco Femme and Phool. Co are examples of how women-led or women enabling green and socially inclusive business can truly contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 13 by merging ecological restoration with social empowerment. Both succeeded against tremendous headwinds— market resistance, financial scarcity and social stigma— by intertwining their innovative operations with a deep social mission. Offering fair pay, training and sustainable employment for women is not just a concrete step towards improving their lives— it serves to strengthen community resilience. They were further scaled by strategic alliances, CSR certification and education campaigns. These cases make it clear that backing women with access to education resources will allow climate smart businesses to grow into a model scalable inclusive sustainable development.

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Exploring the Rich Heritage of Bangladesh's Tribal Communities and Their Culture

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Abstract

The study has explored the preservation of indigenous cultural heritage in Bangladesh by focusing on three critical factors: land security, mother-tongue education and community engagement. The purpose has been to investigate how these elements are contributing for sustaining cultural identity among tribal groups. A quantitative survey-based approach has been applied with the involvement of 100 respondents from major tribal communities such as Chakma, Marma, Garo, Santal, Tripura, Khasi and Rakhine. Data have been collected using a structured questionnaire and analysis has been conducted through multiple linear regression through SPSS. The findings have revealed that land security and mother-tongue education have shown significant positive impacts on cultural preservation, while community engagement has shown a positive but non-significant influence. Mother-tongue education has been identified as the strongest predictor by highlighting the importance of early education in indigenous languages for sustaining heritage. Land access has also played a crucial role by ensuring continuity of rituals, ecological practices and ancestral connections. However, limited community participation in rituals and crafts has reduced its independent effect on heritage preservation. The study has concluded that cultural sustainability requires both institutional reforms and grassroots participation. So, policies must secure land rights, strengthen native-language education and create inclusive platforms for cultural activities. By doing so, Bangladesh can protect the diverse traditions of its tribal peoples and ensure their active contribution to the nation's cultural fabric.

Keywords: Indigenous Heritage, Land Security, Mother-Tongue Education, Community Engagement, Cultural Preservation, Bangladesh Tribes, Tribal Rights.

Introduction:

Bangladesh has been home to diverse indigenous communities who have been contributing the cultural richness of the nation. Reports have estimated that there are more than fifty distinct groups who are speaking over thirty-five languages (IWGIA, 2025). These groups, including Chakma, Marma, Santal, Garo, Tripura, Khasi and Rakhine, have carried unique traditions, rituals and folk literature that are connecting past and present generations. Despite their significant contribution to cultural identity, indigenous peoples have been facing challenges in protecting their heritage.

One of the most pressing concerns has been the lack of access to education in mother tongues. Indigenous children have often been forced to learn in Bengali, which has been caused high dropout rates and weak cultural transmission (Islam, 2020). Without institutional support, young learners have been losing both linguistic skills and the deeper values embedded in their native languages.

Land security has also been a critical issue. For centuries, indigenous peoples had been depending on ancestral lands for their livelihood and spiritual practices (*Indigenous Peoples' collective Rights To lands, Territories And natural Resources*, n.d.). However, they have often faced eviction, dispossession and legal exclusion (Roy, 2000). Studies have shown that the absence of collective land rights has weakened their ability to sustain rituals and ecological practices tied to territory (Bappi, 2024).

Community participation in festivals, rituals, crafts and storytelling has been another vital aspect of cultural preservation (Banda et al., 2024). These activities have strengthened identity, social bonds and intergenerational learning. Yet, modernization, migration and lack of resources have reduced community engagement (Paul & Rakibuzzaman, 2024). As a result, younger generations have become increasingly detached from traditional practices.

Problem Statement:

A primary concern is the **limited access to education in native languages**. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, for instance, less than 8% of indigenous children have completed their primary education and only 2% of them have completed secondary education ("List of Endangered Languages in Bangladesh," 2025). Additionally, **land security** is a critical issue here. Many indigenous communities have been facing land dispossession and encroachment, so their traditional livelihoods and cultural practices are under the threat (Rasul & Gurung, 2024). Furthermore, **community engagement in cultural activities** is being declined. Factors such as urban migration, modernization and limited resources are mainly contributing to reduce the participation in traditional festivals, rituals and crafts (Paul & Rakibuzzaman, 2024).

So, this study's aim is to investigate the interplay between these factors – education in native languages, land security and community engagement on the preservation of indigenous cultural heritage in Bangladesh.

Significance of This Research:

The significance of this research is lied in its ability to link socio-economic issues with cultural outcomes. Previous studies have often focused on single aspects, such as rituals or education. However, this study has taken a comprehensive approach by analyzing the combined impact of multiple factors. The findings can inform policymakers, educators and indigenous activists in designing strategies that promote inclusive cultural sustainability in Bangladesh.

Literature Review:

Definitions, Identity and Constitutional Recognition:

One essential strand in the literature concerns how "indigenous" or "tribal" identity is defined in Bangladesh. Many scholars argue that a lack of constitutional recognition is affecting their identity, rights and land claims. For instance, the paper "*The Imperative and Reality of Constitutional Recognition for Indigenous Land Rights in Bangladesh* (2024)" have showed that indigenous people in Bangladesh do not have legal recognition of collective

land ownership (Bappi, 2024), therefore, forcible eviction from ancestral lands is being occurred continuously.

Another work, *“Colonial governmentality and Bangladeshis in the anthropocene: Loss of language, land, knowledge, and identity of the Chakma in the ecology of the Chittagong Hill tracts (2024)”* has discussed how have national policies, historical colonial legacies and state practices been marginalizing the indigenous identity (Urmee Chakma & Shaila Sultana, 2023). The scholars have showed how these practices have been controlling that who is allowed to speak, who is counted and whose knowledge are being counted.

In addition, the *“Joint Submission on the Human Rights Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh”* has reported that the state does not fully recognize indigenous peoples (IWGIA, 2023).

Language, Literature and Oral Traditions:

“Humanistic Values of Indigenous Languages in Bangladesh (2020)” has explored how children from indigenous household's struggle in school because the system is designed for the Bengali language. Many indigenous students are dropped out or get low grades since their native languages are not supported (Islam, 2020).

“Folk Literature of Bangladeshi Ethnic People: A Study on Manipuri, Chakma, and Tripura Tribes (2025)” has looked at folk stories, songs and other oral forms among these three groups. It has showed how folk literature preserves values, social norms, cosmology and moral lessons. The study also notes that folk literature often reflects gender roles, land relations, spiritual beliefs and seasonal cycles (Dr. Md Zahidul Islam, 2025).

Material Culture, Fashion and Aesthetics:

The study *“Fashion of Indigenous People in Bangladesh: Exploring Traditional Clothing Process of Chakma Tribe (2021)”* has examined how clothes are made in Chakma communities. It also has showed the weaving techniques, patterns, use of color and how attire can expresses the identity, status and cultural meanings (Mahbub et al., 2021). It also has mentioned that how these clothes are used in festivals and daily life.

“Indigenous Costume Color of Bangladesh: A Traditional Context for Cultural Revival (2022)” has focused on the costume color via visual and statistical analysis. It has suggested that costume colors can embody traditional aesthetics. By doing that, they connect present day with past meanings. Also. this study has revealed how color choices are not random and showed the links to locality, mythology, environmental context and symbolic meaning (Minhus et al., 2022).

“Building Pattern Technique of an Indigenous Community – Does Its Appearances a Distinctive Representation?” has examined indigenous built forms and discussed architecture and structures of indigenous groups in Sylhet (and elsewhere). It has also suggested that building techniques can reflect on responses to environment, materials and cosmological ideas (Rahman et al., 2021).

Rituals, Festivals, Religion, and Worldviews:

“Implementation of Indigenous environmental heritage rights: an experience with Laitu Khyeng Indigenous community, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh” has discussed how environment and spiritual traditions are bound. It is showing that many practices around rivers, forests, hills are not only economic but also sacred (Datta, 2019). It has also showed

how development and conservation projects can often ignore spiritual and ritual dimensions.

There is literature on Rajpunyah, a major festival in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where tribal King's circle heads had collected and distributed taxes and hold fairs ("Rajpunyah," 2025). The festival is a combination of political, ritual, social functions and reinforcing the local authority and identity.

Folk literature also has showed ritual cosmology— stories about ancestors, spirits, guardians of land. These beliefs have been guiding their agricultural practice, land use, relations with non-human nature (forests, animals) etc. Some studies have showed these beliefs are under pressure by religious conversion, loss of land, environmental degradation. For example, "Colonial governmentality (2024)" is showing how land loss can be caused of losing ritual practice and connection with sacred ecology (Urmee Chakma & Shaila Sultana, 2023).

Land, Environment, and Livelihoods:

The constitutional absence of recognition of collective land rights for them has some major consequences. Works like "*The Imperative and Reality of Constitutional Recognition for Indigenous Land Rights in Bangladesh*" is showing how this absence can create evictions, loss of customary land and lack of legal protection (Bappi, 2024).

Environmental justice studies, such as "*Development for whom? an Indigenous environmental justice movement in Bangladesh* (Hasan, 2022)" is showing how extraction, deforestation, infrastructure projects disproportionately can affect indigenous communities. They often have sometimes little participation in decision-making (Hasan, 2022).

"*Implementation of Indigenous environmental heritage rights* (Datta, 2019)" has explored how local environmental heritage, natural resources, customary rights are undermined by state and non-state interventions including land grabbing, imposition of forest laws and development projects without informed consent (Datta, 2019).

Challenges, Social Change and Cultural Erosion:

In "*Humanistic Values of Indigenous Languages* (2020)", scholars have reported that education system is forcing indigenous children to use Bengali rather than using their own mother-tounge so they have been losing their languages, identity, many students can not complete their school properly (Islam, 2020).

"*Colonial governmentality and ... Chakma ...* (2024)" have also showed how national ideologies privilege Bengali language, culture and nationality which are marginalizing non-Bengali languages and norms. It is also showing how indigenous people are expected to assimilate (Urmee Chakma & Shaila Sultana, 2023).

Studies of material culture are mentioning the decline trend in traditional crafts (Sharmin, 2020). Here, it is found that many weaving or dress practices are no longer profitable. On the other side, younger generations do not always learn these skills for their livelihood.

Religious conversion, migration (especially of youth to cities), media consumption, exposure to non-indigenous norms is also reported as such influences that transform or sometimes erode traditional culture in their tribal life (Santo Chicham, 2022).

Rights, Representation, and Political Participation:

Another major focus is the legal, political and social rights of indigenous peoples including policies, participation, representation, advocacy and how communities themselves act.

Many Indigenous groups do not have constitutional recognition as “indigenous/tribal,” which affects their ability to access state protections (Bappi, 2024). However, “The Joint Submission on the Human Rights Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh (2023)” has provided outlines gaps in access to justice, discrimination, lack of legal protection and poor participation in public affairs. It has estimated there are more than 54 indigenous peoples are speaking more than 35 languages (IWGIA, 2023).

Environmental justice movement work (Hasan 2022) is showing that indigenous communities are mobilizing. They have been resisting exploitation of land without their consent. Moreover, they demand free, prior, informed consent (FPIC). Again, they demand more say in how development or conservation happens (Hasan, 2022).

Research Gap:

- ✓ Limited empirical research on the combined effect of land security, mother-tongue education and community engagement on preserving tribal cultural heritage in Bangladesh.
- ✓ Most studies focus on individual aspects such as education or rituals but rarely quantify their collective impact on cultural preservation.
- ✓ Lack of updated statistical data linking socio-economic factors with actual participation in cultural activities among different indigenous communities.

Objectives:

- ✓ To examine the **impact of access to ancestral land** on maintaining traditional cultural practices.
- ✓ To assess how **education in native languages** influences cultural knowledge and transmission among tribal youth.
- ✓ To investigate the relationship between **community participation in festivals, rituals, and crafts** and overall cultural preservation.

Hypotheses:

- ✓ **H1:** Greater access to ancestral land is positively associated with stronger cultural preservation.
- ✓ **H2:** Higher participation in mother-tongue education is positively associated with stronger cultural preservation.
- ✓ **H3:** Increased engagement in cultural activities is positively associated with stronger cultural preservation.

Conceptual Framework:

The following diagram is showing the conceptual framework of the study.

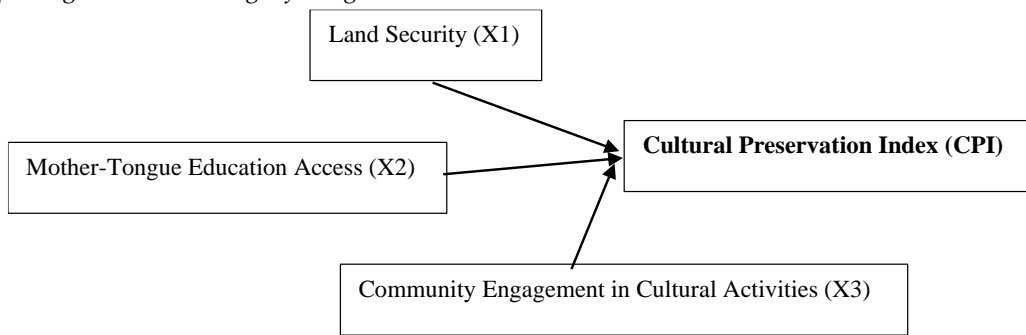


Fig 1: conceptual framework

Cultural Preservation Index (CPI): It is measuring the extent to which tribal communities maintain and practice their heritage, including language, rituals, crafts, festivals and folk literature.

Land Security (X1): This variable is measuring the extent of access to and control over ancestral land for cultural and livelihood purposes

Mother-Tongue Education Access (X2): This independent variable is showing the availability and participation in early education in the community's native language

Community Engagement in Cultural Activities (X3): It is showing the frequency and participation of community members in festivals, rituals, craft-making and oral storytelling

Methodology:

This study has been adopted a **quantitative survey-based approach** to examine the factors influencing cultural preservation among Bangladesh's tribal communities. The target population are the members of major tribal communities such as Chakma, Marma, Garo, Santal, Tripura, Khasi and Rakhine. A total of **100 respondents** were surveyed using a structured questionnaire. The survey has captured demographic information, including age, gender, education, occupation, tribe and household income, as well as measures of cultural preservation, land security, mother-tongue education access and community engagement in cultural activities.

The **dependent variable** in this study is the **Cultural Preservation Index (CPI)**, which is reflecting the extent to which respondents maintain and practice their heritage, including language, rituals, crafts, festivals and oral traditions. The **independent variables** are **Land Security (X1)**, **Mother-Tongue Education Access (X2)**, and **Community Engagement in Cultural Activities (X3)**. All variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

For data analysis, **multiple linear regression** was employed to assess the relationship between the independent variables and the CPI. The regression model is specified as follows:

$$CPI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

where β_0 represents the intercept, β_1 - β_3 are the coefficients for the independent variables and ϵ is the error term. Data were analyzed using SPSS and composite scores for each variable were calculated by averaging the relevant survey items. Reliability of the constructs was confirmed through **Cronbach's alpha** and the model fit was evaluated using **R², adjusted R² and F-statistics**.

Findings & Analysis:**Table 1: Demographic Information**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)
Age (years)	18-25	20
	26-35	25
	36-45	20
	46-60	20
	60+	15
Gender	Male	55
	Female	45
Tribe / Community	Chakma	20
	Marma	15
	Garo	15
	Santal	10
	Tripura	10
	Khasi	10
	Rakhine	10
	Other	10
Education Level	No formal education	15
	Primary	25
	Secondary	30
	Higher Secondary	20
	Graduate & above	10
Occupation	Farmer	35
	Artisan / Craftsperson	20
	Teacher / Educator	10
	Student	15
	Govt. / NGO Employee	10
	Other	10
Household Income (BDT)	<10,000	20
	10,001-20,000	30
	20,001-30,000	25
	>30,000	25

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.993 ^a	.985	.985	.10468	.985	2118.178	3	96	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), CE, LS, MT

The regression model has been highly significant and has explained a very large proportion of the variance in cultural preservation. The **Model Summary** shows that 98.5% of the variation in the Cultural Preservation Index (CPI) has been explained by land security (LS), mother-tongue education (MT) and community engagement (CE). The adjusted R² is also confirming the stability of the model. The **F-statistic (F = 2118.178, p < 0.001)** is indicating that the model as a whole has been statistically significant (Frost, 2017).

Table 3: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	69.630	3	23.210	2118.178	.000 ^b
	Residual	1.052	96	.011		
	Total	70.682	99			

a. Dependent Variable: CPI

b. Predictors: (Constant), CE, LS, MT

The **ANOVA results** further are confirming that the predictors have a strong combined effect on cultural preservation. The regression sum of squares (69.630) has been far greater than the residual sum of squares (1.052), which shows that the model fits the data well (The Investopedia team, 2025).

Table 4: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.249	.063		-3.958	.000
	LS	.213	.061	.205	3.497	.001
	MT	.717	.085	.684	8.465	.000
	CE	.123	.104	.110	1.186	.239

a. Dependent Variable: CPI

The **Coefficients table** is providing the insight into the contribution of each factor. Land security has shown a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.205, p = 0.001$) as it is suggesting

that greater access to ancestral land is associated with stronger cultural preservation (*The Beta (β) Coefficient in Multivariate Linear Regression*, 2023). Mother-tongue education has been the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.684$, $p < 0.001$) which is indicating that education in native languages plays a critical role in sustaining cultural practices and traditions (*The Beta (β) Coefficient in Multivariate Linear Regression*, 2023). Community engagement has shown a positive but non-significant relationship ($\beta = 0.110$, $p = 0.239$), which implies that while participation in cultural activities supports preservation (*The Beta (β) Coefficient in Multivariate Linear Regression*, 2023), its effect is weaker compared to land security and mother-tongue education in this dataset.

Hypotheses Results:

H1 is Accepted as Land security has shown a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.205$, $p = 0.001$) and confirming that access to ancestral land contributes meaningfully to cultural preservation (Abhigyan, 2024).

H2 is Accepted since mother-tongue education has been the strongest and most significant predictor ($\beta = 0.684$, $p < 0.001$) (Abhigyan, 2024). This is showing that education in indigenous languages is playing a central role in sustaining heritage.

H3 is Rejected as community engagement has shown a positive but non-significant effect ($\beta = 0.110$, $p = 0.239$) (Abhigyan, 2024). While participation helps, it does not independently predict cultural preservation when other factors are controlled.

Discussion:

According to reports from the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Bangladesh is home to over **50–54 distinct groups** who are speaking more than 35 languages (IWGIA, 2025). This linguistic and ethnic diversity have been reflecting the rich heritage of the country's tribal communities. However, despite such diversity, their official population has been consistently underestimated in national records.

The **2025 census** has reported approximately **1,650,478 indigenous people**, which is close to 1% of the national population (*The Indigenous World 2025: Bangladesh - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs*, 2025). The **Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)** has provided a similar figure of **1,650,478**, broken down as 824,751 males and 825,408 females (Business post bd, 2022). These numbers align closely with the **2011 census**, which recorded around **1,586,141 people or 1.8% of the population** (Business post bd, 2022). The minimal growth over a decade is suggesting stagnation and, in some regions, even a declining trend. For example, in the **Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)**, the population of indigenous peoples has decreased from **920,217 in 2011 to 852,540 in 2022** (Priyam Paul, 2025). This declining trend is reflecting on migration, displacement and land-related challenges that have been documented in multiple studies.

In contrast, activist groups have consistently argued that the official numbers do not reflect the real situation. Their estimates are that the indigenous population closer to **4–5 million**, significantly higher than the government's reported **1.65 million** (Pavel Partha, 2024). This discrepancy is pointing to a deeper issue of recognition and inclusion, which directly impacts policy planning, resource allocation and representation.

Another critical development has been in the **legal recognition of indigenous groups**. Initially, the **2010 Small Ethnic Groups and Minorities Cultural Institution Act** recognized 27 communities. This number has now been officially increased to **50 groups** (Siddiqui,

2024). This recognition is an important step forward, but there remains a gap between legal recognition and practical implementation, particularly in areas such as land rights, education in mother tongues and preservation of cultural practices.

Regional distribution also presents important insights. Reports indicate that the **plains host around 80% of the indigenous population**, while the **Chittagong Hill Tracts contain the remainder** (IWGIA, 2025). This distribution is significant because it is highlighting the cultural variation within indigenous groups.

Recommendations:

1. **Ensure constitutional and legal recognition of indigenous peoples and their collective land rights:** The recognition of indigenous communities in the Constitution and national laws is necessary for their cultural survival. Without legal protection, they will remain vulnerable to eviction, land grabbing and discrimination (*International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Alternative Report Submission: Violations of Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Bangladesh*, n.d.). Recognition should not only be symbolic but must include rights to collective ownership of ancestral land. This step will secure their identity, strengthen their confidence and create a legal foundation for protecting their cultural heritage.
2. **Develop and implement primary education programs in mother tongues of tribal groups:** Education in indigenous languages is one of the strongest tools for preserving culture (Tara Chouhan, 2025). The government should introduce curriculum and textbooks in the mother tongues of major tribal groups. This will reduce dropout rates among indigenous children and help them connect with their heritage while also learning the national curriculum. When children learn in their own language, they can transfer cultural knowledge more effectively to the next generation.
3. **Train teachers from indigenous communities to strengthen culturally relevant pedagogy:** Only textbooks in local languages are not enough. Teachers must also be trained to respect and apply indigenous worldviews in classrooms. Recruiting teachers from tribal communities will bridge the cultural gap between students and formal education (Jessy T.M & A. Vijayanand, 2023). Training should focus on bilingual education, oral traditions and indigenous history, so that the education system becomes more inclusive and relevant.
4. **Provide financial and institutional support for traditional crafts, music, and festivals:** Cultural practices such as weaving, folk music and rituals are losing ground due to modernization and economic challenges (Mridha, 2023). Government and NGOs should provide financial aid, training workshops and fair markets for indigenous crafts. Institutional support should also be given to organize cultural festivals and document oral traditions. Such initiatives will help preserve traditions and also create sustainable livelihoods for tribal artisans and performers.
5. **Encourage community-driven cultural centers for intergenerational learning:** Local cultural centers can act as safe spaces where elders, youth and children come together to share knowledge (Pup, 2025). These centers should focus on language teaching, craft-making, storytelling and spiritual practices. If these are designed and managed by the communities themselves, such centers will ensure ownership and sustainability. Intergenerational learning will bridge the gap between past traditions and future needs.
6. **Establish monitoring bodies to protect indigenous land from encroachment:** Land encroachment has been one of the biggest threats to indigenous survival (Human Rights Research Center, 2025). Independent monitoring bodies, with representation from tribal

groups, civil society and government agencies, should be formed. These bodies must have authority to investigate land disputes, prevent illegal grabbing and safeguard communal land rights. Monitoring should be transparent and supported by legal enforcement mechanisms.

- 7. Promote inclusive participation of indigenous groups in policymaking and cultural institutions:** Indigenous peoples must not remain passive subjects of policy; they must be active participants. Government bodies, cultural institutions and development programs should reserve seats or quotas for tribal representatives (Aylwin Oyarzún, 2009). Their voices should be used to take decisions on education, land rights, environment and culture. By ensuring participation, indigenous peoples will gain agency and policies will become more responsive to their realities.

Conclusion:

The study has examined the preservation of tribal cultural heritage in Bangladesh through the lens of land security, mother-tongue education and community engagement. The findings have confirmed that both land access and native-language education have been decisive in sustaining cultural practices. Among these, education has been emerged as the most powerful factor, as indigenous languages are not only carrying communication value but also transmit social norms, values and identities. Land security has also been remained central, as ancestral territories connect cultural practices with ecological traditions and spiritual beliefs.

Community engagement has shown a positive but weaker role. While festivals, rituals and storytelling have helped to preserve identity, their independent effect has been limited in comparison to structural factors like land and education. This outcome has suggested that community activities require institutional and economic support to achieve stronger cultural impact.

The conclusion of the study has emphasized that cultural preservation cannot be achieved without addressing structural inequalities. Lack of recognition, insecure land rights and limited access to education in mother tongues have continued to weaken tribal heritage. Therefore, sustainable cultural preservation must be rooted in legal protection, educational reform and inclusive participation.

Bangladesh's indigenous peoples have held traditions that enrich the national identity. Their preservation is not only a matter of cultural diversity but also of justice, dignity and equality. By ensuring land rights, expanding native-language education and promoting community-led initiatives, policymakers and institutions can safeguard the living heritage of tribal groups. The study has affirmed that protecting indigenous culture is essential for building an inclusive and culturally vibrant society in Bangladesh.

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Appendix:

Variable	Question Code	Question	Likert Coding	Notes
Cultural Preservation Index	CPI1	I actively apply traditional knowledge or practices in daily life.	1=Strongly Disagree ... 5=Strongly Agree	Include in CPI composite score
	CPI2	I can accurately explain the historical/cultural significance of rituals.	1-5	
	CPI3	I/family participate in creating or maintaining traditional crafts/artifacts.	1-5	
	CPI4	I can recite/teach at least one folk song/story/oral tradition.	1-5	
	CPI5	I encourage younger generations to participate in cultural heritage activities.	1-5	
Land Security	LS1	My community has full control over ancestral land.	1-5	Include in LS composite
	LS2	Land ownership supports continuation of rituals/festivals.	1-5	
	LS3	Confident land remains under indigenous control next generation.	1-5	
	LS4	Limited/contested land negatively affects cultural activities.	1-5	Reverse-coded before calculating LS composite

	LS5	Land access allows maintenance of ecological practices tied to culture.	1-5	
Mother-Tongue Education Access	MT1	Children have opportunities to learn in native language at school.	1-5	Include in MT composite
	MT2	Educational materials are available in native language.	1-5	
	MT3	Early education in mother tongue enhances heritage understanding.	1-5	
	MT4	Schools encourage use of indigenous language in activities.	1-5	
	MT5	Mother-tongue education positively influences youth participation in cultural traditions.	1-5	
Community Engagement in Cultural Activities	CE1	I regularly participate in rituals, festivals, or ceremonies.	1-5	Include in CE composite
	CE2	I contribute to craft-making, folk art, or traditional music.	1-5	
	CE3	Storytelling/folk traditions strengthen community bonds.	1-5	
	CE4	I collaborate with others in organizing/preserving cultural programs.	1-5	
	CE5	Engagement increases my personal understanding/appreciation of heritage.	1-5	



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Female Agency in Indigenous Performance Traditions: Music and Dance in Tamang and Limbu Societies

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Abstract

Music and dance are not merely forms of entertainment, but they carry deep cultural significance. The tribal communities of India possess their own distinct musical and dance traditions. These give us an insight into their social structures, belief systems, practices, traditions and cultural values. Women's participation in these indigenous practices mirror their role and status within the society. Tamang and Limbu women of the eastern Himalayan region actively participate in their musical traditions. They also take part in various forms of dance. This has evolved their role as custodians of intangible cultural heritage. They also transmit it to the future generations. Using both primary and secondary sources, this paper aims to make an analysis of the Tamang and Limbu women in their respective traditional music and dance in Darjeeling Hills.

Keywords: Tamang, Limbu, Whai, Selo, Lang, Samlo

Introduction:

Indigenous women occupy a significant and respected position within their societies. As guardians of cultural heritage, they play vital role in preserving and transmitting traditions, customs and knowledge to the future generations. Their position as knowledge keepers enables them to preserve oral traditions, practice sustainable indigenous skills and transfer their cherished values to the young ones. They also safeguard the intangible cultural heritage including folk narratives, folk songs and dance forms that are markers of their distinct identity. Often, they also assume leadership roles in their communities. They have an extensive knowledge about various rituals, festivals and traditional healing practices. Their active engagement in the tribal social and cultural sphere enhances the indigenous way of life.

The Tamang and Limbu Tribes:

The offshoots of the eastern Himalayas are home to many indigenous communities who have been living there since time immemorial. Among these ancient communities, Tamang and Limbu are also included. Both have a unique history of origin. Despite sharing the same geographical location i.e. eastern Himalayas, they have distinct yet vibrant culture and traditions. Their social system is also different. Their religious adherence is also different.

Tamangs are majorly the followers of Buddhism while the Limbu tribe practice animism and shamanism.

It is said that the word "Limbu" has its origins in the word "Lingdong" which means bow and arrow. Hence, we can say that Limbus denotes a bow shooter or an archer. (Debnath, 2020) They speak their own language called Limbu Paan and their script is known as Sirijunga script named after their 17th century scholar Sirijunga Teyongsi. They are one of the oldest inhabitants of the Eastern Himalayas comprising eastern Nepal, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Sikkim. In fact, the word Sikkim comes from two Limbu words, "Su" meaning new and "Khim" meaning place. They are also scattered in North eastern states of Assam and Nagaland as well as the western parts of Bhutan. A census conducted by the Limbu Association of Darjeeling reports that the Limbus numbered around 50000 in the Darjeeling district and its sub-division including Kalimpong (S. Subba, 2018). They are also found in the plains of Duars (Debnath,2020). They call themselves as "Yakthung" or "Yakthum" which means "heroes of the hills."

The word Tamang is a connotative of two words "Ta" meaning horse and "Mang" means "warrior". Thus, it is commonly believed that Tamangs were the cavalry during the reign of King Srong Tsen Gampo in Tibet. Some scholars opine that the word Tamang came from their principal occupation as horse traders (Tamang, 2016). There remains a controversy regarding their homeland. Some scholars say that they were from Tibet while others opine that they used to inhabit the border areas of Nepal and Tibet. While the Tibetans history refers to them as Rongpa meaning foreigner indicating their origin outside Tibetan valley. Sudipa Lama (2024) writes that they were the cavalry who entered Nepal and settled in the Eastern Himalayan region. Eventually from there they also migrated to the neighbouring Darjeeling Hills and Sikkim. Today Tamangs are largely found in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and neighbouring state of Sikkim in addition to Nepal. They are also living in Assam, parts of North-east India and Bhutan. They have their own language which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages. They practiced oral traditions and did not have a script. Recently a new script called Tamyik Lipi has been developed by Tamangs based in Nepal. Tamangs are also known by different names such as Murmi, Mulmi, Lama, Bhootiya, Ishang, Nishung, Saing and Siyena Bhutia.

Position Of Women in Limbu and Tamang Community:

The Tamang and Limbu communities were given Scheduled Tribe Status in India in the year 2003 by the government of India after an extended struggle to attain tribal status. Both these communities possess a rich culture and unique customs and traditions that set them apart from each other and other communities of the region. The status of women in these communities can be understood from their beliefs and customs.

The Tamang community is essentially patriarchal but they consider women as significant part of their society. There is no inequality or oppression against women. The Tamang whai or song itself testifies the fact. A Tamba, who is regarded as a ritual expert or poet historian of the Tamang society, sings "Amailey hoi Amailey" three times at the start of Whai. It is an appeal to the mother. It honors Goddess Saraswati, also known as Rhuisang or Parvati, who is both the Tamang people's mother and their progenitor. This in a way indicates the crucial position of mother or female in the Tamang society. Not much is known about the traditional Tamang women. An appearance of Tamang women can be described as wearing an upper blouse called as Khenja and a lower long gown often resembling a long skirt. A pangden or

Female Agency in Indigeneous Performance Traditions: Music and Dance in Tamang and... Manisha Tamang piece of thick handwoven apron is wrapped around their lower body. Married women wrap the pangden on the front while unmarried women wrap it in the back. They also wear a traditional hat often having an embroidery of their cultural symbols like totola ful (trumpet flower) and dilbo.

Various customs and traditions of the Tamang janjati such as Chardam (Marriage ritual) helps to provide security and empowerment to women. Sudipa Lama (2024) has discussed extensively about the Chardam ritual that is performed in Tamang marriage in the bride's house.

“According to ancestral tradition, the Tamba from the bride's side makes a statement, declaring that the maiti (immediate family) gives their daughter to the groom's family as a promise that even though their daughter is taken away, she will still be a part of their family until her death and that her family still holds the right to her except her blood, flesh, and body.” Lama S (2024)

This ensures that the Tamang woman is treated well by her in laws and she also gets the right to retain her surname the entire life. Another important custom is that the groom's family starts looking for the bride. They send a Pong/Shyalgar to the bride's family. If the bride's family do not accept the pong, the marriage proposal is considered rejected. Widow Remarriage is also prevalent among the Tamangs. Majority of the Tamang people are followers of Buddhism. Tamang Buddhist women have a key role in Buddhist Gonpa or monasteries. They are essential part of any ritual and observations in the monastery. They are also active members of the Gonpa administrative committee as well. Their role is organising Buddha Purnima, Sonam Lhochar and other pujas along with men is indeed remarkable. Some women even lead the members. In addition, women as lay followers also form “Mhanipa Sanga” or prayer groups. These groups comprise of both old and young women. Men are also part of these shangas. Whenever any death occurs in their immediate society the members visit the bereaved family and conducts prayers for the departed soul. They provide consolation to the bereaved family. Today Tamang women have a good socio-cultural status. They are educated and empowered. We find them working in various fields as doctors, teachers, scholars, nurses etc.

Limbu society accords a high religious and socio-cultural status to women in comparison to other communities in the eastern hill (Chatterjee, 2021). They have myriads of roles to perform in their family matters and community. It is seen that these women take part in decision making and no festivals and rituals can be performed without the presence of women. The elevated position enjoyed by women is reflected in their religious practices. “Yuma” or the female deity is revered as their supreme God. Yuma or grandmother is considered as the creator and worshipped in all the occasions. The Limbu concept of the supreme deity, the creator is female which keeps it distinct from the mainstream religion (S. Subba, 2018). Various folk tales of Limbu also reveal the tribe's perspective about women. One such tale is about Mujingna Kheyongna;

“The narrative surrounding “Mujingna Kheyongna”, the first woman created exemplifies the intrinsic feminism. Mujungna Kheyongna depicted as a self-reliant and industrious is a paragon of female independence symbolising the foundational role women play within the community. Her journey to self-sufficiency demonstrated through her learning to sew clothes and adapt top her environment reveals a

Female Agency in Indigenous Performance Traditions: Music and Dance in Tamang and... Manisha Tamang perspective on gender that values women's independence and capacity as essential to social harmony and continuity." B. Limbu et al. (2024)

Limbu society is considered as patriarchal but their customs and practices like worship of female goddess, Sappok Chomen or womb worship, absence of polygamy, permission of widow remarriage etc. shows their attitude towards women is not biased. Their marriage rituals also provide women with security and rights including the right to dissolve the marriage if she is not given good treatment. They are provided equal opportunities in education and treated at par with men. Limbu women can be seen in many areas today as independent and successful.

Women In Indigenous Musical Traditions:

Music is an important identity marker of an indigenous community. Folk music is of profound cultural and historical significance. We can gain the knowledge about history, cultures, rituals etc by attending and perhaps listening to the songs and musical instruments of a particular community (Barman & Alone Hung Subba, 2022). Their songs provide an insight into their way of life and traditions. They speak about their origin, ancestors, and beliefs and help us to understand their social structure as well as relations with nature. Musical instruments are also part of indigenous identity and gives us glimpse of their arts and crafts as well. In addition, the involvement of women in the songs, dances and playing of instruments helps us to get an idea about the position of females in their society. In many tribal societies women are important part of the folk music. The Tamang and Limbu women are also actively engaged in their folksongs and dances. Their participation in fact helps in the promotion as well as preservation of the tribal music, songs and dances. Various form of dance is performed by Tamang and Limbu women across eastern Himalayas. However, considering the geographical limitations and scope of the study this paper focuses on the dance and song traditions practiced among the Tamang and Limbu women in the Darjeeling Hills.

Members of the Tamang community are highly fond of music. Music constitutes the principal part of their amusement and is the basic means of sharing of feeling and transmission of knowledge (Lama, 2014). Their songs are of different types. One important genre of songs is known as "whai. It is usually sung in Tamang language particularly by the Tamba. Tamba is usually an aged person and knows the Tamang rimthim (beliefs and practices). He is well-versed in Tamang language and is an essential part of the tribe's ritual and ceremonies. Tamang people also sing songs in Nepali language and it is known as "Tamang selo." Rhama is sung during the Tamang wedding by the Tambas. The tribe people also have an inherent love for dancing. Their dance is known as Shyaba (Tamang, 2016).

Both men and women enjoy dancing and singing. Tamangs songs and dances are usually accompanied with the playing of their main musical instrument, "Damphu". There exists an interesting folklore behind the creation of Damphu. This narration is found in the Tamang whai called "Damphu se Bala Whai". According to this whai, Tamang ancestor named Pengdorjee *memey* (great grandfather) created the instrument Damphu. Once he killed a wild deer (ghoral) and skinned it, dried the skin in the sun, made a circular frame from the koiralo tree and stretched the hide across the frame and fixed it all around with 32 little pegs made of the malla bamboo (Pyaasi Yonjan, 2017). Later he saw a Danphe (male pheasant) bird hopping and dancing. He really liked it and copied the bird's dance while playing the Damphu. It is said that Damphu was named after the bird Danphe. He also attached a

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wooden replica of the bird on top of the instrument. A tyap tyapey or splint to play the instrument is also present. This kind of Damphu is still made today. Raju Moktan a famous Damphu maker from Jorbungalow, Darjeeling said that that the 32 pegs and the splint represent different Buddhist Lakshanas or signs. (Ethnic cords, 2022. 12:01). Whenever a Damphare plays the Damphu, the wooden bird sprang with the beats of the instrument. Another important Tamang instrument is the Tungna which resembles a harp. It used to be played by the Tamang shepherd in the Himalayas.

In the Tamang musical traditions, women play an important role, often singing and dancing along with the menfolk. Their musical performances form an essential part of any Tamang festivals and ceremonies. They also play their musical instrument Damphu.

Whai / Damphu song: As discussed earlier Whai or whaee are songs in Tamang language. Whai is sung by the Tamba and accompanied with the beating of the Damphu. Whai varies in rhythm and tune. Some whai begins slowly and then gains pace gradually. It is often witnessed that Tamang women sing whai but are usually accompanied by men. In recent times, women's performance without any male involvement is increasingly seen during the Sonam Lhochar or Tamang New Year celebration. Sonam Lhochar is celebrated in the month of January or February. On the occasion of Sonam Lhochar, a three day's conference is held every year where all the Tamang people gather and celebrate the beginning of a new year with grandeur. Women also attends this celebration. Cultural Dances and songs are performed during these three days along with other items. Here women are seen participating in musical performances such as singing of whai and also playing of the Damphu. On many occasions, in Tamang villages like weddings, we often find old men and women sing whai to the beats of the Damphu.

Damphu Shyaba/ Damphu Naach: Women are also found participating in Damphu Shyaba or Naach within the Tamang tribe. This dance is performed while playing the Damphu by the men. They slowly twist their bodies to the beatings of the instrument. This is also copied by the women. Together they enjoy the Damphu Naach while singing the Tamang whai. There exist religious dances in the Tamang community as well.

Tamang Selo and Selo Dance: Women of the Tamang janjati also take part in singing Tamang selo and also performs selo Dance. Selo songs are sung in Nepali language by men and women. Selo is a combination of two Tibetan words Shey meaning sing and Lu means song. Hence, selo have been derived from the Tibetan word Shelu which means to sing a song (Lama, 2014). Like whai selo songs narrates the origin of the universe and humankind, the past of the Tamangs while also depicting their culture. The singing of selo takes place in different occasions, both religious and non-religious. Selos are sung is rituals as well as festivals such as New Year, wedding and even rice feeding ceremony of an infant. The context of the selo also includes various aspects of life such as love, feelings etc and as full of fun. One feels happy while listening to Tamang selo. Tamang selo is quite popular among the people of the tribe and also liked by people belonging to other communities. Like every Tamang song Damphu playing is necessary while singing selo.

Selo Dance is an interesting and energetic Tamang folk dance. It is performed by male and females together as well as singularly. Men plays the damphu in selo dance and women joins them. However, on festivals like Sonam Lhochar women are also seen playing Damphu and doing the selo shyaba. All the Tamang people enjoys the selo dance in wedding

Female Agency in Indigeneous Performance Traditions: Music and Dance in Tamang and... Manisha Tamang ceremonies. Tamangs people are traditionally agriculturist, some of the selos depict women in the Himalayas (add)

Juwari: Women also participates in musical duels like Juwari within the Tamang janjati. Juwari is also sung by people belonging to other communities in the eastern Himalayas. In Tamang community, Juwari was an important part of their musical traditions and a medium of entertainment. On occasions particularly like wedding, men and women finds amusement in engaging themselves in Juwari. Men and women form group and there is a competition between them. One group starts questioning and another group give answers. An interesting feature of this musical duel is that the questions are asked as songs and the answers are also given as songs. Juwari is sung with the accompaniment of Damphu. " Often it happens that the vanquished has to surrender to the victor (winner) who will elope with the former to become his/her life partner" Lama (2014).

It is sad to reflect that this tradition is gradually getting lost and the present Tamang people are least concerned about reviving their slowly diminishing customs. While Tamang organisations like All India Tamang Buddhist Association (AITBA) based in Darjeeling is working for the promotion and preservation of Tamang culture since its establishment in 1981, however the response from the present generation is quite disappointing. Sisir Moktan , a member of the youth wing of AITBA said that efforts are being made by the Tamang organisation to promote the Tamang culture and make the young generation more aware about their practices and customs. (Interview with Sishir Moktan, 28 August 2025)

Music and songs are indispensable part of Limbu culture. Just like Tamangs, Limbu people love music and incorporate songs and dances in their festivals and rituals. Limbu folk songs and dances are very diverse. Limbu songs are relevant in order to have a deep understanding of the Limbu culture and society. These songs are in one hand, recreational but on the other they also help to get an insight in to the social life of the tribe. Their songs are the medium through which the mundhum or oral scripture is transmitted and kept alive. The Limbu word for song is "samlo" while dance is called as "lang". There are various types of Limbu songs such as Khyali, Sakpa, Palam, Kemba, Domke, Akma, Haakparey, Nisammang Sewa and others (Dutta, 2014). Another important part of Limbu oral traditions is the Mundhum. It is in fact considered as the very first song of the Limbus (Barman & Alone Hung Subba, 2022). Limbu dance or samlo is also of various kinds. Ke-lang, Yarakma or Ya-lang, Nahangma or war dance, Yagrangsing, Pungsok, Tongsing etc are important Limbu dances. (Dutta, 2014). Limbu community also has their own traditional musical instruments. These instruments are played in their ceremonies, both religious and non-religious. Both men and women play musical instruments. Their important folk musical instruments are Chyabrun, Binayo, Murchunga, Negra, Mung & Kingana (Sherpa, 2021). Limbu women are traditionally known as Yakthungma. Women are an important part of the folk music and dances. They sing many Limbu songs and take part in their dances. Their participation in various genres of Limbu songs is discussed below.

Palam Samlo: It is one of the popular Limbu folk songs. The word Palam comes from two words. "Pan" which means dialect or dialogue and "Lam" which means way or medium (Sherpa, 2021). It is sung widely in various occasions like weddings, festivals and other events. In addition, it is also sung while doing chores. Its most important association is with the Ya-Lang or Dhaan Naach so it is often known as the agricultural song. Since women are an important part of dhaan nach, they also sing the Palam. It has been seen that women sing

this song in social gatherings as well. In addition, Palam Samlo is also sung in a question answer format between a boy and a girl and covers topics such as human civilisation and love ((Limboo et al., 2025) Some consider it as the romantic song of the Limbus as it expresses the sentiment of love. Through Palam past and present experiences, romantic feelings and knowledge are conveyed. It is also called as the romantic song of the Limbus. Palam Samlo has become increasingly popular over the years among the Limbu community.

Khyali Samlo: While the Tamang song duel is called as Juwari, musical competition among the Limbu people takes the form of Khyali Samlo. Young boys and girls of the Limbu tribe take part in singing Khyali. The Palam Salmo is dialogic whereas Khyali is a singing competition where females compete with males. One asks questions through song and other answers through song. They use both Limbu and Nepali words while singing this song. Boys and girls also joke among themselves through the Khyali Samlo.

Tamke Samlo: Traditionally, Limbus was an agricultural community. Therefore, many of their songs and dances are related to agriculture. Tamke Samlo is one such agricultural song which originated in the past. Almost all the Limbu people are aware of the story of an old man named Kusarakpa, who started the Tamke song. According to the folk tale, Kusarakpa wanted the lazy girls and boys to work as they had been struck by famine situation, so he motivated the boys and girls to work in the paddy fields while also singing the Tamke in a competitive manner (Sherpa, 2021).

Haakparey Samlo: It is considered as the most important folk song of the Limbu tribe. It is sung in a slow manner, usually by middle aged Limbu men and women who have dhaangood knowledge about the Mundhum, the oral scripture of the tribe (Sherpa, 2021). It is sung in various ways. It can be sung in groups or as duets or even solo. It is usually sung in three different occasions-birth, marriage and funeral (Barman & Alone Hung Subba, 2022). Women also sing other type of songs such as the Swampa Samlo or lullaby and Domke Akma while doing chores.

Limbu folk songs are associated with dance performances most of the time. Limbu women like to dance various kinds of dances. They take part in the Ke lang or Chyabung Dance, Dhaan Naach or Ya lang along with men and sometimes groups consisting of only women.

Ke Lang: One of the most popular dances of the Limbus janjati is the Ke lang or the Chyabung dance. Ke means "Chyabung", which is the musical instrument of the community. It is also considered as the cultural symbol of the Limbu tribe as it is played in almost all the occasions, festivals and religious rituals. Chyabung resembles a drum. It is made of a hollowed tree trunk which makes it heavy to carry. The two openings on the side are covered with animal hides. The drum is carried by men and women follows the men and together they dance merrily making a circle. The lead is often provided by one person who instructs the other performers. "The female performers move their hand's steps that sync with the drum beat; usually of 12 beats while the male performers play the drum." Thapa Magar (2014)

Thus, Ke lang is a group dance. The dancers imitate the action of many insects, animals and other living beings during this dance (Dutta, 2014). On interviewing an old Limbu lady Smt. Lakhmati Subba, a resident of Pudung Busty Kalimpong, she talked about *Hatti* or Elephant Lang and *Kawwa* or Crow Lang used to be performed in olden days. Ke lang is mandatory in Limbu weddings and even the bride and the groom perform the dance after

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the completion of the wedding ritual. (Interview with Smt. Lakhmati Subba, 03 November 2025)

Ya Lang: Another significant dance of the Limbu men and women is the Ya-lang. In Limbu language, "Ya" means Paddy. Ya-lang or Paddy Dance is traditionally an agricultural dance which has turned into a recreational dance form in the present day. It is also known as dhaan nach. Both men and women take part in this dance. Traditionally it was performed during the harvesting season of paddy (Sherpa, 2021). Yalang being a duet performance necessitates the involvement of both male and female youths; the absence of either renders it inauthentic and therefore, not definable as a Yalang (R. K. Limbu & Nepal Sanskrit University, 2011). As discussed earlier, the dance is performed by singing the Palam song. Men and women move together in a gentle circular dance singing and saying "Ha ha ha". Today, we can see Limbu people performing the Yalang in many festivals and celebrations of their community. This dance is performed in groups.

Limbu Women and Musical Instruments:

Limbu folk musical instruments are rich and varied. These musical instruments are symbolic of the rich art of the Limbu janjati. No study of musical traditions become complete without knowing about the various musical instruments. Limbu women play few musical instruments. Nerbu Chemzong, a resident of Jorbungalow and a Limbu cultural expert said that Limbu women play the Murchunga and Binayo. (Interview with Nerbu Chemzong, 31.07.2025) While another individual named, N B Subba, a resident of Bunkulung said that women also play the Jyamta which resembles cymbal. (Interview with N B Subba, 28.07.2025) Nerbu Chemjong clarified by saying "traditionally Jyamta did not belong to the Limbus but the new generation has adopted the playing of this instrument as well." Today women can also be seen playing the Chyabrung as lighter ones made of steel are available. (Interview with Maden, 28 August 2025)

Conclusion:

Thus, the music and dance traditions of eastern Himalayan tribes like the Limbu and Tamang are incomplete without the participation of women. Women in both these communities enjoy a respectable position in their societies. This is reflected in their beliefs and traditions. The worship of Goddess Yuma by the Limbu community as their supreme deity testifies their favourable attitude towards women. Similarly, the invocation of the mother before singing songs reflects the Tamangs' respect for females. Tamang and Limbu women play important roles within their families and actively participates in decision-making processes along with men. Tamang women's performance of the whai, selo and shyaba have always been encouraged and appreciated by the members of the community. The Yalang or the paddy dance is incomplete without the involvement of Limbu women. In both these tribal communities' women retain the right to agree or to refuse to take part in singing and dancing. Group performances of women are commonly seen during festivals, weddings and New Year celebration. The musical instruments are also played by these women and contribute significantly to preserve cultural traditions. Over time, the tribal societies of Tamang and Limbu have witnessed considerable progress and development. Particularly after the attainment of tribal status in 2003 they have benefitted from various governmental schemes. Women have received many educational scholarships and opportunities and today many Tamang and Limbu women are visible in diverse professional fields. Their role in society has expanded in multiple ways.

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Gender, Digital Democracy and Participatory Governance: Rethinking Women's Participation

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Abstract

The major focus of this paper attributes with two main questions- (a) does Digital Democracy excludes women from the ambit of participatory governance and (b) does digital democracy neutralize the value of gender? The interrogation based on descriptive analytical method with secondary data covers two major shifts in the positional status of women in participatory governance. Its portraits how do women's role as citizen gradually transform to re-image them as netizen. In this context it also highlights on how gently their positional status redirect their roles from subject to object. While digital democracy expands the scope of Government, it articulates a major shift in the pattern of governance. Thus, justifies the very role of power in its interaction with process and practices. This paper examines how does such interaction-institutionalise the role of gender in terms of skill and knowledge therefore produces a thin line between skilled and unskilled in the operation of technological power. Such gap definitely reproduces new form of social hierarchy where weak gender becomes more marginalised due to their minimum access of technology. Thus, this article concludes that, merely the expansion of the scope of participation in digital democracy does not mean that it will dismantle the power block of gender hierarchy. As long as civic consciousness could not obtain, the accountability of government will not be ensured. Thus socio- cultural restructuring of gender roles will become distant dream which is essential for sustain gender justice and equality in Participatory governance of digital democracy.

Keywords: Digital Democracy, Participatory Governance, Women's Political Participation Gender, Governance, Digital Divide

Introduction:

In the contemporary era of participatory democracy, digitalization has become a hallmark of political regimes. While technology reshapes democratic structures and rapidly transforms the dimensions of traditional political power, the strategic importance of political participation reaches new heights. In the virtual world of democracy, the citizen becomes a netizen, digitalized skills become power and e-participation becomes a signature practice that legitimizes the authority of democratic governments.

Passion of power, which drives the overall trend of digital democracy, sets norms on the basis of which uniform structural goals can be achieved. The different forms of political power are re-oriented. It creates graphical as well as digital linkages that allow free interaction among various forms of government. As a result, technical competency of governance enhances. It boosts up the coordination between national, regional and local governance. In this way, the scope of governance expands. Such expansion alters the flow of democratic participation in both rural and urban participatory governance.

Although these changes are relative, as they are closely linked to transformations at regional and national levels of governance, their impact often negatively affects the role of several genders, particularly women. Digitalisation of participatory governance exploits the bi-nary vision of political power in order to politicise gender by altering its social roles. The main objective lies behind such activity is, inclusive participation by exclusion of gender.

However, the expansion of digital democracy does not automatically ensure inclusive participation (Norris, 2003; Legard & Hovik, 2022). This study shows that how digital governance transforms participation into a skill-based activity. In such case, effective citizenship is determined by one's own access to technology, his/ her socio-cultural position and competence to use technological devices without any hassle. As women do not share same social and technological space as men do, their formal inclusion in digital platforms fails to produce genuine participation. Thus, digital democracy, while appearing gender-neutral, often reproduces existing social hierarchies within a technological framework, particularly in the sphere of participatory governance.

Objectives:

In this article, an attempt has been made to examine how the gendered nature of technology in digital democracy re-defines the concept of participation within the framework of participatory governance. The second objective of this study to analyse the tension between women gendered social roles and their equal status as citizens in relation to political participation. The third objective is to investigate how the expansion of participatory mechanisms in digital democracy reproduces new forms of hierarchy and exclusion.

Method: This paper adopts a descriptive-analytical method based on secondary sources.

Analysis and Finding:

(i) Between Inclusion and Exclusion: Women's Participation in Participatory Governance in the Digital Era:

The term "participation" in women's participation has a clear gendered dimension. It is often defined as a process, that set the rules on the basis of which inclusion of the excluded takes place. The pattern of inclusion is depended upon specific interaction between gender, space and culture. Thus, mainstreaming weak gender, specially, the excluded one, is the result of a specific structural orientation of a gendered society (Kabeer, 1999). In this process, collaboration, connection, and the continuation of socially prescribed gender role soften tend to change. Though, existing patterns of gendered orientation are not altered respectively. (Krook & Mackay, 2011). As a result, participation becomes gendered. Masculinity dominantly determines the procedural conditions under which the participation of weak gender can be regulated.

Such a gender-oriented scheme of participatory governance in digital democracy raises a number of serious questions: Is digital democracy capable enough to break the stereotypes of gendered participation? Is women's political engagement a result of mainstreaming gender? How does gendered participation in political context protect the voice of different women as a social category? Does women's interaction with the process of mainstreaming gender helps them to build up a distinct political identity for women? If so, what role does digital democracy play in developing such distinctiveness, and how effective is it in protecting women's share in participatory governance from counter-revolutionary forces?

It is true that by optimising decentralised power participatory governance providing an equal scope for all citizens to participate in deliberative governance. But gendered role of participation undermines the character of democratic politics. In this context, participation becomes a political tool in the hand of the 'power elite' (Mills, 2019) of gender politics. Mainstreaming of gender shapes the basic orientation of structured social norms. It helps to connect politics with policy to transform gendered identity from personal to political. However, the basic structure of gender politics remains the same.

Although, this process raises a serious question of gender sustainability. As mainstreaming is not conducted strictly along gendered lines, the politicisation of gender deeply biased by the non-gendered issues (Kallay & Valkovicova, 2020). It misleads the legitimisation process of gender politics. In digital democracy multiple identical values interact with social political norms. It challenges the one-dimensional model of gender politics. So, gender alone could not become a source of legitimisation of power thus lost its control over politics significantly.

In populist politics, leader-centric forms of political power increasingly become dominant. It enables ordinary citizens to establish a direct connection with leaders (Laclau, 2005). Such connection helps leaders to portrait themselves as true representatives of the people. In this sense, participatory governance pursues self-sustained individual freedom and rights to ensure the duty of rulers. It not only makes ruler more accountable to the people, rather it acts as a trust-building mechanism (Rosanvallon, 2011) within political communities. Here, the 'self' is not opposite to community; rather, it develops within community. Community provides essential conditions to develop self in its highest form. Self-driven instincts often render visionary objectives of participatory goals but such goals never obliterate the collective value of democratic participation. In Participatory governance cognitive democratic values thus replaces authoritarian imposition, articulated through the diversity of social experiences, interests, and identities present within the democratic political sphere.

In this context, it is important to examine how cognitive democratic values can help digital democracy to deconstruct the gender-based identity in persuasion of gender justice? Does participatory governance generate collective value by dislocating androcentric goals of power in order to make women free from their stereotype gender roles? Before delve into these questions it is important to understand what digital democracy is and how it reconceptualises governance.

Digital democracy refers to a new form of governance based on information and communication technology (ICT) to operate, sustain, and survive in the modern

technological world (Fang, 2002, Akter et.al, 2019). It directs attention towards several new goals, the most important of which are:

- (1) Connectivity,
- (2) Competence, and
- (3) Commitment.

Thus, the role of governance in the digital age has changed rapidly. Digital democracy deconstructs the boundary between government and governance by intensifying interaction between power and knowledge (Faucault, 1991). It justifies the transformation in the patterns and preoccupations of governance and develops a more concrete connection between power and authority in managing public affairs.

In a country like India, where all power is vested in the hands of the people, the people remain the sole source of authority. They delegate this authority to their representatives whom they consider fit for the task. Political power is based on the consent of the people. Accountability of people's representatives reflects within the ambit of governance. Digital democracy expands the scope of governance. It facilitates common people in taking part in governmental activities thus brings them within the purview of governance. In theory such inclusion is not explicitly gender-biased. However, an important question remains: does such inclusion truly help women to become an active participant in participatory governance? Do they enjoy their political rights uninterruptedly or does such inclusion further feminise their roles to satisfy the patriarchal expectations under the guise of mainstreaming politics?

To answer these questions, it is important to understand what role digital democracy plays to include women within the ambit of participatory governance.

First, digital democracy empowers participatory governments to design governance structures in ways that enable the maximum possible participation of people. Prior to the digital regime, involving citizens in participatory decision-making required the establishment of multiple institutional setups, particularly in marginal administrative areas. In contrast, digital governance provides a single centralised platform through which people across different administrative tiers can participate and voice their concerns regarding public affairs (Macintosh, 2004).

The question, however, remains: how does such a structure helps women to participate in governance at the different level? There is no doubt that, digital system is formally free from all sort of gender bias. Irrespective of multiple divisions among people, based on class, caste, region, religion, gender and so on, it provides equal opportunities to all citizen to become a part of participatory governance. But in India, where large sections of the people have limited access to modern technology, it is often difficult for women to acquire technological skills for effective participation. This leads their exclusion from the ambit of digital democracy. It is not that such exclusion is inherent because they are women, but their limited access of technological knowledge and skills (Dijk, 2020) push them away from democratic power centre. Such conditions tend to polarise governance by dividing citizens into two categories: the technologically proficient and the technologically excluded.

Secondly, in order to expand digital access to participatory governance, governments sometimes subsidise the cost of modern technology, particularly for women. These efforts

hardly satisfy the needs of women. In most cases women are unaware of the facilities of such schemes. In patriarchal society like India, women's inclusion in digital world is highly depends on the consent of their male counterparts. Thus, such schemes will never become successful without the removal of patriarchy. Not only so, poor women hardly find any time to spend on the modern technological devices as they bound by their duty to manage household chores. In this context it is quite clear that without altering the gendered power relation of traditional society, no schemes will become successful.

Thirdly, older women are not familiar with the use of modern technological devices, thus maintain a safe distance from digitalised governance processes.

Fourthly, in many areas, poor digital infrastructure and service networks pose serious obstacles to common people – especially women – seeking to participate in participatory governance of digital democracy.

Fifthly, in most cases, operating systems are guided by foreign languages, and poor women fail to understand the instructions provided for this purpose. As a result, digitally activated governance hardly shapes women's participation in its domain. Although several initiatives have been undertaken to encourage women's participation in governance – such as the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA), Mahila e-Haat, Banking Correspondent (BC) Sakhi, and the Digital Beti Initiative – the desired level of success has not yet been achieved. A large number of women still remain beyond the purview of participatory governance.

Thus, it can be argued that participatory governance has largely failed to resolve the tension between traditional and modern gender roles within a digitalized governance framework. Moreover, it has been unable to address intra-gender divisions based on class, caste, religion, region, and language, resulting in the uneven incorporation of women into governance activities.

(ii) Participatory Governance and Gendered Inequality: Access, Literacy, and Technological Barriers in Digital democracy

The digitalisation of participatory governance, although it increases administrative capacity, has seriously affected women's participation, which was carefully planned in the earlier era to reduce gender discrimination in rural society. As the structural set-up of participatory governance changes rapidly under the influence of rampant digitalisation, it fails to accommodate all sections of society, particularly the weaker gender, within the governance process. Administrative norms that previously dominated the sphere of governance have undergone a sudden transformation. In their place, a new set of norms and belief systems now dominate the administrative domain, fundamentally altering the traditional relationship between the rulers and the ruled (Chadwick, 2006).

The nature of administrative responsibility has changed, and the direction of obligation and duty has been re-dimensioned accordingly. In this context, the new rules of governance do not conform to the principles of gender equality. Subsequent phenomena such as e-literacy, digital voting, virtual citizenship, and computerised governance have become determining factors in conceptualising and contextualising the changing domain of democracy. Consequently, participation in participatory governance is increasingly conditioned by technological supremacy, where eligibility depends upon mastery over newly developed technological tools (Mossberger et al., 2007).

With these transformations a new class has arisen in the domain of digital democracy. Their control over technology makes them able to dominate power and resources within democratic government. A new form of power relation develops in this phase. Such relations vertically connect the units of power and shift the participative values accordingly. It further marginalises the role of women in participatory governance. To manage the affairs of participatory governance a number of new projects has been undertaken which place unskilled women as receiver end, thus excludes them from the sphere of decision making. With such exclusion women lose their control over the major decisions, shape their life and livelihood. Their primary exclusion from the sphere of power circle occurs due to their limited capacity to handle new technological equipment (Halfkin & Huyer, 2007), though it has a different connotation. In the so-called democratic processes of digital democracy all orbits of power are highly controlled by the platform capitalism (Tornberg, 2023). Corporate digital network fixes up the role of women as labour, thus bring them under the control of the technological power. Their inclusion in the labour market forces them to accept the secondary position in the hierarchical power structure. Thus, their participation in the democratic sphere becomes eroded.

While some scholars identify the gendered nature of technological development as the primary reason for such exclusion (Wajcman, 2004; Hafkin & Huyer, 2007; Antonio & Tuffley, 2014) others argue that it results from the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women (Torenli, 2006; Agarwal, 2001; Mossberger et al. 2007, Dijk, 2005). A group of academicians opine that unequal access to power and resources is deeply rooted in socio-cultural history, where dominant cultural values determine the social position of different genders in terms of power, resources, and influence (Bourdieu, 2001; Lober, 1994; Young, 1990). Visibility in the socio-political sphere is conditioned by excellence in controlling the narrative of power, which in turn legitimises hierarchical relationships between genders.

Scholars who link such exclusion to post-colonial legacies present a different perspective. In their view, the language of dominant power often shapes the narratives of power dimension. It definitely establishes new mechanism, which exercises control over power structures (Foucault, 1991) through algorithms (Beer, 2017; Gillespie, 2014), often justified in the name of modernisation. This process re-writes the vocabulary of domination as it places technical use of tactical language to dominate over the weaker gender. Proponents of the technocratic approach justify such exclusion by promoting administrative efficiency. In their view administrative efficiency is the ultimate goal. To achieve it, primarily technological reform is inevitable (Fischer, 1990; UN, 2018; Hood, 1991). Feminist thinkers, although conceptualise the unequal attributes of power, but hardly provide any solution to redress it. They often fail to realise the fundamental reality that power itself is gendered. Such failure makes them bias in justifying their theoretical position.

While a large number of scholars devotes their time and labour to develop the theoretical attributes of gender, practical attention remains focused on how swiftly gendered power relations have divided the space of participatory governance (Brush, 2003). In this context androcentric biases legitimise the generalised administrative goals. Modernisation justifies the neutralisation of power, by undermining the justification of gender equality. It deviates participatory governance of digital democracy from its

proclaimed goals. In such case Participatory governance tends to become a showpiece in the ambit of symbolic democracy (Taubes, 1955).

Women are continuously diverted from their natural role as citizens through the imposition of femininity (Lister, 2017). In the name of defining femininity, a number of so-called universal ethos's are imposed on women, pushing them away from their real goals embodied in the vision of power. Domestic femininity further confuses women by justifying their familial roles and redirecting their aspirations accordingly. Such endeavours render women irrelevant within the sphere of power.

In participatory governance, the interaction between political power and social status is largely shaped by gendered attributes (Baviskar & Mathew, 2009). As a result, gendered norms are used to socialise the role of political power. In digital democracy such norms slightly alter their position. In this phase, social acceptance of political power largely depends on a number of social networks. Through this network political rulers legitimise their rule. Under the direction of the expertise technocrats, such networks help rulers to institutionalise a support base in favour of their rule. But in Third World country like India, it could not fully free from gender bias. For example, in India, common people believe that women are less competent to control technology based political outcomes than men. Thus, socially produce gender roles set the power goals of the political actors. Skill and knowledge are used accordingly. In this way the share of women in technological knowledge is gradually decreased. Gender norms normalise the power position in such a way that this situation appears almost natural. As technology based political outcomes are the subject to rational choice, commonly perceived as belonging to the public domain, thus women exclusion from public sphere questions the rational acceptability of political outcomes.

In many cases, women's eligibility is questioned on the grounds that they are believed to lack sufficient knowledge and merit to handle technological equipment (Wajcman, 2004) that is essential for the effective functioning of governance at the different levels. This unequal perception, embedded within the structures of participatory governance, leads to discrimination among genders based on levels of digital literacy. It creates multiple barriers that adversely affect women's participation in participatory governance of digital democracy.

The division of labour based on technological efficiency often confines women to a nominal role in participatory governance. The digital divide compels them to acknowledge the supremacy of their male colleagues (Wajcman, 1991), as women are comparatively less familiar with the use of digitalised mechanisms prevalent in the modern technological world. As democratic states are increasingly shaped by technological advancement, power exercised through technology becomes dominant. Women's subordination to this technologically mediated power structure places many of them at a marginal position thereby undermining their capacity to emerge as effective leaders.

Technology often portrays women as warriors rather than leaders. Their struggle to change their fate by breaking gender stereotypes and transform society accordingly postulates a new goal of power regime. They intend to deconstruct the and areocentric values of power relation which represent women as backward in comparison to their male counterparts, and push them outside the power circle. Such barriers not only question women's gender roles but also label them as non-profitable, effectively excluding them

from the centre of power. This significantly restricts women's effective participation in democratic governance within an increasingly digitalised administrative framework.

(iii) Power, Technology, and Marginalisation: Reconfiguring Women's Roles in Participatory Governance of Digital Democracy

Before addressing the question- how women can assume an active role in participatory governance of digitalised democracy, it is essential to delve into the matter of what prevents women from taking on such a role? The answer is partially based on the notion that domestic femininity adopts to define and regulate the women's social behaviour. Domestic femininity in its normative sense restricts women's role to the domestic sphere. It secludes women from the domain of public responsibilities. Out of their fear of losing social recognition women hesitate to cross the boundary line imposed upon them by domestic femininity. It not only confines their roles but also challenges their individual social existence. Consequently, the reconfiguration of women's roles in participatory governance is constrained by such prerogative meanings of gender identity. It shapes and sizes the digitalisation of femininity and defines their role accordingly.

Thus, portraying women in a new role that conforms to digitalised democratic governance is a challenging task. Women's incorporation into the newly construct belief system, where knowledge dominates over socially constructed identity norms, can happen only when they transform the dimensions of their thought. This transformation requires moving beyond the thumb rules of gender-oriented identity sanctity by accepting their multipolar identity (Mohanty,2005). In this process, the gendered construction of the feminine role gradually becomes obsolete.

One may argue that when women alter the subjective roles prescribed by gender-oriented norms, the goals of their sociability also change, bringing women into the public domain as objects (Bartky, 2015) rather than autonomous subjects. Such a transformation from subject to object may allow women to conform to roles imposed by the capitalist free-market economy. Consequently, through participation in several participatory institutions of governance, women often struggle to establish themselves in terms of a meaningful and self-defined identity.

Antagonists of this view have argued that participatory governance provides a number of alternatives through which women can change and challenge their traditional gender-oriented roles (Agarwal,2001; Cornwall, 2003). By providing digitalised platforms, participatory governance not only enhances women's scope of participation but also increases their capacity for self-knowledge by enabling them to map their potential power. For example, through their virtual presence in participatory governance, women can correlate their abstract (imposed) self with their concrete (achieved) self and thus transcend their identity to a higher order. This process may help them to understand their inner power, through which they can realise their connection with the power of the universe and justify the truth that they should perform as part of humankind rather than prioritising the remote identity (gender) imposed on them from outside. It also increases their confidence level to meet the needs of the present digital era.

Feminist thinkers, however, have criticised such idealistic views by pointing out that most technological innovations have a gendered dimension, as they are developed primarily by considering the needs of men in order to save their time and money (Cowan,2023; Wajcman,1991), leaving little scope for women. In the sphere of digitalised

governance, whatever technologies are used are not planned for the purpose of increasing women's participation, but rather for the smooth operation of governance. Consequently, the parameters of effective participation are fixed in such a way that suppresses women's enthusiasm to become part of effective governance. Moreover, women have limited access to these electronic gadgets and are often treated by others as non-performers because of their gendered roles. In this context, it becomes difficult for them to recognise themselves as potential actors in participatory governance. Though, feminists argued that altered gendered model of power can reverse the dimension of relationship status, they could hardly outline a viable model through which technological mediation could be aligned with equitable and meaningful participation of women in participatory governance.

(iv) Beyond Access: Rethinking Gender Equality in Digital Democratic Practices

Digitalised governance offers an alternative model to describe the relationship between power, gender, and politics. The narratives of this model are based more on creative experiences than on normative values. The major thrust of these narratives lies in the digitalisation of power within politics and the subsequent reconstruction of gender roles. Thus, mainstreaming gender in digital democracy becomes merely a facet of empowerment. Politics does not necessarily assume a judgmental role, as empowerment itself becomes subject to digitalisation.

However, gender narratives that have historically justified the central connotations of power continue to remain political. Male-centric determinism illustrates how power is digitalised, who gains access to the means of power and appropriates it, what the ultimate use of power will be, how gender issues are negotiated in the process of digitalisation, and who becomes the beneficiary of this transformation.

In this context, power – the driving force of politics – remains fundamentally gendered in nature. The articulation of male-centric values through technological devices arrests the free flow of value-neutral logical construction of power. Thus, space for open interaction between different value laden identities is gradually decreased. In course of time the traditional norms of gender division are gradually become obsolete. In its place a new set of norms develop. It technically supports multi-identical features of gender both in society as well as in workplace. In this way women's identical features as gender are gradually eroded. It weakens their movement for position and power in politics. Thus division continues to exist, though in a modernised form. In this sense, the overlapping values of power and politics retain a judgmental character.

In continuation of the above discussion, one can say that digital democracy fixes the parameters that determine the degree of freedom, access to rights, rules of trust among different genders, conditions of justice, and so on. As the predominantly entrenched norms of structural hierarchy normalise the imbalances created by the digital divide, the goals and values of political ideology become altered. Generalisation emerges as a major trend in recapitulating the relational terms of power and politics. It side-lines substantial factors such as gender, class, caste, region, religion, and others from the ambit of political legacy. In other words, modern technological values redefine the meaning of neutrality in terms of efficiency by discarding the ethical concerns of identity-based politics (Feenberg, 2012). Consequently, gender becomes diluted, and the marginality of women in digital governance appears naturalised.

Though digital democracy provides women with equal opportunity as their male counterparts, but here equal opportunity implies equal capacity and skill in using modern technology. Since women do not occupy the same social space as men, their access to the benefits of modern technology becomes a distant dream. They receive only partial benefits offered through their male counterparts in accordance with prevailing social norms.

Thus, neutrality is not free from gender concerns (Wajcman,1991); rather, it provides an alternative model to visualise the goals of power, sustained through skill and competency. Theoretically, the non-gendered attributes of power appear to diffuse its gendered roles, as skill and competency are not dependent upon gender. Some scholars argue that as non-gendered attributes define the goals of power in digital democracy, power becomes free from forms of liability (Eubanks,2018) that make it answerable or responsible to the plights and distresses of weaker genders (Zuboff,2023). Such dynamic changes further delegitimise the role of gender in governance. The submissive positioning of gender is reflected across different fields of government.

Although in recent years a number of initiatives have been undertaken by the Indian government to bring weaker genders within the purview of mainstream politics, a low rate of political participation, digital illiteracy, male dependency, technological apathy, poverty, and poor accessibility have rendered these efforts ineffective. From the following table, one can examine the rate of women's participation in various governmental schemes introduced to spread digital literacy, as well as in other platforms established to promote digital governance.

Table-1

Programme/Platform	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Nature of Participation
PMGDISHA (Digital Literacy)	42.5%	37.8%	31.6%	Training/Access to ICT
Jan ShikshanSansthan (Skill+Digital Use)	76%	78%	80%	Livelihood Digital Skill
NIELIT ICT Training	45%	49%	53%	Capacity Building
MyGov Portal (Policy participation)	~25%	~27%	~28%	Online Consultation
CPGRAMS Grievance Portal	~26%	~27%	~28%	Complaints to govt
RTI online Portal	~12%	~13%	~15%	Democratic accountability
e- Courts service	~20%	~22%	~24%	Legal Participation

Source: Compiled by the author from MeitY Parliamentary Questions on PMGDISHA, DARPG Annual Reports (CPGRAMS), Central Information Commission Annual Reports (RTI), and MyGov Citizen engagement statistics, Government of India

(Note: Data represent participation trends gender wise yearly statistics are not uniformly published across all platforms)

From the above table, it is clearly visible that women are less interested in participating in digital governance, while their growing interest is sustained in the development of livelihood skills and capacity-building activities. Their non-participation in digital governance indicates either a lack of awareness about these schemes or inadequate

preparedness to engage in the process of digital governance. The low participation rate cited in the table also suggests that civic consciousness among citizens in the country has not developed properly. Even though a large number of women enhance their skills and gain experience through digital modes for improving their livelihood capacities, they are hardly interested in confronting the structural constraints that obstruct their participation in forums of digital governance.

The low visibility of women participants in various government schemes also establishes that such schemes are not sufficiently gender-sensitive to their needs. The data in the table further show that while common platforms of digital governance have not been able to ensure women's participation on a large scale in exercising their rights as citizens, specific women-centric schemes have increased their level of participation in a more desirable manner. Hence, the gender-neutral form of digital democracy is effectively rejected by them.

To theorise this problem effectively, a number of scholars focus on the objectivity grounded in it (Wazcman, 2004; Faulkner, 2001). However, the shift that contextualises subjectivity within the theoretical domain of digital democracy is hardly addressed in these theories. While some scholars devote themselves to developing a conceptual link between digital power and gender (Haraway, 2013; Wazcman, 2004) in order to understand the co-ordinal relationship between objectivity (sensual experience) and politics, others concentrate on crude power relations to justify politics within gender studies (MacKinnon, 1989; Walby, 1998).

In this account, several scholars observe that the transition from government to governance in the age of digital democracy shifts the objectives of governance from general to particular and from particular to general in a cyclical manner (Rhodes, 1996; Kooiman, 2004; Osborne, 2006). When the question of skill and competency in governance arises, the focus shifts from the general to the particular; thus, the subjective choice of power requires objective reliability. Similarly, when the question of governability emerges, the focus shifts from the particular (gender issues) to the general, as it attempts to free governance from subjective bias in order to appear neutral (objective). Such alterations challenge the dimensions of cohesive forces necessary to form gender sensibility and to ensure the universal applicability of governance.

The subjective framework of equality narratives in digital democracy is also questioned by another group of scholars (Young, 1990; Fraser, 1989). They opined that; digital democracy suggests equality as equal capacity. Thus, the provision of equal opportunity for all could not be justified by the supporters of Digital democracy. They alternatively promote the idea of equity as the core concept of objectivity. In their view as equity is grounded in the need-based subjective choice thus it enhances the capacity of participative governance to provide civic amenities as per citizen's requirements. In this way, they challenge the subjective framework in which the generalisation of gendered attributes is normalised in the name of equal capacity. By questioning the internal subjective orientation of such debates, feminist thinkers criticise the process that compels women to think through a patriarchal lens. Thus, major feminist concerns are attributed with to the severe dilution of the individual self under the influence of patriarchal outlook. But their narratives hardly reveal how to play a safe game within the domain of public sphere. They equally mute about the one-sided process of the digitalisation of the women's participation

in the democratic ambit of participatory governance. Critics of feminist thinkers focus their inability to connect the subjective choice of women with the objective ideals of digital democracy (Asenbaum,2019).

Indian democracy consciously builds up an alternative model to experience subjectivity, within the framework of digital governance. Yet this alternative model does not change the basic orientation of objectivity. It also suggests that gender equality is not obtained merely with the process of democratic digitalisation. Rather, it depends on certain conditions like trust, reliability, responsibility, connectivity, commitment, consensus-building, consciousness-raising among citizens, justice, and sociability which may transform the power orientation in participatory governance of digital democracy. It should be kept in mind that gender equality is not merely an outcome of government policy; rather, it emerges from enlightened civic culture rooted in social consciousness, mutual respect, and participatory awareness among citizens.

Conclusion:

Thus, from the above discussion, one can realise that women's participation in participatory governance in the era of digital democracy is a relative phenomenon, dependent on several socio-political and economic variables aligned with different phases in the evolution of E-governance. In the process of digital interaction among various tiers of government, between government and citizens, and among citizens themselves, a space develops that connects government with governance. However, such a connection can hardly provide a gender-friendly environment, as weaker genders still remain outside the sphere of controlling power.

Digital governance redefines participation in a mechanistic way, in which participants must develop specific skills to exercise their citizenship properly. Consequently, the power vested in the people in a republican country like India gradually becomes weakened. This is followed by a shift in the process of governance that directs government towards new objectives. In this context, a new phase of accountability emerges, where participatory governance is no longer confined within traditional administrative boundaries as the scope of digitalised government expands beyond jurisdictional limits.

Digitalisation of participation in participatory governance though formalise women's participation but limit its scope within grassroots levels. In the process of governance women hardly get access of the device which may help them to control over power. Thus, institutional spaces do not ensure effective participation of women. Not only so, such institutional spaces most often produce support base for the ruler. In this process, homogenisation of socio-political culture takes space. To protect the interest of dominant culture such spaces never allow women to continue with their own cultural identity. With the expansion of digital governance, such cultural dominancy increases to a new height. Increasing use of technology justifies the norms on the basic of which cultural dominancy exercise. Digital competence set the boundary lines that further exclude women from the centre of decision-making power. Women do not possess equal access of digital resources of what government commit in its policies. Thus, a gap between policy intention and social reality, reducing participation to a procedural exercise. Unless state initiatives address these socio-cultural and digital constraints, women's participation in participatory governance will remain symbolic rather than substantive.

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Analysing Trans-gender Community: Meaning and Theoretical Perspectives

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Abstract

The societal construct shapes human relations, defining norms and conditions that influence communal dynamics. Throughout history, the process of categorizing individuals has fostered cooperative communities and along with perpetuated exclusionary behaviors to transgender individuals. The present paper aims to unravel the complexities surrounding the meaning of transgender through a qualitative exploration. The research tries to advocate for a more inclusive and equitable society. In a country where freedom, enlightenment and development are espoused, the persistent marginalization and dilemma surrounding transgender communities underscores a failure to uphold democratic principles. This paper endeavors to foster greater awareness and understanding of transgender communities in India, laying the groundwork for future research endeavors and advocating for the recognition and empowerment of this marginalized demographic.

Keywords: Transgender, third-gender, LGBTQIA+, Queer theory

Introduction:

A society determines the norms and conditions for human relations. The evolution of society goes back to the time of homogenising humans into categories. This process had, on the one hand, created a community of different people who share an amicable and cooperative relationship. But man himself, on the other hand, deprives others to be included into that community. This need of inhabiting with similar people had over time developed the ugliest trait in humans, which is to discriminate those who are different in one way or the other from the rest. One such category is the Transgender category which is regarded as different for their unique gender orientation. Trans-genders exist all over the world in every society, sometimes being forefront members of the community while sometimes relegated to lower strata. India is a multicultural and multi-ethnic country. Indian society presents a unique and multiple perspectives with regard to this particular group of people i, e. the transgender people. This is true in respect of almost all regions and societies of the country.

Objectives:

The status of transgender people in the society is a complex one. Their position in the society and their identity still pertains to create a huge dilemma in the society. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to understand clearly about the meaning of transgender in a broad sense. Who is transgender, what is the meaning of transgender, who are regarded as third-gender and what are the complexities of the term transgender in relation to hijra and transwomen are the specific objectives of the study.

Research methods:

The study is based on secondary sources. Qualitative approach has been adopted to carry out the research. The necessary data and information are collected from various secondary sources like books, journals, articles, government reports, newspapers etc.

Literature Review:

The study of existing literature on the research subject is a very important step in any kind of research work. When one reviews existing literature, it not only clears one's opinions on the subject matter but also helps one to understand the theories, opinions, interpretations and viewpoints existing in that particular area of research. In order to have a clearer understanding of the present study, a number of existing literatures were explored.

The book "Foucault and Queer theory (Post-modern encounters)" by Tamsin Spargo has very much helpful for understanding the connection between Foucault and Queer theory. This book has given an overview of Foucault's work and how it is related with queer theory. It is very much helpful for understanding the interrelationship between Foucault's ideas of knowledge, power and sexuality with queer theory. How homosexual grew out of a particular context in 1870s and the Victorian sexual repression ideas about homosexuality are discussed in detail in this study. The present research has also highlighted how Victorian influence has made the position of transgender in society as a disrespected one.

The researcher has taken help from the book "Queer Studies" by Kaustav Bakshi and Rohit K. Dasgupta. This book explains the concept and theory of "Queer" in the Indian context. It analyses the different issues related to Queer studies focusing on Malaysia and China. It also studies the possibilities and resistances of queer studies in Indian academia.

The book "Gender trouble: Feminism and subversion of Identity" by Judith Butler is helpful for understanding about the role of society for developing gender identity. How a particular category of individual started performing the prefix gender role of society is clearly discussed here. The book stated that gender is not fixed. Sometimes male behave and think like a female and vice versa. Society prefixes some role for male and female and wants them to behave like on that particular way. If someone refuses to do so then they are not acceptable by the society.

Abhijit Rohi in his article "Decriminalizing Homosexuality: Looking Through the Eyes of Indian Society" has given a brief history of Indian homosexuality. It gives a detailed explanation of section 377 of the Indian Penal Code and mentions the recent changes to the concept of homosexuality and the impact on society after the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

"Gendered Bodies: The Case of 'Third Gender' in India" by Anuja Agarwal starts with an analysis of sex-gender distinction and its critique. It also explores anthropologists' discovery of multiple gender systems and describes hijras in different categories like in

colonial literature, as tribe or caste, the public and private appearance of the hijra community. After going through a number of select literature on the concerned research area, the researcher has found that there is a gap in the studies conducted centring around the transgender community in India as well as in Assam. A very limited number of studies have been conducted in this area of research and even those studies have been of a very limited periphery. Those studies have failed to explore all aspects of Transgender life and the problems and issues that they are dealing with.

Understanding Transgender: A Study on the Rights of Transwomen and Hijras in Assam is a thesis submitted by Nandita Deka to Gauhati University. This work helps understand the status of the transgender particularly transwomen and hijras in Assam. A brief historical evolution of transgender people' status in India and Assam is also discussed here.

Significance:

Society has always operated under certain structures. Categorising human being into male and female is one of such a structure. However, while doing so a significant amount of the population might sometimes be excluded and left behind. Denial of basic rights and opportunities to certain section of the society will never lead to the fulfilment of true democratic principles. When the world was moving towards freedom, enlightenment and development, a large amount of the population in India remain excluded due to their distinct identity. The transgender community of India is foremost among them. The Indian society as a society of embracing difference, has miserably failed to embrace the LGBTQIA+ community. Unlike minority, linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious communities of the country, the transgenders are denied basic rights in the country as well as participation in the public. Ignorance of general public is the other major concern. Their demands for rights and recognition are the recent development in India. A few studies have been conducted in this area of research. Before concerning about other perspective, it is very important to understand the community. Therefore, this paper will try to explore and provide a comprehensive meaning of transgender community so thus it can help future researchers and create awareness among the general public about this community.

Discussion:

Understanding trans-gender:

The term 'transgender' cannot be defined in a simple way. Usually, the term is generally used to refer to individuals whose gender identity or expression does not meet with social expectations for their assigned sex. According to World Health Organization (WHO), "Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and expression does not conform to the norms and expectations traditionally associated with the sex assigned to them at birth". It includes all those groups of people who find a mismatch between their assigned sex and expected gender norms. Transgender people may self-identify as transgender, male, female, trans-woman, trans-man, transsexual, or by a variety of indigenous terms used in specific cultures. Thus, many terms and concepts are used for transgender people having different connotations and characteristics. The abundance of terms often creates confusion, and most of the time people mix up various other terms related to transgender. The underlying reasons can be due to a lack of transgender studies in society or a lack of awareness about the community. In order to better understand

'trans-gender', it is important to deconstruct the core concept of LGBTQIA+ since transgender is an integral part of it.

LGBTQIA+ Community:

When we study transgender, we must have a clear understanding of the concept of LGBTQIA+.

Here -

L stands for Lesbian. Women who are homosexual or who are sexually attracted towards women.

- G stands for Gay. Men who are homosexual or who are sexually attracted towards men.
- B stands for Bisexual. Bisexual is a person who is sexually attracted to both men and women.
- T stands for Transgender. Transgender are those people who are not happy with their assigned gender roles and eager to play the role of the opposite gender. It is an umbrella term that covers a variety of personalities like transman, transwomen, hijras, crossdresser, gender queer etc.
- Q stands for Queer. Generally queer means strange; it indicates the sexual and gender identity which are not straight and cisgender in terms.
- A stand for Asexual. Persons who are not interested and attracted towards sexual activity with any other.
- I stand for Intersex. It is a term used for a variety of situations in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual structure that does not fit the boxes of female or male, like vague genitalia at birth, micropenis, inflamed clitoris, partial labial fusion etc. Most of the hijras in Assam fall in this category.
- The sign "+" stands for all those gender-variant people who are not included in the above terms and who do not fit in the given structure in society. Examples include pansexual (people who feel attracted to anyone regardless of their gender, they are attracted towards personality rather than gender), two-spirit (individuals who have both masculine and feminine personalities), non-binary (a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman; they behave according to their own bidding).

Transgenders are a part of this broader community of LGBTQIA+. Transgender is an umbrella term, covering a variety of gender variant people, including transmen, transwomen, crossdressers, intersexes, hijras and genderqueers etc. Transwomen and hijra in Assam fall within the transgender community. The supreme court of India declares transgenders and hijras as the third gender.

Transgenders/Transsexuals:

The words Transgender and Transsexual are often used in the same way. But there is a basic difference between them. The term 'transsexual' is older than the term 'transgender'. David Oliver introduced the term 'transsexual' in 1949 and the term 'transgender' was first coined in 1965 by psychiatrist John F. Oliven of Columbia University. The difference between these two lies in sex and gender differences. Sex is biological and implies physical differences. Transsexual people fall under this category. Transsexuals are those who define themselves as member of the opposite sex. Contrary to this, gender is a social construct

idea and an individual's psychological recognition of self. Here we can connect the concept of transgender - when a person feels internal gender disposition and feels more comfortable with the opposite gender role in society or find a mismatch between his/her assigned sex then it is called transgender.

Transgender: Transwomen and Hijras:

A transgender is a person who has transitioned from male to female. A transwoman is an adult who was assigned male at birth but whose gender identity is female. There are two types of transwomen- one who has gone through sex reassignment surgery. There is another category of transwomen and others who do not feel the necessity of sex reassignment but play the role of the female in society.

The word 'hijra' can be defined as the individuals who identify themselves as neither male nor female or who describe themselves as female. Hijra is a biological male or intersex person who rejects the masculine identity and choose to identify themselves as women, deny being men, in-between man and women or neither man nor women. It has two types -one is intersex people (who do not fit in the typical definition of the male and female body), or a male who wants to become and behave like the female gender. There is a process called "castration" through which they can become a hijra. In India, the total population of transgender around 4.88 lakh, and in Assam the total number is 11,374 (Census Report, 2011). However, it was the first count of transgender in census.

Third Gender:

The concept of 'third gender' is controversial among the LGBTQIA+ community. The patriarchal set of mainstream Indian society describes male as the first gender and female as the second gender. The concept of 'third gender' emerged when the LGBTQIA+ community demand equal rights and status in society. It was in 2014 when the Supreme Court of India declared transgender people as the 'third gender'. It was regarded as a historic judgement for the community, as they were getting recognition in the eyes of law for the first time. The judgement gives all the fundamental rights to the third gender community. This judgement, however, created confusion among different sections of the transgender community. However, only the transgender people and hijras fall under the third gender. Lesbians, gays, bisexual people are not included in the third gender category, because, these are mainly groups that fall under sexual orientation, not gender. In 2016, the Supreme Court clarified this and ordered the Centre not to include lesbians, gays and bisexual people into this category. Hijras are the first recognised as the people of third gender.

Theoretical linkages:

Transgender as a community has always been marginalised. This marginalisation is not region or society specific. The Transgender community are unique and marginal because of their specific physical and sexual structure. This structure does not come under the accepted categories of human society as male and female. But the section of people who are neither male nor female or who are not satisfied with their prevailing gender category is regarded as 'minority' and not categorised into the structure and mainstream society. This concept has clear linkages with the theory of post-structuralism. Post-structuralism as a theory goes beyond the structures. It believes in fluidity. Post-structuralism is a way of understanding the world by studying the meaning which goes beyond the text. It

encourages a way of looking at the world that challenges what comes to be accepted as truth and knowledge. Poststructuralism is against all those binaries and gives a different perspective through different viewpoints.

Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction can also be linked with the studies of transgender community as in every society there is one centre and others that exist within the periphery of that centre. It is of common knowledge that the world is hugely dominated by man and is patriarchal in nature. As such the men in the society form the centre of decision making, power and authority. The women come second to the men. In this centre periphery relationship, the transgenders become a distant opposition whose issues are of little to no consideration.

The queer theory propounded by Foucault can also be linked with the researches of LGBTQIA+ Community. The queer theory is a post-structuralist critical theory that entered into the field of humanities and social sciences in the 1990's. This theory focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. It also studies any kind of sexual identity or activity which falls into prescriptive and divergent categories and is mostly associated with LGBT (lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender) studies.

Transgender in Assam:

The issue of third gender rights and their marginalization have been a subject of intense socio-political discourse across various parts of the world. In India, while the legal recognition of the third gender (also known as hijra, kinnar, or aravani) has been a significant step toward addressing discrimination, it has not led to the full social acceptance and integration of this community. Assam reflects this contradiction too although the third gender has been granted legal recognition, its members continue to face deep-rooted social, cultural, and economic marginalization.

The marginalization of third-gender individuals in Assam is multi-faceted, involving the denial of equal access to education, healthcare, employment, and basic rights. This group is often subjected to discrimination, exploitation, and violence due to a lack of social awareness and entrenched cultural norms. Despite legal advancements, the struggle for recognition is ongoing, with third-gender individuals still fighting for full integration into society. The lack of a supportive societal framework, limited access to resources, and societal stigmatization result in the persistence of inequality and exclusion. While legislative measures have granted rights, significant barriers to social acceptance, recognition and equality persist.

Conclusion:

Like any other human being, the historical evolution of the transgender community in India makes them a reliable part of our society. Transgender persons were a part of Indian society since ancient period. The situation of Transgenders started deteriorating when British colonial rulers came with their ideologies of sex/gender binary bodies and hetero-normative sexuality perspectives. The hijra body was problematic because of its ambiguity and its difference with the able procreative/heterosexual body i.e., the British notion of an ideal human being "able-bodied white heterosexual male". Gradually, various laws against hijras were introduced, effectively depriving the community of their earlier privileges.

The discrimination and exploitation of transgender start at home. The socialisation process and structured rules of society do not want to understand the mental and physical condition of transgender people which results in various problems in the lives of transgender as well as in society. Continuation of the British draconian laws in some form or another even after independence, Indian tradition and culture that excludes and isolates transgenders, wrong interpretation of transgender in mass-media, faulty socialisation process, prevalent superstitions can be identifies as some of the causes behind the sufferings of transgender people in Indian society.

In 2014, a historic event transformed the status of transgenders in the country with the path-breaking Supreme Court decision on the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) vs. Union of India and Others judgement, wherein it upheld the right of the transgender persons to decide their self-identified gender and made several other legal declarations aimed at the upliftment of this neglected community. Following this judgement, the “Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill” was introduced in Rajya Sabhain in 2014 and passed in 2015. The bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2016, which was passed in 2019 and became an Act. However, this bill has been criticised on several grounds. It was massively diluted and betrays a lack of understanding of the community and its concerns. After a lot of movements and struggles, on 6 September 2018, a historic judgement came from the Supreme Court of India that legalised some of the parts of Section 377 of IPC which criminalised homosexuality.

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Re-evaluating the status and roles of Courtesan in Buddhist Literature with special reference to Jatakas in Early India

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Abstract

Women have gained a new arena of visibility as a topic of historical discussion in recent times. The exercise of rewriting the past has been confined to invisibilising women; their presence has been registered only negatively, mainly through an extensive silence. However, here, an attempt will be made to re-evaluate the status and roles of the Courtesan with special reference to the Jataka. Courtesans in early Indian Buddhist literature were wealthy, strong and independent, often acting as key patrons of the faith. They held a high status for being cultured, educated artists who were outside domestic constraints, thereby challenging traditional gender roles. While often depicted as tempting, their conversion signifies the triumph of Buddhist teaching over worldly desire. In early Buddhist literature, courtesans played an important role. Many courtesans were rich enough to give groves, food, houses, and wealth to Buddhist monks and even to the Buddha. However, in this article, an attempt will be made to re-evaluate and rethink the position of courtesans, the reality of society, and their place within the collective control of man.

Keywords: Courtesan, Independence, Stereotype, Passive, Prestige, Control

Introduction:

Vedic literature provides some source material for reconstructing India's social history. Extracting information from this literature requires significant effort and explanation and lacks widespread acceptance. However, Buddhist literature, though wordy and repetitive, yields important insights into the society of ancient India. The picture that they portray of the urban society, of the rising cities, human beings of all castes and occupations, merchants, storekeepers, rulers, and their officials is both original and convincing. In Buddhist literary sources, women get full attention. Here, we find a courtesan. Traditionally, one could opt out of the stereotyped role of woman as wife and mother only by becoming a courtesan. In Buddhist literature, she appears to be a woman who also suffers from social condemnation, but in other ways. Her status was better than that of the wife in some cases. She had a relatively high level of independence, and, as she had her own remuneration, she possessed a confidence that the common woman in the house did not. So, an attempt will be made here to re-evaluate the role and status of Courtesans in early India in Buddhist literature, with special reference to the Jataka.

Courtesan in Buddhist literature:

Buddhist literature includes an extensive collection of sacred texts that originate in the teachings of Gautam Buddha. Here we find the Tripitaka (Three Baskets): the foundational Pali texts, including the Vinaya Pitaka (describes discourses), the Sutta Pitaka (describes monastic rules), and the Abhidhamma Pitaka (doctrinal philosophy). There are also important Sanskrit texts that emphasize the Bodhisattva path, such as the Prajnaparamita Sutra and the Lalitavistara (Life of Gautam Buddha). There is also some narrative and historical literature, such as the Jatakas, the Dipavamsa and the Mahavamsa. Actually, Buddhist literature covers a vast range of textual traditions, scriptures, many commentaries, and other literary and poetic texts. Buddhist literature is written in Pali and Sanskrit. It is important to understand that early canonical texts, for example, the Tripitaka, were written in Pali. Sanskrit is used for later texts, especially in the case of the Mahayana textual tradition. Actually, Buddhism spread widely across Asia, so Buddhist literature was translated into various regional languages; as a result, the teachings of the Buddha reached diverse cultures. We also find a vast collection of later Buddhist texts. Another important text was Therigatha. It is a compilation of poetry which was written by monks and Bhikkhunis. The name of this text comes from one of the purest forms of Buddhism, which is called Theravada.

Buddhist texts uniquely portray courtesans. The courtesan could own property. In certain situations, she did not allow herself to be browbeaten by the men around her. Ambapali, the famous courtesan of Buddhist literature, declined to give up her invitation to a meal for the Buddha in favour of the Lichhavi princes who wished to edge her out and host the Buddha themselves. However, the courtesan's freedom was only partial, as she was constrained by the socially conditioned role for women. If women are not wives and mothers, they must be mistresses. If we look at the situations in which the courtesan was placed, this is strikingly evident: she remained subject to male control and dominance. How did a woman become a courtesan? Not by choice, at least in the case of Ambapali. Ambapali was the most beautiful girl in Vesali. According to the literature, Vesali had a custom whereby the most beautiful girl in the city could not marry. Instead, she was installed as a courtesan so that everyone could have free access to her. Another version in the texts says that the princes of Vesali quarrelled among themselves about who should marry her, and since they could not agree, they set her up as a courtesan instead. Apparently, when men cannot agree among themselves about who should have a woman, they agree to share her by installing her as a courtesan.

A courtesan was seen as someone who raised the "prestige" of a city. The citizens of Rajagaha concluded that Vesali was a flourishing city because of Ambapali's presence, so they decided to replicate those conditions in Rajagaha. The citizens of Rajagaha then decided to install Salavati as the courtesan of Rajagaha. Salavati's narrative clearly shows that the courtesan was under continuous pressure to fit into a stereotyped role, so she could not have a child. When Salavati became pregnant, she said, "Men do not like a pregnant woman," and went into hiding. After she delivered her child, she abandoned it so that she could successfully return to her livelihood.

Sometimes the courtesan substituted for the housewife, as we have described earlier. However, most striking is the example of a courtesan who wished to join the sangha. She had to travel to be ordained, but she could not publicly renounce her status as a courtesan,

for fear of the men who would waylay her to prevent her from becoming a bhikkhuni. The courtesan's freedom then was only relative, and she continued to be trapped by the sex role imposed on her by society. She may have escaped drudgery and physical slavery, but she had not escaped from the collective control of men.

Representation of the Courtesan in Jatakas:

The Jataka stories are an integral part of Buddhist literary sources. They describe Buddha's previous births and depict them in both human and animal forms. Each story offers a moral lesson, emphasizing compassion, empathy, and a moral code of conduct. In these Jataka stories, we find that the Buddha possesses all these qualities and always guides others to understand the real meaning of our lives. These stories are preserved in various forms of art, such as paintings, and in ancient sites like Sanchi and Ajanta. Through these paintings, we can understand their cultural impact. Actually, Buddhist literature has a deep impact, has vastly shaped the Indian textual tradition, and always offers an extensive collection of texts. It always tries to inspire other literary sources globally. Actually, the Sutta Pitaka is a summary of the conversations of Gautam Buddha with his disciples. It can be considered one of the three Pitakas. The Sutta Pitaka has five parts: Digha Nikaya, Majjhima Nikaya, Samyutta Nikaya, Anguttara Nikaya, and the Khuddaka Nikaya. The Jataka stories are part of this Nikaya. The Sutta Pitaka was compiled at the first Buddhist council, held in 483 B.C.E. The Digha Nikaya is a long collection,

It contains a significant number of historical Suttas. We find from the Samannaphala Sutta that at that time, people were experts in various crafts and professions. Actually, various occupational groups were described, such as potters, basket makers, weavers, etc. Here we find the mention of Bimbisara, who was murdered by his son Ajatasatru. Another important Sutta mentions the king Prasenjit of Kosala, who was a contemporary of Buddha. From this Sutta, we understand the social position of the four Varnas. Another important Sutta is the Mahaparinirvan Sutta, which gives us important information that Ajatasatru made a plan to eradicate his rivals, who were from Vajji. Here we find another mention of Ajatasatru, who was advised by the Buddha that till the time when Vajjians were united, nothing can be done with them. But after this, Ajatasatru became very cautious and created dissensions among them; as a result, Vesali was annexed by the Magadha kingdom. Majjhima Nikaya comprises the middle length of the collection. It is a collection of information about the life of Buddha. Ariyapariyesana Sutta is a very important sutta that deals with different parts of his life and activities done by him. From this work, we find that in the course of his visit, he stayed at various places like Rajagaha, Campa, Nalanda, Mithila, Kusinara, Kosambi, Vesali, and other places. Here we find the historical references of the Vijjis and Mallas, the Sakyas of Kapilavastu, and the Magadhas. It also mentions that Vajjis and Mallas were establishing sanghas and ganas, which were governed by responsible corporations. Here we also find that the political relations between the Licchavis of Vesali and king Prasenjit of Kosala were cordial. Samyukta Nikaya comprises the connected discourses of Buddha. Here we find the mention of King Prasenjit of Kosala, whose capital was Shravasti. Here we find Kosala-Samyutta, which is mainly devoted to the king. It also mentioned the war that was fought between the king of Magadha, Ajatasatru, and Prasenjit. Finally, Prasenjit married his daughter Vajira to Ajatasatru and granted him the town of Kashi.

Anguttara Nikaya comprises various numerical discourses. Khuddaka Nikaya comprises a small collection. The Khuddaka Nikaya also includes the Dhammapada, a very popular collection of the Buddha's teachings on how we should live our daily lives, with great meaning. Actually, Buddha gave the monks meaningful advice to teach in different languages, so that common people could understand the way of life. There is another Buddhist text named Milindapanha. This is a compilation of questions of King Milinda. This book was written by Buddhist monk Nagasena. Menander, an Indo-Greek king, and this book is named after him. It is written in prose form. It is a kind of critical text that critiques the problems and controversial points of Buddhism. It is written in Pali. Actually, it is a conversation between the Indo-Greek king Menander and the Buddhist monk Nagasena. So, we have a major storehouse of Buddhist Literature. This literature helps us understand ancient society and economy effectively.

The Jatakas are a collection of stories about the Buddha's former births. Here we find 550 stories. This is a very important text to understand ancient Indian history. Here, we can see a mention of a courtesan. Many Jataka stories mention courtesans in society. Prostitution shows an economy where surplus was available. It also shows the rise of big or joint families and strict rules on women. Here we find a class of educated and cultured courtesans who were very prosperous economically. Jataka stories consistently show that courtesans were very wealthy. They owned so many things, like a large number of servants, jewellery, dresses and more. They have also made relationships with important men who were in a relationship with the ruler. In a Jataka story, we find that a courtesan was removed from her position, but after some time, by the king's order, she regained her position. Here we see that their presence was controlled by the state. In another story, we find that a ganika freely speaks to the village head and relays the words to the ruler; we say that they can put their words on important matters of the state. Actually, the description of courtesans differs significantly from that of other categories of women mentioned in the Jatakas, particularly in their association with wealth and participation in economic sectors. There are so many categories of courtesans in the Jatakas. Here, we find the presence of ganika, Nagarsobhani, and Shilpakaraka through the stories. Courtesans could charge for their status. In her home, she became the head, and her decision was final. This story is present in the Atthana- Jataka. Here we find that a merchant's son always gave a courtesan in Benares sufficient money. He was her visitor. One day, he visited her house without money. Though he made so many requests, the courtesan did not permit him. She said that, as a ganika, she could not favour anyone when it came to matters of money. She ordered her maids to turn the man away from her home. Here, we find a contradictory situation: we saw the powerful presence of a courtesan, yet she was never allowed to form a responsible relationship. We find that in the Kanavera Jatak and Sulasa Jataka, the ganika lost her money and fell in love with a man. Interestingly, the presence of courtesans is always found in contradiction to other categories of women in society. Jatakas show that the courtesan's presence clearly indicates that society consistently discouraged her from forming a happy, prosperous family life. The description of the courtesan shows her independent presence. Despite that, the discouragement of having a relationship with a ganika opens before the audience a matter of interrogation.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, silence always has a voice we should hear. Silence does not mean an absence. We should learn to listen to such silences. Attempts could be made by understanding the description of suppression. This kind of silence may be a plan devised by society. In the Jatakas, descriptions of women have always been initiated by men. So, Ganika's passive presence and deep silence should be understood. The Jataka stories show us various features of daily life. We see various events of daily life, and the stories of courtesan's show that they follow the teachings of the Buddha; beyond that, they show us the daily matters and confrontations of human beings. Prostitution originated a long time ago in the world scenario. So, the presence of a prostitute should be considered as a subject matter of history. In Buddhist literature, we find courtesans playing various roles, including artists skilled in various arts. Actually, she possessed various abilities, such as singing and writing poetry. After studying Buddhist literature, we can say that sometimes courtesans are seen as assets to a state, as they have sometimes served as mediators, and this kind of story we find in the Jataka. Another quality that underscored the importance of their role and status was their knowledge. In Jataka stories, we find courtesans who possess good knowledge about various languages. But we should take the initiative to understand the silences of these categories of women, who play diversified roles without receiving sufficient appreciation. We should also understand their silences, as silence does not mean a complete absence. If we want to analyse the soul of any civilisation, acknowledge its high quality, and realise its constraints, we must study the history of women and understand their position in it. Human nature many times wants to try to control and suppress these kinds of embedded voices of women.

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Development vs. Deforestation: Analyzing the Framing of the Deocha-Pachami Coal Project on social media and its Impact on Political Discourse in Bengal

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Abstract

The Deocha-Pachami Coal Project in Birbhum, West Bengal, is a classic example of the clash between economic growth and environmental preservation. The project's positive aspects include the world's biggest coal mine with a reserve of more than 1.2 billion tonnes, an investment of ₹35,000 crores, and provision of up to 100,000 jobs along with improvement in energy security. Conversely, the project has been criticized for the cutting down of trees, the relocating of over 21,000 Adivasi people, and damage to wildlife which in turn has created divided views on social media that affect Bengal's political climate. The objectives are - 1) spot the major frames in social media talks like "economic development" vs. "environmental injustice"; (2) go through the influence of these frames on public opinion; and (3) analyse their contribution to political polarisation, The study used a mixed-methods approach that included qualitative content analysis of existing X (formerly Twitter) posts done through thematic coding and quantitative sentiment analysis with the help of tools such as Python's NLTK and NetworkX for interaction mapping. Posts were selected using keywords like "Deocha Pachami Coal Project" and hashtags. The analysis goes from January 2021 (the announcement of the project) to December 2025 (continuing protests, the start of mining, and corruption claims), covering such important dates as elections and tender processes. This paper dissects how competing frames emerge, propagate, and polarize opinions, drawing on theoretical lenses to reveal their broader implications for democratic deliberation and sustainable governance.

Keywords: Ethics, Moral Crisis, Dharma, Conflict, Consciousness

Introduction- One of the recent contemporary projects of clash between economic growth and environmental preservation is the controversial coal project of Deocha-Pachami in Birbhum, West Bengal. This project is the world second biggest coal mine with the storage of approximately 1.2 billion tons and expected to offer 100,000 jobs with the investment of 35k crores along with the improvement of energy preservation and house relocation.

Although the project has been criticised for lots of deforestation and more than 21k Adivasis relocation and massive wildlife damage has divided the views of social media that

impacting the Bengals political climate. New media platform inclusively X (Formerly Twitter) fuel up these division and creating the battleground that can manipulate the public sentiment and political mobilisation. In Bengal's multiparty political battleground which is dominated by Trinamool Congress and challenged by other opposition party like CPIM and BJP, creates a frame to shape electoral strategies and legitimate political background. This Controversial coal project diversified the tension in the political landscape of west Bengal that provides clash between economic development with the fear of environmental devastation and cultural upliftment. This research paper analyses how competing frames merge Polarised the political opinion and creating the theoretical frame to reveal the broader conflicts for democratic deliberation and sustainable governance.

Several hashtags like # DeochaPachami, # Justice for Adivasis, # DeochaPachami Coal Project, and protest for deforestation added to this situation by creating more polarised and alliance against government. New media creates the opportunity of debates that are not only democratic but also opens door for misinformation, so it would be important to have inclusive policies for sustainable development to be achieved. This research study uses Framing Theory (Entman,1993) to present how media shapes the public's perception by propagating certain aspects of real world. This study also incorporates Agenda Setting theory (McCombs & Shaw,1972) to analyse how the issues are selected in social media and that directly manipulating the political agendas in Bengal political battleground.

Problem statement and significance- This study presents a case study that economic rationale coverages like employment, investments etc converges with environmental and social implications. New media framing can increase or decrease legitimate policy, after case salience and can change partisan mobilisation. By understanding the framing dynamics of west Bengal offers insights into the developed political landscape of Bengal including the indigenous rights and media influence in the India's republican democratic landscape.

Objectives: Three major objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. Identify the major frames in social media forum like economic upliftment vs environmental degradation.
2. To analyse the influence of these frames on the public opinion
3. And to examine their any contribution to political polarisation in recent political situation of Bengal

Methodology: This research paper incorporates mixed method approach, qualitative content analysis of existing X post regarding the theme and done through thematic coding and quantitative sentiment analysis with the help of Python NLTK. This study selected posts by using the keywords like "Deocha Pachami Coal Project" and various related hashtags as their search criteria. The time frame of this paper is from January 2021 which was the project announcement date and ends on December 2025, when mining starts its initial basalt collections and corruption allegations arise about the project. Also, this study followed ethical guidelines by studying and analysing only public posts and protected the user's privacy through the anonymization of unverified accounts. The main constraints that this study faced that the social media content disappears after publication and platform algorithm biases.

Theoretical Framework: The main theoretical framework of this study is based on two theory- Framing theory (Entman 1993) and Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs &

Shaw,1972), these theory helps to analyse the social media framing concept around the Deocha-Pachami project of Bengal.

Framing Theory Application Entman's theory- This theory shows how frames can influence and manipulate audience understanding and policy adoption. According to the political leader this project is going to give almost 1lakh job and 35000 crore revenue while ignoring the massive deforestation and tribal displacement danger that can impact over 12.3 square kilometre of land. While the pro party post supports the economic progress and ignore environmental degradation and the anti-party post support the Adivasis sentiment and public opinion of the opposition.

Agenda-Setting Theory- Application of this theory evidences through usage of hashtag like # DeochaPachami as well as #SaveAdivasis, the social media mainly X, clearly shows the project visibility, government narratives that construct the political polarisation and also viral protest materials do the same for environmental protection.

Literature Review-

1. Groundxero. (2021, December 25). *Prominent citizens of West Bengal call for scrapping of Deocha-Pachami coal mining project*¹- states the use of social media to present the Deocha-Pachami project as an environmental problem by showing how it causes deforestation and displacement of Adivasi people while failing to deliver its economic benefits. Also, in details opined the appeals which show how open-cast mining creates climate change while using manipulating method to obtain government verification of job creation and further tree planation activities. The way information gets presented online creates opposition movements which shape how people in Bengal perceive the TMC development plan.
2. Liberation. (2022, February 2). *Withdraw Deocha Pachami Coal Project*- ²Social -The media exposes TMC's supposed reasons for their demonstration when protest footage from Harinsingha spread online and their staged "confessions" appeared as a response to the viral videos. Liberation (2022) critically demonstrates how protest material spreads through its distribution to create a divided public discussion which compares the progress of the ruling party to the opposition's claims of land loss. The political situation in Birbhum becomes more intense because of this situation between opposing political parties.
3. Telegraph India. (2025, August 18). *Row over Deocha-Pachami as activists claim coal project is basalt business*³- These reports define the how activist reframes this project as a "basalt business "scam, while suing new media documents to challenge legitimacy of CM's 2025 BGBS launch. Also explains CPM led posts defining salience,

¹ Groundxero. (2021, December 25). *Prominent citizens of West Bengal call for scrapping of Deocha-Pachami coal mining project*. <https://www.groundxero.in/2021/12/25/prominent-citizens-of-west-bengal-call-for-scrapping-of-deocha-pachami-coal-mining-project/>

² Liberation. (2022, February 2). *Withdraw Deocha Pachami Coal Project*. <https://www.liberation.org.in/detail/withdraw-deocha-pachami-coal-project>

³ Telegraph India. (2025, August 18). *Row over Deocha-Pachami as activists claim coal project is basalt business*. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/row-over-deocha-pachami-as-activists-claim-coal-project-is-basalt-business>

minimizing developmental gains, contributing to paving a public distrust towards regional policies.

4. Das, T., & Tewari, M. (2022, April 12). *Resistance report: Deocha-Pachami Coal Mine Project*⁴- Gulmohur Quarterly- Women from the Santhal community run online campaigns on communiqués like X, battling media narratives that obscenely declare consent intermingled with dispossession. Also echo chambers influencing TMC's post-Singur image in Bengal politics were for 'Birbhum Jami Jeevan Jibika O Prakriti Bachao Mahasabha.'
5. (2025, April 29). *Deocha-Pachami is not development. It's dispossession in disguise*⁵Deocha-Pachami is also criticized as capitalism in disguise, further commodifying Adivasi land, social media forcing posts from job/revenue frames up against ecological justice. examines how these narratives elevate polarized discourses that demand policy reevaluation and the embattled status of energy-ecology in Bengal.

Bengals Historical political Context- West Bengal always has a rich political background surrounding its land, class and developmental issues. Immediately after 1947, Bengal faced the problems of refugee influxes and religions controversies and Naxalites unrest highlighted peasant revolts against zamindari remnants. From 1977 to 2011, Bengal was under CPI(M)-led left front and faces several issues like Singur (Tata Nano, 2006), Nandigram (chemical Hub,2007) and that lead to TMC's 2011 victory under Mamata Banerjee's "Ma-Mati-Manush" slogan.

The identity politics battle between tribal/SC rights and development matters became a major issue during TMC governance. Deocha-Pachami revives this, with allegations of bypassing gram sabha consent mirroring past grievances. Social media platforms create a new phase of environmental activism which changes its focus from class issues to eco-justice matters. The upcoming elections before 2026 will create a possibility for the third-front movement together with Congress-Left alliance to emerge as a threat to TMC-BJP political control over rural and tribal communities. Land has functioned as a powerful symbol of resistance throughout history for Every location from Swadeshi (1905) to Singur demonstrates how "development" conflicts with agricultural traditions and locals gain power through their protests against elite agreements.

Data Collection- The data has been collected from the said time frame of January 2021 to December 2025 and collected 12500 posts included the keywords and hashtags like- Deocha Pachami Coal Project" along with the hashtags #DeochaPachami and #BirbhumCoal and #AdivasiRights in both English and Bengali languages. The project can be categorised through four stages which include its announcement during 2021 and the protests which occurred between 2022 and 2023 and the elections and tenders process which will take place between 2024 and 2025 and the start of mining operations in 2025. The data collection included posts which met the criteria of being publicly accessible in either Bengali or English language and which provided clear evidence of mentioning the coal project together with

⁴ Das, T., & Tewari, M. (2022, April 12). *Resistance report: Deocha-Pachami Coal Mine Project*. Gulmohur Quarterly. <https://www.gulmohurquarterly.com/photo-story/resistance-report-deocha-pachami-coal-mine-project>

⁵ Author Unknown. (2025, April 29). *Deocha-Pachami is not development. It's dispossession in disguise*. Academia.edu. https://www.academia.edu/129112419/Deocha_Pachami_is_not_development_It_s_dispossession_in_disguise

its social and political effects. The parameter for exclusion included anonymous bot accounts and contained no valuable content while showing only unrelated metadata. As its method required qualitative content analysis using thematic coding of frames and subframes to be conducted through an inductive- deductive approach. The Python-based NLP tools NLTK and Bengali-English sentiment lexicons conduct sentiment analysis through their quantitative measurement of polarity and emotional valence. Network analysis uses to identify powerful users who create retweet and reply networks and establish connections between pro-project and anti-project groups.

Ethical considerations: This study maintains ethical standards by using only public data while protecting the user privacy through permanent anonymization of all data subjects. This study also presents its limitation through the transparent disclosure of any potential sampling biases and different languages and avoiding the automated bot activity.

Data analysis- The main method of sentiment analysis used Python NLTK to understand the dichotomy of positive and negative categories and sometimes neutral as well, while TextBlob helped in Bengali language version. The inter-coder reliability measurement achieved a score of Kappa 0.82. This study uses frame and sentiment changes within the definite time frame to identify which events caused the changes in two different areas. This study examined how the patterns of frames create changes in sentiment scores while discovering the major news and policy changes as core sources of increased sentiment. Also, this study discovers the core players through whom leading political parties, media personnel and activist propagate their respective frames throughout the research.

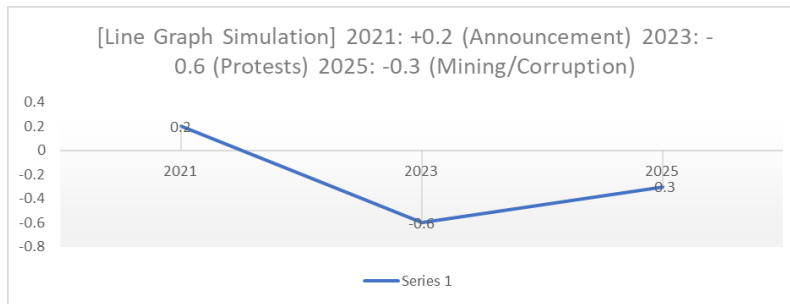
Results- Frame Identification- Two primary frames dominated (Table 1). Economic Development (42% of posts) stressed jobs (28%), investment (22%), and energy security (15%). Environmental Injustice (38%) highlighted deforestation (25%), displacement (30%), and wildlife loss (18%). Subframes included corruption (12%) and protests (8%).

Table 1: Frame Prevalence (N=12,500 Posts)	
Frame	
Economic Development-	42%
Environmental Injustice-	38%
Neutral/Hybrid-	8%
Corruption/Protests-	12%/8%

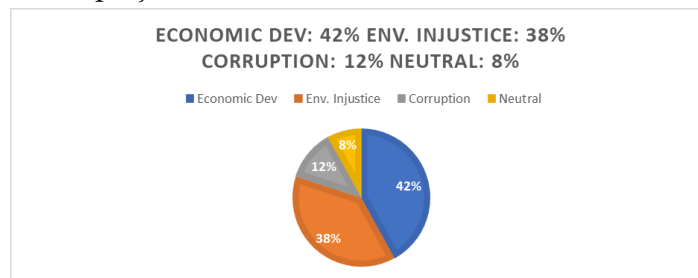
Sentiment Analysis Comparison (2021 vs. 2025)- Quantitative results from Python NLTK show a drastic erosion of the "Development" optimism.

Year	Positive Sentiment (Jobs/Growth)	Negative Sentiment (Displacement/Scam)	Neutral
2021	52%	18%	30%
2025	22%	68%	10%

Sentiment and Public Opinion Influence-Sentiment skewed negative overall (-0.32 average score), intensifying during protests (Figure 1 simulation: Line chart peaking at -0.65 in Q3 2023). Development frames correlated with positive sentiment ($r=0.68$), injustice with negative ($r=-0.72$).



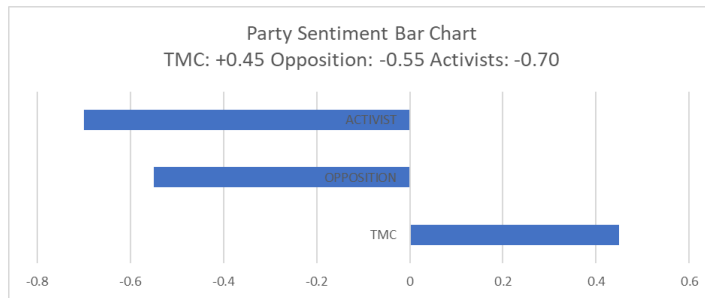
Engagement (likes/retweets) was 3x higher for injustice frames, suggesting stronger mobilization. Framing in social media, Dominant frames emerged as two overarching narratives: Economic Development: Emphasizes job creation (up to 100,000) and energy security through underground mining and large-scale investment (₹35,000 crores). Proponents leverage projected economic multipliers, regional growth, and modernization benefits to legitimize the project.



The process of environmental injustice shows its effects through deforestation which dislocates more than 21000 Adivasi people while disrupting environment and creating problems about consent and governance. The project threatens to take away people's rights because it shows the ecological costs together with social equity. The subframes together with rhetorical devices show how the displacement of people and their rights legalization through personal stories of affected people and their indigenous rights. The public reading shows how tendering procedures become hidden while due process emerges as a major governance issue and surveillance operations create additional problems. The project provides evidence that energy independence connects to regional energy systems while industrial development supports national security. The creation of protests and mobilization mechanisms uses hashtags together with demonstration requests to create public opposition which shows how different connected groups work together. The posts make an effort to combine different frames through their explanation of development with safeguards as an option which shows the need for policies to work together with reforestation and social compensation and transparent governance. The pattern of public sentiment shows how different groups of people react to the two opposing frames: Pro-development posts show positive public sentiment because they link growth to security. The content of anti-displacement and environmental justice posts carries negative sentiment which shows the detrimental effects on people and their rights which are at risk.

The study demonstrates that sentiment reaches its highest point during three main events, which are protests and major policy announcements and elections. The research shows that election periods create both increased voter turnout and stronger political party activities. The ruling party employs development language to present the project as a major

growth driver, which supports their message about job creation and regional development. The opposition parties use displacement stories and government performance evaluations to depict the project as mismanaged and corrupt and as using coercive methods against vulnerable communities.



The framing concept creates unique biased communities on new media platform with defined cross cutting conversation between pro and anti-project groups. Synchronised mobilisation greatly influenced by Hashtag campaign and coordinated messages while attention asymmetrical during key political moments. The new media environment creates rapid sharing of any incomplete and unverified or contested information, that sometimes that misinformation intertwined with legitimate claims of individual rights, environmental safeguards, compensation. There is a need for policy reforms for transparent consultation, independent impact assessment and verifying and monitoring mechanism to stop polarisation.

Discussion: Collected frames had a direct impact on the opinion, like Developmental frames influences the ruling party (TMC) support among the urban users and injustice frame shows the rural/Adivasis mobilisation, shows as opposition agendas. After applying the agenda setting effects, it is observed that the social surges leading media and policy discussion. This study also shows that people developed their viewpoints about the social issues which resulted in the usage of echo chambers as their main method of communication. Also, the new media platform created unverified information sharing system that enabled the users to receive false information about the number of people who had died for this project or while using this platform for democratic purposes. The govt need to impose policies for mandatory environmental impact assessments together with social impact assessments and procedure for ethical fact- checking of misleading information. This study also shows that the public with high new media activity level received more platform advantages whereas future research should be including all kinds of new media platforms like- Facebook, Instagram etc.

Conclusion- It can be concluded by saying that this Deocha-Pachami project creates a window for how social media can influence the economic promise against environmental peril while polarising the politics of Bengal. The viral X posts show the growth story of TMC competes with oppositions story about the dispossession which has gain momentum and interlinked the policies of jobs and rights and creates a path which enables people to escape from binary choices and achieve developmental justice. The X posts show how public opinion and political discussion exists as two rival narratives which shows the war between economic development and environmental injustice. The resulting polarization demands governance reforms which require transparent communication and participatory approaches to achieve economic goals while safeguarding ecological resources and

community rights. Policymakers and civil society organizations can create inclusive evidence-based strategies which achieve sustainable development goals through framing dynamics because they enable protection of vulnerable communities and ecosystems.

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Ancient Indian Legal Thought: Justice and Punishment in the Arthashastra and Its Contemporary Value

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Abstract

From ancient times to the present day, the judicial system has been an indispensable part of society. From the moment unethical activities such as injustice, oppression, and wrongdoing began in society, the necessity of a judicial system was felt in order to protect human civilization and maintain social order. In ancient Indian thought, the king was essentially chosen to protect the subjects and establish justice.

On the other hand, the great scholar Kautilya, the author of the *Arthashastra*, described the judicial process as the "life" of the state. According to him, a state where justice is not established soon moves toward destruction. The primary objective of justice is to ensure the protection of the lives and property of the subjects and to establish social peace by appropriately punishing those who create disorder in society. According to the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, references to both civil and criminal judicial systems are found in the Mauryan administrative structure. Separate courts were also established to conduct these two types of judicial processes.

In the case of criminal offences, the state itself initiated the judicial proceedings. Many historians have expressed the view that the laws and regulations described in the *Arthashastra* were later reflected in various ways in the European criminal justice system. Essentially, the state was an indispensable institution for the welfare of the people and the maintenance of social order. During that time, the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya served as one of the fundamental bases for shaping India as a welfare-oriented state.

Keywords: Kautilya, Arthashastra, Justice, Judge, Witness, Punishment, Public, Relevance, Manusmriti, Yajnavalkya.

Introduction:

Among the valuable texts inherited in post-Vedic India, the *Arthashastra* composed by the great scholar Kautilya is one of the most significant works. Although written nearly 2300

years ago, the text is still highly appreciated today for its profound significance and relevance in various political, economic, and social matters. Because of the universality of its subject matter, its practical outlook, and its well-structured principles of state administration, it has attracted the attention of scholars from ancient times to the present.

In ancient Indian literature, discussions concerning the conquest of kingdoms, governance, and administrative systems are not new. Various parts of Vedic literature, such as the *Yajurveda*, the *Atharvaveda Samhita*, and the *Brahmana* texts, contain references to different ideas related to politics and governance. An important addition to this tradition is Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, which stands as a well-organized and systematic document of statecraft and administrative policy in ancient India.

The great scholar Kautilya composed this work by synthesizing the earlier teachers' ideas concerning *Dandaniti* (the science of punishment or statecraft). "In the *Mahabharata* it is mentioned that at the beginning of creation, for the protection of the earth, Lord Brahma composed a scripture called *Dandaniti*."¹ From various ancient texts it is known that in ancient times this *Dandaniti* was one of the four branches of learning included in the education of a king. In its initial stage, *Dandaniti* mainly assisted royal justice, but gradually it came to include almost all aspects of state governance.

Through the *Arthashastra*, a clear picture of the administrative system and social policies prevalent during the Mauryan period can be obtained. This text indicates that the king was the primary source of justice and the supreme authority of the state. The *Dharmasutras* and *Smriti* texts also clearly mention that the king was the source of justice and the chief judge. He listened to the complaints of the subjects and punished the offenders accordingly. Establishing justice was one of the foremost duties of the king.

However, it was not possible for the king to hear all kinds of cases personally. Therefore, he heard appeals against the decisions of lower courts. In this context, the *Narada Smriti* mentions that decisions of village courts could be appealed in city courts, and decisions of city courts could be appealed before the king, but there was no provision for appeal against the decision of the king. In this regard, the following verse is noteworthy –

“Grāma dr̥ṣṭaḥ pure yāti pure dr̥ṣṭaḥ tu rājani.

Rājñā dr̥ṣṭaḥ kudr̥ṣṭo vā nāsti punarbhavo vidhiḥ.

That is, a matter judged in the village court may go to the city court, and a matter judged in the city court may be appealed before the king; but once judged by the king, there is no provision for reconsideration.

The king's judicial activities must necessarily be conducted according to the directives of the *Dharmashastra* and *Nitishastra*. Ignoring these principles is not appropriate for a king. According to Kautilya, the judicial system is the life of the state. He believed that a state which fails to establish justice soon moves toward destruction. According to him, the principal objective of justice is to ensure the protection of the lives and property of the subjects and to maintain social order by appropriately punishing antisocial elements who create disorder in society.

The *Arthashastra* discusses various aspects of state administration in ancient India in detail. However, in the present discussion, an attempt has been made to highlight particularly the perspective of the *Arthashastra* regarding the judicial system and the establishment of peace in society.

Judges and the Structure of the Judicial System:

“According to Acharya Kautilya, the system of governance is like a cart with one wheel – just as a cart cannot move with only one wheel, similarly the administration of a state is not possible without assistance and cooperation. Therefore, it is the duty of the king to appoint competent *amatyas* or ministers and to give importance to their advice in the administration of the state.”² “In the appointment of *amatyas*, the king should consider the candidate’s knowledge, intelligence, courage, competence, character, suitability to the country and time, and a life free from crime.”³ According to Kautilya, those who are born in their own country, possess noble character, are free from faults, skilled, proficient in fine arts, knowledgeable in economics, possess good memory, are clever, eloquent, strong, and energetic should be appointed to administrative responsibilities. At the same time, he further mentions that ministers should be influential, tolerant, pure in character, friendly, devoted, polite, capable, healthy, patient, selfless, steady in nature, affectionate, and free from hatred. Persons possessing these qualities should be appointed as the Prime Minister and other ministers. In ancient *Smriti* literature, the term *sabha* mainly referred to the king’s court or the judicial assembly. In this judicial assembly, mention is found of an important official known as *Prangbibak*. Although Manu and Yajnavalkya did not clearly mention the name of this officer, it holds special importance in the discussions of Kautilya. “In the absence of the king, learned Brahmins were appointed as representatives in the judicial assembly.”⁴ If for any reason the king was unable to conduct the proceedings of the assembly himself, he would appoint learned Brahmins as representatives and the activities of the assembly would be conducted with their assistance. This arrangement was known as *Prangbibak*.

According to Kautilya, three judges should be present together to conduct judicial proceedings. They would carry out judgments concerning agreements, contracts, and various civil matters. “Kautilya used the term *Dharmastha* for judges.”⁵ According to him, “the responsibility of these three judges was to protect the people from wicked and cruel persons.”⁶

For assisting the chief judge, “ancient *Smriti* writers also mentioned that the king should appoint at least three civil officials.”⁷ Besides the judges, the presence of priests and other respectable persons in the judicial assembly is also known. Manu used the term *Dharmapravakta* for a judge.

Kautilya also discussed in an organized manner the judicial system and the organization of judicial institutions. The judicial system described by him is a clear example of administrative decentralization. For the settlement of disputes, he mentioned the establishment of courts at different levels. These courts were established – at the junction of two *janapadas* (in the *Antahpala* fort), at the centre of ten villages (in *Sangrahana*), among four hundred villages (in *Dronamukha*), among eight hundred villages (in *Sthaniya*), and a principal court for the entire district.

In addition, in order to protect ordinary people from corrupt officials of the state, exploitative merchants, and wicked persons in society, Kautilya established a special court known as *Kantakashodhana*. The main objective of this court was to suppress the “thorns” or dangerous elements of society and thereby establish order and justice in public life.

Important information about the nature of the ancient Indian judicial system is found in texts such as the *Arthashastra* and the *Brihaspati Smriti*. According to the descriptions in these texts, “a judicial department should be established on the eastern side of the royal palace,

and its entrance should preferably face east.” The court was “decorated with garlands, incense sticks, and seats. Seeds and gems were also kept there, and the court was adorned with various pictures and images. It was also customary to keep fire and water in the court.

A total of ten members were present in the judicial assembly – the king, the chief justice, civil officials, *Smriti*, accountant, writer, gold, fire, and *Purusha*. Among them, the chief justice conducted the judicial proceedings and made the decision, and the king imposed royal punishment according to that decision. The rules of justice were preserved in the *Smriti*. Gold and fire were used during the taking of oaths, and water was kept for thirsty persons. The accountant-maintained records of various objects and evidence, and the writer preserved all documents related to the judicial process. The official known as *Purusha* brought government officials, the accused, and witnesses before the court and ensured their security.

Besides this, several state-recognized institutions also played important roles in judicial activities. According to Acharya Kautilya, the *Gram Sabha* was the lowest level of the judicial system. The head of the village was called the *Gramni*. He was elected by the villagers and was not a salaried employee. The *Arthashastra* mentions the existence of a village council of elders, which included prominent persons of the village. This council resolved minor disputes and could impose fines when necessary.

Above the village court, there were successively the courts of *Sangrahana*, *Dronamukha*, and *Sthaniya*, which were given authority to conduct judicial proceedings within limited jurisdictions. In addition, institutions such as *Kula*, *Shreni*, *Puga*, and *Pana* also existed, which were regarded as private courts.

According to Kautilya, an official called *Sangrahana* was appointed for a group of ten villages, who settled minor disputes. According to the text *Mitakshara*, near or distant relatives resolved disputes in the *Kula* court. When disputes arose in a joint family, the elder members of the family first tried to settle them. For this reason, the *Kula* court was essentially a judicial assembly of a large joint family where the elders of the group delivered decisions. Kautilya also described civil and criminal law in his text. According to him, civil law was mainly based on prevailing social customs and concepts. He mentioned that the caste system was a fundamental characteristic of Indian society; therefore, it was not possible to fully apply the principle of equality to all citizens at that time.

Therefore, considering the reality of the caste system, it was the responsibility of the king to apply civil law. At the same time, it was also the duty of the king to preserve and implement those customs and traditions that were beneficial for the welfare of the state and the people. However, Kautilya opposed the implementation of unreasonable and improper customs. In this context, Kautilya placed greater emphasis on the achievable rather than the means. According to him, if the result of a task is good, the means adopted for it become secondary.

Acharya Kautilya mentioned certain specific principles for judges in the judicial process. According to him, while conducting judicial proceedings the judge must carefully listen to the statements of both the plaintiff and the defendant, and in order to discover the truth he must take the help of both witnesses and spies. At the beginning of the judicial process, it is necessary first to record the statements of the plaintiff and the accused. In addition, he also mentioned that written evidence should be given the highest importance in determining facts related to an incident.

In this context, the *Manusmriti* states that the king or the prince should not create disputes on their own; rather, when someone approaches the court with a dispute, it is the duty of the king not to ignore it but to judge it properly.

In the initiation of a dispute, an important question is – who first approached the court seeking justice. According to some “economists and jurists, the person who first takes refuge in the court in a dispute should be regarded as truthful.”⁸ Their argument is that the person who becomes the victim of injustice cannot tolerate the suffering and therefore approaches the court quickly. However, Kautilya did not support this view. According to him, “who applied earlier or later in a dispute is not particularly important in determining the truth.”⁹ In order to determine the real truth, the judge must rely only on evidence and testimony. That is, “the person who is established as truthful through evidence should be considered truthful.”¹⁰

On the other hand, another question arises regarding whether a dispute should be judged if a long period has passed after the incident occurred. In this matter, differences of opinion are seen between Kautilya and other scholars. According to other scholars, it is improper to judge an incident long after it has occurred. But Kautilya did not accept this view. He clearly stated that “a wrongdoer should never escape punishment. No matter how old the incident may be, if it is proven, the offender must certainly be punished.”¹¹

Therefore, from the above discussion it is understood that Kautilya did not accept strict limitations of time in the judicial process. According to him, the primary duty of the judge is to deliver the correct decision on the basis of evidence and testimony. In many cases this perspective appears even more rational than that of the modern judicial system. In ancient times judicial proceedings were mostly conducted in written form. For this purpose, clerks or writers were appointed in the courts. “Their main duty was to properly record the statements of the plaintiff, the accused, and the witnesses, and to preserve all documents, letters, and statements of the court.”¹²

Whatever the accused and witnesses said before the judges in the court had to be recorded by the writer exactly in the same manner. If it was found that the writer made even the slightest alteration while recording the statement, there was a provision to impose appropriate punishment upon him.

Some political thinkers of ancient India divided evidence in judicial proceedings mainly into two categories – divine evidence and human evidence. According to them, before making a decision in any dispute or debate, both types of evidence in favor and against must be considered. Divine evidence included oath or pledge in the name of a deity, while human evidence included written evidence, possession evidence, and witness evidence.

Acharya Kautilya did not mention divine evidence in the *Arthashastra* written by him. In judicial proceedings he considered only human evidence as relevant and acceptable. In deciding disputed matters, he gave special importance to written evidence. According to him, three rules should be followed in the case of written evidence – (1) *Rajyakrita*, (2) *Sthānakrita*, and (3) *Svahastakrita*.

The general meaning of the word *Bhukti* is enjoyment or possession. In the *Arthashastra*, Acharya Kautilya provided clear provisions regarding possession. Like Manu and Shukra, he also recognized *Bhukti* as an important form of evidence. According to him, “if a person neglects his property and another person continues to enjoy that property for ten years, then the original owner loses his right.”¹³ However, if the owner of that property is a child, an

elderly person, a patient, an addict, someone residing abroad, or someone who has left the country, or if the property comes under someone else's control during exile or revolution, then even after ten years of possession his full right over the property remains intact.

The general meaning of the word *witness* is a person who directly observes an event. According to Maharshi Manu, a person who has directly seen or clearly heard something and can properly describe it is called a witness. A truthful witness is never considered inferior from the perspectives of *Dharma* and *Artha*.

According to the *Manusmriti*, the householder, residents of the place of occurrence, and persons belonging to the Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra classes may serve as witnesses. However, in special circumstances people of all classes, persons knowledgeable in religion, and men free from greed may also be accepted as witnesses. Persons of opposite nature should not be accepted as witnesses. According to Acharya Yajnavalkya, "three or more persons should be made witnesses from among those who are ascetics, charitable, noble, truthful, religious, possess sons, are wealthy, and follow the scriptures."¹⁴ Acharya Kautilya also placed special importance on the qualifications of witnesses in matters of testimony.

A difference of opinion is observed between Kautilya and earlier scholars regarding the number of witnesses. Kautilya believed that in order to decide a disputed matter, at least three persons who are trustworthy, of good character, and previously considered suitable to give testimony should be appointed as witnesses.

In the judicial system of Acharya Kautilya, the importance of testimony was extremely high. According to him, in judicial proceedings both the number and the credibility of witnesses must be considered. If both parties agree, "then even one witnesses may be considered sufficient."¹⁵ However, in cases of complaints related to debt, a single witness should never be considered sufficient.

Moreover, in the case of transactions conducted alone or secretly, the testimony of an unmarried woman or a man who directly saw or heard the event may also be considered acceptable. Generally, it has been mentioned that at least three witnesses should be summoned in judicial proceedings.

In the court, "before giving testimony the witness had to take an oath and was cautioned that the testimony he provided should be untruthful and free from deception."¹⁶ In this context, Acharya Kautilya believed that before taking testimony the witness should be cautioned according to his social status. A Brahmin witness was requested to speak the truth, and his testimony was taken in front of a vessel filled with water or fire.

Witnesses belonging to the Kshatriya class were warned that if they gave false testimony, they would be humiliated before enemies and forced to beg with hands placed on their foreheads. Vaishya witnesses were told that if they gave false testimony, they would be deprived of the merits gained from religious acts such as sacrifices and charitable institutions. Shudra witnesses were told— "if they gave false testimony, the merits accumulated over many births would go to the king, and the sin of the king caused by their false statement would also fall upon them."¹⁷

In addition, Kautilya also mentioned that after receiving testimony, its truth should be verified through spies. Through this method it was possible to prevent deception and falsehood in judicial proceedings.

Acharya Kautilya supported strict punishment against those who gave false testimony. In this context he mentioned the opinions of various economists and religious lawgivers. According to Acharya Manu, if a person creates a dispute by giving false testimony and thereby causes loss to another person's wealth, "then ten times the amount of the loss caused by that false testimony should be collected from that person as a fine."¹⁸

Principles of Punishment:

In ancient Indian political and social thought, the importance of punishment or the penal system was very great. According to Manu, "at the beginning of creation the Supreme Being created punishment as a radiant, crime-destroying force in order to protect all living beings and maintain order in society."¹⁹ It is out of fear of this punishment that people refrain from wrongful acts and social order is maintained.

The main objective of punishment is the prevention of crime and the preservation of *Dharma*. For this reason, in most ancient Indian texts the origin of the penal system has been considered divine. According to Yajnavalkya, the system of punishment was created to suppress wicked persons and criminals.

The *Mahabharata* also states that it is through fear of punishment that people are compelled to perform their respective duties. In order to prevent *Matsyanyaya* in society – that is, the tendency of the strong to devour the weak – the system of punishment is essential. Therefore, the administration of punishment has been considered a fundamental responsibility of the state for the establishment of justice and order.

Kautilya expressed extensive views regarding *Dandaniti* (the policy of punishment). According to him, in order to keep the state free from obstacles and well-organized, and to ensure that people of every *varna* perform their respective duties, the system of punishment is absolutely necessary.

According to Kautilya, the *Arishadvarga* present within human beings – such as desire, anger, greed, pride, arrogance, and pleasure – excite people and lead them toward unrighteousness and immoral conduct.²⁰ Therefore, in the interest of protecting *Dharma* and promoting public welfare, he considered punishment to be extremely necessary. According to him, if there is no punishment or penal system, then "*Matsyanyaya*" will prevail in society; that is, powerful individuals will begin to oppress the weak.

Elsewhere in the *Arthashastra*, while explaining the importance of punishment, he states that appropriate punishment inspires people toward *Dharma*, *Artha*, and *Karma*. For this reason, "*Dandaniti* has been called the protector of the *Trivarga*."²¹ Generally, the principle that determines and regulates punishment is called *Dandaniti*. Through this principle unattained objects may be obtained, acquired wealth can be protected, protected wealth can increase, and increased wealth can be properly preserved. In other words, the entire worldly way of life depends upon *Dandaniti*. Therefore, in order to maintain disciplined behavior among the people, the ruler should impose prompt and appropriate punishment in cases of crime.

From the descriptions of most ancient texts, it is known that "even in ancient times, as in the modern era, various forms of punishment existed. Generally, four principal types of punishment have been mentioned – (1) Symbolic punishment, (2) Restrictive punishment, (3) Preventive punishment, and (4) Corrective or reformative punishment". Acharya Kautilya presented a scientific form of the penal system in the *Arthashastra*. He determined

different types of punishments for different crimes by considering factors such as the nature and extent of the crime, the circumstances of the incident, the capacity of the offender, caste, gender, social condition, age, and the character or disposition of the offender.

In order to maintain consistency in determining punishment, Kautilya first proposed a fundamental principle. According to him, the offender should be punished in proportion to the crime; that is, punishment should be determined according to the degree of the offence. However, such punishment should only be given when the crime has been completely proven.

Considering that people of different levels live within society, Kautilya believed that for some individuals even a small punishment is sufficiently effective. They regard such punishment as a great consequence for themselves. Therefore, at times a minor punishment may function as effectively as a severe one. On the basis of this principle, he prescribed both lighter and heavier punishments for people of different ages and conditions in society.

In addition, Kautilya also mentioned differences in punishment according to caste distinctions. According to him, for the same crime the nature of punishment may differ between Brahmins and persons of other castes. For example, if a Brahmin commits a crime, then marking him with a symbol indicating the crime and exiling him from the country should be considered sufficient punishment; and a Brahmin should never be subjected to corporal punishment. On the other hand, "if a person of a lower caste commits an offence against a person of a higher caste, he should be given double punishment. Conversely, "if a person of a higher caste commits an offence against someone of a lower caste, then giving half of the prescribed punishment will be considered sufficient.

Essentially, out of fear of social shame, a modest person tries to refrain from sinful acts. Considering this psychological aspect, Acharya Kautilya established a special principle in the system of punishment. According to him, in some cases humiliating the offender before society may be an effective punishment. Therefore, he mentioned provisions for engraving on the forehead of a Brahmin or learned person a mark indicating the particular crime committed. As a result, the social reputation and honor of the offender would be destroyed, and other members of society would also learn to refrain from such crimes.

For example, in the case of theft, the symbol of a dog was to be engraved on the forehead; in the case of murder, the mark of chains; in the case of illicit relations with the teacher's wife, a special symbol; and in the case of drinking alcohol, the symbol of a drinking house was to be engraved on the forehead. Through this, the offender would feel ashamed in society and fear and awareness would arise among others to refrain from committing similar crimes.

According to Acharya Kautilya, sometimes a person does not wish to commit a crime himself, but due to particular circumstances he becomes compelled to do so. Therefore, in such situations the offender should not always be given full or severe punishment. On the basis of this principal Kautilya prescribed certain special provisions. He stated that if a person addresses another with insulting or hateful language under the influence of carelessness, intoxication, addiction, or similar conditions, then he should pay half of the prescribed fine.

Furthermore, Kautilya specifically prohibited the imposition of severe corporal punishment upon children, the elderly, the sick, intoxicated persons, the insane, the hungry, the thirsty, the exhausted, those weakened by excessive eating, the diseased, or persons

physically weak. Through this he emphasized the importance of humanity and the consideration of circumstances in the application of punishment.

On the other hand, Acharya Kautilya believed that the policy of deterrence is also an important method of suppressing crime. According to him, strict punishments should exist for certain special crimes. As a result, people do not dare to commit wrongful acts out of fear of punishment, and criminals are also discouraged from repeating the same crime.

In this context, Kautilya mentioned certain specific punishments in his *Arthashastra*, which in present times may be considered inhuman and cruel. According to him, criminals should be punished in places where ordinary people can witness it, so that fear may arise among others. Such punishments included – causing death by burning the body or skin with fire, cutting off the tongue, tying the hands and feet and hanging the offender upside down, pulling out the nails with needles, etc.

Similarities and Differences between the Mauryan Judicial System and Punishment and the Modern Judicial System:

During the Mauryan period, the judicial system mainly depended on the authority of the king and the state. In the *Arthashastra* written by Acharya Kautilya, detailed descriptions of Mauryan administration, judicial policy, and penal policy are found. In the judicial system and principles of punishment described in this text, some important similarities with the modern judicial system can be observed on one hand, while on the other hand many fundamental differences are also noticeable.

Similarities

First, the main objective of both judicial systems is to establish the rule of law and maintain social order. In the Mauryan period, efforts were made to maintain order in society through *Dandaniti* so that crime would decrease and moral conduct among people would be maintained. Similarly, in the modern judicial system the application of law aims to ensure peace, order, and security in society.

Second, the importance of proving the crime is clearly present in both systems. According to Kautilya, the offender should be punished only after the crime has been completely proven. In the modern judicial system as well, the court delivers judgments on the basis of evidence, testimony, and investigation.

Third, the principle of determining punishment according to the degree of the offence exists in both periods. Kautilya mentioned that punishment should be determined by considering the nature of the crime, circumstances, the condition of the offender, age, and other factors. In the modern judicial system as well, judges determine punishment by considering the seriousness of the offence, circumstances, and other relevant factors.

Fourth, the objective of preventing crime is one of the main aims of both judicial systems. In the Mauryan period, attempts were made to suppress crime by creating fear among criminals through strict punishment. In the modern judicial system also, an important objective of punishment is the prevention of crime and ensuring the safety of society.

Fifth, the concept of reformatory punishment exists in some form in both systems. Kautilya mentioned the reduction of punishment in some cases by considering the condition of the offender. In the modern judicial system this concept has developed in a more organized manner, where special emphasis is placed on correctional institutions, rehabilitation, and social reintegration.

Differences

However, several fundamental differences can be observed between the Mauryan judicial system and the modern judicial system.

First, there is an important difference regarding the equality of law. In the Mauryan period differences in punishment according to caste distinctions were seen. For the same crime, the severity of punishment could differ between a Brahmin and a person of a lower caste. But in the modern judicial system all citizens are equal before the law; differences in punishment based on religion, caste, gender, or social status are not acceptable.

Second, there are notable differences in the nature of punishment and the concept of humanity. In the Mauryan period many severe and physical punishments such as mutilation, burning the body, cutting the tongue, etc., were practiced. In the modern judicial system such punishments are considered inhuman and contrary to human rights. At present punishments such as imprisonment, fines, and community service are more common.

Third, differences also exist in the structure of the judicial system. In the Mauryan period the king was the supreme authority of the judicial system and justice largely depended on royal power. But in the modern state the judiciary is an independent institution, separate from the executive and legislative branches, and functions independently.

Fourth, the concept of human rights is extremely important in the modern judicial system. At present the fundamental rights of the accused person, the right to obtain legal counsel, and the right to a fair trial are protected by law. In the Mauryan period such human rights-based concepts were not so developed.

Fifth, differences can also be observed in the objectives of punishment. In the Mauryan period the main objective of punishment was to create fear and maintain social control. But in the modern judicial system the aim of punishment is not only to punish; rather, importance is also given to the correction of the offender, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society.

Conclusion:

From the above extensive discussion, it becomes evident that during the Mauryan period the judicial system and penal policy were extremely important components of state administration. Within the administrative structure of that time, the judicial system functioned as the principal means of maintaining social order, establishing law, and ensuring the stability of the state. From the detailed description of judicial policy and penal policy found in the *Arthashastra* written by Acharya Kautilya, it is understood that in ancient Indian political thought the judicial system was considered in a highly organized and practical manner. Kautilya believed that an appropriate penal system was essential for maintaining order in the state and establishing justice among people.

One of the major characteristics of the Mauryan judicial system was the determination of punishment according to the crime, the importance of evidence, and the application of strict penal policy to prevent crime. The main objective of this system was to maintain order in society and prevent people from committing wrongful acts. At the same time, Kautilya also mentioned that punishment should be determined by considering the age, condition, and

circumstances of the offender, which indicates a practical aspect of the judicial process. Many of these principles show similarities with the modern judicial system.

However, there are also significant differences between the Mauryan judicial system and the modern judicial system. In the Mauryan period there were differences in punishment according to caste distinctions and in many cases severe and physical punishments were applied, which are considered inhuman in the present time. On the other hand, in the modern judicial system all citizens are equal before the law and issues such as human rights, justice, and individual freedom have gained special importance. Moreover, in the modern judicial system emphasis is also placed on the correction, rehabilitation, and reintegration of offenders into society.

Therefore, it may be said that the Mauryan judicial system was consistent with the social, political, and cultural realities of its time and played an important role in maintaining order in society. Although significant changes have occurred in the structure and values of the judicial system in the modern era, the penal policy and judicial ideas of Kautilya still occupy an important place in historical and theoretical research as a valuable example of ancient Indian administrative knowledge.

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Human Rights and Justice: A Theoretical Analysis from an Ethical Perspective

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Abstract

According to conventional wisdom, the legal system grants individuals' certain rights grounded in principles that predate the very enactment of law. However, ensuring that individuals actually receive justice remains a formidable challenge. In this context, a pertinent question arises: Since the State ultimately serves as the custodian and enforcer of all legal provisions, how can human rights be realized if the State itself fails to grant citizens the rights to which they are entitled? It is precisely against this backdrop that the relationship between human rights and social justice emerges as a central theme of discussion. If concepts such as equality, judicial independence, and human dignity cannot be firmly established through the realization of social justice-facilitated by an awareness of human rights-then efforts are undertaken to achieve these objectives through legal initiatives. When the legal system functions effectively, these principles come to be recognized as established human rights. Indeed, it may be argued that social justice serves as a prerequisite for human rights. The concept of "justice" is also inextricably intertwined with the realm of morality. In the context of interpreting this concept, the views of Barker, the utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill, the individualist Nozick, and the socialist Karl Marx are particularly noteworthy. However, the manner in which John Rawls articulated his theory of justice in his seminal work, - *A Theory of Justice*, commands particular significance. In presenting their respective conceptions of justice, both Nozick and John Rawls rejected the arguments advanced by the utilitarian philosopher Mill. Rawls did not advocate for any form of coercive interference with individualism or private property rights. Nevertheless, Rawls viewed the wealthy as a resource-a means through which the economic conditions and fortunes of the impoverished population could be improved. The influence of John Rawls's philosophical thought is discernible in the conception of justice articulated by Amartya Sen in his book - *The Idea of Justice*. Professor Sen did not prioritize the establishment of appropriate institutions as the sole or primary means of fulfilling the demands of justice. He considered 'Social Choice Theory' to be an acceptable approach for addressing various issues related to justice. Thus, various concepts-such as liberty, equality, capabilities, and entitlements-are intertwined with theoretical analyses concerning justice.

Keywords: Justice, Ethics, Equality, Dignity, Freedom, Rule of Law

Introduction:

In his book 'An Introduction to Ethics', William Lilly, while indicating the characteristics of ethics, has called ethics a normative science related to the behaviour of socialized people. The word 'socialized' means that as a social being, man is bound by the dictates of right and wrong. If a person's entire life's work were such that there was no possibility of benefiting anyone else in society, nor was there any danger of harm, then there would be no question of identifying that person's work as right or wrong. In this context, Lilly has raised a famous statement of Aristotle - 'He who does not need to live in society is either an animal or a god.' According to this statement, Robinson Crusoe's behaviour should also be called good or bad, because he was not a lonely islander from the beginning, he had a social life. Therefore, when the words with the meaning of right are applied to the behaviour of the lonely islander Crusoe, the meaning of those words should be sought from his previous social life. In addition, this social perspective of ethics is supported by common folk usage. For example, the social process of telling the truth is easily considered a subject of ethics in the eyes of folk usage. But our personal actions, such as learning to sing, are not a subject of folk usage ethics.

An important topic in social ethics is the concept of justice and its related issues. The issue of justice has been discussed since the time of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. The medieval philosopher Thomas Aquinas and the modern philosophers Hume, Mill, and economist Adam Smith have discussed it in detail. In the seventies of the twentieth century, John Rawls revived the theory of justice with a novel interpretation. The social context of justice is very complex. Social justice is a concept that indicates equality among all people regardless of class, race, religion, etc. Its presence can also be seen in the issue of obtaining social and economic opportunities among all people. In fact, no matter how many interpretations of social justice or justice are raised from the conceptual point of view, in reality it is not that clear and specific.

Social Justice: Theoretical Analysis:

Social justice is a prerequisite for human rights. Through social justice, the basic rights, privileges, and morality of all people in society are maintained. If social justice is not established, human rights become meaningless. Therefore, before discussing the relationship between justice and human rights, it is necessary to know the meaning of justice. The concept of justice is associated with the concept of fairness. Again, the word justice is also related to the concept of morality. The concept of justice can be explained by protecting and establishing some moral rights of people. It includes the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as moral rights. Literally, social justice is impartiality and fairness.

According to Professor Barker, justice is the synthesis of liberty, equality and fraternity. Justice is the recognition of human dignity. The principle of liberty confirms the principle of justice. Justice is established only when liberty is desirable and everyone has the opportunity to enjoy it equally. Justice recognizes the special privileges of any person. In this case, no kind of unequal distribution is supported. This doctrine is called the theory of egalitarian justice. Many have called this doctrine unrealistic. If it is accepted from the theoretical point of view that all people are equal, but in reality, their needs, expectations and demands are not equal. Therefore, the distribution of resources according to the needs, demands and expectations of people is necessary for social equality.

John Stuart Mill discusses the theory of justice in the last chapter of his book (Utilitarianism). Although the principle of utility is the only criterion for judging the right and wrong, right and wrong of human behaviour, there is still a deep relationship between utility and justice. Justice is an alternative to social utility. The concept of justice is secondary and backward to the principle of utility. Like Hume, Mill believes that the concept of justice originates from human psychology. This concept is a kind of feeling and tendency, which arises from two basic natures of mankind. One of these two basic natures is the desire to punish the offender and the other is the belief in the harm done by one person to another. The desire to punish the injured or injured person arises from two reasons. One reason is the tendency to self-preservation and the other from a feeling of benevolence. Justice originates from the desire to punish. However, there is no moral feeling at the root of revenge. In this case, morality is related to the feeling of social welfare. All these feelings will be considered moral only when these feelings work for the general good and welfare of society. According to utilitarianism, the concept of justice and individual rights can be considered moral by everyone only when they are considered as auxiliary means of social welfare. The main and main objective of utilitarianism is to increase the collective happiness, peace and utility of people. However, inequality will be considered desirable only when it is able to play an effective role in achieving maximum utility for society. That is, if it is possible to increase the maximum happiness, peace and welfare of the maximum number of people as a result of unequal distribution, then unequal distribution will be considered good.

Although the concept of justice is used in many different ways, it is generally accepted that all societies should be governed by justice. John Rawls, in his book *A Theory of Justice*, outlined two principles of the theory of justice.

- First: Each person in society is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.
- Second: Inequality in the distribution of social and economic goods may be acceptable if it (a) is justified by rational individuals in providing benefits to all people and (b) ensures equal opportunities for obtaining prestigious positions and jobs.

Although John Rawls spoke of two principles of the theory of justice, an analysis of his doctrine reveals three principles. According to the first principle, all people in society have an equal right to enjoy basic freedoms. The second principle has two parts. The first part promises to provide equal opportunities to all citizens in the distribution of jobs, social prestige and status. The second part states that inequality in the distribution of wealth and status can be accepted as acceptable only when such inequality makes it possible to achieve the welfare of the less advantaged; deprived, oppressed, and large numbers of poor people in society. In this case, the first principle is called the principle of equality of freedom, the second is the principle of equal opportunity and the third is the principle of distinction.

Human rights and justice:

The concepts of human rights and justice are closely related to the protection and development of human interests. The term human rights involve the issue of ownership, while the concept of justice involves the issue of access to opportunities. Although the concepts of human rights and justice are interrelated, there are several differences between the two in terms of origin, scope and practical aspects. From a practical perspective, the relationship between the two concepts can be discussed as follows:

- a) Human rights are a type of fundamental rights that guarantee freedom, personal security, and the pursuit of prosperity, the right to freedom of religion, as well as the right to education, medical care, and participation in cultural activities. The state is committed to enforcing all these rights through the judicial system. But social justice is a moral and ideological concept, where all members of society are recognized to have the same basic rights, security, and benefits.
- b) Human rights establish the right of people to enjoy rights such as freedom, equality, security, etc. When rights are established in all these matters, people gain the ability to achieve rights. The concept of human rights is associated with the concept of social rights and obligations to receive benefits.

On the other hand, social justice refers to the principle of protecting the interests and happiness of all people living in society. It has no legal basis. This principle is practiced when the greatest good of the greatest number of people is considered. The concept of social justice is associated with the equitable distribution of social opportunities. Justice seeks the general welfare of people through the formation of a just society. As a result, the concept of human rights is preserved and developed through the establishment of social justice.

- c) Human rights and social justice are complementary to each other. Social justice is ensured by some essential preconditions such as social equality, independence of the judiciary, absence of arbitrary power, human dignity etc. If all these conditions are not established with the help of social awareness, attempts are made to achieve them through legal initiatives. When such legal system is in force, it is considered as a recognized human right. If people do not strive to maintain, preserve and implement them, then the enjoyment of such legal rights becomes uncertain.
- d) The state has an important role in both social justice and human rights. The welfare state is related to both social justice and human rights. Social justice provides the opportunity to establish a welfare state. This welfare state has various arrangements for the establishment of distribution, power, freedom, security, brotherhood and friendship.
- e) Social justice is consolidated, developed and established through the enjoyment of human rights. Because social justice creates opportunities for the protection, enjoyment and development of human rights. The concept of human rights is included in the principle of social justice. Here, the guarantee of satisfaction of human needs, the establishment of justice through the redistribution of resources, and equality of dignity and benefits are established as human rights.

Freedom and equality:

The concepts of liberty and equality are closely linked to Rawlsian thought about justice. One of the various parts of Ross's theory of justice is the - priority of self-will. While Rawls own statement on this priority is relatively weak, it is very prominent in modern voluntarism theory. This statement is identified by Robert Nozick as a broad one, from the rights of the individual to the rights of property. According to him, there will be an extreme priority in advancing social goals, such as eliminating deprivation and deprivation, and in almost all political justice.

These rights take the form of- necessary obligations and their loss cannot be tolerated. According to this logic, things that we consider desirable, such as functional, the rules of conduct which secure rights on a completely different level from those of happiness, equality

of outcome or opportunity, etc., are obligatory to be adopted without regard to their consequences. This statement proves the necessity of priority. The relatively minor claims of 'self-will', which are presented in libertarian theory, are essentially the basic political and civil rights with certain personal freedoms. But the priority which this limited rights claim is absolute. Although these rights are limited in their scope from those described in libertarian theory.

Comfort and efficiency:

Based on what has been discussed earlier, it can be said that any overall assessment of the claim to justice requires that people have the freedom and capacity to live the life they desire. The aspect of freedom that Amartya Sen has emphasized when discussing the **opportunity** and **process** of freedom can be called the positive forum of freedom. In this kind of freedom, it is not just about the ability of the individual to move towards the desired goal within his own reserved circle without facing any obstacles, but here special emphasis is given to the discussion of the actual ability of the individual to do this or that. The first freedom is negative and this is what can be called freedom in the old way. Both Rawls and Amartya Sen consider such freedom as a valuable social good, but the difference between Rawls and Amartya Sen is that Rawls does not give it priority over everything else. Amartya Sen especially wants to show that this is the highest ideal of Pareto. (Optimality Theory) The concept of efficiency is one of the core tenets of welfare economics and is considered a hallmark of personal freedom, it is practically incompatible with the accepted formulation of the principle of freedom. If the pursuit of one's own desires is the object of one's attention, then it is not enough to take into account the primary goods that a person possesses, but also the character traits that the person needs to transform these goods for the purpose of his own achievement. For example, a disabled person may own more wealth but be unable to live a normal life that a perfectly healthy person can live with much less. Similarly, an older or sicker person may have more wealth but face difficulties in living a normal life.

By the capability of a person, we mean the combination of various actions by which that capability can be mastered. Capability is a kind of freedom by which different standards of living can be mastered. If a person fasts, his response in terms of hunger or nutrition will be considered the same as that of any hungry person. But the scope of the capability of that rich person is different from that of another person, because he can eat good food as he pleases, which another person cannot. There is disagreement about which particular actions fall within the list of capabilities. Where the claim for equality is clearly and uncontroversially raised, there, all else being equal, Amartya Sen speaks in favour of capability-equality. Although in this context he does not forget to remind us that the question of capability-equality does not necessarily come up in the question of justice - partly because capability is not always the only important dimension, and partly because equality is not always the only important social virtue.

Professor Amartya Sen unique contribution to understanding inequality is the introduction of the concept of capability. The capacity to transform resources dynamically varies from person to person. But social institutions have little role in eliminating this inequality. In such inequality, the question arises as to what kind of compensation can be given for differences in interpersonal capabilities. If the possible remedies for inequality and poverty depend solely on the appropriate use of resources, then the acceptability of the resources approach becomes greater than that of the ableist approach.

Ownership and capacity:

Traditional welfare economics specifies utility as the standard of value. But if any standard is confined to the narrow limits of utility, the scope of seeing people becomes very narrow. Only one aspect of human life emerges in satisfaction or fulfilment of desires. It is wise to be aware of pleasure, but slavery cannot be accepted with pleasure. If one focuses exclusively on mental characteristics such as happiness, joy, desire, etc. the comparison of happiness and deprivation between individuals is greatly hindered. We can change our desires and our ability to obtain happiness depending on the situation. Especially in a state of danger, the nature of this happiness changes a lot. It is unfair to apply the criterion of utility to the deprived. For example, people from backward classes as a social class, intolerant communities. Among the minorities, sharecroppers in an uncertain world, whose bones are broken in an exploitative state. forced to work, the oppression of housewives in a strict gender-based society. All these Deprived people accept their remoteness. As a result, they demand no radical change. They do not have the courage to do anything, but rather they pursue their desires and expectations without any ambition. adapts to the situation as much as possible. So, the mental measure of happiness or joy, so flexible that it cannot be considered an indicator of deprivation. The plight of the deprived, an attempt to suppress or silence the determination of the criteria of utility, it can be observed forever. But even keeping this fact in mind, it is difficult to create such a situation. It will be a place where people can judge what kind of life they want to live. They will get the right opportunity themselves. These trials need more comprehensive information. Collection, based on which people's ability to live the life they want in their own judgment, it is possible to emphasize.

The ability to gain utility has its own importance. Whatever the ability is judged here, the matter of gaining happiness prevails there, that is, the importance of something means happiness, that is how the matter of judgment stands. There, the question of eliminating many other deprivations such as hunger, poverty, injustice, exploitation, illiteracy is not considered important in its own logic. All these things will be considered important only when happiness is obtained in return for all those deprivations. The extent of this importance again depends on the extent of happiness. But this narrow view based on utility is not enough for the overall evaluation of human life.

So economic rights are a real issue in human rights discourse. Organizations associated with the human rights movement never deny this real problem. However, due to differences in perspectives on social justice, there is disagreement about how active the human rights movement will be in the struggle to protect or achieve economic rights, and to what extent they will participate in this movement. At the root of this disagreement is the ideology of difference in perspectives. Organizations established for the purpose of protecting human rights have their own ideological positions. This ideology determines what their position will be on social justice. It is on the basis of this ideology that the position their movement will take on the main component of human rights- economic rights. The programs of organizations established for the protection of human rights include the economic intensity of the existing society, the various human problems arising from the unequal distribution of wealth, and the problems that globalization has exacerbated. The economic security of the common people has decreased in the era of capitalist globalization. The 2004-05 report of the International Labour Organization shows that 6.2 - percent of the working-age people in the world are currently unemployed. Of those who do work, most work for wages that make it

difficult for them to support themselves. The richest Five (5%) percent of the world's population earns 114 times more than the poorest 5 percent. ²⁴ According to the 2003 Human Development Report, the income of the richest 25 million Americans is equal to the combined income of the poorest 2 billion people in the world. In such circumstances, achieving the right to life is a real challenge. Many of whom Yes, the right to live cannot be established by taking something away from them and giving it to the deprived. This is why human rights organizations do not agree with the Pareto-based economic theory.

Future thinking:

Historically, the need to protect human rights at the national or domestic level has been almost entirely linked to the dominant ideas of the time. Democratic governance, in principle, provides for the subordination of the minority to the will of the majority and thereby ensures the equality of citizens, human dignity and social justice. The most powerful tool for protecting human rights is democracy. In theory, democracy is a system of government in which sovereign power is exercised directly or indirectly among all free citizens and through a representative system.

In the concept of human rights, human dignity applies equally to every man and woman. Through this, the aspects of justice, freedom and equality are revealed to the greatest extent. The rule of law is necessary in the expectation of this justice. Human rights law does not treat different people equally, but rather sees one from another in this regard. That is why everyone is considered a separate special entity as a human being entitled to equal dignity. In the changing circumstances of the world, the principle of non-discrimination has failed to understand the overall meaning of human rights. The only principle that human rights philosophy and reality have been able to reflect is the concept of preserving human dignity. The concept of the right to life is also linked to the fundamental right called the right to life.

The issue that needs to be mentioned in the context of discussing the relationship between democracy and human rights is whether the citizens are able to use the facilities that democracy provides to the citizens of the state. In November 1998, former President of the Philippines Fidel Valdez Ramos expressed an opinion in this regard at the University of Australia. According to him, democracy cannot survive without public support. The challenge before the people of today's world is not only to remove authoritarian regimes through democracy, but also to go beyond this and to manage democracy for the common people. The extent to which all the facilities that democracy creates will be accepted depends on various factors such as multi-party-political power, principled debate and value formation. If the opposition parties in a democratic system make efforts, then the government cannot remain indifferent to various important issues related to civil rights. Even if democratic conditions do not exist, pre-democratic the strength and patience of the opposition parties in South Korea indirectly influenced the governance of the country even before the full establishment of democracy. Social problems like gender inequality, child labor, primary education, etc. remained neglected in most cases. But as these issues came to the attention of the opposition parties, they received the attention of both the law and the ruling class. The rule of democracy is to make the demands of the people clear. In many cases, rights cannot be obtained without demanding. Among the rights that are being demanded in present-day India, notable is universal primary education, the proposal to give one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha to women by law, etc. Apart from this, voluntary euthanasia is often demanded as a right. The role of democracy is also essential in achieving

religious rights while maintaining communal harmony. Democratic security is essential for the progress and existence of a diverse country like India, where Hindus are in the majority, which is a large Muslim-majority country, where millions of Christians and most of the world's Sikhs, Parsis and Jains live side by side. As valuable as democracy is as a primary source of human rights, it is also necessary to explore various ways and means to activate it well and realize its power. The establishment of social justice does not depend on the size of the institution, but on its effective management.

Conclusion:

Human rights and justice cannot be understood as isolated ideals, they gain meaning only when grounded in ethical reflection and lived social realities. A theoretical analysis shows that rights are not merely legal claims but moral assertions rooted in human dignity, equality, and respect. Justice, in this sense, becomes the practical expression of these moral commitments, guiding how societies distribute resources, recognize differences, and address historical injustices. Ethical perspectives—from deontological emphasis on duty and rights to consequentialist concern for outcomes and well-being—offer different yet complementary ways to justify human rights. At the same time, critical approaches remind us that rights discourse can sometimes overlook power imbalances, cultural diversity, and structural inequalities. Therefore, a meaningful understanding of human rights must move beyond abstract universality and engage with context, vulnerability, and lived experience. Justice demands not only formal recognition of rights but also their actual realization through fair institutions, inclusive policies, and active civic participation. In a rapidly changing world marked by inequality, conflict, and technological transformation, the ethical foundation of human rights remains essential. It provides a moral compass that challenges injustice, protects the marginalized, and encourages accountability. Ultimately, the relationship between human rights and justice is dynamic and evolving, requiring continuous ethical engagement to ensure that the promise of dignity and fairness is not only declared but genuinely fulfilled in practice.

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From Context to Tradition: The Supremacy of Water Rituals in Indian Sundarbans

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Abstract

Since time immemorial, water has been firmly connected with any culture to sustain livelihood. Water has a profound relationship with human civilization as nearly all the ancient cultures were set up on the banks of rivers or large water bodies. In the Indian cultural context, water serves as the purifying element of nature. From birth to death, water plays a vital role in Indian society especially in Sundarbans regions of West Bengal. As a natural agent, water is found here to a large extent. The islanders believe water to be their deity, and they worship water regularly before starting their journey towards the mangrove forest for earning their livelihood. The present paper tries to explore these water-based rituals and how these rituals became tradition over the ages. The dwellers perform some rituals irrespective of their religions. They take the rituals as the unwritten laws of the jungle. They keep their belief in these rituals and obey with great reverence for their safe return from Mahal (working in the Forest). Making any exceptions to the rituals may jeopardize their lives in the jungle. In the Sundarbans, every islander observes these water-based rituals. These celebrations not only reflect their reverence for nature but also reinforce their vital connection to the environment. The islanders believe that the rituals may protect their lives in any perilous circumstances in the Sundarbans where the lives of the islanders are deeply intertwined with the forest and water. The paper promotes these water-based rituals which are observed over generations in the islands of Sundarbans and how these turn into a tradition. The paper will highlight the social realities of people of Sundarbans which acts as their context. Thereby, the representation of the traditions centring water will be the focal point of the present study. This paper will analyse how the contexts have been transformed and the traditions are settled down. How these traditions work as symbolic power and balance of the natural world will be highlighted here.

Key Words: Ritual, Sundarbans, Tradition, Water, Culture, Worship.

Introduction: Various mythological stories illustrate the significance of water as the source of life. In Hindu mythology, it is believed that life commenced with Lord Vishnu, who resides in a deep oceanic slumber. This perspective emphasizes the vital connection between water and life, showcasing the profound themes present in various cultural beliefs about the origins of existence. The world has Water as the predominant element and same

as with the human body. This concept connects to the intrinsic nature of life, illustrating how both the world and our body are intricately woven together by this vital element of nature. The Rig Veda proclaims: "These waters are pure and auspicious (which cleanses); These are the medicines (healers, physical and spiritual) of all; these waters help growth and provide prosperity for all."(Kasturi)

From African cultures to Indian cultures, the tradition of water rituals is of great significance, which is continued through the worship of water deities. Indian societies worship water as a power of spiritual cleansing. There is a belief that the water of river Ganges can drive away any earthly sin. The holy Water from the Ganges is kept in every household for purification before conducting any ceremony. Before beginning any traditional puja, rituals, or ceremonies or a wedding, a pot (generally kalash) of Ganga Jal (water of Ganga) is placed there. The water deities of the seven sacred rivers – the Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswathi, Godavari, Narmada, Sindhu, and the Kaveri are invoked into the pot. Symbolically, the water of this pot turns into sacred nectar, and it serves as the blessings of immortality. Water is sprinkled over with the chanting of some mantras to purify everything before the beginning of any religious ceremony. This paper seeks to bring out a portrayal of religious enactment and the lives of islanders surrounded by water.

Life is not possible without water. In India, there are many holy places situated on the banks of rivers and at the confluence of rivers. In Indian Culture, the holy water of the River Ganges holds a deep religious significance. It is believed that sparkling water of Mother Ganges has purifying power. In the way of salvation, the role of divine Ganges is beyond question. The cultural and spiritual bonds with Ganges posit its proximity in the lives of Sundarbans. Life in the Sundarbans is full of challenges and struggle. Human-wildlife conflict and natural disasters are a constant threat to the people of Sundarbans. To mitigate such complications, they become closely dependent on nature. As a result, the dependence on nature grows, and the culture of this region develops in harmony with nature. To them, the water of holy Ganges can purify any kind of fear, dirt and obscurity. Mother Ganges works as a catalyst in time of devoting any other God and Goddesses. They believe that without the holy water of Ganges, every ritual remains incomplete. The vulnerable riverine ecology of the Sundarbans helps the people towards the formation of such tradition.

The water bodies of these regions are mostly salty which is very vulnerable for fertile land and the dams. To keep the water bodies calm, they worship Lord Shiva. After the fulfilment of their desires, the dwellers offer salt into the water as oblation and chant as

“Atti Ganga Bhatia Panch Pir Dariya
Gaji Ganga-Shiva Badar Badar, Badar Badar”.

They believe that if Lord Shiva will be pleased by their devotion, Lord Shiva will provide the sweet water for their cultivation.

Water has an important place as a sacred element in the beliefs and practices of every ritual. Alison notes it as ‘To them the river is the divine mother, a goddess known as Ganga, Mother Ganga, Maa Ganga, a deity that can wash away your sins and your suffering, and take the souls of your deceased loved ones straight to heaven.’ (Alison) Many pilgrims flock to the holy towns to attain salvation and hoping for an end to their suffering. “The river is considered pure and it is believed that bathing in her will bring

redemption and liberation; so ritual bathing is an important part of any pilgrimage." as observed by Alison.

The islanders believe that 'Ganga ma' protects them on both water and land. The most renowned place in the delta region of Sundarbans is the Sagar Islands. There is a reference to the place in Mahabharata. The most sacred place for bathing is located here, known as "Ganga Sagar". Pilgrims from distant places come to take a holy bath at the conflux of the river and Sagar (Ocean). The most popular belief is that if anyone can take a dip in the holy water of Ganga Sagar during the Makar Sankranti, they will attain salvation. During the month of Poush of the Bengali calendar the ritual of this holy bathing is observed.

The islanders perform certain water rituals regularly. They believe the practice of these rituals will protect their lives from any natural catastrophe or wildlife encounters. In the territory of Sundarbans, the native people are mostly dependent on water and forest for survival. Subsistence is very risky both in the forest and in the water. To seek rescue from any perilous situation, the islanders worship Goddess Kali. "The risks of working in water are immense as compared to that of working on land in this region; camouflaged and submerged crocodiles can attack without warning. The worship of Kali can also be attributed to urban encroachment in the delta." (Dasgupta).

Driven by the imperative of survival and livelihood, the people of this region are compelled to venture into the Sundarbans forests by boat to collect its aquatic and forest resources. There is no assurance of a safe return for those who embark on these journeys into the jungle. To avoid these perilous environmental circumstances, family members— anxious to ensure that no harm befalls their loved ones— observe various rituals, prayers, and superstitious practices at home both before the journey begins and throughout the entire duration of the travellers' absence in the jungle. Those who undertake this boat journeys also observe various rituals and superstitions— at home as well as aboard their boats. A distinct "boat culture" has evolved alongside the broader Sundarbans culture since the distant past.

The Sundarbans hold a special significance for those whose lives and livelihoods are intricately connected with this unique environment, often referred to as "Ma Bonbibi's Realm" (*Ma Bonbibir Mahal*). This deep connection inspires local communities to embark on "Journeys to the Realm" (*Mahal-jatra*), where they navigate the waterways of this enchanting region. The boats used for these expeditions are cherished and considered "The Mother's Temple," reflecting the respect and reverence for the natural environment. Through these journeys, people engage with and gather valuable forest and aquatic resources, sustaining both their livelihoods and the rich traditions of the Sundarbans.

The worship of Goddess Bonbibi is also a widely practised traditional cultural form in the Sundarbans, which also includes water as an indispensable element. The islanders believe that facing any kind of danger in the sea is the curse of Goddess Bonbibi. Pleasing the Goddess will bring no harm to them both in water and land. For this reason, before setting out on their journeys through watery ways, they pray to Goddess Bonbibi. Even the wives of the boatmen often vow for a special worship upon the safe return of their husbands. In this way, Goddess Bonbibi also becomes a part of the Sundarbans water-based cultures.

In many instances, the common folks of Sundarbans, unable to bear the costs of cremation or funeral rites, set the bodies afloat in a sacred river. In the past, a dying person

was brought to the banks of the Ganges even before their death. The funeral rites for the majority of the deceased are performed on the banks of the Ganges, or on the banks of any river regarded as a symbolic manifestation of the Ganges. Following the Hindu Custom, the 'bones' of the deceased are brought to the Ganges or to the confluence of the river and the sea. Indeed, death itself is often referred to as 'Gangayatra' (the journey to the Ganges) or 'Gangaprapti' (attainment of the Ganges). According to popular belief, the touch of the sacred waters of the Ganges—the 'Purifier of the Fallen'—washes away all impurities, malice, envy, sins, and sorrows of all humanity. The path to Nirvana becomes smooth, and the soul attains eternal salvation in heaven. The Ganges is simultaneously a Goddess and a mother; the river symbolizes the flow of life and serves as the ultimate source for the purification of all earthly things.

"Bhara Bhasan" is a water-based ritual in Sundarbans. In the 'Bhara Bhasan' ceremony, the procedure for preparing the 'Bhara' (ritual offering) during the month of Jyeshtha involves the following: seventeen different types of leaves, bound together with red thread, are placed upon a new or freshly washed winnowing basket (*kulo*). Additionally, seventeen varieties of fruits, along with sweets made from date palm jaggery or sugarcane jaggery—typically presented on a banana leaf—are arranged within the basket. Subsequently, on a Tuesday, this basket is worshipped—either by a priest or by the devotee herself while observing a fast and maintaining ritual purity. Then this winnowing basket is set afloat in the waters of the Ganges or a local pond on the following Wednesday. This act is known as 'Bhara Bhasano' (setting the 'Bhara' afloat). Since this ritual worship is performed on the Tuesdays of the month of Jyeshtha, these specific days are referred to as 'Joy Mangalbar' (Victorious Tuesday).

Similarly, during the month of *Agrahayana*, women observe fasts and perform worship on four consecutive Tuesdays. On these days, oblations such as seventeen pairs of bananas, radishes, 'Kul' (jajube) fruits, and various leaves are arranged within a winnowing basket; the basket is worshipped on Tuesday and set afloat on Wednesday. This ritual is observed as a form of worship dedicated to Devi Mangalchandi. The 'Bhara Sazano' (arrangement of the 'Bhara') is typically performed by installing a ritual earthen pot ('ghat') dedicated to Mangalchandi near the grain store ('gola') or within the family shrine ('Thakur Ghar'). The act of arranging and worshipping the 'Bhara' on a Tuesday during *Agrahayana* is known as 'Kuli-Mangalbar.' During the Tuesdays of both Jyeshtha and *Agrahayana*, the worship of Mangalchandi is celebrated exclusively by women through the performance of various traditional female rituals ('stree-achar'). It is worth noting that in the Rarh region—particularly in the district of Nadia—a 'Kul' tree laden with fruit is worshipped by ritually envisioning it as the Goddess 'Chandi' herself.

The historical connection between 'Joy Mangalbar' and 'Kuli-Mangalbar' and the realm of maritime commerce is substantiated through an analysis of the prevailing geographical environment and conditions of the era. Viewed through the lens of the geographical context, it can be surmised that during the months of *Agrahayana* and *Paush*, merchant vessels would embark on voyages from Bengal—navigating the waterways of the Bay of Bengal—towards the 'Dakshin Patan' (the southern islands/ports). This timing was chosen because, during this specific period, the rivers and the sea tend to remain calm, and the northerly winds—favorable for sailing—begin to blow. When the northerly wind catches a boat's sail, the vessel can swiftly and effortlessly make its way toward the islands lying to

the south. Due to this geographical factor, during the month of *Agrahayan*, rituals were performed—specifically involving the ceremonial installation and worship of a sacred pitcher ('ghat') dedicated to Mother Mangalchandi. The women used to pray for the well-being of husbands and children who had embarked on distant trading voyages.

The Tuesdays falling within the month of *Agrahayan* are referred to as 'Kuli Mangalbar.' They are designated as such because these Tuesdays are observed with the specific intent of safeguarding the 'kul' (lineage)—that is, protecting the lives of one's husband and children. In its literal sense, the term 'Bhora' refers to a boat. The act of loading indigenous goods onto a boat and launching it into a river or the sea is known as 'Bhora Bhashano' (the launching of the *Bhora*). Once the 'Bhora' has been set afloat in the river, one does not look back; indeed, turning around to cast a backward glance is considered inauspicious. In its true significance, this practice constitutes a psychological subject matter. When merchants set sail for distant foreign lands, the lingering gaze of their loved ones can weigh heavily on their minds, causing distress or anxiety. The folk custom—which dictates that one should avert one's eyes once the merchant vessel (*bhara*) has been launched—serves to validate this psychological truth.

The Tuesdays falling within the month of 'Jyaishta' are known as "Joy-Mangalbar" (Tuesdays of Victory). These days are observed with the specific intent of praying for the safe and unhindered return of merchant vessels to their homeland. It is, in essence, a "Tuesday of Triumph"—a celebratory ritual expressing the collective joy and exuberance associated with a prosperous return from distant foreign shores. Furthermore, within the households of merchants, a sacred earthen pot ('ghat') dedicated to the Goddess Mangalchandi is kept installed throughout the year; this vessel is worshipped daily with offerings of oil, vermilion, water, and flowers.

It is worth noting that, within the corpus of 'Mangalkavya' (narrative poetry of the Mangal tradition), the deities Durga, Chandi, and Manasa are often portrayed as manifestations of the very same Goddess. Bijay Gupta, the renowned poet of the "Manasa Mangal" cycle, sought to convey the concept that these three distinct deities are, in fact, merely different expressions of a single divine entity. Addressing Chand Sadagar, the Goddess Daman-Chandi declared: "Worship Padmavati, O Merchant Chand! Behold, all these forms are but one; do not perceive them as distinct or separate. He whom one perceives as Vishnu is, in truth, Mahadev (Shiva); likewise, behold in Kubera and Varuna, the Sun and the Moon. She whom one recognizes as Bhagavati is, in reality, Vishahari (Manasa); through the grace of Padma, I serve as the vessel that ferries souls across the ocean of worldly existence." (Naskar, 204).

The saga of Chand Sadagar represents maritime culture of ancient time which is prevalent in today also. As water is a crucial medium of commercial purpose, it becomes a source of rituals in remote areas of Sundarbans. They include water in every attempt to safeguard their family members from the rages of the sea. Women transform their husbands' vessels into a temple by placing an idol of Goddess Shashti. This idol serves as a source of divine empowerment in the mid sea during any kind of hazardous circumstances.

Conclusion:

In the modern era, the inherent perils associated with commercial voyages across treacherous waterways have significantly diminished; nevertheless, this deep-seated folk

custom remains very much alive in the hearts of Bengali mothers. Particularly in the regions bordering the Sundarbans, it is customary for certain Hindu households to install a 'ghat' of Mangalchandi within their domestic shrines ('Thakur-ghar'). Here, the vessel is ritually bathed daily with oil, vermilion, and water, followed by formal worship. This ritualistic worship of the 'ghat' is performed solely to invoke the well-being and prosperity of the family. In their true essence, both "Kuli-Mangalbar" and "Joy-Mangalbar" represent ancient folk traditions deeply rooted in the maritime trade practices of the past.

The people of the Sundarbans believe in the myth of the River Ganges, which asserts that holy water is essential for any worship process. Their livelihoods are also dependent on rivers to a great extent. Here also, water acts as a context for worshipping so that their lives could be safe in water in time of serving their daily work. Besides, flood is one of the hazardous catastrophes that can destroy their habitat in a moment. They started to worship water from any River with the chanting of Ganga Mantra. Thus, the significance of holy water evolves in the tradition of Ganga Puja, which is essential before performing any other ritual.

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Environmental Movements in India: A Socio-Political Analysis of Ecological Resistance

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Abstract

The environment is composed of everything that is included in the world known to man. In addition to humans, the world known to man includes various animals, insects, plants, soil, water, wind, light, heat, factories, houses, roads, etc. The environment is formed on the basis of all these. The active position of living beings, plants, light, wind, water, soil, heat, etc. is considered as the environment. In the overall discussion of ecology, the concept of environment includes the natural world that is perceptible to the senses, as well as the world of human creation, science, technology and socio-cultural matters. Animals and plants included in the environment are living elements. On the other hand, light, wind, water, soil, heat etc. are non-living elements.

Keywords: Environment, Development, Chipko, Ecological, Conservation

Introduction:

The environment is essential for life. The dependence of life on the elements of the environment is undeniable. Animals have to depend on the environment for food. Animals have to depend exclusively on other animals and plants for food suitable for life, on soil, other living and non-living elements for habitation and on the oxygen in the air for respiration. All these elements of the environment are not static, but changeable. However, this does not apply to sunlight. If the quantity of all these elements of the environment decreases or increases or quality of the element's decreases, various problems will arise in the lives of the animals living in the environment. Many animals will migrate and try to stay together, while some species will become extinct. As a result of all this, the balance of the existing environment will be upset.

Objectives of the study:

1. To focus the socio-political elements to driving India's environmental movements.
2. To analyse the role of various stakeholders in shaping environmental movements.
3. To discuss the impact of environmental movements on policy, governance and sustainable development.

Research Methodology:

The proposed study is based on theoretical and secondary data method like books, journal, newspaper, internet etc.

Environment and Politics:

In order to prevent the gradual degradation of the environment, an activism is being observed all over the world these days. Needless to say, India is no exception. In the last 20 years, more than a hundred environmental organizations have been formed in our country. Some are working at the local level, some at the national level. Most of the organizations are private or voluntary. The objectives and work of all such organizations are not the same. According to the type of work, these organizations can be divided into three categories- (1) educational, (2) developmental and (3) preventive. There are:

(1) Educational:

There are several environmentalist mass organizations in India whose work is to collect information about the environmental pollution caused by industry and agriculture and to make the people aware. A notable organization in this regard is the Center for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi. In 1982 and 1985, they published two important environmental reports. Today, most of the environmental debates are based on these two reports. This CSE simultaneously carries out research work and publishes two magazines called *Green File* and *Down to Earth*, which publish environmental news from the country and abroad. There are also organizations called Lokayan and INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art, Culture and Heritage), which are playing a significant role in increasing environmental awareness.

(2) Developmental:

There are some organizations whose work is to make people aware of environmental problems as a bastard child of modern development and on the other hand to conduct various experiments and find alternative paths of development. In fact, such organizations have indicated all the paths which if followed properly can deal with environmental problems and at the same time improve the quality of life of the poor people. For example, 'Utthan' published in *The Hindu Survey of Environment*, 1994 can be mentioned. 'Utthan' is an organization of some development-minded professionals. This organization conducts experiments in an area called Dholera in Ahmedabad district. The quality of the soil in this place is very poor. The groundwater is saline, sometimes floods during heavy rains and again droughts during dry spells. Besides, the character of the soil is getting worse due to excessive grazing of animals and cutting of trees. In 1997-98, 49 percent of the land in about 40 villages in the Dholera region became uncultivable. In summer, many villages in the region have no water. They covered the water bodies with plastic films in such a way that rainwater could be retained and the saline water below could be mixed. This method was found to be much cheaper than the government mega projects and gradually made the land cultivable. Such voluntary organizations educate the people about health, about indigenous medicine, about low-cost housing construction, about the benefits of afforestation. They educate people about various topics, such as the use of solar energy, the market for manufactured goods, the benefits of small savings schemes, etc. They also make people aware of alcohol, smoking, etc.

(3) Preventive:

The government does not support such alternative development initiatives. Sometimes it even opposes them. In addition, local leaders, politicians and bureaucrats oppose them. In this situation, environmental organizations have no choice but to take the path of resistance or movement. Recently, several environmental movements have emerged in different parts of India. For example, Chipko Movement, Narmada Bachao Movement, Tehri Movement, Chilka Movement, etc. are notable. There are many Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in India that organize protest movements against environmental degradation and pollution. The work of such NGOs is to raise awareness among the public about the environment and to put pressure on various political authorities, planning groups, industrialists, etc. For example, the Kerala People's Science Movement (KPSM) of Kerala can be mentioned. This organization organizes marches, holds public meetings, publishes and distributes books and pamphlets on issues such as land degradation, pollution, loss of natural resources, etc. to raise awareness about environmental issues.

Characteristics of the environmental movement:

Most environmental movements are supported by people from all walks of life. This is because environmental problems affect people from all walks of life. When water is polluted or air is toxic, no one is spared. This is why environmental movements in India and around the world have become so strong in such a short period of time. The environmental movement unites as well as divides the people of the society. Since the society is divided into rich and poor, and since not all people in the society are equally dependent on natural resources, the environmental movement is bound to be a class movement. For example, the objective of the Narmada Bachao Andolan is to stop the proposed construction of a large dam on the Narmada River so that the ecological balance is not destroyed and thousands of local rural poor residents are not displaced. On the other hand, the rich and middle-class people of the region are opposed to this movement. The main issues of the environmental movements in Western countries are green conservation, wildlife conservation, pollution-free environment, etc. In contrast, environmental movements in third world countries including India are mainly concerned with the livelihood of the rural poor and marginalized people. Moreover, environmental issues are given priority in the programs of most political parties in Western countries. But none of the political parties in India gives much importance to environmental issues. There is a type of environmentalist in our country who are mainly from the upper or upper middle class of society. Their outlook is scientific. They draw everyone's attention to the gradual degradation of land and water resources, the extinction of natural forests and various species of living beings, and they call for declaring the affected areas as protected areas and banning human movement. These are the elite or advanced environmentalists. They are few in number, but they have considerable influence in determining government policies. The main themes of the environmental movement are clean air, clean water, and clean food. The environmental movements that have developed in India are mainly against all those activities that destroy the environment and make local people miserable, such as large dams built on rivers, deforestation, unplanned industrialization and urbanization, extraction of mineral resources in mountains etc.

Chipko Movement:

The environmental movement in India began with the Chipko movement. This movement was initiated by the residents of the Garhwal region of the Himalayas. The villagers used to collect and use fruits, flowers, wood etc. from the forest area. This was their hereditary right. The state government's forest department took it away. The forest department imposed a ban on the local people of the area not to destroy the forest resources in any way. However, at the same time, timber traders and contractors were given permission to cut down the forest trees. The Chipko movement was formed in protest against this discrimination. All the poor people of the area, including women, joined this movement. They hugged the trees to protect the forest resources. The word 'Chipko' means to hug. This is where the name Chipko movement comes from.

Initially, this movement was spontaneous and unorganized. An organization called 'Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal' was the first to take the initiative to organize the movement. It was formed by some social workers from Gopeshwar village in Uttarakhand. The members of this organization initially spread among the people of the village. - Took initiatives to raise awareness and gradually moved towards building a resistance movement. To avoid clashes with the villagers, the forest department and contractors took the initiative to cut trees in the Phatampur forest area near Kedarnath, far from Gopeshwar village. On receiving the news, the villagers appeared in the Phatampur forest on April 24, 1973. They hugged the trees and kept guarding them night after night. Gradually, the movement spread to a vast area of the hills. The movement was led by Sundarlal Bahuguna, Chandrika Prasad Bhat, Sarala Ben, Meera Ben, Gori Devi and others. Apart from tree conservation, other demands of this movement included maintaining the original species diversity of the forest land, and continuing women's rights in collecting fuel and fodder.

The Silent Valley Movement:

'Silent Valley' is a deep forested valley in the Palghat district of Kerala. It is bordered by Palghat city on one side and Kajikode city on the other. Coimbatore city of Tamil Nadu is also located near this valley. The Kandhipuja river flows from north to south in this valley. The entire region is silent and still. That is why it is called Silent Valley. In 1963, the Kerala government took up the project of constructing a reservoir for hydroelectricity and irrigation in the Nirav Valley. In 1973, the project was approved by the Planning Commission of India. As an initial step in implementing the project, trees were cut in the area. Initially, no one objected. But in 1976, some environmentalists started worrying about the issue and pointed out the potential environmental damage. Gradually, the local people also became aware of it and started opposing it strongly. The National Commission for Environmental Planning and Coordination (NCEP) was formed to look into the matter. Planning on Environment and Co-ordination) formed a Task Force. This Task Force was formed under the leadership of the Vice President of World-Wide Fund India (W. W. F. India). In their report in 1977, the Task Force objected to the destruction of this primeval forest and the construction of the hydroelectric project. As the government ignored this objection and continued to implement the project, the anti-project movement gradually gained momentum.

The most significant role in strengthening the Silent Valley movement is played by the Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP). It is the largest environmental-conscious public science organization in Kerala. Its work is to make the people of the rural areas aware of the environment and make them science-minded. The KSSP's statement is that if the proposed

reservoir construction plan is implemented, the evergreen forest resources of the concerned area will be destroyed, various rare wildlife will be wiped out; the breeding of various migratory fish will be hampered; in short, the natural balance of the region will be destroyed. KSSP conveys their statement to the common people through publishing books and pamphlets, organizing public meetings, collecting public signatures, etc.

Save Narmada Movement:

Narmada is one of the major rivers of India. It originates from the Mahakal Mountain range in Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh. After flowing for about 1,500 km, it meets the Arabian Sea near Bharana in Gujarat. It flows through forested hilly areas, at other times, the river flows through the plains covered with crops. The mountainous valleys of the river are home to various indigenous peoples. The Government of India adopted the 'Narmada Valley Development Project' in 1979 for the overall development of this valley region. It was decided that 30 large, 185 medium and 3000 small dams would be built on this river. These dams would generate hydroelectric power and supply water for irrigation. The largest dams would be two. One in Gujarat and the other in Madhya Pradesh. The first would be named 'Sardar Sarovar' and the second 'Narmada Sagar'. A total of 25,000 crore rupees would be spent. There are widespread protests and public demonstrations against this proposed project. The movement that has taken root against this project is known as the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan'. The movement is led by Medha Patkar and Baba Amte. According to the protesters, this project is the world's largest planned environmental destruction project. As a result of this project, 243 villages will be submerged, 3 lakh hectares of forest land will go under water. The river bed will be filled with sand. The river basin will continue to accumulate silt. During the monsoon, the excess water from the dam will overflow the river bed, causing terrible floods. Forest resources and local plants will be destroyed on a large scale, and many animals will become extinct. If this project is implemented, not only will the environmental balance be disrupted, but also countless poor farmers and tribal people will become ecological refugees. At least 1 million people will lose their land, homes and livelihoods. The tribals have a special relationship with the forest. They depend on forest resources for their survival. Their gods, goddesses, and rituals all revolve around the forest. If the forest resources are destroyed, they will be the most affected. The civilization and culture of this region, which has been developed since time immemorial, will be submerged under water. According to a study by the Environment and Forest Department, if the Sardar project is implemented, the loss will be 8.190 crore taka. And for the Narmada Sagar project, the loss will be about 31,000 crore rupees.

Thal Bayset Project:

In 1972, the Ministry of Petrochemicals of the Government of India approved an ammonia and urea fertilizer production project in the village of Magua Rewas, opposite New Mumbai. The 'Shetkari Bachao Andolan Samiti', consisting of people from 14 villages, had strongly opposed the project since 1972. Later, the Save Bombay Committee was formed with environmentalists from Mumbai. The agitators finally had to back down. The project was implemented in 1984. The local people were not deprived much because about 500 people from Thalbayset got jobs in it. But due to the northeasterly winds, the people of Mumbai have to bear the air pollution of Thalbayset directly. If ammonia ever leaks, at least 45,000 people will be affected. Liquid waste from this factory is discharged into the Arabian Sea through a pipeline. The consequences of this are not yet known.

The Ideological Scenario of Environmentalism in India:

Environmental work in India is largely based on Western environmentalist ideology. The scientific thinking and research required to develop a proper environment-centric trend has not been possible here, firstly, because of the lack of necessary funds and research centers and secondly, because of the lack of interest and participation of experienced scientists in this regard. Moreover, the major political parties in the country have not given separate importance to environmental problems, but have opposed the 'anti-development' view of environmentalists. In the Tehri Dam, Narmada Dam projects, etc. almost all the major political parties have expressed their opinions in favor of the projects and have directly or indirectly opposed the environmentalists. The leftist parties, especially the established leftist economists, have considered the environmental problems mainly as a problem of capitalism. The problem of population growth has also not been addressed by any political party in India. It has not been given much importance till now. And everyone knows the relationship between population growth and environmental pollution. However, recently, both the government and private sectors have started thinking about the environment. Environmental Impact Assessment has been made mandatory for large projects. Various environmental movements have emerged in the last decade and there is a growing resistance against any kind of environmental pollution. The Indian judiciary is also seen playing a positive role in protecting the environment.

Noting the dynamics of the Indian environmental movement, Ramachandra Guha in his article titled 'Ideological Trends in Indian Environmentalism' has mentioned four types of ideological trends, namely (1) Radical Gandhian, (2) Appropriate Technology, (3) Environmental Marxist and (4) Scientific Conservationist. These views are discussed separately below:

(1) Radical Gandhian:

The proponents of this trend are strongly opposed to modern mechanized civilization. According to them, modern science and technology are the root cause of all kinds of problems of the present day. Therefore, they want to abandon modern industrial civilization and return to the simple village society of the pre-capitalist period. In building a mass movement, they want to follow methods consistent with the ancient cultural tradition of India, such as marches, hunger strikes, worship, etc. Sundarlal Bahuguna, Baba Amte, Vandana Shiva, etc. are the proponents of this view.

(2) Appropriate Technology:

The proponents of this trend are not completely opposed to modern science and technology. However, they are in favor of taking up labor intensive initiatives, over which the people will maintain full control. They are not directly opposed to development programs based on modern technology. Rather, they are in favor of setting an example by establishing alternative development projects that preserve the balance of the environment. In short, they want to harmonize ancient and modern technological knowledge.

(3) Ecological Marxist:

The philosophical basis of the environmental Marxists is Marxism. They have a strong belief in socialism and modern science and technology. According to them, the source of the problems of the present day is the unequal distribution of national resources. On the one hand, environmental Marxists are not willing to cling to the past like the Gandhians, and on

the other hand, they do not believe in regional alternative development efforts like 'appropriate technology'. They want to develop society with the help of modern science and technology while maintaining environmental balance. They are in favor of aggressive movements to protect the environment. They maintain close contact with the public science platform and movement and campaign vigorously in support of environmental protection.

(4) Scientific Conservation and Wilderness Enthusiasts:

Scientific conservationists oppose the waste and degradation of the country's land and water resources, talk about conserving forest resources, and draw our attention to the extinction of various species of plants and animals. In dealing with environmental problems, they are more inclined to put pressure on the government than to build mass movements. Their number of followers is small, but their influence in determining government policy is considerable. They ignore the socio-economic factors that cause environmental problems. In a word, they are the elite among environmental activists.

The measures adopted by the Government of India:

The issue of environment has now become a global concern. Needless to say, public opinion is gradually growing in India as well, against pollution, in favor of protecting the environment. In response to this, the Indian government has also taken some steps. Several laws have been enacted to protect the environment.

Indian Constitution and Environment:

The original constitution did not mention anything related to the environment. The reason is very natural. When the constitution was drafted (1949), there was not much need to worry about the environment.

Water Act, 1974:

The first law enacted by the Government of India regarding pollution control is the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act.

The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974. As can be understood from the title, the main objective of this Act was to prevent and control water pollution and to protect the existing water resources. For this purpose, the Act in question provides for the formation of a 'Central Water Pollution Control Board' and a 'State Water Pollution Control Board' at the Centre and the States respectively. The work of this Board will be to conduct research and investigation on matters related to water pollution control and to provide necessary technical assistance and advice. The Act also mentions the punishment to be imposed on those found guilty of pollution-related offences. The guilty person can be imprisoned for 3 months or fined up to 5 thousand rupees. Later, this Act was amended and it was said that if any industry or organization uses water, it will have to pay cess or tax according to the amount. There were various weaknesses in this Act. For example, since the fines for violating the law are small compared to the additional costs that an organization incurs to take the necessary measures to prevent water pollution, most organizations choose to not comply with the law. Moreover, the Board had no right to take direct action against violations. Therefore, the Board had no choice but to resort to complex and time-consuming legal procedures. Because of these weaknesses, the law was not very effective.

Air Act, 1981:

The second important environmental law is the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. The purpose of this Act was to prevent and control air pollution. No new board or agency was formed to implement this Act. The Water Pollution Control Boards were given the responsibility of implementing this Act/ In this regard, the functions of the Board and the powers and limits of imposing fines are equivalent to the Water Act.

Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:

In 1984, the world's largest industrial accident occurred in Bhopal, one of the most populous cities in India. A factory called Union Carbide suddenly began releasing toxic MIC gas. 2,500 people lost their lives, 200,000 people fell ill, and 70,000 people were forced to flee the city. In addition, the financial losses were immense. After such an unprecedented incident, several environmental laws were enacted, of which the law in question is the most important.

Like the two aforementioned acts, the purpose of this act is to preserve and improve the environment. However, unlike the Water Act or the Air Act, no separate body is formed in this case. Instead, the central government appoints some officers. This act gives the government some powers in environmental matters, such as determining the quality of the environment, providing necessary safeguards to prevent accidents due to environmental pollution, preventing the possibility of pollution from factory waste, deciding where a factory or industry will be established, etc. Under this act, the government can impose restrictions on the use of water, electricity or other services by any industry. The government can impose a jail term of 5 months and/or a fine of 1 lakh taka against the violator.

Limitations:

There are various problems in adopting and implementing good environmental policies in India. Reich and Bowonder have divided the problems into two main categories–

(1) Conceptual and (2) Political.

(1) Conceptual problems:

Among the conceptual problems, the first to be mentioned is the lack of clarity in the government's thinking on which environmental issues to prioritize in India. The focus is on relatively simple and less important issues, while the more important ones are ignored. For example, no regulation has been introduced on municipal solid waste, which is a serious public health problem. Secondly, India has not yet formulated a clear policy in line with pollution control regulations. There are no incentives for compliance with environmental regulations, nor are there any significant penalties for non-compliance. The inspection system is very weak. As a result, most industries do not operate pollution control systems even though they are in place to save costs. Third, most environmental policies are adopted while keeping the majority of the country's people in the dark. Most policies are adopted without proper consideration. As a result, various problems arise.

(2) Political problem:

Political problems also create obstacles in the way of implementing environmental policies in India. The government approves large mega-projects with an eye on votes. They want to do it responsibly. Most political leaders hold public meetings in the interest of environmental protection, raise their voices against environmental pollution, but do nothing in practice. In addition, the lack of proper environmental knowledge among government

officials is also noticeable. In fact, they are not willing to bother much with such problems. As a result, bureaucrats are seen to dominate in taking important decisions related to the environment. Many times, development projects are started without the approval of the Ministry of Environment. Some states, by using political influence, obtain approval from the central government for projects that can cause extreme environmental pollution.

The role of Judiciary in the protection of environment in India:

Recently, the Indian judiciary has been seen assuming a new role. Earlier, filing a case in the Supreme Court and other subordinate courts was a complicated and costly affair. But in December 1981, the Hon'ble Justice P. N. Bhagwati of the Supreme Court gave a landmark judgment in the S. P. Gupta case. In that judgment, legal complications were eased in the case of public interest cases and provision was also made for cost containment. Such cases are called Public Interest Litigation (P.I.L.). By making positive application in these public interest cases, the judiciary is trying to establish justice and has acted as a check valve against government inaction in many cases. Sometimes the court has started working on the basis of a complaint written on a white paper received from the public. Many people call this new role of the judiciary as judicial activism.

One of the areas where the Court has exercised judicial activity is the issue of environmental protection. Whenever a complaint regarding environmental degradation is received, the Court investigates, tries to come to a correct conclusion about who or how the environment has been degraded, who has been or is being affected by it. Then the Court warns the authorities responsible for polluting the environment and orders compensation to the affected individuals or groups. The Court has not spared government agencies in this regard. For the speedy disposal of environmental cases, the Supreme Court has set up Green Benches under some High Courts. Some of the salient aspects of the Indian judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, in its pro-environmental stance are highlighted below: (i) Based on the directive principles relating to environment as enshrined in Part IV of the Constitution of India. The judiciary has ordered government authorities at various levels to fulfill their obligations to citizens. The court has taken strict action against any institution, whether public or private, that refuses to fulfill its environmental protection obligations on the pretext of financial hardship. (ii) Article 21 of the Constitution states that no person shall be deprived of his right to life, liberty and property except in accordance with law. The Indian judiciary has extended the scope of this right and declared that the right to life includes life in a pollution-free environment. (iii) The court has ordered some industries to shut down to prevent pollution. The closure of an industry means the loss of livelihood of hundreds of people. This is sad. But it must be remembered that the court takes such steps as a last resort, when there is no result despite repeated warnings. Many industries are forced to take pollution control measures due to pressure or fear from the court. This is undoubtedly a positive aspect. (iv) There used to be a natural reluctance in government agencies to comply with environmental regulations. However, with the increase in judicial activism, this tendency has started to decrease. (v) Sometimes it is seen that the same industry or project gets judicial approval in one place but not in another. At first glance, this may seem like duplicity on the part of the court. In fact, the court behaves in this way in view of social needs. For example, in the interest of protection of the Taj Mahal, the court did not allow the expansion of the oil refinery in Mathura. On the other hand, in the interest

of economic development, the court has approved similar projects in other places despite public protests.

The Forest Policy of the Government of India:

Deforestation and its consequences have become the biggest problem in India today. Satellite images show that an estimated 13 million hectares of forest are being lost in India every year. A country needs one-third of its land area to be covered by forest to maintain ecological balance. But currently, India has 14% of its total land area covered by forest. In the last decade alone, 91,710 sq km., which is equivalent to 2.79% of India's land area, has been destroyed. This massive deforestation has led to other serious environmental problems, such as increased flooding growth, rapid depletion of irrigation systems and reservoirs, drying up of water sources, etc. The social consequences of deforestation are no less important. Large industries and small artisans are experiencing a shortage of raw materials, farmers are experiencing a shortage of fuel and small wood, pastoralists are experiencing a shortage of fodder and grazing land, hunters and food gatherers are experiencing a shortage of They are becoming unemployed. The continuous decline in the amount of forest products has also increased conflicts between different groups claiming forest products. The first National Forest Policy in independent India was announced in 1952. Although the 1952 Forest Policy gave importance to the rights of forest dwellers and the people around them, more importance was given to the collection of revenue from the forest. Forests were cut down indiscriminately to build irrigation and hydroelectric projects, roads, arms factories, etc., but the right to cultivate forest land was considered illegal. As a result, forest dwellers, i.e., villager's dependent on the forest, were continuously deprived of the use of forest resources. The Government of India formulated a new National Forest Policy in 1988, replacing the 1952 Forest Policy. This policy recognized the needs of rural and tribal people for fuel, food, fodder, etc., and emphasized the use of alternatives to wood. It also recognized the need to involve the common people in the revitalization and maintenance of forests.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the National Forest Policy adopted in 1988 are as follows:

- (a) To maintain the balance of the environment through appropriate prevention and to restore the balance of the ecosystem that has been disturbed due to indiscriminate deforestation;
- (b) To maintain our natural heritage by properly protecting the part of the natural forest that is rich in biodiversity;
- (c) To reduce the incidence of floods in areas adjacent to rivers, reservoirs and lakes, to prevent soil erosion for the purpose of soil and water conservation, and to protect reservoirs from siltation;
- (d) Preventing the spread of sand dunes in the desert areas and coastal areas of Rajasthan;
- (e) To increase the amount of forest cover in the country, especially on degraded unproductive lands, through extensive afforestation and social forestry projects.
- (f) To meet the needs of the villagers and indigenous people for fodder, fuel, small wood and other forest products;
- (g) To increase the productive capacity of forests to meet essential national needs;
- (h) Encouraging people to use forest products properly and use alternatives to wood.
- (i) To carry out a massive mass movement involving women to achieve the above objectives and reduce the pressure on existing forest land due to demand.

Conclusion:

To live a healthy life, people need to be proactive in understanding the environment. It is necessary to be aware of the environment connected to life: It is necessary to understand the relationship between life and the natural world. There is a basic philosophy or purpose of environmental practice. It is necessary to ensure the happy living and prosperity of all living beings including humans on earth. For this purpose, it is necessary to preserve the quantity, quality, balance and activity of the elements of the environment. At the same time, it is necessary to take appropriate initiatives and arrangements to review the nature of environmental problems and solve them. In this regard, everyone needs to be environmentally conscious. Humans cannot avoid the effects of the environment. A favorable environment is conducive to human development. Similarly, an unfavorable environment endangers human life. In most cases, the existence, development and even destruction of humans depend largely on the environment. The impact of the environment on the overall lifestyle of humans is beyond dispute. However, in modern times, science and technology have developed and expanded at an incredible rate. As a result, human control over the environment is being observed to a greater or lesser extent. Under the influence of modern science and technology, people have taken initiatives to use the unfavorable environment favorably.

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Performance of Gorakhnath: Revitalizing Its Significance and Vibrancy within the Nath Community

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Abstract

Gorakhnath was the influential founder of the Nath Hindu Monastic movement in India. He is one of the two notable disciples of Minanath, the founder of the Natha Sampradaya. It is believed that he has received teachings from Shiva. Gorakhnath championed yoga and an ethical life of self-determination to reaching samadhi. He is considered a Maha-yogi in the Hindu tradition. Historical texts imply that Gorakhnath was originally a Buddhist in a region influenced by Shaivism, and he converted to Hinduism, championing Shiva, and Yoga. The hagiography on Gorakhnath describes him as having appeared on earth several times. North Indian hagiographies suggest he originated from northwest India. Other hagiographies on Gorakhnath in Bengal and Bihar suggest he originated from the eastern region of India (Assam). Though there is no specific timespan of his birth, but believed that his presence was around the 8th century. In the eastern region of India, there is a creed that Gorakhnath is the saviour God of cows. In some parts of Assam, Bangladesh and Cooch Behar, there is a ritual to worship Gorakhnath for every newborn calf. Specifically, the Nath Sampradaya of the above mentioned are regions worships Gorakhnath on the 21st day of the newborn calf. They offer 'kheer' to the God prepared from the milk of a mother cow as an oblation to the God. In the time of worshipping, a group of people perform several songs which have been orally transmitted from generation to generation. These songs liven up the magnificence of and the tales of his Guru Gorakhnath's appearance as a cow protector. In the present days, this ritual and these tales have been found in amalgamation with the Rajbangsi Culture.

Keywords: Gorakhnath, Nath, ritual, Yoga, Cow, song, worship

Gorakhnath, also called Gorakhshanatha, was a Hindu master yogi who was the influential founder of the Nath Hindu Monastic movement in India. He is one of the two notable disciples of Minanath or Matsyendranath, the founder of the Nath sampradaya. The incarnation of Gorakhnath was between the fifth century A.D and the twelfth century A.D. Gorakhnath was not only a 'Maha-yogi' and a significant evangelist, but also a sagacious and litterateur. Treatises on Guru Parampara in the Nath Sampradaya dictate that he is one of the nine influential Nath. It means he is one of the most notable gurus of the nine principal gurus. He is considered a Maha Yogi in the Hindu tradition. Historical texts imply

that Gorakhnath was originally a Buddhist in a region that was influenced by Shaivism, and he converted to Hinduism, championing Shiva and Yoga. Gorakhnath championed yoga and the ethical life of self-determination as a means to reaching Samadhi.

Scholars like Minanatha and Gorakhnath are eminent ascetic persons in the Nath sampradaya. The title 'nath' was added to the yogis of this sampradaya after initiation. The lexical meaning of the word 'nath' is God, the Almighty, and preceptor. Besides, 'nath' defines just a community of human beings. This community has maintained its existence from the very ancient period through its elevated lifestyle. Besides India, Nepal and Tibet are also their domiciles. They contemplate or pursue 'Param Iswar' [God] in the form of Nath, and the persons who receive success in their contemplation turn into Godlike gurus among the common people. In the course of time, the word 'nath' has been treated as their principal title. These meditators and their inheritors have been familiarized in this universe as Nath. It has been dictated in the *Brahma Vaivarta Purana* that the first and foremost of the eleventh Rudras was Mahan Rudra, and the name of his wife is Kala or Kalabati. The name of their son is Bindunatha. According to scholars, Mahayogi Bindunatha gave birth to 'nath', and from then, the word 'nath' has become a convention. The other name of Bindunath is Yoganath. Every person from the Nath lineage uses the word Nath at the very end of their names, such as Adinath, Minanath, Gorakhnath, Chowranginath, Jalandharnath, Satyanath, Chhayannath and so on.

Nath is the Guru of this Nath Sampradaya. They meditate on 'paramguru' in the advice of nathguru. For being generated from Bindunath, the title 'nath' has been inscribed after the name of yogis. As they practice yoga, they are also referred to as 'yogis'. Many of the ancestors of the present Nath sampradaya achieved success in their pursuit of yoga, and many of them have been worshipped by the common people as incarnations even during their lifetimes. Some of them attained more popularity in comparison with the Gods. Common people worshipped the three Naths - Adinath, Minanath and Gorakhnath. The worship of TinNath was extensively practised in the convention. There was a belief among the common folk that by worshipping the TinNath, people would get rid of suffering, repentance, poverty, and that their longings would be fulfilled. They worship to bring prosperity and peace to their domestic life.

'Yogikul' is another name for the Nath sampradaya. The principal work of these people was following yoga along with studying, teaching and beneficence. The nath saints brought a smile to the exhausted, rudderless and aimless people, showing them the virtue of living, the ways of salvation. They uprooted the walls of social discrimination and gave equal dignity to every person irrespective of race and colour. The Nath sampradaya is the community of ancient India that holds the lofty ideas in different fields and has an elevated culture. This community is the tangible democrat, free from fundamentalism and bountiful in nature. They re-established and enlarged the Sanatan Hindu religion in India and Nepal by saving it from the aggression of Jainism and Buddhism. In the Satya Yuga, there was no racism. Everyone was kinder at that time. So, there is no doubt that the Nath sampradaya generated from Rudra is gracious in nature. They worship the master of this earth as Nath, and for this reason, this religion is called the Nath religion. It can be said that they addressed their guru as nath, and through the help of the nath, they meditate on the 'paramguru' or 'parameswar'. The nath followers are the pursuers of the *Rudra* form of Mahadeva. In this context, it is very clear that they are 'shaiva'.

Many scholars dictate that the Nath religion originated in Bangladesh. As a result of it, scholars have mentioned a Bengali book named "Nathasahitya". In the literature of Bengali as well as in the "Nathasahitya", the names of the four gurus have been referred to. They are Minanath or Matsyendranath and his disciple Gorakhnath, Jalandharipa or Haripa Sidhyacharya and Kanupa Bondha or Kanupa Sidhyacharya. In chronicles, a relationship between them and the king of East Bengal, Manik Chandra, is described. The names of the Queen Moynamoti and their son Gopichandra or Gobinda Chandra are also mentioned.

The predominance of Nathyogis was especially in Bangladesh. Dr. Mohan Singh has referred in his book about Gorakhnath that he was the inhabitant of 'Purba Banga'. Gorakhnath had no parentage. It has been seen that at different times, Gorakhnath appeared in different places. For this, people believe that there are four incarnations of Gorakhnath in the Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali Yuga. The reality is that Gorakhnath was alive for ages by virtue of his yoga. He was the figure of Mahadev's sacrifice. Sometimes, it is dictated that Mahadev himself appeared in the form of Gorakhnath to pay a visit to Goddess Parvati. There is a saga narrating the birth of Gorakhnath. One day, Mahayogi Minanath takes alms from a woman. To see Minanath as a powerful saint, the woman prays for a son. Minanath gives her some ash kindly and states that in the appropriate moment, she will obtain a son. The woman keeps the ashes apart in order to consume them later. Then the neighbour women mock her after hearing all the incidents. At this, being irritated, the woman throws the ashes into a dung heap.

After twelve long years, Minanath again comes to take alms from the woman and inquiries about the son. Then he comes to know that the woman throws the ashes into a dung heap. After that, he goes near the dung heap and invokes the son to come out. A twelve-year princely boy comes out from the heap and stands in front of Minanath with his folded hands. As he emerges from dung [goraksha], his name becomes Goraksha. Minanath sets out with Goraksha, and after giving the initiation of sannyas dharma, he takes Goraksha to Badrikashram. There, Goraksha achieved his salvation after twelve years of pursuit. Then he becomes Gorakshnath or Gorakhnath and starts his pilgrimage with his Guru. Gorakhnath has perambulated many places and pursued his pursuit. He has visited various countries and preached his religion by establishing monasteries, mandirs and idols. Thus, he initiated a great number of disciples and evangelized.

The lexical meaning of the word 'yoga' is connectivity. It defines the connection between 'paramatma' and 'jibatma'. The union or amalgamation is the principal work of yogadharma. Devadidev Mahadev is the reservoir of all knowledge, omniscient and 'trikaladarshi'. Lord Shiva is the creator of this Yogadharma, or the pursuit of Yoga. He has dictated this yoga to Parvati, and at that moment, Minanath learned this. After some time, he teaches this to his main disciple, Gorakhnath, and Gorakhnath has spread among his disciples. In this way, this great pathway of pursuit is spread all over India and outside India. Yoga Darshan is a very ancient Darshan. Whatever we perceive with our material eyes is not the real image; the real 'darshan' is to perceive with the help of our inner sight. Yoga teaches us to have this real 'darshan' or to see the union of 'atma' and 'paramatma'. Through 'Yogadarshan', one can comprehend the truth of the self, and thus one can achieve the 'Brahma darshan'. Through practicing yoga, real knowledge originates in the mind of the follower. Achieving this knowledge is called 'Brahmalabh'. In this way, the soul of the follower attains salvation.

Gorakhnath dictates the six parts of yoga – asana, pranayama, pratyahar, dharaṇa, dhyāna and samādhi. The follower who attains the knowledge of Brahma is called a nath. A nath dictates a path among his disciples. Similarly, the disciples can also turn into a nath by maintaining all the advice of their nathguru. Among nathgurus, the nine naths became renowned in Bangladesh. Besides, TinNath has become very popular. They are Adinath, Minanath, and Gorakhnath. It was believed that meditating on the names of the Tinnath would protect people from every danger and burden. That is why there is a line “saradin koiro re bhai songsarer kam, sondhya hoite loio Tinnather nam” [Do all the works of livelihood throughout the daytime, but from evening meditate on the name of Tinnath].

According to Dr. Grierson, Gorakhnath was a man of the eighth century. Some say, the birthplace of Gorakhnath was in Punjab, now Gorakhpur or Kathiawad. According to the Nepalese, Gorakhnath was engrossed in his devotion to Lord Shiva in a cave in West Nepal. It is said that Gorakhnath is the Adiguru of the Gorkha race. To some scholars, the name ‘gorkha’ is derived from the name of Gorakhnath. For this, Gorakhnath is the honourable God of the race of Gorkha and for the people of Nepal. Gorakhnath is considered the founder of *Hatha Yoga*. The nath yogi sannyasis who follow Gorakhnath - are called Kanphata Yogis. After initiation, the ears of these yogis have been pierced. In these two holes of the ears, they have to wear ‘kundals’. The ‘kundal’ is made of stone, crystal or the horns of rhinoceroses. They believe that this kundal is the kundal of Lord Shiva. Yogis call it ‘mudra’, and another name for it is ‘darshan’. So, the kanphata yogis are also called as ‘darshan yogis’. The influence of Kanphata yogis is mainly noticed in the region of the Himalaya.

It is believed that Guru Gorakhnath saves people and cows from any kind of crucial situation. If anyone recalls Gorakhnath to save cows or to protect cows from other animals or from any disease, it is said that he appears to protect and save cows. He is the guardian angel of cows. In the ancient period, when cows were not tied down with ropes, common people domesticated cows with a deep belief in Guru Gorakhnath. There were many legendary tales where Gorakhnath returned the deviated cows to their masters, and some people experienced that Gorakhnath roamed in the deep forests sitting on the back of a cow. The cow is the ‘vahana’ of God Gorakhnath. For this, the idol of Gorakhnath has a statue of a cow beside him.

Gorakhnath had the capability to heal cows from any kind of severe disease. Tinnath is worshipped unitedly, where Gorakhnath is a part. The idol of Tinnath is all about a single body that bears three heads. People believe that the Tinnath is the three different forms of absolute power. For having three heads, during worship, the devotees offer three oblations differently. As Gorakhnath is inferred as the incarnation of “Devadidev Mahadev”, there is a similarity in the process of worshipping. When Gorakhnath is invoked separately, only one oblation is dedicated. Nath Yogis carry a begging bowl, a wallet, fire tongs and use a crutch [acal]. All of these are perceived in the image of Gorakhnath. The wallet is made of red cloth, and it is usually hung from the left shoulder. He wore a rudraksha mala and a langoti [a special rope made of black sheep’s wool].

Gorakhnath or Tinnath is invoked for the well-being of a newborn calf. This ritual has been spread over the other communities also, exceeding the Nath community. When the age of the newborn calf becomes twenty-one days, this ritual of Gorakhnath is performed. The women of the house don't drink the milk of the particular cow for whom the ritual is performed. This restriction is maintained till the celebration. The women don't take any kind

of food made of milk during this time. But for the men and children of the house, there is no such system. They don't restrict themselves to milk and milk - made foods.

In the present time, the calves remain unfastened till twenty - one day from birth. At the time of worship, a small rope and a stick are placed beside the idol of Gorakhnath. After the completion of worship, the stick is touched softly in the manner of beating the body of the calf, and then the calf is fastened with the given rope for the first time. This worship of Gorakhnath is performed to thank him for bringing an able - bodied calf to this earth and also for the well - being of both the mother cow and the calf.

There are no rigid rules to perform the ritual. The women of the house can perform this puja without the help of any priest. Besides the devotees, there are a group of 'kirtaniyas' who sing the magnificence of Gorakhnath through 'kirtans'. The devotees can hand over the whole ritual to a priest also. This is completely optional. Generally, this ritual takes place during the evening. There is no such rigidity to keep fast for the performance. After eating vegetarian foods, the housewives can perform the ritual. Before sitting to worship, the mistress of the house prepares 'kheer' from the milk of the mother cow as an oblation. 'Naru' is prepared from this 'kheer'. Some narus are kept aside to make "vanger-naru" with cannabis. As cannabis is a part of the oblation for the worship of Shiva, it is also a mandatory ingredient of the ritual of Gorakhnath. After the completion of the worship, these "vanger-naru" are distributed among men only. Women don't take this offering.

The devotees decorate the idol of Gorakhnath on an altar with flowers. In front of the idol, an auspicious pot is laid with ' amrapallav', betel leaf and guava. Dots of sindur are mandatory in this pot and on the 'amrapallav'. The rope and the stick are put on alter to receive blessings. It is believed that this blessed rope and stick will domesticate the calf, and no harm will fall upon the calf. 'Naru' - made of Kheer, fruits, sweets, and cannabis are offered as oblations. Cannabis is decorated in a particular container called 'kolke'. This 'kolke' is a small, narrow earthen pot. In the case of Tinnath worship, three 'kolke's are offered, and one is adequate for the separate worship of Gorakhnath. This ' kolke ' is wrapped with small pieces of red cotton cloth, which is known as 'shaluk'. The shaluk is considered as a sacred ingredient of this ritual. Without 'shaluk', the 'kolke' with cannabis cannot be offered. The process of worship and the performance of kirtan go on simultaneously. Another important note is that the lamp must remain ignited throughout the whole performance. It should not be extinguished for a single moment. The extinguished lamp during the worship connotes an ominous sign upon the family note as well as the cows. The songs of the 'kirtans' are mainly the legendary tales of Gorakhnath's glorious activities. In his livelihood, how Gorakhnath saved cows from hazardous situations, how he rescued them from severe diseases with the help of his yoga - all these are the basic ideas of the songs. Here is such a ballad-

“Hasere goyalini hate niya mata
Tarpore jiya uthe goyalinir byata
Hasere goyalinir mao hate niya dao
Hasere goyalini hate niya mata
Shatsoya gabi banchilo, noysoya bachha”

[When the cattlegirl comes out with the pot of worship, her son becomes alive / at this the mother of the cattlegirl becomes exalted / the worship of cattlegirl saves seven hundred cows and nine hundred calves.]

These "kirtans" are not inscribed anywhere. This type of glorious song is orally transmitted from generation to generation. This 'kirtan' is an inseparable part of this ritual. Here is a ballad which concludes the ceremony-

"Aroni re bhai Aroni, mao lokhkhi chori
Mao lokhkhi dilo bor, dhankula dui bar kor
Dhan dibi na dibi kori, songe dibi sonar nori
Sonar nori, rupa fal; baghe mohishe jurche hal
Thubbo.....
Sonibare gai biyailo, robibare deo sunailo
Magon deo go barit jai, gondacharek naru chai,
Magon deo go barit jai."

[brother Aroni, maa Lakshmi has given her boon / you should give alms of paddy seeds full of two pots / if you don't give paddy seeds, you will give money along with gold made stick / the body of the plough is made of gold and the nozzle is of silver / tiger and buffalo are plowing together / give alms and a few narus, we will go home now].

Just after the accomplishment, the worshipper throws some narus into the roof of the cowshed. Generally, the roof of the cow - shed is built with tin. Here is also a custom regarding the throwing. The narus should not be returned to the yard from the wavy tin. The narus must have fallen on the other side of the cowshed. This action is performed by the cattleman of the house. This activity implies an effort to keep the cowshed safe from any kind of harm. After this deed, some 'narus' are fed to the calf and the mother cow. There is a belief that this is a blessing as well as medicine for the calf and the mother cow. Along with this feeding ceremony, the devotees worship them with a lamp and incense sticks. After bowing down in front of the idol, all the members of the house touch the feet of the calf and the mother cow as part of the ceremony. Then the cattleman beats the calf softly and fastens the calf by putting the blessed rope around its neck. Lastly, the offerings are distributed to the devotees, kirtanias and the common people. The cannabis with the 'kolke' is especially given to the kirtanias. Even amid the performance of kirtan, they used to have the cannabis as prasad of Baba Gonakhnath. On that day, they don't smoke from other 'kolke', they only smoke from the particular offered 'kolke'. All of them share the same 'kolke'. Through eating the narus made of kheer, the women of the house start to have the milk ceremonially.

Rajbanshi farmers and Palia farmers from Dinajpur- Rangpur district worship Gorakhnath differently. Generally, this ritual is maintained by the Hindus of Bangladesh. They keep a piece of wood smeared with oil and sindur in the corner of the cowshed as the emblem of Gorakhnath. They worship this wooden piece with various obituaries. The Hindu farmers of Pabna district observe "Gorakhnath's Brata", whereas in Maymarsingha and Dhaka 'Gorakhnath's Shirni' is celebrated as folk culture. They worship Gorakhnath after thirty days of the birth of a calf. They prepare the image of a calf, a swastika from the kheer along with narus. The cowboy put all these offerings in a banana leaf inside the cowshed. They believe that at night, Gorakhnath will come and take this oblation. This 'shirini' ritual is mainly for the purpose of having more milk from cows. The women of the house make 'payesh' that day and serve among all the cowboys of the area. After eating this 'payesh', they hit the cows with their uncleaned hands. This folklore says that this ritual will increase the milk of the mother cow. In this context, some ballads are performed.

Along with the Nath Sampradaya, different Hindu communities of the two Bengals worship Guru Gorakshnath as the protector of cows. The first milk, as well as the first calf, is offered to Gorakhnath, symbolizing purity and devotion. In the region of Katwa, magnificent large earthen statues of horses are devoted in the form of Gorakhnath. Beyond the Nath Sampradaya, the Kotals from the Rarh Bangla are the passionate devotees of Gorakhnath. The Kotals keep fast on the day of the yearly ceremony, embodying their devotion and spiritual deduction. In the village of Khowaidanga of Ketugram police station, Gorakhnath is worshipped with great pomp and grandeur. Gradually, this ritual has spread over the remote areas of the Rarh Bangla. In the district of CoochBehar, the Nath Sampradaya worships Gorakhnath as the protector of cows, while the local Rajbanshis and the other community's worship Tinnath for the same purpose. Being a historical man, Gorakhnath is the first mankind who appears as a legendary character and then becomes a divine person in the eyes of the common folk. The treatise 'Gorakh Bijay' not only celebrates his remarkable accomplishments in Yoga but also underscores the magnificence of his entity.

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The Ethical Difference Between Active and Passive Euthanasia: A Comparative Discussion

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Abstract

According to utilitarianism, the act that brings more happiness or pleasure than suffering is good. Euthanasia therefore reduces human suffering and at the same time provides stability to the family. Professor Peter Singer has spoken about Preference utilitarianism in this context. We have a right to life, which allows the person concerned to live according to his decisions. Now if a severely mentally ill person decides to euthanize, then we should help him by respecting his individuality. The only difference between these two types of euthanasia is that in active euthanasia, the act is done intentionally, but in passive euthanasia, death is not caused intentionally. Euthanasia is often compared to murder. There are different interpretations of euthanasia and I have discussed here what kind of euthanasia is acceptable.

Keywords: suffering, kill, medical science, live, right to die, euthanasia.

In our daily practical life, although suicide cannot be supported morally, many people support euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide in certain cases. Although this ethically presents some important liberation in the case of suicide. In contemporary applied ethics, especially medical ethics, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide have attracted everyone's attention. Although suicide is a heinous crime, many ethical philosophers have shown the scope of physician-assisted suicide.

The etymological meaning of the word 'Euthanasia' is 'comfortable death', that is, the death of a person who wants to die is peaceful. The word 'Euthanasia' comes from two Greek words – 'Eu' and 'thanatos'. The word 'eu' means easy or comfortable and the word 'thanatos' means death. So 'euthanasia' means a peaceful and easy death. To end life easily and peacefully to get rid of the endless pain of an incurable disease. Again, It is also seen that if the fetus is suffering from serious diseases, such as brain neural tube defects, organ defects etc, the disabled and congenitally ill child is not capable of living, or if there is no possibility of survival for a person suffering from a terminal disease, euthanasia is a method of hastening death to relieve them from their suffering.

However, many consider euthanasia to be a reprehensible and immoral act. Since the fifth century BC, Western physicians have also followed the oath of Hippocrates, the father of medical science. and have shown an anti-euthanasia attitude. The oath is no one shall be

given a lethal drug even if he wishes it, nor shall any person be advised against using such a drug. Although euthanasia is now legally recognized in many countries, including Belgium, Netherlands, and Switzerland. This is still debated in many other countries.

Recently, in 1973, the American Medical Association issued a statement stating that euthanasia has been called unethical. The intentional killing of another person by one person is unethical. However, in practical ethics, death is not considered wrong. The death of a person is called 'disadvantageous' only when the person who killed him is considered guilty. Suicide is the act of killing someone voluntarily, but when a doctor helps someone die by giving them drugs or other substances, and the person kills themselves with that help, that suicide is called physician-assisted suicide. Euthanasia is when a doctor or health worker provides a less painful death to a patient suffering from a terminal illness.

However, there is a difference between suicide and euthanasia. The person who is going to commit suicide wants to die, to be free from his own life. On the other hand, the person who wants euthanasia wants to die peacefully, to be free from a painful death. Euthanasia is differentiated in various ways. There are two types of euthanasia, the method of causing this death.

- i) Active euthanasia
- ii) Passive euthanasia

In order to give the patient direct relief from the suffering and misery of the patient, the arrangement of his death or euthanasia is active. The act of killing the patient by killing him with a deadly injection is called active euthanasia. When we say killing in general, we do not make much difference between this type of euthanasia. Here the matter of killing is to be as painless as possible, its arrangement is made here. However, this type of euthanasia has not yet been recognized in our India.

On the other hand, in passive euthanasia, the patient is allowed to die by withdrawing treatment or life-sustaining measures. Here, the patient is pushed to the brink of death. In this context: Peter Singer gives an example of a fatal childhood disease called spina bifida. In this case, the child is born with a hole in the back and the spinal cord of the child comes out through a hole in his body. This was not the case until the first half of the twentieth century and the patient would die within a few days. By 1957, the treatment of this spina bifida disease began with a device called the Holter valve, but it is seen that those who survive this treatment live horribly. Such as in most cases they are paralyzed or have no control over their bodies and more than half are mentally retarded. In view of their condition, a British doctor has proposed that it is not necessary to treat every child with the Halter valve method, but only those born with minor birth defects. Others: When treatment is withdrawn from children, those children die early. Active measures are being taken to cause the death of these children, only a life-giving measure is being withdrawn. This is called passive euthanasia.

In 1973, the American Medical Association approved passive euthanasia, although it was supported from a humanitarian perspective, but active euthanasia was declared prohibited. For example, the intentional killing of a people by one person by another is against medical ethics, but there are many cases where the death of the patient is inevitable, where the patient or his relatives can hasten the death of the patient by interrupting the medical process. Doctors in England also declared this passive euthanasia, although he supported it, he did not accept active euthanasia.

But now the question is, can this kind of treatment be stopped and the path of death made easier in terms of humanity? In this context, Dr Anthony Shaw has said in his article 'Doctor, do we have a choice?' that the goal of the doctor is to prevent death and knows how to slowly and gradually kill children without treatment. It is an easy matter to stop the treatment for severely disabled children and end their death, to simply relieve them of their pain. but to see a child dying of infection and dehydration in a medical center is a tragic matter.

Let us take another example, the case of a patient suffering from cancer, which is incurable and cannot be cured. In the present modern medical system, even if it is possible to save him alive for a few days, the patient, who is suffering from unbearable pain considers death desirable and requests his doctor to cause his death. But here, the doctor does not allow the proposal of the patient, because passive euthanasia is not acceptable to die. Undoubtedly, the passive process is inhumane because, the patient dies due to the interruption of treatment and the person who has been suffering for a long time ends his life. The disease is incurable and the prognosis is unbearable, then for the sake of humanity, only active euthanasia is acceptable. It is possible to cause the death of the patient by administering lethal drugs.

1. Withdrawal of medical treatment and suspension of medical treatment:

Many people believe that there is a moral difference between withdrawing life-sustaining medicines and devices and not starting treatment. When a doctor removes a respirator from a patient who is unable to breathe on his own, the doctor causes the patient to die. On the other hand, a doctors cause the patient to die by not putting the patient on a respirator and not starting treatment. In the first case, the doctor causes the event and in the second case, the doctor allows the event to happen. If the patient dies because of stopping the treatment, then the doctor is responsible for the patient's death, but on the other hand, if the patient dies because of not starting treatment, the doctor cannot be held responsible for the patient's death.

We usually act of commission and act of omission- these are two different doctrines. Again, in some cases we consider act of omission to be more desirable than act of commission. Then, we may think that if a doctor kills a disabled child or a cancer patient by administering a lethal drug, it would be an improper action. On the other hand, stops the treatment of that disabled child or cancer patient in every way and helps them die, it would be a proper action. In another way, we can say that act of omission is also a kind of act of commission (performance of action)- both actions are essentially optional actions. Some ethicists have drawn this distinction between action and omission, eventually drawing a distinction between killing a patient and letting a patient die in decision-making.

Therefore, there is no moral difference between performing and abstaining from performing an action, between killing by administering lethal drugs and killing by withholding drugs. To illustrate this point, James Raichels cites two examples - one in which a person is actively killed and the other in which he is passively allowed to die. First example: If somehow the six-year-old cousin dies, Smith will inherit a huge fortune. One evening, the six-year-old child went to the bathroom to bathe in the bathtub, and Smith secretly entered the room, drowned the child, and killed him, and decorated the scene in such a way that it would appear that the child had drowned in some supernatural way.

Second example: If the six-year-old cousin somehow dies, Jones will inherit a huge fortune. Similarly, one evening, a six-year-old child went to the bathroom to bathe in the

bath tub, and at that time Jones secretly entered the room and saw that while bathing, the child had slipped and fallen, hit his head and was lying face down in the puddle, unconscious. Jones was very happy to see the incident and stood still for a while by the bathtub, hoping that if the child did not die, he could keep the child immersed in the puddle, otherwise the child would not be able to get out of the bathtub and the child would die due to the sudden fall.

In the first example, Smith killed the child in a deliberate manner (Active Euthanasia), which is called Killing, and in the second example, Jones passively refrains from acting, resulting in the child's death (Passive Euthanasia). Which can be called letting die.

If we judge from a moral point of view, it is difficult to say which of these is better and which is worse. In his defence, Jones did nothing intentionally to harm the child here but remained passive and watched the child die. Although this argument was acceptable in the eyes of the judge in court, from a moral perspective, it can never be acceptable. From a moral point of view, motive and intention are the things to be judged. In that case, the intention of both Smith and Jones here is the death of the child. In order to achieve this purpose, in the first case, Smith has acted in an active manner and in the second case, Jones has acted in an inactive manner, but Jones's passive action is also deliberate and intentional. Therefore, from a moral point of view, both examples are considered as wrong actions. The only difference between these two examples is that in the first example, Smith was ready to kill, but in the second example, Jones was not ready to kill.

2. Arguments against euthanasia:

i) Prolonging life is the true religion of living beings. People have future plans and want to live to realize those plans. If euthanasia is supported, the future plans of some people will not be possible. The possibility cannot be denied that if the dying person lived a little longer, they could have written a high-quality research book according to their plan and presented it to our society, but euthanasia hinders the person's future plans, which may not be beneficial for society either.

ii) Only in cases where the disease is incurable and fatal is the request for euthanasia made. But is there any certainty that the disease is incurable and that the cure is not possible? It may also be that the doctor has made a mistake in diagnosing the disease. The disease is not incurable at all. In fact, it may be that today's incurable and extremely painful cancer patients Doctors keep alive in the hope that tomorrow the true cause of cancer will be discovered and the disease will be cured. Therefore, if the possibility of curing the disease and alleviating the pain is accepted, euthanasia can never be supported.

iii) The desire for voluntary euthanasia is natural. It may be that the patient does not actually wish to die, but wants to live, because his illness is so severe, he wishes to die to relieve the pain, so the need here is to relieve the pain, not to cause death. If the wish for death is not the goal, then it cannot be said that the killing is the person's desire and will be considered as murder.

Again, when a dying person wishes to die, the patient is allowed to die due to the insistence of relatives who are unwilling to bear the cost of that wish. This is also a type of direct killing.

iv) If the legal form of euthanasia is supported, there is a risk that many frauds and deceits will be accepted as legitimate. It can be feared that even for the greed of huge wealth, a person who wants to die is being killed by giving him a name for euthanasia. Basically, due

to all these problems, euthanasia has not been supported in various countries (except Netherlands) even today.

v) Euthanasia destroys the patient's morale to live a healthy life free from disease. The essence of survival is the desire to survive, if that desire is lacking, the disease cannot be cured by relying only on medicine. Sometimes, hearing this euthanasia creates despair in the patient's mind. It is not desirable in practical life.

This relief from death is also justifiable from the point of view of utilitarianism. According to utilitarianism, actions that cause more pain than pleasure are bad, inappropriate actions, and actions that cause more pleasure than pain are good, appropriate actions. As a result, rather than keeping a person suffering from a disease and suffering immense pain alive, it is better to kill him peacefully without causing him any pain. Every human being has the right to wish for death to achieve liberation. Therefore, euthanasia can be supported.

Conclusion:

It is very difficult to differentiate between active euthanasia and passive euthanasia. These two types of euthanasia are all the same. The main point is that here the patient dies. In some cases, the death is caused by the patient himself and in some cases the death is caused by someone else. Just as active euthanasia cannot be supported in the same way as passive euthanasia is not acceptable. The only difference between this two euthanasia is that in active euthanasia the act is done intentionally but in passive euthanasia the death is not intentionally caused.

It is very difficult to differentiate between active euthanasia and passive euthanasia. Both types of euthanasia - active euthanasia and passive euthanasia are the same. The main point of these two types of killing is the patient's death. The only difference is that in the case of active euthanasia, the patient is being killed directly, and in the case of passive euthanasia, the patient is being killed indirectly. Active euthanasia is compared with killing, and passive euthanasia is letting die.

In some cases, this euthanasia can be called a proper action. For example, in the case of a patient suffering from incurable cancer, we can support euthanasia and free the patient from their suffering. Where the person in agony is fighting with the agony of death. Maybe it is not possible to cure their disease with treatment. In that case, euthanasia can be used, but It should be noted that the diagnosis in that case should not be wrong. A person suffering from an incurable disease knows that they want to be freed from their long-lasting pain, then this euthanasia can be supported from an ethical point of view. However, if euthanasia is legalized, there is a possibility of much fraud and deception, which is never supported in practical ethics. Euthanasia can be supported in special cases.

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Rethinking Free Speech in Digital Age: Insights from John Stuart Mill.

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Abstract

The circumstances under which the freedom of speech functions has greatly transformed due to the digitalization of communication. On the one hand, social media platforms have opened up more opportunities to express oneself and engage in the global discussion, and on the other hand, social media also brings certain issues such as misinformation, fake news, domination of algorithms, and echo chambers. The increasing numbers of regulatory measures by the state and nonstate actors are also introducing challenges to free expression. The article reinvestigates the traditional defense of free speech as presented by John Stuart Mill in the works under *On Liberty* (1859) and also tries to determine its applicability in the new digital space. The fallibility, dissent value, and harm principle-based framework by Mill offers a solid basis for the analysis of the contribution of free expression to the democracies. Even though, Mill believed in rational discussion, modern digital communication makes that kind of discussion more difficult to happen because online platforms work in very different ways. The article claims that although the principles of Mill are still normatively relevant, they have to be substantially reinterpreted along with the line of algorithm-based communications and excessive information flow. The paper will be based on the current theoretical frameworks and will investigate how digital space can affect the shaping of popular opinion and can cause a pause in the freedom of expression. It also examines feasible interventions, such as making algorithms transparent, becoming digitally literate, and responsible in content moderation, as potential solutions to the problem of reconciliation between freedom of expression and new harms. The article concludes that free speech within the digital era requires a fine balance between the liberty of an individual and curbing the emerging dangers of digital communication frameworks.

Keywords: Digital Public Sphere, Algorithms Governance, Free Speech, John Stuart mill, Harm Principle.

Introduction:

Extensive digital communication infrastructures have made the world we inhabit more inter-linked than ever before. Information and opinions now travel continents in real time and has the most fundamental impact in how politics are communicated. This revolution of digitalization has altered the traditional historical communication patterns. The traditional top-down and centralized forms of communication have now transformed into horizontal and more decentralized communications (Papathanassopoulos and Giannouli, 2025). The

social media platforms, such as Facebook, X (previously Twitter), WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube have become leading platforms of political discourse and opinion formation. These platforms are now virtually acting as modern public spheres where the citizens are taking an active part in discussing and shaping political thought (Shaholli, 2025).

Taking a broader perspective, the above-mentioned technological changes seem to have enhanced the freedom of expression by availing unparalleled opportunities to the ordinary citizens to engage in political discussion (Puri, 2025). With the digital platforms, unlike in the past, when only the political elites and the traditional media houses had access to the communication channels, millions of people can now create, distribute and challenge ideas in the society. However, the growth of online communication has also presented some huge challenges as far as the practice of free speech is concerned. Misinformation is likely to spread faster and further due to increased flow of facts, politicization persists, and social divisions happen (Gomathy et al., 2024). Counteracting this, governments and technology companies are becoming more and more involved in the process of censoring content, deactivating accounts, or limiting the exposure of this or that type of expression. Although such interventions are commonly defended on the basis of ensuring the order in the society or avoiding harm, they also bring up essential issues simultaneously about censorship and oppression of lawful dissent (Fitzgerald and Lokmanoglu, 2023).

These tensions can be well depicted by recent political happenings. As an example, statements of an Indian political spokesperson Nupur Sharma about the Prophet Muhammad created a horrific spread of the misinformation and gave rise to the debates on the regulation of the online speech in India (Reuters, 2022). On a related note, following the 2023 earthquake in Turkey, the government was reported to censor online freedom of expression by journalists and citizens who opposed the government in their critique (Buyuk, 2023). In Nigeria, Twitter has temporarily blocked a post which contained the controversial message by the president and the government decided to ban Twitter temporarily (Macleod, 2021). Still more recently, in March 2026, the Department of State Services allegedly arrested Nigerian social commentator Sani Waspapping because of a social media post concerning the US-Iran-Israel dispute (DSS Arrests Social Commentator Sani "Waspapping" in Kaduna over Post on US-Iran-Israel War | Sahara Reporters, 2026).

These events point to an on-going paradox that lies at the core of democracies in modern societies, the way to strike a balance between civil peace and protecting the freedom of speech. In order to solve this tension, one should go back to the work of one of the most influential philosophers of liberty, John Stuart Mill. Mill, writing in nineteenth century, came up with an eminent argument in defense of free speech based on the spirit of individual liberty and open debate (*On Liberty*, 1859). His arguments have remained useful in the quest of the modern societies to balance the principles of free expression with the complicated issues presented by the digital communication mediums.

Intellectual Background: Life and Influences of Mill:

In a variety of aspects, each and every thinker is a product of his or her historical and intellectual habitat. To gain a proper insight into the defense of free speech by John Stuart Mill it is thus important to look at the formative factors that shaped his philosophical perspectives. John Stuart Mill was born in 1806 in the year Pentonville, London in the family of James Mill and Harriet Barrow (Macleod & Miller, 2016). His father James Mill was a right hand to Jeremy Bentham and a true follower of the doctrine of utilitarianism (Macleod &

Miller, 2016). James Mill was so motivated in developing a mature and disciplined intellect that he exposed his son to a rigorous and highly disciplined education at a tender age. At age three, Mill started studying Greek, later studying Latin at age of eight and by the time he was twelve, he was well acquainted with the topics of classical literature, as well as logic, geometry, political economy and calculus (Macleod & Miller, 2016). However, this process of intellectual development was accompanied by a considerable psychological cost. Such strict training, caused a pitiful mental collapse when he was in his early twenties. It is this crisis that made a turning point in his intellectual growth. With the involvement of the Romantic poets, especially William Wordsworth, Mill started to see the significance of emotion and individuality and the sensitivity of morals, things that in his previous education were relatively ignored (Macleod, 2016). Wordsworth also made Mill exposed to other thinkers like Thomas Carlyle, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Those experiences opened up his intellectual insight and made him realize the weakness of the utilitarian approach. Taking a look back at his early life, Mill in later years acknowledged to have only exposed to one side of the truth (Mill, 1873/2007). This would subsequently form part of his defence of free speech specifically, no one opinion can assert that it holds the absolute truth.

Of all the influences of his life, the role of Harriet Taylor is one which is prominent. Their intellectual collaboration between them significantly influenced the opinions of Mill in the liberty and individuality. Taylor advanced the contributions of Mill particularly on female rights and personal autonomy. She also brought refinement in the thinking of Mill on the correlation between the individual autonomy and the social advancement. *On Liberty* was a collective work that Mill himself termed as a joint production, and he emphasized that they worked together (Popova, 2019). The language and especially the socio-political situation of the nineteenth century England also largely acted as determining factor behind the thought of Mill. This era was characterized by the severe censorship regulations, such as the Six Acts of 1819, which placed a lot of restrictions on the freedom of political communication and press (History Hub, 2021). Simultaneously, the British society was reshaping itself through the Industrial Revolution, urbanization, the growth of political engagement, and the emergence of new democratic perspectives.

Taken together, these factors contribute to the explanation of the philosophical premises that ensued in the defence of free speech by Mill. His early experiences of intellectual narrowness and this was accompanied by his experience in the world of various points of view, that made him denounce the notion that truth can be born out of one source of authority. Rather, Mill came to think that truth is developed through the clash of ideas. Therefore, silencing dissenting opinions prevents society from gaining knowledge. More to the point, these experiences also contributed to the development of the harm principle. After observing the evils of repression of intellectual thought, as well as the worth of variety of thought, Mill was trying to create a scheme that would possibly enhance the freedom of the individual and avoid harm to society. The fact that he differentiates between the allowed expression and detrimental forms of incitement, shows that he tries to make a compromise between the freedom and responsibility. This remains the dominant part of the modern controversy on the freedom of speech on the Internet.

Mill's Defense of Free Speech:

The philosophical defense of free expression by John Stuart Mill, which he expressed at greatest length in the 1859 treatise *On Liberty*, has been a staple of liberal thought ever since. And still has influence on legal and political discussions today. Although it is not a monolithic offer, Mill's defense of free speech is a multi-layered and multi-pronged framework composed of the principles of fallibility, utility, and human flourishing (Mill, 1859). The reasoning presented by Mill in this defense can be dismantled into a set of interdependent justifications,

The Tyranny of the Majority and the Assumption of Infallibility:

The essence of the ideas by Mill on liberty is that the nature and extent of the power that society is allowed to wield on the individual is debated. More importantly, he recognizes the greatest enemy to liberty not in the blatant actions of a tyrannical regime, but rather in the tyranny of the majority, which is more thorough and systematic (Eduardo, 2025). Such social repression, manifested in an opinion and emotion may be more disturbing than law itself, since it offers fewer way to escape, blends in fabric of life, and enslaves the soul. In his book *On Liberty*, chapter 2 which is called, *Of the Liberty of thought and Discussion*, Mill contends that suppression of an opinion is a special evil that is enough to forcefully take away both the present and future of the human race (Mill, 1859). This argument is based on the value of human fallibility. Silencing dissent is equivalent to assume one's own infallibility, which is not acceptable at all by Mill. According to him, there is no period that will be without mistakes and most of the concepts that were popular at one time or another have been proved to be not true or even stupid (Mill, 1859).

The Three fundamental dimensions of Free Expression:

The greatest contribution of Mill into the philosophy of free speech is his systematic argumentation of why even false or unpopular views have high utility values. This argument is commonly formulated in a three-pronged or tripartite frame, showing that even in any possible situation, the act of inhibiting discourse is harmful to the quest of knowledge and truth (Eduardo, 2025).

- **The Truth That May Be Silent:** The primary and the most basic debate that is presented by Mill is that the opinion that is censored can be true. The censoring of such opinion can be likened to robbing the society of the chance to substitute falsehood with truth (Mill, 1859). Mill gives this argument by citing instances of past times when routinely believed ideas were found to be invalid. As an example, previous orthodoxies like the belief of a flat Earth were heavily upheld, with the opposing views pushed to the edges or even out of the discussion, only to be later on accepted to be right. Mill also contends that human beings exhibit a major intellectual vice of halting critical thinking once a belief has seemed to have been established. He notes that people tend to stop doubting ideas that are accepted and therefore they are considered to lose their energy and thus might not be challenged even when the ideas are invalid. This tendency is the one that explains a considerable percentage of human error (Mill, 1859). Here, Mill is focused on the power of free discussion as a tool of keeping the process of critical inquiry alive. Allowing the representation of different and even opposite beliefs, the society can be certain that beliefs constantly undergo testing and reinforcement, which makes society a step closer to truth (Jacobson, 2020).
- **Even a False opinion Has a Part in the Truth:** Secondly, Mill argues that even views that

are generally regarded as false can have some of the truth which can contribute to a larger perspective of the truth. It is important that one opinion does not encompass the totality of the truth. So, it is must to interact with another and present conflicting views. The engagement and opposition of opposing views is what will help to arrive at a more detailed grasp of the truth (Turner, 2021). According to Mill, beliefs which are not questioned easily become hard in nature, which is one-dimensional and loses its in-depth quality and criticality. Instead, dissent teaches people to renegotiate and clarify their opinions and continue holding truth as an active lived and rational belief instead of letting it deteriorate into blind dogma (Mill, 1859).

- **Keeping Truth Alive by Debate:** Lastly, Mill believes that even a truth-based opinion should always be submitted to persistent challenge and debate (Jacobson, 2020). In the absence of such critical engagement, people will put their believe in something without thinking about the reasoning behind them. Truth in this scenario becomes numb to the intellectual activity and according to Mill, it is a “dead dogma”, a belief that is accepted on paper but not one that is truly believed in (Mill, 1859, p.58). Mill points out that truth is not just valuable because it is accepted but that it is valuable because we understand it. Unless the beliefs are challenged, their intent becomes fatigued and they stop impacting character and behaviour in a purposeful manner. Therefore, a constant struggle is necessary in order to make the truth alive, which must be based on logic and self-contemplation instead of accepting the truth passively (Eduardo, 2025).

Democratic Life, Autonomy and Citizenship:

Mill uses the defense of free speech to be closely connected with his overall understanding of autonomy of individuals and democratic involvement as well. He also claims that a freedom to express personal position is significant to the attainment of self-rule and an independent judgment. These persons who are not given a chance to express and to argue their point of view are less likely to develop intellectual freedom that is needed to play a significant role in the life of society (Mill, 1859). In this sense, free speech is not only an individual right, but also a necessity of democracy. An open expression society stands better chances of creating knowledgeable and participatory citizens who are able to discuss issues of common interest. With the free speech, this allows everyone to be involved in the establishment of common decisions that enhance the democratic legitimacy (Kasper and Kozma, 2024). Further, the development of individuality is considered by Mill to be a social good. Diverse views and ways to live make sophistication within the society since they promote experimenting and innovating. Freedom of expression in this sense not only serves the purpose of political democracy, but also cultural and intellectual life.

The Philosophical Boundary of Free Speech: Harm Principle:

The core in the philosophy of liberty as expounded by John Stuart Mill in his masterpiece book *On Liberty* (1859), is a simple yet influential principle concerning to the legitimate claim of social or state authority over the individual. This principle, which is widely known as the harm principle, lays down the most crucial basis of justification of coercive intervention. Mill famously argued “*That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.*” (Mill, 1859, p.16). This concept the best and most significant attempt in the political philosophy which establishes a border line between the freedom of a person and the social

control. The primary idea of Mill was to take a strong stance in favour of the freedom of individuals, although, at the same time, he was willing to give society certain regulations, which could help it operate smoothly and avoid hurting other people.

Self-Regarding and Other-Regarding Actions:

The argument as presented by Mill relies on two distinct forms of human action namely self-regarding and other-regarding actions which influence the individual and the other people respectively. Mill holds that an individual can fully possess his body and mind when the issue at hand is very much personal to him or her. When that happens, the society can give advice, guidance, or persuasion but it has no right to apply law or social pressure so that one can act in a given manner for their own good, whether physical or moral. But once the actions of a person begin to influence other people and he or she causes or even threatens harm to them, the society or the law can control that person. The harm principle claims that avoiding harm to others is not merely a motivation of interference, however, it is the only proper reason (Mill, 1859).

Harm versus Offence:

John Stuart Mill formulates in *On Liberty*, the harm principle, according to which the individual liberty can only be interfered with to avoid harming other people. Also, he formally does not distinguish between harm and offence but, such a distinction is clearly visible in his argument. Bare offence such as listening to an unpopular view or a criticism, does not warrant censorship. To Mill, disagreement and intellectual disquiet are the critical constituents of a democratic discourse. Societies that lack the input of divergent views in them are likely to have their intellectual faculties stagnate (Mill, 1859). But speech which directly incites violence or has the immediate effect of harm may fairly be suppressed. The famous example of corn dealer that was described by Mill exemplified this concept. A newspaper article that criticizes corn dealers is not objectionable since it contributes in the body of conversation that people engage in. However, saying the same to a crowd full of angry people in the front of the house of a corn dealer might start a fight and thus it is not covered by the act of freedom of speech (Mill, 1859).

This difference is still the focus of the modern political and legal discussions. The contemporary democratic societies tend to find it difficult to establish what could be termed as harm in regard to speech. Whereas the framework as developed by Mill focuses on the safeguarding of dissenting and minority opinions, there are more problems like misinformation, online harassment, and digital radicalization, which the modern policymakers are more urgently faced with, and these phenomena is gradually erasing the distinction between speech and harm (Kalliris, 2024).

Placing Mill in modern Theory:

Although the defense of free speech made by Mill is fundamental, theorists in the present-day society have raised significant issues about the practice in the contemporary times of communication. The idea of a public sphere proposed by Jurgen Habermas underlines the necessity of the rational-critical debate as a system of democratic legitimacy (Habermas, 2023), but researchers assert that such a set of values is frequently violated in the context of digital platforms because there is a lack of deliberation and critical debate. Equally important, Cass Sunstein lists such a danger as echo chambers (Sunstein, 2001) where people are becoming progressively exposed to only similar-minded opinions and so the deliberative

value of free speech is becoming undermined.

These simply imply that the circumstances under which Mill proposes the truth-seeking discourse are no longer entirely in place within contemporary digital systems of communication. Consequently, in order to go back to Mill in the present day, the affirmation of his principles is necessary, as well as the investigation of the structural limitations that are faced by modern communication.

The online era and the New Dynamics of Free Speech:

The situation has changed dramatically due to the digital age and freedom of speech. Leaving the print-based communication system that existed in the times of John Stuart Mill, the modern world is being defined by all the social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, X, Redditt, Telegram and others) that have interconnected in a radically different way, extending the reach, speed and scale of human expression. The most popular modern definition of free speech is the one that is used by the Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which describes the right to seek, to obtain and convey information and ideas of all type irrespective of borders, orally, in writing or in print, in art or any other media of choice as the right to free speech (United Nations, 1966). This right is not absolute however. Article 19(3) states that under such freedoms, there are special responsibilities and duties. Hence the service of such freedoms can be subjected to some obligatory limitations, including the limitations maintained by law and necessities to the respect of the rights or the reputations of others or the safeguarding of national security or of the order of society or of the health or the morals (United Nations, 1966). In such a way, the fundamental structure of free expression has remained consistent with the principles of harm as articulated by Mill. However, the expression and its regulation have had significant transformations in the digital environment.

- **Truth-Oriented Discourse to Emotion-Driven Communication:** Among the best alterations, it is possible to distinguish the change of the truth-oriented discourse to the emotional one. The instrumentation of free speech was appreciated in the Millian model as a tool of seeking the truth via rational debate, critical interaction and the “collision of adverse opinions” (Mill, 1859, p. 89). The aim of truth assumed that the participants are devoted to the rational discussion. They are allowed to be persuaded by more appropriate evidence or reasoning. Modern social media ecosystems, conversely, are prone to boosting emotionally expressive and attention-seeking content. These are extremely polarizing and sensational in nature because the algorithms of the platforms functions to push such contents (Vosoughi et al., 2018). When it comes to discussion on digital platforms, it frequently reflects interests more towards finding reach, visibility, engagement and popularity than finding the actual truth. Studies often show that falsity propagates in a larger volume, influence, rapidity, and extensively than the truth within the social media (Vosoughi et al., 2018.). Therefore, the essence of the free speech, the pursuit of truth in the form of stated reasoning is becoming blurred by the logic of entertainment and virality.
- **The Economic Rise of Podcasts: Echo Chambers and Algorithms Curating:** The second, major revolution is the shift in its power of debate to conformity and reinforcement. Open disagreement was intensely defended by Mill. He even tried to explain that by arguing that even false opinions are intrinsically valuable since they dispute dominant beliefs and thus tend not to degenerate into dead dogma (Mill, 1859). But AI-based and

algorithm-driven content curation in digital medias is more likely to support prior preferences and beliefs, and thus generate so-called echo chambers and filter bubbles (Jindal and Gouri, 2024). All this leads to a situation in which users can be mostly subjected to the pre-existing opinions. This keeps them distant from the opinions that are difficult to agree with and undermines the crucial culture of critical discourse. This trend is almost strikingly similar to what Mill described as the tyranny of the majority. Which he fears “more formidable than many kinds of political oppression” (Mill, 1859, p. 7). Algorithm curation in the digital realm sometimes intensifies this. Such curation deliberately avoids dissonant voices by filtering them out and reinforces majoritarian opinion. This process could simply compromise the existence of meaningful intellectual exchange.

- **Quality of Discourse, Accountability and Anonymity:** Third major change is the fact that complex tension between anonymity and responsibility in the public discourse. In situations where social repercussions can create the feeling of wearisomeness, anonymity can encourage people to voice their opinion and express themselves without the fear or the consequence of punishment. This is important to democratic engagement and can even prompt people to have an honest conversation about a highly sensitive topic (Jordan, 2019). Mill's emphasis on accountability in public discourse highlights the needs for individual to support their opinions with reasonable reasoning. However, this is challenged by the consequences of the anonymity in digital space, where the absence of accountability can introduce suspicions and hinder the quality of public discourse (Doyle, 2015).
- **Between Small-Scale Circulation and Virality on a Large Scale:** A fourth significant change is the one related to the shift from the limited circulation to the large-scale virality. Before the advancement of digital platforms, the circulation of ideas and information was very much limited. But in contemporary times because of digital platforms the instant spreading of messages has become new normal. Ideas and information can now reach a large number of audiences all over the world, which significantly increases the scale of coverage and the impact of speech as well (Dhaliwal, 2025). The real-time and large-scale information flow is able to intensify the potential damage of the expression as the contents that are misleading, inflammatory or hostile can quickly come into social or political effects. The example of the corn dealer which Mill used to distinguish between legitimate criticism on newspaper and incitement before angry mob (Mill, 1859), is further undefined under the new conditions of the digital age. In which one post can be circulated to millions of people within hours, can potentially be connected by a single, incitatory post, and organized violence or harm.
- **Technological Intensification and Continuities of History:** It is necessary to state that, most of the phenomena that are commonly described as being specifically digital in nature such as hate speech, public mockery, social exclusion, and misinformation, have their historical origins that date prior to the internet. Historical research confirms that the same practices were present during the era of Mill such as the marginalization of the dissenting voices, propagation of false or biased views through partisan newspapers and the use of language to cause social exclusion (Gordon, 1997). The contemporary age is a distinctive one not because of the presence of such phenomena but because of their magnitude, pace, and impact that has been immensely magnified by digital media.

Last but not least, the regulation of speech on social media platforms is now a central role of both social media sites and governments. Meanwhile, content moderation, account restrictions or bans, and shadow banning, which involves blocking internet contents without notifying anyone, are forms of control practiced by the platforms (Hojati and Nault, 2025). Governmental control has also become more obvious, as content is being struck down by order without clear communication to the users (Hojati and Nault, 2025). Although these actions are reasonable under some circumstances, it also creates an issue of overreach, lack of openness or toleration, and preventing lawful expression. To sum up, besides the general similarity between the basic principles of free speech in the digital era and the Millian framework, digital era has brought forward many others, which has made its practical application harder. The critical task today is not to disregard the principles, but rather to redefine them in a way that can safeguard the liberty of the individual and also can deal with the emerging challenges posed by modern modes of communication.

How to protect Digital Free Speech: Practical Ways:

Mill would have most likely been astonished or appalled to witness the contemporary mode of discussion. However, the central challenge of *On Liberty* remains the same, how can societies guard the terms of an open, free and rational argumentation, without permitting anarchy? The philosophical model of Mill that includes the search of truth through the conflict of opposing opinions and preventing harm to others can continue to offer normative direction even in recent days to solve the emerging problems of the digital communication. A number of sensible reforms based on the Millian ideals can be used to bring modern platform governance in favour of the spirit of individual autonomy, deliberative process, and free speech.

The quick propagation of fake news or misinformation is one of the key problems under the umbrella of digital age. To resolve this problem the majority of people should strive to be certain and to analyse information. One of the points that Mill considers is that, people who solely receive one view do not truly know what they believe. So, they should analyse multiple views to come up with a conclusion (Mill, 1859). Fact checking sites, including PolitiFact, FactCheck.org and FactChecker.in are thus essential in facilitating the healthy discussion. Also, new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, may be used to find misleading content and give readers an overview about the context and credibility of information (Chakrabarti, 2025).

The issue of content moderation and takedown is equally critical. The decision to remove posts or to restrict or suspend the accounts of the users should be based on clear principles that are in line with the harm principle. The justification of restrictions only takes place when such speech presents a real threat of harm but there must be transparency and accountability in such decision making. It is important to strengthen the legislation to create a clear framework based on which the content moderation should be performed by the private companies. Giving users clear reason behind the content removal should also be considered. All these may successfully contribute in preventing unfair censorship and may increase confidence in digital regulation (Jhaver et al., 2024). There is also a need of algorithmic transparency. Algorithms used by social media rarely reveal the way they give more priority to one type of content over the other. Increased openness would enable the researchers and policymakers to appreciate the influences of the digital flows of information and their implication on citizens (MacCarthy, 2020).

Moreover, the successful operation of the free speech in digital era is highly subjected to the evolution of digital literacy, critical thinking and tolerance. The development of technology on its own cannot support any meaningful discourse unless the ways people interact with information improve. The only way to overcome the impact of the algorithm-based curation of content is exposure to a variety of perspectives. This is likely to solidify pre-existing beliefs in most cases. Inviting people to support more diverse views can stem out the development of the echo chambers and enable a more stable public space. Also, there are new technologies like the blockchain that can provide ways to protect the freedom of speech. Being a decentralized and unalterable system, blockchain may offer new opportunities to safeguard digital contents and minimize the possibility of unfair bans (Ritu et al., 2023). Meanwhile, separate community-based moderation systems, including participatory flagging or vote systems, might be useful in analysing potentially toxic materials as well. These measures can potentially assist in negotiating between free expression protection and the necessity of responsibility on the Internet. Overall, technological innovation, institutional transparency, and personal duty should be involved in changing the framework of Mill in accordance to the digital era. Through this combination, one will be able to retain the fundamental values of free speech and work towards the challenges introduced by modern-day communication settings.

Conclusion:

The defense of John Stuart Mill on free speech is one of the strongest defenses on the connection between liberty, truth, and democratic life ever made. His statement that to be an intellectual is to be a dissenter and to forbid a opinion is an unjustified assumption of infallibility, is still echoed in modern discussions. However, the digital era poses itself with threats that Mill would not have ever envisioned. The advent of the algorithm-based communication space, the fast proliferation of fake news and the increased contribution of both governments and private companies in the process of speech regulation on digital platforms, make it more difficult to employ his framework. Within these conditions, the sense of expression and harm is becoming blurrier. This paper has suggested that the principles formulated by Mill need not be discarded, but rather revisited in the context of these changes. The harm principle, specifically, has to be construed in the environment where speech can rapidly scale and have indirect but considerable consequences. This appeal to the truth that comes about through free discussion should also consider the structural distortions that are presented by online platforms. What has made Mill always relevant is not the ready-made solutions, but rather the normative base through which the contemporary societies can re-examine the circumstances of free speech and expression. The balancing of the freedom of speech in the digital age should then be careful between safeguarding individual liberty and the changing manifestations of the harm that come along with the new systems of communication.

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Nature of Vāda in Nyāya Philosophy

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Abstract

According to nyaya there are three types of kothā, and among these, vāda (debate) is one. Katha that is conducted solely for ascertaining truth is called vāda; for this reason, many also refer to vāda as tattvabubhūtsukathā (discussion aimed at knowledge of reality). In Nyāya philosophy, what is called vāda is described by Dharmakīrti in his Vādanyāya as prapañcakathā or bistārakathā. Although the prapañcakathā accepted by Dharmakīrti appears similar to the vāda recognized in Nyāya, it is not actually vāda, because according to Nyāya, vāda (debate) can take place between a teacher and a student, or between two students belonging to the same tradition. However, according to Dharmakīrti, prapañcakathā can take place between any two individuals who are interested in acquiring knowledge on the same subject. Jain Acharya Vadideva Suri, while describing the characteristics of vāda, says that vāda is a form of reasoning that involves two sides: the proposition and the counter-proposition. On one side, a point is established, and on the other, it is refuted. He notes that both the jigīṣu (inquirer) and the tattva-nirṇayīṣu (one seeking to ascertain truth) can initiate the debate. However, the Nyāya tradition considers only tattvabubhūtsukathā as vāda and does not recognise the presence of jigīṣu in vāda. Thus, the question arises: Is vāda a form of tattvabubhūtsukathā or jigīṣu-initiated debate?

Keywords: Vāda, Pramānatarkasādhanōpālambhaḥ, siddhāntābiruddhaḥ, pañcābayabōpapannaḥ, pakṣha-pratipakṣha-parigraha, avyupagamabyabasthā

There are three types of kathā: Vāda, Jalpa and Vitandā. Among these three forms of kathā (discussion), vāda is one of them. That form of debate whose only purpose is the establishment of truth is known as vāda; therefore, many also describe vāda as tattvabubhūtsukathā. While discussing vāda, Acharya Jayantabhatta said- “Vītarāgaiḥ śiṣyabrahmacāriṇi saha vādaḥ prayōktavyaḥ”¹ That is, the teacher (Guru) or instructor himself, being free from attachment and passions, should engage in debate (vāda) with his students and fellow learners. But why would a person choose to engage in such a debate (vāda)? In response to this question, it can be said that both the disputant (vādin) and the opponent (pratīvādin) engage in debate (vāda) for the determination of truth. When a

¹ Jayantabhatta, *Nyāyamāñjarī*, edited by Nyāya Vyākaraṇāchārya Suryanarayana Sharma, Varanasi, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pustakalaya, 1992, p. 152.

student, having learned from the Nyāya standpoint that the self is eternal, encounters an atheist claiming that the self is non-eternal, he becomes doubtful – whether the self is eternal or non-eternal. At that point, the student, free from the question of victory or defeat (*jigyasashunya*), solely to remove doubt or attain true knowledge, approaches the teacher and expresses his desire. The teacher then engages in discussion with the student to resolve his doubt, and this variety of discussion is called *vāda* (debate). Therefore, the ancient authorities have said – “*Gurvādiviḥ saha vādaḥ*” That is, one should engage in debate (*vāda*) with the teacher as well as with fellow students. Acharya Jayanta Bhatta says that in *vāda* (debate), the arguments employed by the teacher are so flawless that, by merely hearing them, the doubts of the students regarding the subject under discussion are removed. According to Jayanta Bhatta, in this *vāda* (debate) there are two parties: the first is the learned, impartial teacher—free from attachment and aversion—who imparts true knowledge; and the second is the students or fellow learners. In this kind of debate, there is no trace of arrogance or vanity.

In Nyāya philosophy, what is called *vāda* (debate) is referred to by Dharmakīrti in his work *Vādanīyāya* as *prapañcakathā* or *vistarakathā*. According to him, in this *prapañcakathā* there is no role for victory or defeat. The disputant and the opponent rise above victory and defeat and engage in *prapañcakathā*; their sole aim is to attain true knowledge. Although the *prapañcakathā* accepted by Dharmakīrti appears similar to the *vāda* recognized in Nyāya, it is not actually *vāda*, because according to Nyāya, *vāda* (debate) should be conducted only among teacher and student, fellow learners (*brahmacārins*), as well as those who are well-versed in scriptural truth and seekers of the highest good.² In simple terms, *vāda* (debate) can take place between a teacher and a student, or between two students belonging to the same tradition. However, according to Dharmakīrti, *prapañcakathā* can take place between any two individuals who are interested in acquiring knowledge on the same subject.

The Advaita Vedāntin Adi Shankaracharya also accepts the *vāda* recognized by Maharṣi Gautama. According to him, even in *vāda* (debate), along with establishing one’s own position as the disputant, it is also necessary to refute the opponent’s position; otherwise, the objective of determining the truth cannot be achieved.³ Here a doubt arises: if, for seekers of liberation (*mumukṣu*), it is reasonable to determine truth merely by establishing one’s own position, then why should they, with an attitude of hostility, refute the views of others? It is true that merely establishing one’s own position is sufficient for the seeker of liberation (*mumukṣu*) to attain knowledge of truth, however, a person of dull intellect may think that since teachers like Kapila, Patanjali, and Kanada are worthy of reverence, their established doctrines must be accepted as true without question. But Adi Shankaracharya holds that although they are worthy of reverence, their doctrines may not necessarily be true; therefore,

² “*Taṁ śiṣya-guru-sabrahmacārī-biśiṣṭaśreṣṭhībhīrasūyībhīrabhyupeyāt*” –Maharshi Gautama, *Nyāyasūtra* – 4/2/48.

³ “*Vedāntārthanirṇayasya ca samyagdarśanārthatvāt annirṇayena svapakṣa sthāpanam prathamam kṛtam tat hi abhyahitām parapakṣa pratyākhyānāt iti*” – Badarayan, *Brahmasūtra*, Shankaracharya, *Śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣya*, translated by Vishvarupananda and edited by Citghanananda Puri and Ananda Jha, *Vedāntadarśanam* (Vol. II), Kolkata, Udbodhan Karyalay, 1996, p. 216.

in order to make such a dull-intellectual person understand this, it is necessary to demonstrate the inadequacy of those doctrines or refute them.⁴

In the *Bhāmatī tikā*, it is stated that a discourse motivated by the desire to determine truth (tattva-nirṇaya) is called vītarāga-kathā (dispassionate discussion). The disputant can never arrive at the determination of truth without addressing the defects in the opponent's view and refuting the objections or faults that the opponent raises against his own position. In a vītarāga-kathā, truth-determining discourse, the presence of the opponent's standpoint is always evident; it is never a case of the absence of an opposing view; but this does not in any way undermine the purpose or meaning of vītarāga-kathā.⁵ The disputant and the opponent are advised to engage in vāda (debate) free from attachment, passion, and similar emotions (rāgādisūṇya). That is, what is accepted as vāda in Nyāya is referred to in the *Caraka Saṃhitā* as sandhyāsaṃbhāṣā, by Dharmakīrti in *Vādanyāya* as prapañcakathā, as tattva-bubhūtsu-kathā, and in the *Bhāmatī tikā* as vītarāga-kathā.

Jain philosophers have also regarded the debate of a vijigīṣu (one who desires victory) as vāda. In *Pramāṇamīmāṃsā*, Hemachandra states that since the occasion of defeat (nigrahasthāna) are also to be brought out in vāda (debate), the preservation of truth (tattvasamrakṣhaṇ) is achieved through vāda itself, for that, there is no need for jalpa or vitaṇḍā.⁶ According to him, through vāda (debate) itself it is possible to explain the reasoning of disputant and opponent who seek victory (vijigīṣu). Therefore, he speaks regarding the characteristics of vāda (debate), for the purpose of preserving truth, vāda (debate) is the discourse in which one presents one's own position and refutes the faults of the opponent before the prāśnikādi (vādin or prativādin, Savya, savāpati). Therefore, he rejects the jalpa and vitaṇḍā recognized in Nyāya for the preservation of truth. According to him, both the determination and preservation of truth are possible through vāda (debate) itself.⁷

The Jain Acharya Bāḍidevasūri, while describing the characteristics of vāda (debate), states that vāda is a form of reasoning in which there is a disputant and an opponent. On one side, a particular proposition is established, and on the other side, the exact opposite

⁴ "Nanu mumukṣhaṇām mōkṣhasādhanatvena samyagadarśananirūpaṇāya svapakṣhasthāpanameba kēbalaṃ karttuṃ yuktaṃ, kiṃ parapakṣhanirākaraṇena paradvēśakarēṇa? Bāḍhamebaṃ, tathāpi mahājanaparigrhītāni mahānti sāṅkhyāditantrāṇi" *Sharīrikabhāṣya* - 2/2/1 (Badarayan, *Brahmasūtra*, Shankaracharya, *Śārīrakamīmāṃsābhāṣya*, translated by Vishvarupananda and edited by Citghanananda Puri and Ananda Jha, *Vedāntadarśanam* (Vol. II), Kolkata, Udbodhan Karyalay, 1996, p. 216.)

⁵ "Tattvanirṇayābasānā bitarāgakathā, na ca parapakṣhadūṣaṇamantareṇa tattvanirṇayaḥ śakyah karttūmi tattva-nirṇayāya bitarāgenāpi parapakṣho dr̥ṣyate, natu parapakṣhatareti, na bitarāgakathātvyāhatirityarthaḥ" - *bhāmatītikā* 2/2/1. Ibid - p. 216.

⁶ "Teṣāṃ ca nigrahasthānāntaropalakṣhaṇatvāt. Ataeba na jalpa bitaṇḍe kathe, vāda syaiba tattvasamrakṣhaṇārthatvāt". - Hemachandra, *Pramāṇamīmāṃsā*, edited by Paṇḍit Sukhlal Ji Sanghavi, Ahmedabad, Sarasvatī Pustak Bhaṇḍar, 1989, p. 63.

"Ucitānām ca nigrahasthānānām vādeapi na virōdhosti". Ibid. p. 64

⁷ "Tattvasamrakṣhaṇārtham prāśnikādisamakṣham sādhanadūṣaṇavadanaṃ vādaḥ" ||30|| - Ibid. p. 63.

position is refuted.⁸ He states that this vāda (debate) can be initiated by both the vijigīṣu (one who seeks victory) and the tattva-nirṇayīṣu (one who wishes to determine the truth).⁹

However, the Nyāyikas recognize only tattvabubhūtsukathā as vāda; they do not, in any way, acknowledge the presence of a vijigīṣu (one seeking victory) in vāda (debate). Because in a discourse where a vijigīṣu (one seeking victory) is present, the determination of truth may not be possible. In short, the Jains endorse it as ‘vāda’ (debate), whereas the Nyāyikas recognize it as ‘kathā’ (discourse). Just as the Nyāyikas recognize two types of discourse – tattva-bubhūtsu-kathā and vijigīṣu-kathā – the Jain philosophers also accept two types of vāda (debate): in one type, the tattva-nirṇayīṣu (truth-seeker) participates, and in the other type, the vijigīṣu (one seeking victory) participates.

While describing the characteristics of vāda (debate), Maharshi Gautama said – “Pramāṇatarkasādhanōpālambhaḥ siddhāntābiruddhaḥ pañcābayābōpapannaḥ pakṣhyapratipakṣhaparigrahō vādaḥ”. 1/2/1. That is, in a vāda (debate), the disputant and opponent adopt mutually opposing positions on a subject (for example, ‘the self is eternal’ and ‘the self is non-eternal’), establish their own side using pramāṇa and tarka, and refute the opponent’s position. Moreover, the discourse follows sid’dhāntābirud’dhaḥ and pañcābayābōpapannaḥ (employs the five-membered syllogism), applying both the disputant’s and opponent’s statements. Such a discussion is called vāda (debate).

While explaining the term pakṣa-pratipakṣa-parigraha (acceptance of disputant and opponent), the commentator states that in the same subject (adhikaraṇa) or dharmī, the mutually opposing doctrines acknowledged by the disputant and opponent are called pakṣha and pratipakṣha.¹⁰ The Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara states that in the same subject (adhikaraṇa) and at the same time, two mutually opposing qualities or doctrines are called pakṣha and pratipakṣha (disputant and opponent).¹¹ While explaining, Acharya Jayanta Bhatta says – parigraha is the method or arrangement for approach and acceptance of positions. For example, if one person says ‘sound is eternal’ and another says ‘sound is non-eternal,’ the acceptance of these mutually opposing positions as disputant and opponent constitutes vāda (debate).¹² The commentators Bātsyāyana and Uddyotakara also state that a subject is fit for debate when there is general knowledge of the object, but doubt arises regarding its specific characteristics. If the specific property is also certain, then there is no

⁸ “Viruddhayodharmavyavacchedena svikṛtatadanyadharmavyavasthāpanārtha sādhanadūṣaṇabacanaṃ vādaḥ. 8|1” – Vadideva Suri, *Pramāṇanyāyatattvalokālāṃkāra* (with English Translation and Commentary), edited by Dr. Hari Satya Bhattacharya, Bombay, Jain Sāhitya Vikash Mandal, 1967, p. 616.

⁹ “Prārambhakaścaatra jijñīṣuḥ, tattvanirṇāniṣuśca.” – 8.2, Ibid., p. 620.

¹⁰ “Ekādhikaraṇasthau viruddhau dharmmau pakṣhapratipakṣhau pratyānikabhābāt, astyātmā nāstyātmēti” – Fanibhusan Tarkabagish, *Nyayadarshana* (Vol- I), with Gautama Sūtra and Vātsyāyana Bhāṣya, Kolkata, Paschimanga Rajya Pustak Parshad, 2018, p. 367.

¹¹ “Bastudharmābekādhikaraṇau biruddhābekakālābāṇabasitau bastudharmābiti” – Uddyotakara, *Nyāyabhāṣyavārtika*, edited by Anantalal Thakur, Delhi, Bhāratīya Dārśanik Anusandhān Pariśad, 1997, p. 138.

¹² “Pakṣhapratipakṣhau byākhyātau tayōḥ parigraho abhyupagamo niyamaḥ, eko bakti nityaḥ śabdaḥ aparastvanityaḥ śabdaḥ ityāhi – soyaṃ pakṣhapratipakṣhaparigrahō vādaḥ” – Jayantabhatta, *Nyāyamañjarī*, edited by Nyāya Vyākaraṇāchārya Suryanarayana Sharma, Varanasi, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pustakalaya, 1992, p. 250.

need for further debate in that case. Such a pair of object-properties, which is generally known but specifically doubtful, must be doubtful in the same subject (adhikaraṇa). Because if they belong to different subjects (adhikaraṇas), there is no need for their debate. Because both of those properties can be established through valid proofs (pramāṇa). For example, 'the self (atmā) is eternal' and 'the intellect (buddhi) is non-eternal.' Here, although eternal and non-eternal are mutually opposing properties, they belong to different subjects and can be established through valid proofs, so no self-contradiction is observed. Moreover, those specific properties must be mutually opposed. For only what is opposed requires debate; what is not opposed does not require debate. For example, the substance has qualities (dravyo guṇavān) and the substance has action (dravyo kriyāvān). Since these two properties of the substance are not mutually opposed, their presence in the substance can be established through valid proofs. Moreover, the mutually opposing properties must occur at the same time. Properties occurring at different times cannot be the subject of debate, because they can be established through proof. For example, a substance that is active at one time may be inactive at another time. Moreover, only that knowledge which is anabāsati (uncertain knowledge) requires debate. And knowledge that is already established does not require debate. Because once a determination (nirnaya) is made, there is no need for debate; therefore, after a determination, debate is unnecessary. All such mutually opposing properties with these characteristics constitute the pakṣha-pratipakṣha. It should be noted here that what is the disputant's pakṣha becomes the opponent's pratipakṣha, and what is the opponent's pakṣha becomes the disputant's pratipakṣha. For example, in the contradictory statement (vipratipatti-bākya) 'Is the self-eternal or not?' – 'the self is eternal' is the disputant's position pakṣha) and 'the self is non-eternal' is the disputant's counter-position (pratipakṣha); conversely, 'the self is non-eternal' is the opponent's position (pakṣha) and 'the self is eternal' is the opponent's counter-position (pratipakṣha).

Later, while explaining the meaning of the term 'parigraha', the commentator states – 'Parigrahōvyupagamabyabasthā' that is Parigraha is avyupagamabyabasthā, Acharya Jayanta Bhatta has expressed the same view. The meaning of 'avyupagama' is the method or arrangement of acceptance, Therefore, the substance is of this kind and not another – the arrangement of such acknowledgment is called avyupagama or parigraha. On this matter, Uddyotakara has said – "Tayōḥ parigrahō it' thambhābaniyamah, ēbam dharm'māyam dharm'mī naibam dharm'mēti" – That means this property (dharmin) possesses such a characteristic and not another; the acknowledgment of such a property of the dharmin constitutes the pakṣha-pratipakṣha parigraha (acceptance of disputant and opponent positions). When a vādin (disputant) asserts that the self-possesses the property of eternity and it cannot in any way possess non-eternity – thus acknowledging the vādin pakṣha (disputant's position) – and the opponent asserts exactly the opposite, that the self-possesses non-eternity and in no way eternity – thus acknowledging the prativādin pakṣha (opponent's position), then the acknowledgment of these mutually opposing positions regarding the self is called pakṣha-pratipakṣha-parigraha. It should be noted here that this pakṣha-pratipakṣha-parigraha is the very cause of the kathā (discussion) itself.

Here an objection is raised that if pakṣha-pratipakṣha-parigraha is considered as vāda (debate), then it would be liable to the defect of ativyāpti as found in jalpa and vitandā. Because in jalpa and vitandā, such pakṣha-pratipakṣha are also present. In response, it is said: yes, that is true; since pakṣha-pratipakṣha-parigraha is merely a property of the kathā,

it is only a universal characteristic of the kathā. But there is a special feature of vāda: in vāda, the establishment of a position is through ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’, whereas in jalpa and vitaṇḍā, the establishment of a position is through chhala and others (chhalādi). Therefore, a kathā (discussion) in which one establishes one’s own position and refutes the opponent’s solely through pramāṇa (valid proofs) and tarka (reasoning) is called vāda. Whereas a kathā (discussion) in which one establishes one’s own position and refutes the opponent’s using chhala, jāti, and nigrasthāna (occasion of defeat) is called jalpa. Similarly, a kathā in which the first party establishes its position using chhala, jāti and nigrasthāna but the second party does not establish its position, is called vitaṇḍā. It should be noted that vāda is ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’. Here, the term ‘sādhanā’ means establishment, and ‘upālambha’ means refutation.¹³ Therefore, ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’ means the establishment of one’s own position through pramāṇa (valid proofs) and tarka (reasoning), and the refutation or objection of the opponent’s position also through pramāṇa (valid proofs) and tarka (reasoning). And for this reason, the commentator Bātsyāyana has said in the Vāda Sūtra Bhashya (commentary of vāda sūtra) – “Tasya biśeṣaṇam, pramāṇatarkasādhanopālambhaḥ pramāṇatarkasādhanam pramāṇatarkopālambha” That is, the characteristic is ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’, which means the establishment of one’s own position through pramāṇa (valid proofs) and tarka (reasoning), and the refutation of the opponent’s position also through pramāṇa (valid proofs) and tarka (reasoning).

The question arises: how does the term ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’ distinguish vāda from jalpa and vitaṇḍā? Or is it the case that, like ‘pakṣha-pratipakṣha-parigraha’, it is equally present in all three types of kathā? In response, it is said: no, it is not the same. Establishment and refutation through pramāṇa (valid proofs) and tarka (reasoning) constitute vāda, whereas establishment and refutation through chhala, jāti and nigrasthāna jalpa and vitaṇḍā. The Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara has tried to explain this matter by giving an example, He said, for example, that although a cow (go) and a boselaphus tragocamelus (gavaya) share all other characteristics, they are distinguished from each other by the presence or absence of a dewlap (galakamvala). The one with a dewlap is a cow, and the one without it is a boselaphus tragocamelus (gavaya). Similarly, ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’ distinguishes vāda from jalpa and vitaṇḍā.

Here, Acharya Jayanta Bhatta of the *Nyāyamañjarī* raises a possible objection and refutes it. The objection he raises is as follows: if pratyakṣha (perception) is para-pratīti-anupāyatvāt, then it cannot serve as a means for the opponent, because pratyakṣha (perception) is only the means for one’s own perception. That is, the pratyakṣha (perception) of the pot by person ‘A’ will be the cause of A’s own knowledge of the pot. It can never be the cause of person B’s knowledge of the pot. Then how can it (pratipakṣha) establish one’s own position and refute the opponent’s position in vāda? Farther, it is not possible to establish (sādhanā) one’s own pakṣha through tarka, because tarka is non-valid (apramā), and Maharshi Gautama does not accept establishment (sādhanā) through non-valid (apramā) means. Therefore, if it is not possible to establish one’s own position through tarka,

¹³ “Sādhanam sthāpanā, upālambhaḥ pratiśēdhaḥ” – Fanibhusan Tarkabagish, *Nyayadarshana* (Vol-I), with Gautama Sūtra and Vātsyāyana Bhāṣya, Kolkata, Paschimbanga Rajya Pustak Parshad, 2018, p. 367.

it is likewise impossible to refute the opponent's position through tarka. Then, how can tarka serve as the means for establishing one's own position and refuting the opponent's position in vāda? In response, he says: this is true, but the term 'pramāṇa' does not refer only to perception (pratyakṣa); it also includes inference (anumāna-pramāṇa) and its essential components (avyaya). Here it is said that through the five members (pañcāvya) of a syllogism, establishment and refutation can be achieved. Although tarka by itself is non-valid (apramā), that is, incapable of directly establishing one's own position or refuting the opponent, it serves as a helper (anugrahaka) to the pramāṇa. Therefore, it can sequentially (paramparā) establish one's own position and refute the opponent's position.¹⁴ "In the Tarka Sūtra Bhashya, the commentator Bātsyāyana said – "Pramāṇavyanujñānāt pramāṇasahito bādeapadiṣṭa iti" That is, tarka removes doubt and directs the pramāṇa to examine its own subject; therefore, tarka is mentioned in the subsequent characteristic of vāda. The Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara has also expressed agreement on this matter. He says that non-valid (apramā) tarka is not itself the cause of establishment and refutation; rather, it serves to consider the subject of the valid means (pramāṇa). Tarka thus acts as a helper (anugrahaka) to the pramāṇa.¹⁵ Regarding tarka, it can be said that when a question about the truth of a substance arises, doubt arises concerning the mutually opposing properties of that substance. Then, the doubter later gives 'anujñā' – that is, acceptance or authorization based on valid inference (upapatti-prayukta) – to one of the opposing properties of the subject of doubt. Such knowledge in the form of this anujñā is what is called tarka.¹⁶

Here, another objection is raised: what is the nature of the establishment (sādhana) and refutation (upālambha) mentioned in the sūtra? If it is understood as bhāvasādhya (as denoting the act/result), then its meaning would be establishment (siddhi) and refutation (upālambha). And if it is taken in the sense of 'bhāvabācya' (as denoting the act/result), then one's own position can be established or achieved (siddhi) through pramāṇa and tarka, but the opponent's refutation (upālambha) cannot be accomplished, because they are non-counteracting with respect to the other's position (paramata-apratipādakatva). That is, pramāṇa and tarka cannot establish the opponent's position, because the viewpoint of the other cannot be an object of our perception. Because if the opponent's view were to become an object of our perception, then it would be established as real; because according to Nyāya, that which is unreal (asat) cannot be perceived. Consequently, its refutation (upālambha) would never be possible, because how can something that has already been established be refuted? Therefore, we cannot say that the opponent's position becomes an object of our perception. And since the opponent's position is not an object of our perception, it cannot be refuted (upālambha) through pramāṇa and tarka. Therefore, sādhana (establishment) and upālambha (refutation) cannot be understood in the sense of 'bhāvabācya' (as denoting the

¹⁴ Jayantabhatta, Nyāyamañjarī, edited by Nyāya Vyākaraṇāchārya Suryanarayana Sharma, Varanasi, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pustakalaya, 1992, p. 150.

¹⁵ "Brūmaṇ siddhy-upālabdhyoḥ kāraṇam, api tu pramāṇaviṣayābivecanāt tarkaḥ pramāṇānyanugrṇāti." - Uddyotakara, Nyāyabhāṣyavārtika, edited by Anantalal Thakur, Delhi, Bhāratīya Dārśanik Anusandhān Pariṣad, 1997, p. 139.

¹⁶ "Abijñāyamānatattvearthe jijñāsā avajjāyate jāniya imamiti. Atha jijñāsitasya vastuno vyāhatam dharmo vibhāgena bimarśati kiṃsvidityebamāhosvinnāivamiti." - Fanibhusan Tarkabagish, Nyayadarshana (Vol- I), with Gautama Sūtra and Vātsyāyana Bhāṣya, Kolkata, Paschimbanga Rajya Pustak Parshad, 2018, p. 345.

act/result). Again, if they are taken in the instrumental sense (karaṇabācyā), then the meanings of the pañcāvayava would already be included within the terms sādhana and upālambha. Hence, there would be no need for the separate mention of 'pañcāvayavopapanna' in the sūtra. Therefore, the terms sādhana (establishment) and upālambha (refutation) cannot be understood either in the sense of bhāvabācyā or karaṇabācyā. Hence, the question arises: in what sense, then, should these two terms be understood?

In response, it is said that the terms sādhana (establishment) and upālambha (refutation) can be understood in both senses – bhāvabācyā (as denoting the act/result) and karaṇabācyā (as denoting the means). Even if these two terms are understood in the karaṇabācyā and thereby include the five members pañcāvayava, still the mention of 'pañcāvayavopapanna' in the sūtra does not become redundant. Because the term 'pañcāvayavopapanna' has been added for another reason, which will be explained later. And if it is taken in the sense of bhāvabācyā, then the doubt arises that pramāṇa and tarka cannot refute the opponent's position, since they are non-establishing with respect to another's view (paramata-apratipādaka). According to the Vārtikakāra, this is true – i.e., the opponent's standpoint cannot become an object of our perception. Therefore, the Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara says – "Na vrumaḥ pratipakṣhabīṣaya upālambha iti, kiṃ tu sādhanabīṣayaḥ" That is, the refutation mentioned here is not of the opponent's subject itself, but of the means used to establish the opponent's position. And since that sādhana is within our scope of cognition, no objection arises here.

Here again an objection is raised: when the term upālambha is used in the presence of the opponent, how can it denote the means of establishing (sādhana) the opponent's position rather than the opponent itself? In response, the Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara says that this is determined by capability (sāmarthya) and incapability (asāmarthya). That is, only that which is fit for refutation should be refuted; the opponent's position itself is not fit for direct refutation.¹⁷ Because whether there is refutation (upālambha) or non-refutation, the nature of the opponent's position itself is not affected. But by the same reasoning, the nature of the sādhana also cannot be affected. Therefore, the idea of refuting the opponent's sādhana does not appear to be logically justified.

Therefore, in this way, no refutation would be possible at all – neither of the effect nor of the cause. Because each of them has the capacity with respect to its own domain; that is, every effect and cause is supported by its own respective object. And where there is incapacity (asāmarthya) with respect to that object, there neither the effect nor the cause exists. Now the question arises – then whose refutation (upālambha) will take place there? In response, the Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara says – 'yo'yaṃ nigṛhyate', that is, the one who is to be defeated (nigṛhīta) is the one whose refutation (upālambha) takes place. Now the question is: who is to be defeated (nigṛhīta)? In response, it is said that it is the person (puruṣa) who is defeated. Non-comprehension (apratipatti) and vipratipatti belong to the person, not to the cause or the effect. The properties of that person are revealed through their own statements, and it is precisely those person-specific properties – brought to light by

¹⁷ "Yadupālambhyayogaṃ tadupālambhyate, na ca pratipakṣa upālambhyayogyaḥ." – Uddyotakara, Nyāyabhāṣyavārtika, edited by Anantalal Thakur, Delhi, Bhāratīya Dārśanik Anusandhān Pariṣad, 1997, p. 140.

their statements – that become the object of refutation (upālambha). Here, another question is raised: how do we derive this meaning from the sūtra? In reply, the Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara says that the expression ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’ means the establishment (sādhana) through pramāṇa and tarka, and the refutation (upālambha) of that very establishment through pramāṇa and tarka. Because ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’ actually stands for ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanaśca pramāṇa-tarka-sādhana-upālambhaśca’. Here, one occurrence of the word sādhana is omitted. For example, the word uṣṭramukhī is derived from the expression ‘uṣṭrasya mukhamiva mukham yasyāḥ sā’ (she/he whose face is like the face of a camel). Here, one occurrence of the word mukha (face) is elided.¹⁸

Regarding this qualifier ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’, the author of the Nyāyasiddhāntamālā has addressed another possible doubt. He says that the expression pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ denotes not only establishment and refutation through valid means (pramāṇa) and reasoning (tarka), but also establishment and refutation through fallacious means (pramāṇābhāsa) and fallacious reasoning (tarkābhāsa). According to him, since the primary aim of vāda is the determination of truth (tattva-nirṇaya), fallacious means such as pramāṇābhāsa and tarkābhāsa cannot be deliberately employed there. However, in jalpa and vitaṇḍā, where mere victory is the objective, their use is permissible. If, during vāda, a disciple unknowingly employs pramāṇābhāsa or tarkābhāsa, then the teacher will point out that such fallacious reasoning has been used. Similarly, if the teacher commits such an error, the disciple will also point it out.

Earlier, an objection was raised that the use of the term ‘pañcāvayavopapanna’ in the vāda-sūtra is redundant or unnecessary. Here, that objection is being refuted, and the necessity of the term ‘pañcāvayavopapanna’ is being explained.

From the definition that jalpa is the establishment and refutation through chhalādi (chhala, jāti and nigrasthāna), it may appear that vāda, being the opposite of jalpa, excludes such devices – i.e., that in vāda, the use of nigrasthāna is prohibited. The Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara says that from the definition ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’ as vāda, it is understood that even in vāda there is the presence of nigrasthāna. Because wherever the term upālambha or its synonyms are heard, there is the presence of nigrasthāna. But if this is accepted, then no distinction would remain between jalpa and vāda. In response, it is said: no, they are not the same, because in vāda not all nigrasthānas are admitted. Now an objection is raised: if that is so, then vāda would become a kind of jalpa. That is, vāda would be a particular type of jalpa in which only some nigrasthānas are mentioned, whereas jalpa would be the general type in which all nigrasthānas are admitted. In response, it is said: no, they cannot be the same. Because jalpa is a discourse motivated by the desire to win (vijigīṣu-kathā), whereas vāda is a discourse devoid of such a desire to win. Therefore, vāda can never be jalpa.

By the two terms ‘pañcāvayavopapanna’ and ‘siddhāntāviruddha’, it is indicated which nigrasthānas (points of defeat) are to be identified in vāda. Some hold that by the term ‘pañcāvayavopapanna’, the nigrasthānas called deficiency (nyūna) and excess (adhika)

¹⁸ “Pramāṇatarkasādhanaḥ pakṣhaḥ, pramāṇaus tarkeṇa ca sādhanasyaupālambhaḥ. Pramāṇatarkasādhanaśca pramāṇatarkasādhanaopālambhaśca pramāṇatarkasādhanaopālambhaḥ. Ekasya sādhanashabdasya gamyamānārthatvāt lopaḥ, yathoṣṭramukhī kanyeti.” – Ibid p. 140.

are to be indicated in vāda. That is, if the vādin or the prativādin, while supporting their own position, fails to mention any one of the pañcāvayava, then the nigrasthāna called deficiency (nyūna) arises. And if they mention more than the required avayava, or introduce unnecessary additional reasons (hetu) and examples (udāharaṇa), then the nigrasthāna called excess (adhika) arises. The commentator has also explained it in this way. While explaining the necessity of the term 'siddhāntāviruddha' mentioned by maharṣi Gautama in the definition of vāda, the commentator has referred to the definition of the fallacy of contradictory (viruddha hetvābhāsa). Therefore, even in vāda, it is necessary to identify the viruddha hetvābhāsa. Is it only the viruddha hetvābhāsa? In response, some scholars explain the commentator's statement by saying that, by mentioning the definition of viruddha hetvābhāsa, he actually intended to indicate that the nigrasthāna called hetvābhāsa is to be identified in vāda. Later, while explaining the definition of viruddha hetvābhāsa, the Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara hetvābhāsa.says, all types of hetvābhāsa are included under viruddha hetvābhāsa. At this point, Acharya Jayantabhatta says, - "... Bhāṣyakāra bacanātpramāṇapadena ca tanmūlāvaṣṭakṣepātpramāṇābhāsamūlanirāsē sati sakalahetvābhāso dbhāvanamapi tatra siddhamiti" That is, according to Acharya Jayanta Bhatta, from the statement of the commentator, and from the primary implication (mukhyārtha) we derive, it becomes clear that by the term 'siddhāntāviruddha' one should understand all types of hetvābhāsa-this is established. Therefore, in order to indicate that even in vāda there is a need to identify the nigrasthāna called hetvābhāsa, Maharshi Gautama has included the term 'siddhāntāviruddha' in the vāda-sūtra. That is, during a vāda between teacher and disciple, if there is any hetvābhāsa in the disciple's reasoning, the teacher will point it out and correct it. Likewise, if the teacher, by mistake, employs any fallacy, it is the duty of the disciple to bring that fallacy to the teacher's attention.

However, the Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara gives a different explanation. According to him, by the term 'pañcāvayavopapanna', not only the nigrasthānas called deficiency (nyūna) and excess (adhika) are implied, but also the fallacies of the avayava (avayavābhāsa) are included. He said - "pañcāvayavopapanna iti pañcagrahaṇāt nyunādhike labhyatē. Avayavagrahaṇāt tadābhāsā labhyanta iti". That is, by the inclusion of the term 'pañca' (five) in 'pañcāvayavopapanna', the nigrasthānas called nyūna and adhika are implied. And by the inclusion of the term 'avayava', the avayavābhāsa are implied. And since avayavābhāsa is included, its root, namely hetvābhāsa, is also included. Because if an asat hetu is employed, it will constitute not only a hetvābhāsa but also an avayavābhāsa.

If the above explanation of the Vārtikakāra Uddyotakara is accepted, then the question arises: what is the necessity of the term 'siddhāntāviruddha'? Does its inclusion become redundant? In response, the Vārtikakāra says - "Nānarthakam, apasiddhāntabirodhārthatvāt." That is, the term 'siddhāntāviruddha' in the definition of vāda is not redundant; it is used for the purpose of preventing apasiddhānta (self-contradictory conclusion). Therefore, in vāda, an apasiddhānta cannot be accepted. If it is accepted, it constitutes a nigrasthāna called apasiddhānta, and if anyone errs in this respect, it must be pointed out. On this matter, the Vārtikakāra has cited the sūtra concerning the apasiddhānta nigrasthāna.

Some, in support of the commentator, have stated that the commentator himself admits that even in vāda there is a need for the nigrasthāna called apasiddhānta. Therefore, while explaining the necessity of the term 'siddhāntāviruddha', he mentions the phrase 'kasya-

cid-avyanujñānārthaṃ' in his commentary. Furthermore, often vāda proceeds without explicit use of the pañcāvayava, yet even there, the need to point out the hetvābhāsa exists. For this, the commentator explains that the primary meaning of the term 'siddhāntāviruddha' is to indicate the necessity of the nigrāsthāna called hetvābhāsa. Here, a question may arise: if vāda can occur without the use of the pañcāvayava, then how can the definition or characteristic of vāda be indicated by it? It should be noted here that the two terms pañcāvayavopapanna and siddhāntāviruddha are not essential conditions or qualifiers of vāda; rather, they are sufficient conditions. Therefore, vāda can take place even without them. Here, an objection is raised: if vāda can occur without these two terms, then there is no need to include them in the definition of vāda. In response, it is said that if these two terms are not mentioned in the definition, then the definition would be defective due to incompleteness (avyāpti). That is, Maharshi Gautama has included these two terms in the vāda-sūtra in order to indicate that wherever these nigrāsthānas are present, they also fall within the scope of vāda.

Here, another objection is raised: when the term 'pañcāvayavopapanna' is included in the definition of vāda, it implies that in vāda, establishment (sādhanā) and refutation (upālambha) occur through pramāṇa and tarka. Because when we apply the pañcāvayava to the thesis and related statements, we must also accept the underlying pramāṇa. Because the pañcāvayava are always used for establishing something. And when we are proving, it goes without saying that the tarka, which is necessarily employed to support the pramāṇa, must also be accepted. Therefore, it is clear that vāda is never possible solely by the pañcāvayava without pramāṇa and tarka. This gives rise to the question: why then does Maharshi Gautama explicitly mention pramāṇa and tarka separately? We also cannot say that the reason is to prohibit excess in jalpa and vitaṇḍā, because the statements by which one's own position is established and the opponent's is refuted through chhalādi belong to jalpa, and those by which one's own position is established and the opponent's refuted through pramāṇa and tarka belong to vāda. According to Nyāya, this is not correct. The commentator states that there are many instances where jalpa occurs through pramāṇa and tarka. Therefore, even in the definition of jalpa, the expression pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ is necessary. Thus, in the context of jalpa, the term 'yathāktopapanna' cited in its definition encompasses the term pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ as used in the definition of vāda. Consequently, the concern of excess in the definition of jalpa cannot be used to explain the necessity of the term 'pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ' as mentioned by Maharshi Gautama in the definition of vāda.

In response to the above point, the commentator Baṭṭsayana has explained the threefold necessity of the term 'pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ' as applied in the definition of vāda—

According to the commentator, merely establishing one's own position through the pañcāvayava does not constitute vāda. For vāda to occur, along with the establishment of one's own position, refutation of the opponent's position is also necessary. However, by the term pañcāvayavopapanna alone, the need for refutation of the opponent cannot be conveyed. Therefore, to indicate both the establishment of one's own position and the refutation of the opponent, as well as the vyatiśaṅga- Samvandha between them, Maharshi Gautama has employed the term 'pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ'. In this context, the commentator's statement is— "avaḃaveṣu pramāṇatarkāntarbhābe

prthakapramāṇatarkagraṇam sādhanopālambhavyatiṣaṅgajñāpanārtham” – That is, even though pramāṇa and tarka are implied in the avayava, and thus are obtained through the term pañcāvayavopapanna, they are mentioned separately to indicate the vyatiṣaṅga-Samvandha between sādhana and upālambha. What is the vyatiṣaṅga? It is the reciprocal relation between the two parties: just as the disputant establishes their own position and refutes the opponent through pramāṇa and tarka, similarly the opponent also establishes their own position and refutes the disputant through pramāṇa and tarka. If it were otherwise – that is, if the disputant and opponent each only establish their own position through the pañcāvayava without refuting the other’s position – then it would not constitute a valid vāda. And the vyatiṣaṅga relation between sādhana and upālambha cannot be explained by the term pañcāvayavopapanna alone; it can only be indicated by the separate mention of pramāṇa and tarka.

The commentator, mentioning another necessity, says: ‘tenāpi kalpena sādhanopālambhō vāde bhavata iti jñāpayati’, that is, the term ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’ is included in the vāda-sūtra to indicate that it constitutes yet another type of vāda. On this matter, the tatparyotikākāra Bācaspati Miśra also says: ‘vādaḥ pañcāvayavopapanna ityekaḥ kalpaḥ, pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ iti dvitīya ityārthaḥ’, meaning that in vāda there are two alternatives, or that vāda occurs in two ways. The two alternatives of vāda are, respectively, pañcāvayavopapanna and pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ. Therefore, Maharshi Gautama has mentioned the term ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’ in the definition of vāda to explain that valid debate for the determination of truth can occur even without the application of the pañcāvayava.

As a third necessity, the commentator says that because jalpa explicitly mentions chhalādi, many might think that the statements in which one’s own position is established and the opponent’s refuted through chala, jāti, and nigrāsthāna belong to jalpa, and those in which one’s own position is established and the opponent’s refuted through pramāṇa and tarka belong to vāda. However, according to Nyāya, this is not correct. The commentator states that there are many instances where jalpa occurs solely through pramāṇa and tarka. Therefore, in the definition of vāda, the term ‘pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopālambhaḥ’ is mentioned. This is because, in the definition of jalpa, the term yathāktopapanna includes this qualifier of vāda within the scope of jalpa as well. It should be noted here that when one’s own position is established and the opponent’s refuted through pramāṇa and tarka without any desire for victory, it is called vāda. On the other hand, if a person establishes their own position and refutes the opponent through pramāṇa and tarka with the desire for victory (vijigīṣu), even if chala, jāti, and nigrāsthāna are absent, it is considered jalpa.

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A Study on Social Adjustment among Secondary School Students

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Abstract

The present study is intended to examine the social adjustment among secondary school students in Kokrajhar district of Assam. Adjustment is the process by which a living organism maintains a balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs. It is used to emphasize individual learns certain ways of behaviour to cope with the situation which he/she attains through harmony with his/her social environment.

The Main purpose of this study was to find out the social adjustment of secondary school students. Descriptive survey method has been used in this study. The study was conducted on a sample of 200 students studying 11th class in secondary school of Kokrajhar district, and sample has been selected using random sampling method. For data collection, the investigator used standardized questionnaire consists of 28 items. The collected data was analysed by using Mean, SD and t-test values. The major findings of the study revealed that the majority of sample possessed moderate level of social adjustment. This is also revealed that there is no significant difference between Bodo and English Medium, ST and General Category, Male and Female, Urban and Rural Secondary School Student.

Keywords: Social Adjustment and Secondary School Students

Introduction:

Human being is social animal, and therefore adjustment with other members in society and self-adjustment with various situation of life are some of the most fundamental characteristics of human psychological and behavioural process. Adjustment starts right after the birth and ended with dead. In this connection, various psychologists of the world have opinion that adjustment is a continuous process of adopting oneself to changes, challenges and stresses in life to achieve emotional stability, social compatibility and mental well-being.

Meaning of adjustment:

Adjustment is a fundamental psychological and behavioural process through which individual strive to maintain a harmonious relationship with their internal needs and the external demands of the environment. In this connection, **Burning (1948)** define "adjustment is the process by which a living organism maintains a balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs." **Bhatia (1965)** also defined

“adjustment as an all-inclusive term meaning relationship between an individual and his environment through which his needs are satisfied in accordance with social demands.”

Adjustment is exclusively an individual process. Hence, works or situation for one person may not be effective or suitable for another due to differences in various aspects of life such as personality, past experience, values, social context etc. Adjustment is a vital and ongoing process that reflects an individual's ability to align themselves with life's demands and transitions. **Bhatnagar (1968)** defined “adjustment refers to harmonious relationship between the individuals and environment whereas social integration enhances efficiency, co-ordination, co-operation and communication.”

It is used to emphasis individual learns certain ways of behaviour to cope with the situation which he/she attains through harmony with his/her social environment. It can also be termed as a process of direction of one's own effort towards modification of behaviour and attitudes, which helps an individual to cope with changes of environment and outlook. This promotes happiness and efficiency of the person in an environment, and make realise as well in regard to acceptance and performance of multiple responsibilities and duties for self and towards another fellow being.

Characteristics of well-adjusted person:

Healthy and well-adjusted person normally possess some behavioural patterns, which are in accordance with the social expectations of an individual. The characteristics of adjustment and well-adjusted persons are:

1. **Flexibility and adaptability:** The healthy and well-adjusted persons can change and modify their approach when necessary. They change their emotions, thoughts and behaviour according to the needs and changing situations.
2. **Emotional stability and resilience:** Ups and down in human life is a common and accordingly we have to take the decision. Emotional stability and resilience refer as one's ability to manage the emotions effectively and rebound from the setbacks. Well-adjusted person can maintain and survive in any situation, and move forward with positive outlook.
3. **Problem solving skill:** This is an ability of an individual that helps to identify, analyse and find out a right path to solve the problems. These skills are utmost important in persons' life, whether it may be in personal and professional for resolving the problems through right decision.
4. **Self-awareness and acceptance:** Well-adjusted persons become able to know themselves including their right, wrong, weakness, strength and emotions. In every moment of life, they can monitor their own thoughts and behaviour, and can create ability of acceptance.
5. **Maintain balance life:** The term balance in life describes a state of harmony and balance in career, relationship, health and hobbies among other areas of their life. Well-adjusted person strives for a balance life between professional works, personal and family life, social works and other commitments, if any.
6. **Maintain healthy relationship in society:** Healthy relationship in society are defined by mutual support, open communication, respect and trust. Positive connections, a sense of belonging and shared belief serve as their cornerstone. These characteristics reflect in the behaviour of well-adjusted person, which maintain a healthy relationship ins society.

7. **Realistic perception of the world:** Realistic perception is influenced by personal experiences, biases and cognitive processes. It is not a perfect reflection of objective reality but rather the result of subjective construction shaped by internal and external factors. Well-adjusted person accepts the world has a certain way of working and always accept it. Realist person is one who believes that the world is not perfect and there will be obstacles along the way.
8. **Satisfaction in various domains of life:** Satisfaction in various domains of life defined as satisfaction of an individual with different aspects of life due to good health, happy family, enough income, good social relationship, leisure time, good working environment, beautiful houses, good education etc. A well-adjusted person only can enjoy and experience the satisfaction across various domains of life.

Types of adjustment:

The main types of adjustment are: -

1. **Social Adjustment:** Social adjustment means how an individual being a member of human society can be ascertained by one's social development and adaptability to the social environment. Social adjustment requires the development of social qualities and virtues so that an individual can realise self-responsibilities and obligation towards other member in society.
2. **Emotional Adjustment:** Emotional adjustment means the process of accepting and adapting of new situations or changes by an individual, and trying to cope with changing situation of one's emotions and behaviours in response to the circumstances.
3. **Educational adjustment:** Educational adjustment means accepting and adapting of the demands and expectations of new environment of an educational Institutions. The educational environment of an Institution may vary from one to another due to various factors such as Curriculums, infrastructure, administrators, teachers, fellow student friend etc. In such situation, if a student make himself or herself enable to learn properly can be termed as educational adjustment.

Social adjustment:

Social adjustment is all the actions or efforts made by an individual to conform to the norms of the society, the measures one takes forward so that he or she can become an acceptable member of that community. It can also refer to an individual's adaptation in social relationships with other people, both inside and outside the school, as reflected in the individual's attitudes and behaviour. Social adjustment can also be defined as finding a balance between one's own needs and needs of the social group, and enable to function effectively within that group.

Social adjustment refers to the process of adopting to social environments, interacting with others and developing relationships. It also refers to an individual's ability for effective interaction and a social situation, which includes relationships with peers, family and the members of community in broader sense. The factors that influence social adjustment of an individual are- family, peers, school environment and individual factors such as personality traits, emotional well-being and academic achievement. The successful social adjustment is crucial for adolescents in general and students in particular since it impacts on their overall well-being, academic performance and future success.

Adjustment problem is very common among adolescents. Due to physical, mental and emotional changes, they suffered from various types of adjustment problems. Some time

they behave like child and some time they behave like adult, adventurous, freedom etc. Such type of situations creates adjustment problems among each-other. Maintaining a balance between self and environment might be a challenge for them. Hence, there is high need know to guide and emotional support to them. Therefore, it is necessary to know, what kind of adjustment problems face adolescents in their educational and social environment, and how we can help them to make a better balance between the students and their self's.

There are various studies to know social adjustment of adolescence students. **Leelavathi** in her study on '*stress and socio-economic status*' found that it is significantly associated with all areas of adjustment. **Sharma and Nanda (1997)** found that adolescents belonging to middle SES suffered more frustration leading to higher aggression as compared to low SES adolescents. **Sonawat and Jain (1994)** studied on '*education and occupation of parents*' and study revealed that adolescents of educated parents were better adjusted while occupation of mother had negative impact. As per as Caste is concerned, **Thirugnasambadhan (1990)** revealed a significant difference among the caste where forward caste students were found better adjusted. **Joymala Paramanik, Birbal Saha and Bhim Chandra Mondal (2014)** studied the adjustment ability among secondary school students in relation to gender and residence. The study revealed that there is no significant difference between adjustments of students residing either at urban or rural area. A study on school adjustment as a function of neuroticism and gender of the adolescents was conducted by **Bhardwaj and Helode (2006)**. The result reported no significant gender influence on school adjustment. The results also revealed that emotionally stable adolescents were better in school adjustment.

Needs and Importance of Study:

The secondary stage of education is regarded as a crucial period for children. At this stage, children tend to need the advice of their parents in decision making and participate in various socially acceptable activities. Therefore, adjustment plays a significant role in the performance of secondary school students. It holds a significant place in the physical and intellectual development of the children, and influences a lot in their academic achievement. Sometimes some of the students take decision of their own instead of taking advice from parents. In such situation, decisions may not align with one's capabilities and could hinder in academic performance and achievement. This stage is a stage of uncertainty, necessitating that every student seeks guidance from their parents. Keeping in view the transformations that students undergo during the pre-adolescence stage, it was realised to know about the importance of the problem of social adjustment among secondary school students.

There are various factors that are significant in relation to the social adjustment of secondary school students. Some of those factors are socio-economic status i.e. life style of an individual. This may be significantly associated with all areas of adjustment. Education and occupation of the parents can also be one of the factors. Because, it affects the adjustment and behaviour of adolescent. Caste also may be one of the factors for adjustment since the status of one caste is differ from another caste. The place dwelling of an individual as urban, semi urban or rural area can also be one of the prime factors in adjustment pattern. Gender is also one of the crucial factors since the genetic make-up, time and rate of maturity differs between boys and girls especially during adolescents. In Indian society norms and perception are different for boys and girls. The relationship of individual with family, the immediate environment may influence adjustment of adolescents. Considering all those

various factors and perspective, there is need and importance of study on social adjustment problems among secondary school students.

Objective of the Study:

The objectives of present study are:

1. To study the social adjustment level of secondary school students.
2. To compare the social adjustment between Bodo and English medium secondary school students.
3. To compare the social adjustment between ST and General category secondary school students.
4. To compare the social adjustment between Male and Female secondary school students.
5. To compare the social adjustment between Urban and Rural Secondary school students.

Methodology of the study:

The investigator used Descriptive Survey Method in this study. The sample consisting of 200 students (100 students from Bodo Medium and 100 from English Medium Secondary School) from various secondary schools of Kokrajhar district, who have been selected using random sampling method. The tool consists of 28 items out of the social adjustment questionnaire for secondary school student by G. Nageswar Reddy.

Analysis and interpretation of the study:

Objective - 1: To study the social adjustment level of secondary school students.

Table - 1

Showing Mean and SD Value of Social Adjustment of Secondary School Students

Variable	Number	Mean	SD
Social adjustment	200	90.005	1.238

Table - 2

Showing the social adjustment level of secondary school students

Sl. No.	Classification of score	Level of Social adjustment	Number	Percentage
1	91 and above	High	27	13.5%
2	88 to 91	Moderate	146	73%
3	Less than 88	Low	27	13.5%

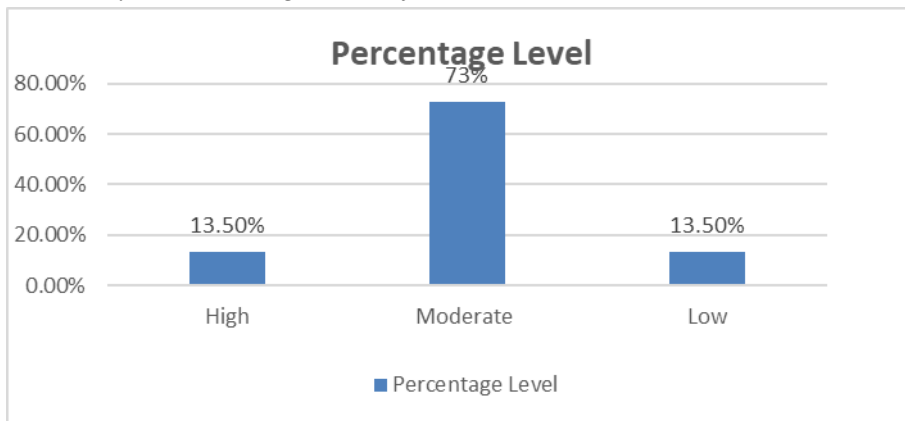


Figure - 1

Figure showing the social adjustment level of secondary school student

The above table shows that the social adjustment level of secondary school students. This can be stated in terms of percentage i.e. 13.50% high, 73% moderate and 13.50% low.

Objective- 2: To compare the social adjustment between Bodo medium and English medium secondary school students.

Hypothesis- 2: There are no significance differences of social adjustment between Bodo medium and English medium secondary school students. Table - 1 shows Mean score, SD and t-test of social adjustment of Bodo medium and English medium secondary school students.

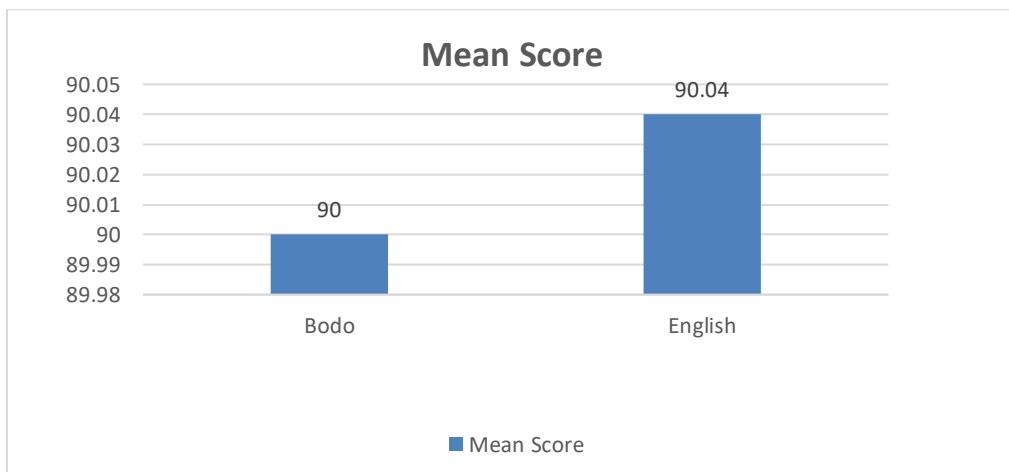
Table - 3

Showing the Mean, SD and t value of Bodo and English Medium Secondary School Students in relation to Social Adjustment

Social adjustment	Medium	Number	Mean	SD	t-test	Not significant
	Bodo	79	90	1.2587	0.180	
English	123	90.04	1.2535			

Figure - 2

Figure showing the graphical representation of Mean Score on Social Adjustment of Bodo and English Medium Secondary School Students



The Mean and SD score on social adjustment of Bodo Medium secondary school students are M=90 and SD=1.25. In case of English medium secondary school students M=90.04 and SD=1.25. The t-value testing the significance of mean difference between Bodo and English medium secondary school students on social adjustment is 0.180, which is lower than table value. This reflects that there is no significant difference between the Bodo and English medium secondary school students on social adjustment. Therefore, the hypothesis on social adjustment in relation to medium is accepted.

Objective- 3: To compare the social adjustment between ST and General category secondary school students.

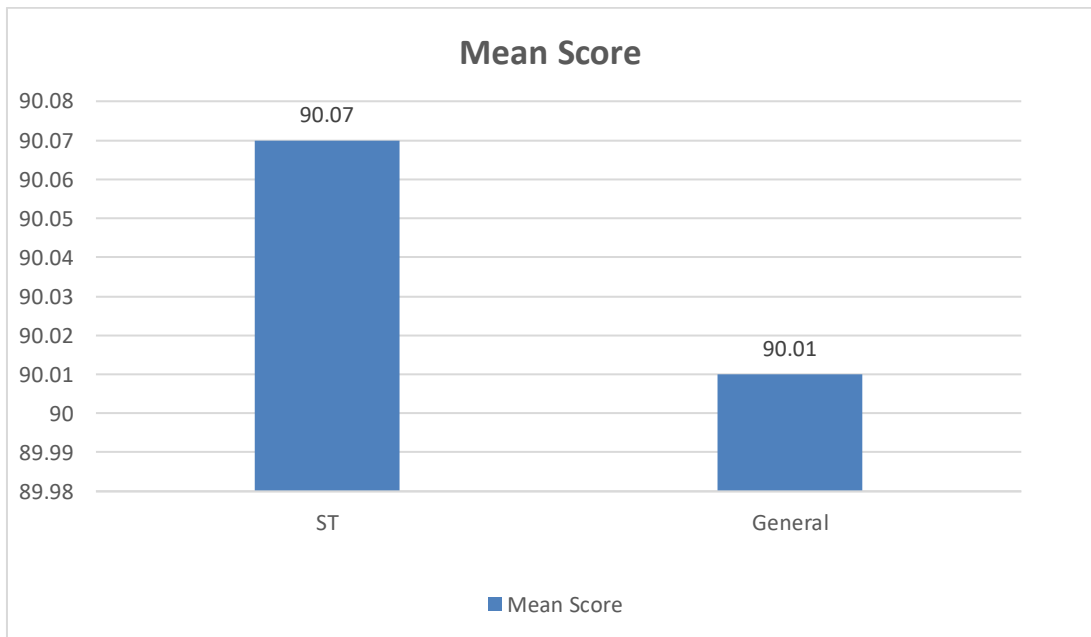
Hypothesis- 3: There are no significant differences of social adjustment between ST and General category secondary school students.

Table - 4
Showing the Mean, SD and t value of ST and General Secondary School Students in relation to Social Adjustment

Social adjustment	Category	Number	Mean	SD	t-test	Not significant
	ST	136	90.07	1.2627	0.1850	
	General	64	90.01	1.2017		

Figure - 3

Figure showing the graphical representation of Mean Score on Social Adjustment of ST and General Secondary School Students



The Mean and SD score on social adjustment of ST secondary school students are M=90.07 and SD=1.26. In case of General secondary school students M=90.01 and SD=1.20. The t-value testing the significance of mean difference between ST and General secondary school students on social adjustment is 0.185, which is lower than table value. This reflects that there is no significant difference between the ST and General secondary school students on social

adjustment. Therefore, the hypothesis on social adjustment in relation to category is accepted.

Objective- 4: To compare the social adjustment between Male and Female secondary school students.

Hypothesis- 4: There is no significant differences of social adjustment of Male and Female secondary school students.

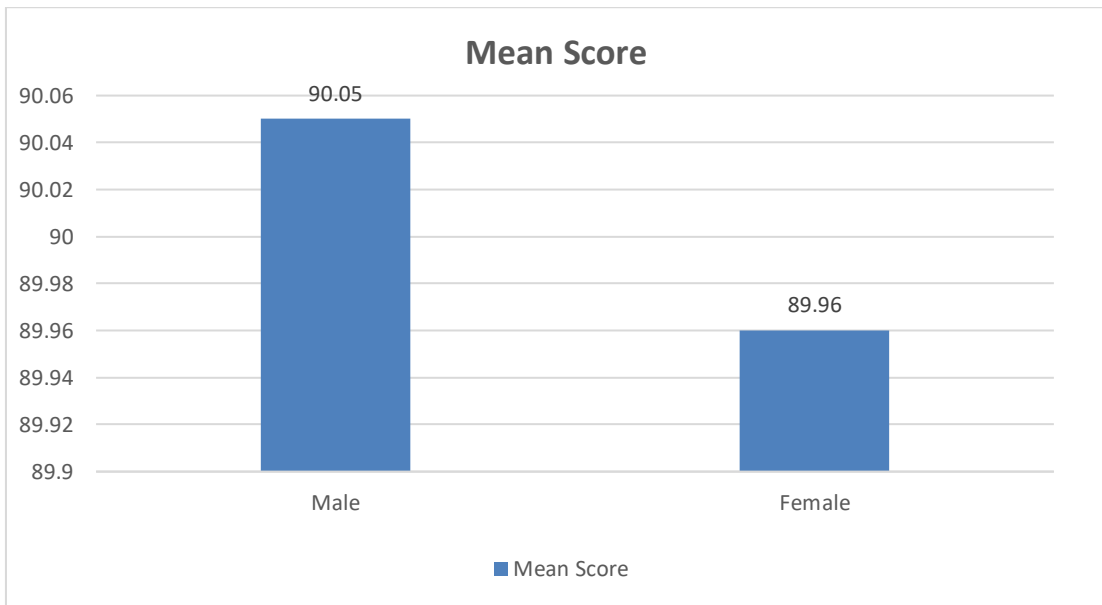
Table - 5

Showing the Mean, SD and t value of Male and Female Secondary School Students in relation to Social Adjustment

Social adjustment	Gender	Number	Mean	SD	t-test	Not significant
	Male	100	90.05	1.2421		
	Female	100	89.96	1.2465		

Figure - 4

Figure showing the graphical representation of Mean Score on Social Adjustment of Male and Female Secondary School Students



The Mean and SD score on social adjustment of Male secondary school students are M=90.05 and SD=1.24. In case of Female secondary school students M=89.96 and SD=1.24. The t-value testing the significance of mean difference between Male and Female secondary school students on social adjustment is 0.176, which is lower than table value. This reflects that there is no significant difference between the Male and Female secondary school students on social adjustment Therefore, the hypothesis on social adjustment in relation to gender is accepted.

Objective- 5: To compare the social adjustment between Urban and Rural Secondary school students.

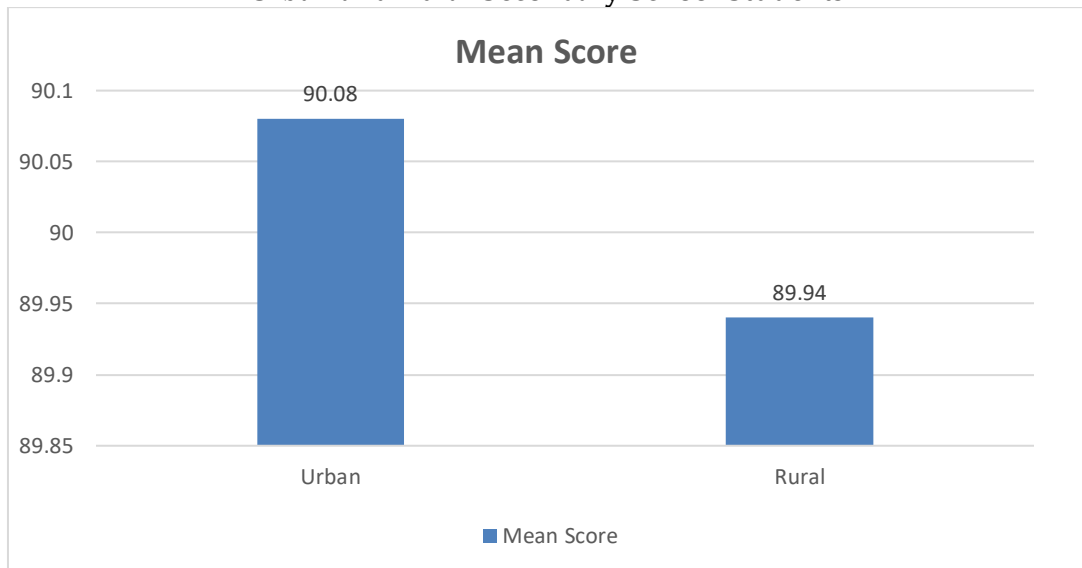
Hypothesis- 5: There is no significant differences of social adjustment of Urban and Rural Secondary school students.

Table - 6
Showing the Mean, SD and t value of Urban and Rural Secondary School Students in relation to Social Adjustment

Social adjustment	Area	Number	Mean	SD	t-test	Not significant
	Urban	90	90.08	1.2077		
Rural	110	89.94	1.2549			

Figure - 5

Figure showing the graphical representation of Mean Score on Social Adjustment of Urban and Rural Secondary School Students



The Mean and SD score on social adjustment of Urban secondary school students are $M=90.08$ and $SD=1.20$. In case of Rural secondary school students $M=89.94$ and $SD=1.25$. The t-value testing the significance of mean difference between Urban and Rural secondary school students on social adjustment is 0.174, which is lower than table value. This reflects that there is no significant difference between the urban and rural secondary school students on social adjustment. Therefore, the hypothesis on social adjustment in relation to area is accepted.

Findings of the Study:

1. The finding of the study revealed that the social adjustment level of secondary school students in Kokrajhar district of Assam mostly have moderate level.
2. The study revealed that there is no significant difference between Bodo and English medium secondary school students.
3. The study revealed that there is no significant difference between ST and General category secondary school students.
4. The study revealed that there is no significant difference between Male and Female secondary school students.
5. The study revealed that there is no significant difference between Urban and Rural secondary school students.

Conclusion:

The analysis and interpretation of data have been observed from the above Table - 2 that the very social adjustment level of secondary school students is 12.50% high i.e. 27 in numbers, 73% is moderate i.e. 124 in numbers and 12.50% is low i.e. again 27 in numbers. As per as comparison is concerned as stated in Table - 3, 4, 5 & 6, the study revealed no significant differences between Bodo and English medium, ST and General category, Male and Female, and Urban and Rural Secondary School Students.

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Dik, Kāla, Ākāśa: A Critical Appraisal of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Doctrinal Lineage with reference to Padārtha-tattva-nirupaṇam of Raghunātha

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Abstract

The objects with which this world is comprised of, are described as 'padārthas' in Vaiśeṣika ontology. The Vaiśeṣika thinkers spoke of seven-fold classification of those possible padārthas namely, 'Dravya', 'Guṇa', 'Karma', 'Sāmānya', 'Viśeṣa', 'Samavāya' and 'Abhāva'. *Dravya* again is subdivided into nine types viz. 'Kṣiti', 'Ap', 'Teja', 'Marut', 'Vyom', 'Dik', 'Kāla', 'Ātmā' and 'Manā'. This classification of categories has been strongly advocated in classical Vaiśeṣika tradition. This tradition however is not maintained by some modern scholars. It is Raghunātha in particular, who deviated from the tradition by enumerating a new list of categories. He is not also in agreement with the realistic account of *dik*, *kāla* and *ākāśa* that the ancient thinkers are seen to adopt. This paper is a humble attempt to judge the veracity of Raghunātha's claim in this regard.

Keywords: Raghunātha, Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa, *ākāśa*, space (*dik*), time (*kāla*)

Philosophical tradition cannot develop naturally unless there is intellectual independence grounded in both loyalty to inherited foundational doctrines established by experience and tested by reason, and creative freedom of thought. In particular cases, the methods that are adopted for the systematic progress of rational inquiry are those subject-matters of the tradition which are designated as "*vidyā*" (knowledge), "*śāstra*" (systematic teaching), or "*tantra*" (doctrinal framework). That intellect which is nourished by experience, guided by reasoning, beneficial in purpose, and oriented toward creative activity is called "*prajñā*" (wisdom). When wisdom follows scripture and scripture follows wisdom, then the tradition embodies a vigorous form of knowledge and is set in motion toward a victorious journey directed toward ever-expanding horizons.

Within the Indian ideological tradition, accords a position of particular prominence to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophical framework. At the very outset of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika philosophy, however, the extensive discussion of means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), objects of knowledge (*prameya*), and categories of reality (*padārtha*) has occasionally given rise to doubt. Some critics even remark, with a tone of lament, that both systems, while promising liberation (*mokṣa*) as their ultimate goal, begin instead with a detailed exposition of categories— much like a person who, desiring to behold the ocean, sets out toward the

mountains. Nevertheless, in both systems, the knowledge of *padārtha* or *tattva* is regarded as the essential means to attaining the highest good (*nīḥśreyasa*). Consequently, the doctrine of categories occupies an equally indispensable place in both philosophical traditions. Although Nyāya accords primacy to *pramāṇa*, and Vaiśeṣika assigns primacy to *dravya* (substance), within the joint Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika tradition the conception of *padārtha* is ultimately derived from the Vaiśeṣika framework. It is upon this doctrine of categories (*padārthatattva*) that Raghunātha Śiromaṇi composed his treatise entitled *Padārthatattvanirūpaṇam*. We shall now proceed to examine the concepts of *padārtha* and *tattva*.

In Vaiśeṣika system, *tattva* (reality) itself is designated as *padārtha*. In explicating the meaning of *padārtha*, Praśastapāda identifies existence (*astitva*), knowability (*jñeyatva*), and namability (*abhidheyatva*) as the marks of being *padārtha*. Kandalīkāra further clarifies that the intrinsic nature of a thing constitutes its existence; *abhidheyatva* denotes its capacity to be expressed in language, while *jñeyatva* signifies its capacity to be known. In other words, Vaiśeṣika philosophy maintains that whatever possesses existence is, in principle, knowable, and whatever can be expressed through speech or words qualifies as a *padārtha*. This also implies that entities lying entirely beyond the scope of human experience are not admitted within the Vaiśeṣika framework. At the very least, the system refuses to recognize as *padārtha* anything that cannot become an object either of knowledge or of linguistic expression.

The Vaiśeṣika conception of *tattva* (reality) is effectively clarified through the very term for it, namely *padārtha*. In Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the word *padārtha* is used to denote *tattva*, and its implicit meaning is that which can be expressed by a *pada* (word). In this context, the decisive factor is not so much the mere existence of an object as its cognition or apprehension. This traditional standpoint is further reinforced in *Saptapadārthī*, which defines *padārtha* as a '*pramitivoiṣaya*',¹ that is, "an object of valid cognition." In the Vaiśeṣika tradition, six or seven types of *padārthas* are acknowledged: substance (*dravya*), quality (*guṇa*), action (*karma*), universal (*sāmānya*), particularity (*viśeṣa*), and inherence (*samavāya*) as the original six, with absence (*abhāva*) later added as a seventh category. A survey of this classification makes it evident that, although substance and quality may be described as objectively real (*vastusat*), all the remaining categories are essentially modes of the manifestation of objects. Consequently, the Vaiśeṣika philosophers do not primarily intend to affirm objective reality as such in their notion of *padārtha*; rather, what is meant by *padārtha* is the cognition or apprehension of objects. These cognitions, moreover, are capable of being expressed through linguistic formulations. Thus, the Vaiśeṣika classification of *padārtha* may be understood, in effect, as a systematic taxonomy of cognitions.

Raghunātha Śiromaṇi's treatise entitled *Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa* is founded precisely upon the doctrine of *padārtha*. In this work, Ācārya Raghunātha not only traces the development of Vaiśeṣika doctrines within the broader Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika tradition, but also brings together, from multiple perspectives, the various objections that had been raised against those doctrines. Among these objections, some are merely indicated in a suggestive manner, while others are articulated explicitly and in systematic form. The objections that

¹ Śivāditya, *Saptapadārthī*, kārikā-2.

Raghunātha presents with particular clarity include those concerning doubt (*saṃśaya*), recognition (*pratyabhijñā*), the causal status of perception (*pratyakṣa-kāraṇatā*), the problem of verbal cognition (*śābdabodha*), the number of categories (*padārtha-saṃkhyā*), and pervasive applicability (*vyāpyavṛttitā*). In addition, certain objections relating to specific qualities (*guṇa*) had already been clearly formulated by earlier Naiyāyikas such as Bhāsarvajña – for example, the denial of the independent existence of *viśeṣa* (particularity), and the rejection of *paratva* (priority/posteriority) and *prthaktoa* (separateness) as additional distinct qualities.

Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa is a composite work situated within the Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika tradition. Nevertheless, the notion of *padārtha* articulated in this text must be understood strictly in accordance with the Vaiśeṣika conception. This, however, does not imply an uncritical or equal acceptance of the authoritative positions of both the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika schools. In this treatise, *padārthas* are not presented according to the conventional classificatory scheme of the tradition. Rather, attention is directed specifically to those categories in which conceptual inconsistencies had emerged within the inherited framework. The work thus undertakes a critical examination of precisely those *padārthas* that had become philosophically problematic in the course of the tradition's development. Not but what an independent and critical mode of inquiry within the Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika lineage had already begun with Udayana, Raghunātha Śīromaṇi occupies a distinctive and decisive position in the further evolution of this tradition.

Although *Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa* is composed with reference to the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of categories, the work does not begin with an explicit exposition or formal definition of *padārtha*. It may therefore be reasonably assumed that Raghunātha Śīromaṇi tacitly accepts the traditional characterization of *padārtha* as that which possesses existence, knowability, and verbal expressibility as its necessary conditions. This inference is supported by the fact that he neither explicitly states these defining characteristics nor subjects them to critical refutation. Yet, even while refraining from rejecting these traditional criteria, Raghunātha goes beyond the inherited framework by admitting a greater number of *padārthas* than those recognized in the classical Vaiśeṣika system. Thus, his position preserves the formal structure of the traditional definition of *padārtha* while simultaneously extending its scope through a critical re-evaluation of the received classification.

If we now turn to *Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa*, we observe that Raghunātha Śīromaṇi begins the work, in accordance with established convention, with an auspicious benedictory invocation (*maṅgalācaraṇa*). He opens with the verse:

Om namaḥ sarva-bhūtāni viṣṭabhya paritiṣṭhate |
akhaṇḍānanda-bodhāya pūrṇāya paramātmane | |

Raghunātha Śīromaṇi employs this verse beginning with “*Om namaḥ*” in order to ensure the unobstructed completion of his treatise. The term *viṣṭabhya* is interpreted as denoting a special kind of sustaining relation, that is, a relation which prevents disintegration or collapse and thereby supports all beings. By *bhūta* (elements) are meant earth, water, fire, air, and ether (*ākāśa*); however, since *ākāśa* is all-pervasive and therefore cannot be sustained by such a relation, the term *bhūta* is here to be understood as referring specifically to the four material elements beginning with earth. The expression *akhaṇḍānandabodhāya* employs the qualifier *akhaṇḍa* (“undivided” or “eternal”) as an attribute of both cognition (*bodha*) and bliss (*ānanda*). Its import is thus to signify the

Supreme Self as possessing an eternal nature characterized by both perpetual consciousness and perpetual bliss. The term *pūrṇāya* is to be understood in the sense of “ever-complete” or “perpetually fulfilled.” The word *paramātmāne* derives from *ātman* in the sense of the substratum of knowledge; the qualifying adjective *parama* (“supreme”) is employed to indicate the excellence or transcendence of this cognitive principle. Accordingly, the overall meaning of the benedictory verse may be rendered as follows: “Salutations to the Supreme Self, who sustains all beings, who is of the nature of eternal bliss and eternal consciousness, and who is ever complete and fulfilled”².

He then proceeds with the declaration: “*Atha padārthatattoam nirūpyate*”³ (“Now the doctrine of categories is to be examined”). After determining the semantic powers of negative particles such as *nañ* in terms of absence of relation (*saṃsargābhāva*) and mutual absence (*anyonyābhāva*), Raghunātha Śiromaṇi, in the course of his discussion, turns to the categories acknowledged by the ancient Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools. Among these, he identifies certain entities as belonging to the class of well-established categories, while others he subjects to refutation, demonstrating through rational argument that they are either untenable or redundant in relation to the already accepted categories. In order to secure the attentive engagement of students, it had been customary since antiquity for authors to begin their treatises with a formal statement of intention (*pratijñā-vākya*). In conformity with this traditional practice, Raghunātha likewise employs such a promissory declaration through the use of introductory particles such as *atha*.

Thus, in *Padārthatattovanirūpaṇa*, the author situates his inquiry within the inherited scholastic convention while simultaneously preparing the ground for a critical re-evaluation of the received doctrine of categories. In this treatise, Raghunātha Śiromaṇi does not present the categories in the conventional systematic order inherited from the tradition. Rather, he undertakes an examination specifically of those categories with respect to which he himself entertains philosophical doubt. In Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the primary and fundamental category is *draṅya*. Among the nine substances traditionally accepted, Raghunātha raises no objection to earth (*kṣiti*), water (*ap*), fire (*tejas*), and air (*marut*). His position, however, diverges from that of earlier authorities with regard to *ākāśa*, space (*dik*), time (*kāla*), self (*ātman*), and mind (*manas*). Accordingly, at the very outset he states:

“*Dikkālau na īśvarādatiricyete mānābhāvāt |*
tattovanimittaviśeṣasamavadhānavaśāt īśvarāt eva tattat kārya viśeṣāṇāmupapatteḥ |
pareṣām ekaikasmāt digādeḥ iva vilakṣaṇānām prācyādīvyavahārāṇām |”⁴

That is to say, space and time are not entities distinct from God, because there is no valid means of knowledge (*māna*) supporting such a distinction (*mānābhāvāt*). Furthermore, the specific effects for whose explanation space and time were posited as independent causes can equally be accounted for by taking God alone as the causal ground. Hence, for the sake

² Raghunātha Śiromaṇi, 1946, *Padārthatattovanirūpaṇam*, ed. Shri Madhusudan Bhattacharya, Kalkata, Kalkata Sanskrit Mahavidyala, page-2.

³ Raghunātha Śiromaṇi, *Padārthatattovanirūpaṇam*, kārikā-1.

⁴ Raghunātha Śiromaṇi, 1946, *Padārthatattovanirūpaṇam*, ed. Shri Madhusudan Bhattacharya, Kalkata, Kalkata Sanskrit Mahavidyala, page-3.

of explaining particular effects, there is no necessity to admit space and time as additional and independent categories.

On this basis, Raghunātha maintains that the postulation of *dik* and *kāla* as separate *padārthas* is philosophically redundant, since their explanatory function can be subsumed under a single causal principle. This critical stance exemplifies his distinctive contribution to the Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika tradition, as articulated in *Padārthatattoanirūpaṇa*.

According to the traditional order of classification in Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the sixth substance (*dravya*) is time (*kāla*). Unless the existence of time is first established, it cannot be subsumed under the class of other well-recognized categories. The existence of time is, however, evidenced by our ordinary linguistic and cognitive practices involving expressions such as “past,” “present,” “future,” “now,” and “then.” If time were not the object of cognition such as “now” (*idānīm*) and “then” (*tadānīm*), human beings would not employ statements of the form “now there is a pot” or “then there was a pot.” Yet such expressions are universally used. Accordingly, the very fact that cognitions of the type “now” and “then” arise, and that corresponding linguistic usages occur, serves to establish the existence of time. Thus, time is inferred and confirmed through temporal awareness itself, grounded in common experience and linguistic practice.

In determining the nature of time, the author of *Bhāṣāpariccheda* explicitly states, “*Janyānām janakaḥ kālo jagatāmāśrayo mataḥ,*”⁵ meaning that time is regarded as the producer of all originated entities, the efficient cause of all effects, and the substratum of the world. Time is further characterized as one, all-pervasive, and eternal. However, the mere assertion that time is the substratum of the world is insufficient to establish its ontological status; it must also be demonstrated in what manner time functions as such a substratum. In the cognition expressed as “*idānīm ghaṭaḥ*” (“the pot exists now”), the term ‘now’ denotes phenomena such as the motion or vibration of the sun and the moon. These motions constitute the limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*) of time. Since time itself has no sensible form, it is not an object of direct perception; rather, it is apprehended through such adjuncts as the motion of the sun, which serve as indicators of time. Consequently, in cognition such as “*idānīm ghaṭaḥ,*” the action in the form of the sun’s motion appears as the locus (*adhikaraṇa*) of produced objects like the pot, that is, as the objective basis upon which temporal cognition of such entities depends. Now, no relation such as conjunction (*saṃyoga*) can exist directly between the sun’s vibratory motion and entities such as a pot, because conjunction between the sun’s motion and material objects like the pot is not possible. Nor can the relation be described as inherence (*samavāya*), for although the sun’s vibratory motion inheres in the sun through the relation of *samavāya*, it cannot inhere in the pot as well. Therefore, in order to account for the relation between the sun’s vibratory motion and objects such as the pot, it is necessary to postulate a single all-pervasive substance that is related both to the sun and to the pot. Consequently, the relation that must be admitted between the distant sun’s vibratory motion and the pot is that of “conjunction with the conjunction of its own substratum” (*svāśraya-saṃyogi-saṃyoga*)⁶—that is, more specifically, “conjunction with the conjunction of the sun as its own

⁵ Viśvanātha, *Bhāṣāparicchedaḥ*, kārikā- 44.

⁶ Śri Pancānana Bhattācārya, 2016, *Muktāvalī Saṃgraha*, on *Nyāya Siddhānta Muktāvalī* by Viśvanātha, ed. Śri Pancānana Bhattācārya, kalkata, Mahabodhi book agency, page- 197.

substratum” (*svāśraya-tapana-samyogi-samyoga*). Alternatively, this relation may be described as “conjunction with what is conjoined to its own substratum” (*svāśraya-samyukta-samyoga*). Here, the term “*svāśraya*” (one’s own substratum) refers to the sun’s vibratory motion itself. Accordingly, the sun’s own vibratory motion has the sun (*Tapana*) as its substratum. Since the all-pervasive time is conjoined with that sun, time becomes the entity that is conjoined with the substratum of the motion (*svāśraya-samyogī*). Furthermore, because conjunction with time exists in all corporeal substances such as the pot, the sun’s vibratory motion is related to such objects through a mediated relation of the form “conjunction with the conjunction of its own substratum” (*svāśraya-samyogī-samyoga*). It is precisely because this mediated relation obtains that, in a cognition such as “*idānīm ghaṭaḥ*” (“the pot exists now”), the pot appears as the substantive (*viśeṣya*), while the sun’s vibratory motion appears as the qualifier or mode (*viśeṣaṇa* or *prakāra*). Thus, it becomes evident that there is no direct relation between the sun’s vibratory motion and objects such as the pot. Rather, it is time as a distinct ontological category that effects the relation between the sun’s motion and material objects. If time were not the substratum of all entities (that is, of the world), it could not serve as the mediator establishing the relation between the sun’s motion and all things. Because time is all-pervasive, it stands in the relation of conjunction with both the solar orb and with objects such as the pot. As a result, the relation between the sun’s vibratory motion and such objects is accomplished. In this way, the all-pervasive substance that is postulated as the *svāśraya-samyogī* within the chain of mediated relations expressed as *svāśraya-samyogī-samyoga* is precisely time. As Viśvanātha states: “Time alone is postulated as that which establishes this relation.”⁷

Now, although the reality of time has been established, it is still necessary to establish the reality of space as a distinct ontological category. *Dik* is the seventh category in the accepted ontological scheme. The author of *Bhāṣāpariccheda* states: “*Dūrāntikādi-dhī-hetur ekā nityā dig ucyate*,”⁸ that is, that single and eternal entity which is the cause of cognitions of distance and proximity is called ‘space’. In other words, *dik* is the unique instrumental cause of such cognitions as “near,” “far,” “north,” and “south.” The properties of remoteness (*paratva*) and proximity (*aparatva*)—which are unproduced by the sun’s motion yet produced by conjunction with material bodies—depend upon a certain conjunction as their non-inherent cause (*asamavāyi-kāraṇa*). The locus of this conjunction is space. Thus, it is space that serves as the substratum of that conjunction which functions as the non-inherent cause of the attributes of distance and nearness.

Since remoteness (*paratva*) and proximity (*aparatva*) in material objects are positive entities and effects (*bhāva-kārya*), they require the acceptance of three kinds of causes: inherent (*samavāyī*), non-inherent (*asamavāyī*), and efficient (*nimitta*) causes. A material object located at a farther place possesses spatial remoteness in relation to a material object situated nearer; likewise, a material object located nearer possesses spatial proximity in relation to a material object situated farther away. The substance in which remoteness and proximity inhere serves as their inherent cause. However, that substance does not possess any quality capable of functioning, in this context, as the non-inherent cause of these attributes. Moreover, neither conjunction with the self (*ātma-samyoga*) nor conjunction with

⁷ “*Kāla eva tat-sambandha-ghaṭakaḥ kalpyate*” - Viśvanātha, *Nyaya Siddhanta Muktaivali*, karika-45.

⁸ Viśvanātha, *Bhāṣāparicchedaḥ*, karika-46.

ākāśa-samyoga can be regarded as the non-inherent cause of remoteness and proximity, because neither the self nor *ākāśa* can be the locus of a conjunction that functions as the non-inherent cause of attributes belonging to other substances. Conjunction with time cannot function as the cause in the present context, for conjunction with time serves only as the non-inherent cause of temporal remoteness and proximity, not of spatial remoteness and proximity.

Therefore, the non-inherent cause of the remoteness and proximity under discussion must be a conjunction with some other all-pervasive substance. This follows from the principle that a distinct conjunction cannot arise without two distinct substances. Accordingly, in the case of a material object in which remoteness and proximity are present, it is the conjunction between that material object and space (*dik*) that possesses non-inherent causal efficacy for remoteness and proximity, whereas no other conjunction does so. Hence, the conjunction between *dik* and a corporeal object is established as the non-inherent cause of remoteness and proximity. Thus, that all-pervasive substance whose conjunction, inhering in the inherent cause of remoteness and proximity, produces these attributes – that is, the substance which serves as the locus of the conjunction functioning as the non-inherent cause of spatial remoteness and proximity in material objects – is precisely space.

Although *dik* is indivisible and unitary, it can nevertheless be denoted by terms such as “east,” “west,” “north,” and “south,” which express mutually opposed meanings. However, pure space in itself is never denoted by words that convey mutually contradictory senses; it is only in its conditioned or qualified state (*upādhi-bheda*) that it becomes expressible by terms signifying opposite space. For example, suppose several persons are seated facing one another around a round table. If one then asks, “In which direction is the table situated?”, one person will say, “The table is to my east,” another will say, “It is to my west,” another “to the north,” and yet another “to the south.” With reference to the same table, fixed in the same place at the same time, the employment of four mutually opposed spatial terms gives rise to the question: Is the table really situated in all four directions? The answer is no. The table exists only in space as such; it is merely through differences of adjuncts – namely, the relative positions of the observers that it becomes the object of such designations as east, west, north, and south. In reality, space is one and indivisible.

Both space and time are eternal, all-pervasive, unitary, and function as instrumental causes with respect to all effects. Nevertheless, actions such as the origination, persistence, and destruction of effects appear to indicate a plurality of times, while usages such as “the object is located to the north” or “the object is located to the south” likewise appear to indicate a plurality of spaces. Now, since material objects are innumerable, if time and space were to be regarded as distinct for each object in virtue of their conjunction with them, time and space would also have to be admitted as innumerable. Such an assumption, however, would result in an unacceptable theoretical prolixity (*mahāgurava*). Therefore, time and space must each be accepted as one only. In reality, although time and space are each single and indivisible, a plurality of times and spaces becomes the object of ordinary usage solely due to differences in limiting adjuncts – such as moments and hours in the case of time, and north and south in the case of space. The apparent multiplicity of time

and space thus arises not from their intrinsic nature but from conceptual and relational qualifications imposed upon them.

According to the Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika system, *ākāśa* (ether) is not an object of direct perception, since it possesses no colour or form; and substances devoid of colour cannot be apprehended by visual perception. A difficulty may then be raised: what is the cause of cognitions such as “the sky is blue” (*nīlaṃ nabhaḥ*) or “there is a bird here” (*iha pakṣī*)? In such cognitions, in reality, it is not ether that appears as the object, but rather light in the form of the sun’s rays, which functions as the locus of perception. Ether itself does not become the object of perception; only the illuminated region does. Therefore, according to the Nyāya view, ether is not perceptible, but is instead inferable as the substratum of sound. That is, *ākāśa* is known through inference, on the basis of its function as the support of auditory qualities, rather than through direct sensory cognition.

Since *ākāśa*, *kāla*, and *dik* are each single and unique substances, they do not possess a generic property (*jāti*) in the ordinary sense; that is, they are not denoted by a class-character such as *ākāśatva*. The term *ākāśatva*, when employed, signifies the property of being the substratum of sound or the inherent cause of sound (*śabdāśrayatva* or *śabda-samavāyi-kāraṇatva*). In this connection, the author of *Bhāṣāpariccheda* states: “Sound alone is to be known as the specific quality of *ākāśa*.”⁹ The term *vaiśeṣiko* in this verse carries a particular doctrinal significance. It is employed in order to emphasize that sound is the only specific quality of *ākāśa*, and that other specific qualities such as colour, taste, smell, and touch are altogether absent in ether. Thus, *ākāśa* is distinguished from other substances precisely by the exclusive presence of sound as its unique attribute.

If, in the above definition, the term “sound-quality” (*śabda-guṇa*) had not been used and only the word “sound” (*śabda*) had been employed—so that ether was defined merely as “that which is the substratum of sound”—the definition would have been over-extended (*ativyāpti*) to include space and time as well. This is because sound is related to *ākāśa* through spatial relations and to time through temporal relations, and thus may be said to be dependent upon them in those respective senses. For this reason, ether is not defined simply by reference to sound, but specifically by reference to sound as a quality. The meaning of this is that *ākāśa* is that entity which is the substratum of the quality called sound, or, more precisely, that in which sound inheres as an inherent cause (*samavāyi-kāraṇa*). In this way, *ākāśa* is distinguished from time and space, and the definition avoids the defect of excessive extension.

Although the existence of space and time has thus been established, it still remains to be examined whether they should be regarded as independent substances. In *Padārthatattovanirūpaṇa*, Raghunātha Śīromaṇi states at the very outset: “*Dik-kālau na īśvarādatiricyete mānābhāvāt*,” that is, space and time are not entities distinct from God, because there is no valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) establishing their independent existence. If, therefore, space and time are not distinct substances, the question arises: under which category of reality are they to be subsumed? According to Raghunātha’s view, space and time are nothing over and above the nature of God; they do not constitute separate ontological entities. Although earlier philosophers accepted them as independent substances, there is, in this matter, no authoritative or favorable proof supporting such an

⁹ “*Ākāśasya tu vijñeyaḥ śabdo vaiśeṣiko guṇaḥ*” — Viśvanātha, *Bhāṣāparicchedaḥ*, karika-46.

assumption. In order to clarify this issue, Raghudeva in his writing *Padārthakhaṇḍana-vyākhyā* explains that Raghunātha Śiromaṇi does not accept space and time as independent substances. A doubt may then arise: what is the proof that space and time are not distinct entities?¹⁰

Since neither space nor time possesses a produced form, both are supersensible (*atīndriya*); consequently, their non-distinctness cannot be established by perceptual evidence. But it may be noted, however, that some Naiyāyikas and Mīmāṃsakas have regarded space as perceptible; thus, it is stated in *Nyāyamañjarī*: “space too is perceptible, being known through cognitions such as ‘east’ and ‘west’.”¹¹

Now, if one were to attempt to establish, by means of inference, the non-distinctness of time or space, one would necessarily have to frame an inference whose delimiting condition (*pakṣatāvachedaka*) is the property of timeness (*kālatva*) or spaceness (*diktva*). But if such an inference were admitted, then the properties of timeness and spaceness themselves would already be established as real. Once these properties are thus established as delimiting conditions of inference, any further inference aiming to prove the non-existence or non-distinctness of time and space would be undermined by mutual obstruction (*vyāghāta*), since the very basis of the inference would presuppose what it seeks to deny. The implication, therefore, is this: if the properties of timeness and spaceness are already admitted as established, their negation cannot subsequently be proved by inference. Hence, no valid inferential proof can be provided for the non-distinctness of time and space, and the attempt to deny their independent status by such reasoning leads to logical inconsistency.

In reply to this objection, it may be stated that the indivisible properties of *kālatva* and *diktva* do not function as the delimiting conditions of the proposed inference. In fact, in cognitions such as “the pot is in the eastern direction” and “the pot exists now”, the delimiting condition of objecthood (*viśayatāvachedaka*) is the property of all-pervasiveness (*vibhūtvā*). It is by foregrounding this property that space and time must be taken as the subject of inference and their status as non-distinct entities is to be established. (Here, by *vibhūtvā* is meant a substance distinct from corporeal substances. This clarification is necessary because Raghunātha Śiromaṇi does not admit *parama-mahat-parimāṇa* in substances.)

A further question may then be raised: if space and time are not independent substances, how are cognitions such as “the pot is in the eastern direction” and “the pot exists now” possible at all? Such cognitions appear explicable only by presupposing space and time as their objective bases. Moreover, if these cognitions are to be accounted for solely through God, how can the mutual distinctness of cognitions such as “the pot is in the eastern direction,” “the pot exists now,” and “the pot existed then” be maintained? In response, the author of *Padārthakhaṇḍana-vyākhyā* states: “*Tattad-upādhi-avicchinādi īśvarādeva tādrśa-pratītinām vailakṣaṇya-niroāhaḥ iti bhāvah.*”¹²

¹⁰ Śri Rāghudev Nyāyāṅkār, 2008, *Padārthakhaṇḍana-vyākhyā*, on *Padārthattvanirūpaṇam* by Raghunātha Śiromaṇi, ed. Dr. Anita Rajpal, Delhi, Amar Grantha Publication, page-4.

¹¹ Jayanta Bhatta, 1982, *Nyāyamañjarī* (with commentary of *Granthibhāṅga*), ed. Gourinath Sastri, Varanasi, Sumpurna Anand Sanskrit Vishwavidyalay press, page-200.

¹² Śri Rāghudev Nyāyāṅkār, 2008, *Padārthakhaṇḍana-vyākhyā*, on *Padārthattvanirūpaṇam* by Raghunātha Śiromaṇi, ed. Dr. Anita Rajpal, Delhi, Amar Grantha Publication, page-5.

The purport of this statement is as follows: just as the earlier philosophers explained cognitions such as “*idānīm ghaṭaḥ*” by means of a unitary and indivisible time conditioned by particular limiting adjuncts, and cognitions such as “*pūrvāsyām diśi ghaṭaḥ*” by means of a unitary and indivisible space conditioned by specific adjuncts, so too the distinctness of such cognitions can be explained through God as conditioned by particular limiting adjuncts. In this manner, the diversity of spatial and temporal cognitions is accounted for without positing space and time as independent substances, by attributing their functional role to God as qualified by different adjuncts.

By the same line of reasoning through which the Ācārya raised doubts concerning the independent substantiality of space and time, he also questioned the existence of *ākāśa* as a distinct substance. Expounding this position, Raghudeva, the author of *Padārthatattoakhaṇḍana*, states that for every positive effect (*bhāva-kārya*), an inherent cause (*samavāyi-kāraṇa*) is necessarily required.¹³ According to the Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika doctrine, if sound is regarded as a non-eternal quality, it must be a positive effect. The earlier philosophers, in order to account for the inherent cause of sound, therefore postulated, in addition to the eight material substances such as earth, a distinct, eternal, and all-pervasive substance called *ākāśa*.

It is precisely this position that Raghunātha Śīromaṇi challenges. He argues that just as every effect necessarily requires an inherent cause, so too it necessarily requires an efficient cause. If God is admitted as the efficient cause of all effects whatsoever, then He must also be the efficient cause of sound as a positive effect; there can be no reasonable objection to this conclusion. Consequently, that very God who is established as the efficient cause of sound can equally well be established as its inherent cause. Therefore, there is no necessity to posit an additional and distinct substance in the form of *ākāśa* solely for the purpose of serving as the inherent cause of sound. The acceptance of *ākāśa* as a separate ontological entity, motivated only by the requirement of explaining the inherence of sound, is thus rendered superfluous.

In response to the foregoing argument, one might object as follows: if the inherence-causality (*samavāyi-kāraṇatva*) of sound is attributed to God, then why should the same causal status not also be attributed to the individual self (*jīvātman*)? Both parties agree that God is the efficient cause of sound; therefore, by the same line of reasoning through which inherence-causality is accepted in God, it may equally be established – by both sides – as belonging to the individual self. Indeed, there is inferential evidence for this position as well, expressed in the syllogism: “*Śabdasta-janyaḥ tadadṛṣṭa-janyato vāt sukhādivat*”¹⁴ that is, sound is produced by the individual self, because it is generated by the unseen merit of that self, just as pleasure and pain are.

By means of such affirmative inference based on similarity of instances (*anvaya-dṛṣṭānta-mūlaka anumāna*), both the doctrine that sound is produced by the individual self and the doctrine that it is produced by God may be admitted without contradiction. Consequently, just as inherence-causality with respect to sound is hypothetically ascribed to God in the absence of a decisive refutation (*anabhīyupagama-vinigamanābhāva*), so too may inherence-

¹³ Ibid, page-8.

¹⁴ Raghunātha Śīromaṇi, 1946, *Padārthatattoanirūpaṇam*, ed. Shri Madhusudan Bhattacharya, Kalkata, Kalkata Sanskrit Mahavidyala, page-5.

causality with respect to sound be ascribed to the individual self. In this way, it becomes logically permissible to conceive the individual self, no less than God, as the inherent cause of sound, and the postulation of a distinct substance such as *ākāśa* for this purpose is thereby rendered unnecessary.

Moreover, if the inherence-causality of sound is admitted in God (Īśvara), that causal status must be grounded in the relation of identity (*tādātmya*). For *samavāyi-kāraṇatva* is defined as that causal status which is delimited by the relation of identity, as determined through effecthood delimited by the relation of inherence (*samavāya-sambandhāvacchinna-kāryatā-nirūpita-tādātmya-sambandhāvacchinna-kāraṇatva*)¹⁵. Consequently, if in God there is postulated a causal status delimited by the relation of identity together with inherence, then, by the very same reasoning, such causal status may also be established in the individual self in the absence of any decisive refutation. Thus, whatever form of identity-delimited causality and inherence is hypothetically admitted in God with respect to sound can, on identical logical grounds, be admitted in the individual self as well.

In reply to this objection, Raghunātha Śīromaṇi maintains that a valid inference cannot be constructed by taking sound as the subject (*pakṣa*), being produced by the individual self as the probandum (*sādhyā*), and unseen merit (*adr̥ṣṭa*) as the reason (*hetu*). This is because such an inference lacks any supporting hypothetical reasoning (*tarka*) capable of eliminating the possibility of deviation (*vyabhicāra*); consequently, the inference is not valid.

Moreover, if the individual self were admitted as the inherent cause of sound, then, just as pleasure and pain inhering in the self are objects of ordinary mental perception, sound too would necessarily be subject to mental perception in the same manner. Since the requisite perceptual contact (*sannikarṣa*) for mental perception would then obtain in the case of sound, it would follow that a cognition such as “I am the substratum of sound” should arise. Such a consequence, however, is unacceptable. Therefore, the individual self cannot be admitted as the inherent cause of sound. Hence, the attribution of inherence-causality with respect to sound to the individual self must be rejected.

A further question may be raised: if a substance called *ākāśa* distinct from the eight material substances is not admitted, then what is to be identified as the auditory organ? It is commonly accepted that the auditory organ is ether delimited by the cavity of the ear (*karṇa-vivara-avacchinna ākāśa*). Hence, it may be argued that in order to account for the auditory organ, one must necessarily posit an additional substance called space beyond the eight substances.

In response, the Ācārya argues as follows: if, according to the earlier view, *ākāśa* can become the auditory organ by being delimited by a particular adjunct, then why should God not become the auditory organ when delimited by a particular adjunct? Just as the Supreme Self, when conditioned by specific bodily forms, is designated as Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara, so too, when delimited by the specific adjunct in the form of the cavity of the ear, the Supreme Lord becomes known as the auditory organ. According to Raghunātha Śīromaṇi, the auditory organ need not be identified with a distinct substance called ether, but may instead be understood as God himself, conditioned by the limiting

¹⁵ Ibid, page-7.

adjunct constituted by the ear-cavity and this constitutes the new doctrine (navya-siddhānta).

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Social Movements in India and Role of Women Since 1947

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Abstract

The socio-political landscape of India has undergone significant transformation since independence in 1947, with gender dynamics playing a pivotal role in shaping both social and political reforms. Women in India have been integral to various social movements, advocating for gender equality, human rights, and justice. This abstract seeks to provide an overview of the evolution of women's roles in Indian social movements, highlighting key campaigns, their intersection with gender issues, and their contribution to social reform. Post-independence, women were central to nation-building, and their participation in movements reflected a continuous struggle against patriarchal structures. The early decades saw women's involvement in the political domain, with figures like Indira Gandhi rising to prominence. However, the grassroots mobilization of women began to gain momentum in the 1970s and 1980s, with movements such as the Chipko Movement (1973) and the anti-dowry movement (1980s) bringing rural and urban women to the forefront. These movements challenged traditional roles assigned to women and showcased their capacity to lead change, influencing both the environment and family systems. The feminist movement in India during the 1970s significantly shaped discourse around gender and social inequality. This period saw a re-evaluation of issues like domestic violence, dowry deaths, rape, and female infanticide, leading to the formulation of laws such as the Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), the Equal Remuneration Act (1976), and amendments to the criminal justice system for rape (1983). Women's organizations, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the All-India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), played a critical role in demanding economic, political, and social justice for women across different strata. The post-liberalization period (1990s onward) brought new challenges, with neoliberal policies intensifying the divide between urban and rural women. Globalization introduced new forms of labor for women, especially in the informal sector, leading to movements advocating labor rights, safe working conditions, and fair wages. Rural women, in particular, became key participants in movements against land displacement, deforestation, and water rights, as witnessed in the Narmada Bachao Andolan and Kudumbashree. In the 21st century, movements such as the anti-rape protests following the 2012 Delhi gang rape, #MeToo, and the Shaheen Bagh protests (2019–2020) have redefined the role of women in contemporary Indian society. These movements emphasize bodily autonomy, legal reform, and intersectionality, linking

gender issues with caste, religion, and class struggles. The protests also saw an unprecedented solidarity across generations, social classes, and communities, highlighting women as powerful agents of socio-political change. In conclusion, the role of women in Indian social movements since 1947 reflects a complex interplay of traditional gender roles, political activism, and evolving societal values. Their participation has been crucial in challenging patriarchal norms and advocating for legal, social, and economic reforms, shaping the broader struggle for gender equality in India. The historical trajectory of these movements underscores the resilience and leadership of women in the fight for a more just and equitable society.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Social Movements, Patriarchal Structures, Feminist Movement, Intersectionality

Introduction:

Since India's independence in 1947, social movements have been a defining feature of the country's socio-political landscape, acting as powerful catalysts for reform and change. These movements have focused on a range of issues, including caste-based discrimination, environmental justice, labor rights, human rights, and, significantly, gender equality. The involvement of women in these movements has been central to many of the transformative shifts in Indian society. Women's roles have not been confined to the margins; rather, they have been at the heart of these movements, fighting for their rights and, in the process, shaping the broader discourse on social justice, human rights, and democracy in India. The historical context of women's roles in social movements in India is deeply rooted in the nation's struggle for independence. Women such as Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay played instrumental roles in the freedom struggle, advocating for independence while also challenging traditional gender norms. Post-independence, however, women's participation in public and political life faced new challenges as patriarchal structures remained embedded in society. While the Indian Constitution enshrined gender equality, providing women with equal rights in the eyes of the law, the reality of deeply entrenched gender discrimination persisted across social, economic, and political spheres. It was within this context that women's involvement in post-independence social movements gained momentum, with women advocating not only for broader social issues but also for gender-specific concerns.

In the early years after independence, the involvement of women in social movements was predominantly political. The rise of Indira Gandhi as the first woman Prime Minister of India in 1966 was a significant moment, symbolizing women's political presence at the highest level. However, grassroots women's movements were more focused on everyday struggles, such as access to resources, education, and fair wages. One of the first major movements that saw extensive female participation was the Chipko Movement in the 1970s. Women from rural areas in Uttarakhand played a leading role in the movement to protect forests from deforestation by physically embracing trees to prevent their felling. The Chipko Movement became a landmark in environmental activism and symbolized the intersection of ecological and gender justice. The movement highlighted how environmental degradation disproportionately affects rural women, who are primarily responsible for gathering resources like firewood and water, thus situating women as central figures in the fight for environmental justice.

The 1970s also saw the rise of the feminist movement in India, which sought to challenge not only the patriarchal structures that limited women's rights but also societal norms that reinforced gender inequality. This period was crucial for the evolution of gender discourse in India. The feminist movement brought attention to issues such as domestic violence, dowry deaths, and rape, which were often ignored or minimized in public and legal discussions. The campaign for the Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) gained strength in the 1970s and 1980s as dowry-related violence against women increased, particularly in urban areas. Feminist activists organized protests, raised awareness through publications, and engaged with the legal system to demand reforms. This era also witnessed the formation of key women's organizations, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the All-India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), which worked to secure economic, political, and social justice for women, particularly those in the informal labor sector.

As India liberalized its economy in the 1990s, new challenges emerged for women, particularly regarding their role in the workforce. Neoliberal policies, which aimed to open up markets and reduce state control, had a mixed impact on women. While more opportunities arose for women in urban areas, the informal labor sector saw an increase in female participation without adequate protections or benefits. Movements advocating for labor rights, particularly those led by women, became increasingly significant during this period. Rural women, in particular, were central to movements addressing land rights, displacement, and environmental destruction. The Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement), led by Medha Patkar, is an example of a social movement in which women played a pivotal role. The movement fought against the displacement of communities due to large-scale dam projects, emphasizing the severe impact on women and children in displaced rural communities. In the 21st century, the role of women in social movements has continued to evolve, reflecting the changing nature of Indian society. Women have been at the forefront of some of the most significant movements of recent years, including the anti-rape protests that followed the 2012 Delhi gang rape case, which sparked nationwide protests and demands for stricter laws on sexual violence. The protests resulted in significant legal reforms, including changes to the criminal law related to rape and sexual assault. The #MeToo movement, which gained traction in India in 2018, also highlighted the pervasive nature of sexual harassment in workplaces, further emphasizing the intersection of gender, power, and justice in contemporary Indian society. The Shaheen Bagh protests of 2019-2020 marked another important moment in the history of women's participation in social movements in India. Women, particularly Muslim women, led the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which many believed discriminated against Muslims. The Shaheen Bagh protests were a powerful demonstration of women's agency and their role as defenders of democracy and secularism in India. The movement garnered national and international attention, highlighting how women, often considered politically marginalized, could become central figures in broader socio-political movements.

The "We Want Justice" movement in Kolkata, which gained national attention, was primarily a response to incidents of sexual violence and gender-based oppression. A significant catalyst for the movement was a rape case in the city. This case and others like it, sparked widespread protests across Kolkata, with women leading the charge for justice,

dignity, and accountability from authorities. Women, particularly students, activists, and professionals, were at the forefront of the "We Want Justice" movement, organizing marches, sit-ins, and public demonstrations. Their participation underscored the urgency of addressing gender violence and the systemic flaws in how such cases were handled by law enforcement and the judiciary.

The role of women in Indian social movements since 1947 has been multifaceted and transformative. Women have been instrumental in shaping movements that address a wide range of issues, from environmental justice to labor rights, from gender-based violence to political equality. Their participation has not only challenged traditional patriarchal norms but also redefined the nature of activism and social change in India. Women's involvement in these movements has underscored their capacity to lead, organize, and advocate for justice, making them indispensable agents in the ongoing struggle for a more equitable and just society.

Need for the Study:

In contemporary society, gender dynamics, social justice, and equality continue to be critical areas of discourse and action. Despite considerable progress over the decades, many regions and communities across the world, including India, continue to face challenges related to gender-based inequality, discrimination, and violence. This study is driven by the need to understand and address the role of women in social movements, particularly in the Indian context, where women have played a pivotal role in shaping the course of societal change. While much attention has been given to the political and economic aspects of social movements, the gender dimension, especially the role of women, has not been examined with the same depth.

The need for this study is underscored by the growing recognition that women are not merely passive beneficiaries of social reform; they are active agents of change. Social movements in India since 1947, from the feminist movement to labor rights struggles, environmental activism, and protests against sexual violence, have all witnessed significant participation from women. However, this contribution often remains underrepresented in scholarly discourse. Understanding the nature, challenges, and achievements of women in social movements is crucial for comprehending the broader landscape of social reform in India. Moreover, with the advent of global movements such as #MeToo, which had a significant impact in India, it has become clear that the fight for gender equality is ongoing. This study seeks to address the critical gaps in understanding the intersection of gender, activism, and societal change, and to explore how women's involvement has evolved, what motivates them, and what challenges they continue to face. By studying these aspects, the research will shed light on the ongoing struggles for gender justice, the contributions of women to social movements, and the changes needed to further gender equality in India.

Scope for the Study:

The scope of this study is broad yet focused, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of women in social movements in India from 1947 to the present day. The study will explore various types of social movements – political, environmental, feminist, labor, and human rights movements – and examine how women have participated in, led, and shaped these movements. Additionally, the study will investigate how these movements have, in turn, influenced women's rights and gender equality in

India. The research will cover movements that include rural and urban women, highlighting the diversity of their experiences and contributions. It will also examine how different social, economic, and political factors have shaped women's involvement in movements, focusing on key regions where women's activism has been particularly prominent, such as West Bengal, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and the national capital, Delhi. The study will analyze major movements such as the Chipko Movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, anti-rape protests, labor rights movements, and environmental activism.

Furthermore, the study will explore the contemporary period, looking at the role of women in modern-day social movements, including digital activism through platforms such as social media. This scope will allow for an examination of how traditional forms of activism have transformed in the digital age, and how women are utilizing new tools to mobilize, advocate, and create change. This study will contribute to academic research in gender studies, sociology, and political science, as well as serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, activists, and social workers who aim to foster greater gender equality and inclusion in India's social fabric.

Significance of the Study:

The significance of this study lies in its potential to offer new insights into the critical role of women in shaping social movements and driving change in post-independence India. Women's contributions to social reform and activism have often been overshadowed by the focus on male leadership in many historical and social narratives. This study aims to correct that imbalance by placing women at the center of the discourse on social movements and justice in India. By understanding how women have navigated and influenced social movements, this research will provide a clearer picture of the interplay between gender, power, and social change. It will highlight how women's involvement in these movements has not only advanced gender equality but has also contributed to broader reforms in areas such as labor rights, environmental justice, and political representation.

This study is significant in its focus on the intersectionality of gender with other social factors, such as class, caste, and religion, which often compound the challenges women face in participating in social movements. By exploring these intersections, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the multiple layers of discrimination and empowerment that shape women's activism. Additionally, the study's findings could have important implications for contemporary activism, offering lessons for how future movements can be more inclusive, gender-sensitive, and effective in advocating for justice. By documenting and analyzing the strategies and outcomes of women-led movements, the study will provide a valuable resource for activists and policymakers seeking to promote gender equality and social reform in India.

Objectives of the Study:

- ❖ To analyze the role of women in major social movements in India since 1947, including political, environmental, feminist, labor, and human rights movements.
- ❖ To examine the evolution of women's participation in social movements, exploring how their roles have changed over time and how they have shaped the discourse on gender and social justice.
- ❖ To explore the intersection of gender with other social factors, such as caste, class, and religion, in shaping women's involvement in social movements.

- ❖ To identify the challenges faced by women in social movements, including societal norms, political barriers, and economic limitations.
- ❖ To investigate how women's participation in social movements has influenced policy changes, legal reforms, and societal attitudes toward gender equality.
- ❖ To explore contemporary forms of women's activism, particularly the use of digital platforms and social media, and to assess how these tools have transformed the landscape of social movements.
- ❖ To provide recommendations for future social movements to ensure greater gender inclusivity and to promote strategies that empower women in their roles as activists and leaders.

Limitations of the Study:

While this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of women's participation in social movements in India, several limitations must be acknowledged. One limitation is the vastness and diversity of the subject matter. India is a highly diverse country, with significant regional, cultural, and social differences that influence the nature and outcomes of social movements. While the study will attempt to account for this diversity, it may not be possible to cover every aspect of women's involvement across all regions and communities comprehensively. Another limitation is the availability of data and historical records. While contemporary movements are well-documented through news reports, social media, and activist publications, older movements, particularly those in rural areas or among marginalized groups, may not be as well-documented. This could lead to an imbalance in the representation of certain movements or communities in the study.

Additionally, the study may face limitations in terms of access to primary sources, such as interviews with women activists. While the study will rely on secondary data and published accounts, direct engagement with participants in social movements would provide richer, more nuanced insights. However, time and resource constraints may limit the extent to which such primary data can be collected. Finally, the study's focus on women's involvement in social movements means that it may not fully address the broader dynamics of these movements, such as their economic, political, or global contexts. While gender will be the central lens of analysis, this focus may leave out important aspects of social movements that are not directly related to women's participation.

Despite these limitations, the study will provide a valuable contribution to the literature on gender and social movements in India, offering important insights into the role of women in shaping the nation's history of activism and social reform.

Methodology:

The methodology for this study on the role of women in social movements in India since 1947 will involve a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of women's participation, leadership, and impact in various movements. This approach will allow for both an in-depth exploration of individual experiences and a broader understanding of patterns and trends in women's activism. The study will begin with an extensive literature review, examining existing research on social movements in India, feminist movements, and gender studies. This review will focus on identifying key social movements where women played significant roles, the challenges they faced, and the outcomes of their activism. The review will also

look at the intersection of gender with other factors such as class, caste, and religion to provide a nuanced understanding of women's participation in social movements.

Qualitative data collection will involve case studies of selected social movements, such as the Chipko Movement, the anti-dowry movement, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, and contemporary protests like the 2012 anti-rape demonstrations and the Shaheen Bagh protests. These case studies will rely on secondary data from books, articles, and archival materials, as well as interviews and oral histories where possible. Interviewing key participants, activists, and scholars involved in these movements will provide first-hand insights into the experiences of women in these movements. Quantitative data will be gathered through the analysis of surveys and reports from women's organizations and research institutions. This data will focus on the participation rates of women in various movements, demographic information such as age, education, and socio-economic background, and the outcomes of these movements, particularly in terms of policy changes and legal reforms.

The analysis will adopt a feminist lens to interpret the data, focusing on how women's roles in these movements have challenged patriarchal structures and contributed to social change. Comparative analysis between different time periods and movements will be conducted to understand the evolution of women's participation and leadership. Finally, the study will integrate the findings from both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a holistic view of the role of women in social movements in India. This mixed-methods approach will ensure a robust analysis that captures both individual experiences and larger societal patterns, contributing to the broader discourse on gender and social justice in India.

Discussion:

A discussion on "Social Movements in India and the Role of Women Since 1947" is crucial because it highlights the transformative journey of gender dynamics in post-independence India. Women have played pivotal roles in key movements, such as the Chipko movement, anti-dowry protests, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, and the fight for political representation. These movements have challenged traditional patriarchal structures and catalyzed legal, social, and economic reforms, fostering greater gender equality. Understanding the contributions and struggles of women within these movements is essential to comprehending the broader social change in India and to inform ongoing efforts for gender justice and inclusion in modern India.

⇒ Understanding Social Movements in Post-Independence India

The history of social movements in India post-1947 is intrinsically linked to the nation's fight for rights, social justice, and equality. Social movements are collective actions with the aim of bringing about change within the socio-political framework of a society. In India, the post-independence period saw a diverse range of social movements, from agrarian struggles to environmental activism, and from caste-based agitations to feminist movements (Shah, 2012, p. 134). The nation's struggle for independence provided a foundational structure for these movements, allowing them to emerge as organized political and social entities.

Women have played a critical role in many of these movements, both as participants and leaders. Their involvement has ranged from fighting for land rights to advocating for gender justice. As seen in the Chipko movement of the 1970s, women have been at the

forefront of resistance against environmental degradation, often linking environmental issues to their daily lives and survival (Agarwal, 1992, p. 125).

The role of women in Indian social movements is important to understand not only from a gendered perspective but also from the standpoint of social justice and empowerment. This introduction lays the groundwork for discussing the significant participation of women in various social movements in India since 1947.

The history of social movements in India since 1947 is deeply connected to the nation's broader pursuit of rights, social justice, and equality. These movements represent collective efforts to challenge entrenched inequalities and bring about meaningful change within the socio-political landscape. Following independence, India saw the rise of a wide range of social movements, encompassing issues as diverse as agrarian reforms, environmental protection, caste-based discrimination, and the fight for women's rights. These movements were not isolated events but rather part of a continuous effort to address the legacies of colonialism, economic disparity, and social exclusion. The foundation for these movements was laid during the freedom struggle, which instilled a sense of collective action and solidarity, helping various groups mobilize for their causes in post-independence India. Women have been at the heart of many of these social movements, contributing not only as participants but also as leaders. Their involvement spans a broad spectrum, from advocating for land rights and economic justice to fighting for gender equality and environmental sustainability. Women have often mobilized around issues that directly affect their lives, drawing attention to broader societal concerns. A notable example of their leadership is the Chipko movement, where women took a central role in protecting forests from deforestation, linking environmental degradation to their survival and well-being. Their actions exemplified how environmental issues are deeply intertwined with social and economic challenges, particularly for rural and marginalized communities.

The participation of women in social movements is significant not only from a gender perspective but also in terms of empowerment and social justice. Through their activism, women have highlighted the need for equality across all dimensions of life, contributing to a broader understanding of justice. Their role in these movements has been crucial in shaping the direction of social change in India, helping to amplify the voices of the marginalized and advocate for a more inclusive and equitable society. In this way, the involvement of women in social movements reflects a broader struggle for justice, equality, and dignity in post-independence India.

⇒ **Women in the Land Rights Movements**

The land rights movements in post-independent India largely focused on redistributing land to marginalized communities, especially Dalits and Adivasis, and addressing feudalistic structures. Women played a pivotal role in these struggles, despite being sidelined in most agrarian discussions. The Telangana Peasant Movement (1946-1951) is an early example of how women actively participated in a land struggle that was initially male-dominated (Sundar, 2007, p. 230). In this movement, women organized protests, provided logistical support, and even took up arms. In later decades, movements like the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) brought women to the forefront again. The NBA, aimed at preventing large-scale displacement due to the construction of dams, was heavily influenced by female activists like Medha Patkar, who advocated not only for the land rights of displaced communities but also for the environment (Dwivedi, 2006, p. 89).

Women played a dual role in these movements, fighting for both gender rights and the rights of their communities.

The intersectionality between land rights and gender justice in these movements reveals how women, often neglected in formal property ownership discussions, used these movements to assert their agency. This chapter explores the evolution of women's roles in these agrarian movements and their demand for equitable land distribution.

The land rights movements in post-independent India were primarily aimed at addressing the deep-seated inequalities in land ownership, particularly among marginalized communities like Dalits and Adivasis. These movements sought to dismantle feudal structures and redistribute land to those who had historically been deprived of it. Women, despite being largely excluded from formal agrarian discussions, played a crucial role in these struggles, demonstrating remarkable agency in the fight for land rights. One of the early examples of women's participation in land struggles was the Telangana Peasant Movement (1946-1951). Although this movement initially had a male-dominated leadership, women became active participants, organizing protests, offering logistical support, and even taking up arms when necessary. Their contributions were vital to the movement's success, yet their efforts often went unrecognized in the larger narrative of agrarian reforms. This sidelining of women in discussions of land rights reflects the broader exclusion of women from property ownership in Indian society, a gap that many women activists sought to address through their involvement in these movements.

In the following decades, women continued to play prominent roles in land rights movements. The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) is a prime example of how women, particularly those from displaced communities, emerged as key figures in the fight against large-scale displacement due to dam construction. Female activists like Medha Patkar led the movement, advocating for the rights of those whose lands were being submerged and for the environmental consequences of such projects. Women in the NBA were not just fighting for land rights but also for broader issues of social justice, linking the protection of land to the survival of their communities and their environment. The intersection of land rights and gender justice in these movements is significant. Women, often excluded from property ownership discussions, used their participation in these movements to assert their agency and demand equitable distribution of land. Their involvement highlighted the need for a more inclusive approach to agrarian reforms, one that considers both gender and social equity. This chapter delves into the evolution of women's roles in agrarian movements, shedding light on how their participation has shaped the broader struggle for land rights and social justice.

⇒ **Feminist Movements and Gender Justice**

The feminist movements in India since the 1970s have been pivotal in shaping discussions around women's rights, domestic violence, and workplace harassment. The Mathura rape case in 1972, where a young tribal girl was raped by police officers, ignited the feminist movement in India, leading to the first nationwide demand for legal reform on rape and sexual assault (Basu, 1993, p. 72). Throughout the 1980s, women's groups organized protests and lobbied for better legal protection, resulting in reforms such as the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983, which broadened the definition of rape. The feminist movement's greatest achievement during this period was perhaps its success in

establishing sexual violence as a public and legal concern rather than a private issue (Kumar, 1993, p. 44).

Furthermore, the Shah Bano case in 1985, concerning the rights of a Muslim woman to alimony, brought feminist concerns into conflict with religious identity politics. This case demonstrated how women's issues often intersected with broader concerns of law, religion, and community identity (Hasan, 1994, p. 98). Women's movements during this time forced a national debate on both gender justice and religious freedom.

The feminist movements in India since the 1970s have played a transformative role in advancing the discourse on women's rights, focusing on critical issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and workplace harassment. One of the key moments that sparked the feminist movement was the Mathura rape case in 1972, where a young tribal girl was raped by police officers. This case outraged women's groups and led to the first nationwide demand for legal reforms related to rape and sexual assault. It marked a turning point, highlighting the need to address sexual violence as a systemic issue, rather than a personal or isolated incident. Throughout the 1980s, feminist groups organized sustained campaigns and protests, demanding stronger legal protections for women. Their efforts culminated in significant reforms, such as the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1983, which expanded the legal definition of rape and introduced stricter penalties for sexual violence. Perhaps the most significant achievement of the feminist movement during this period was its success in transforming the perception of sexual violence from a private, hidden issue to one of public concern, demanding national attention and legal accountability.

Another pivotal moment in the feminist movement was the Shah Bano case in 1985, which concerned the right of a Muslim woman to receive alimony after divorce. The case sparked a national debate, as it brought feminist concerns into conflict with religious identity politics. The ruling in favor of Shah Bano's right to alimony was met with opposition from some conservative religious groups, who saw it as an infringement on Muslim personal law. This case underscored how women's issues are often entangled with broader concerns of law, religion, and community identity in India. Feminist movements at the time navigated these complex intersections, pushing for gender justice while engaging with sensitive issues of religious freedom.

The feminist movements of the 1970s and 1980s thus laid the groundwork for subsequent legal reforms and societal changes, ensuring that women's rights became a central part of public discourse in India. Their efforts helped reshape laws and attitudes toward gender justice, establishing a foundation for future activism.

⇒ **Women and Caste-Based Movements**

Caste-based social movements in India have also seen significant involvement of women, particularly Dalit women, who face double discrimination – on the basis of both caste and gender. The Dalit women's movement has aimed at challenging both patriarchal structures within their community and the broader caste oppression in society. As noted by Rege (1998), Dalit women have been instrumental in shaping the discourse of Dalit politics by bringing gender issues into the conversation (Rege, 1998, p. 112). The Bhimabai Holkar case (2010), in which a Dalit woman was assaulted, galvanized the Dalit women's movement in Maharashtra. This movement focused on addressing issues such as sexual

violence against Dalit women, land rights, and equal opportunities for education and employment (Guru, 1995, p. 58).

Caste-based movements highlight the intersectionality of caste and gender, where women's participation challenges both caste hierarchies and gender-based oppression. This section explores how Dalit women have become key figures in advocating for social justice within their communities and beyond.

Caste-based social movements in India have long been characterized by the active participation of women, especially Dalit women, who face compounded discrimination due to both their caste and gender. These women are at the forefront of challenging deeply entrenched systems of oppression, not only confronting the patriarchal structures within their communities but also resisting the broader caste hierarchies that continue to marginalize them. Dalit women's movements have played a vital role in expanding the discourse of caste politics by emphasizing the need to address gender-based injustices alongside caste-based discrimination.

One of the key contributions of Dalit women to caste-based movements is their ability to highlight the specific challenges they face as women within the Dalit community. Dalit women have been instrumental in reshaping Dalit politics by bringing gender issues into the forefront, thus making their struggle a dual fight against both caste and gender oppression. By doing so, they have pushed for a more inclusive approach within the Dalit movement, one that recognizes the unique experiences of Dalit women and their need for both gender and caste-based equality.

A significant moment in the Dalit women's movement was the Bhimabai Holkar case in 2010, where a Dalit woman was assaulted. This case mobilized Dalit women's groups in Maharashtra and brought attention to the issue of sexual violence against Dalit women. The movement that arose in response to this incident focused on a wide range of issues, from land rights and access to education to the need for equal opportunities in employment. It underscored the vulnerability of Dalit women to sexual violence and the systemic injustices they face in accessing justice.

The participation of Dalit women in caste-based movements also underscores the importance of intersectionality, as their activism challenges both caste and gender-based oppression. Their involvement is not just limited to addressing issues within their community but also extends to advocating for broader social justice. By taking leadership roles in these movements, Dalit women have become key figures in the fight for equality, using their experiences to push for systemic change that benefits not only their own communities but also society at large. This section explores the vital role they play in bridging the gap between caste-based struggles and gender justice, making their contributions essential to the broader social justice movement in India.

⇒ **Women in Environmental Movements**

Environmental movements in India have often seen women as key participants, especially in rural areas where ecological issues directly impact their livelihoods. One of the most iconic movements in this regard was the Chipko movement, where women from the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand hugged trees to prevent deforestation (Guha, 2000, p. 211). Another major environmental movement involving women was the Silent Valley Movement in Kerala during the 1970s, which protested against the construction of a hydroelectric project that would have led to the destruction of one of the last remaining

tropical rainforests in the region. Women played a central role in organizing local communities and highlighting the ecological and economic impacts of such projects on their daily lives (Kumar, 1996, p. 131).

Environmental movements led by women in India have not only focused on preserving the environment but also on ensuring the survival of their families and communities. These movements reflect a deep connection between gender and environmental justice, where women are often seen as stewards of natural resources.

Women have been pivotal in environmental movements in India, particularly in rural areas where ecological issues are closely tied to their daily lives and livelihoods. Their active participation highlights the significant role they play in advocating for environmental conservation and justice.

One of the most renowned examples of women's involvement in environmental activism is the Chipko movement. Originating in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand during the 1970s, this movement saw women embracing trees to prevent deforestation. Their direct action against the logging of forests was not only a fight to protect the environment but also a stand for the preservation of their means of subsistence. The Chipko movement became a symbol of grassroots environmentalism, demonstrating how women's intimate connection with nature and their dependence on it for their livelihood drove their commitment to conservation.

Similarly, the Silent Valley Movement in Kerala during the same period is another notable instance where women played a central role. This movement emerged in response to plans for a hydroelectric project that threatened to destroy one of the last pristine tropical rainforests in the region. Women were instrumental in mobilizing local communities, raising awareness about the ecological and economic consequences of the project. Their activism underscored the impact of environmental degradation on their lives and highlighted the broader implications for biodiversity and local ecosystems. These environmental movements led by women reflect a profound intersection between gender and environmental justice. Women, often regarded as custodians of natural resources within their communities, have consistently demonstrated a commitment to safeguarding the environment not only for its own sake but also for the survival and well-being of their families. Their leadership and activism in these movements reveal a deep-seated understanding of the interconnectedness of ecological health and human livelihoods.

By engaging in these environmental struggles, women have shown how gender and environmental issues are intertwined, advocating for sustainable practices that support both ecological balance and social equity. Their efforts have helped shape the discourse on environmental justice in India, highlighting the essential role of women in the broader struggle for environmental and social sustainability.

⇒ **Political Movements and Women's Participation**

Women's participation in Indian political movements has grown substantially since independence. Women played a crucial role during the Emergency (1975-1977), when they joined the movement against Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's authoritarian regime. Political activism during this period led many women to become prominent figures in Indian politics. For instance, women leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan's associate, Sarojini Mahishi, were at the forefront of anti-Emergency protests (Nair, 1996, p. 217). Post-Emergency, women's involvement in politics expanded with the introduction of

reservations for women in local government through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1993. These amendments ensured one-third reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions, leading to a significant increase in women's political participation at the grassroots level (Bhargava, 1999, p. 77). Women in India have continually fought for representation in the political sphere, breaking barriers and challenging the traditionally male-dominated political system. This chapter discusses the rise of women in Indian politics and their ongoing struggles for greater representation.

Since India gained independence, the role of women in political movements has evolved significantly, with their participation becoming increasingly prominent. Women's involvement in political activism was notably intense during the Emergency period (1975-1977), a time marked by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's authoritarian regime. The Emergency prompted widespread dissent, and women were actively engaged in the movement against the suspension of democratic processes. Their involvement was not limited to supporting roles; women emerged as key figures in the protests, exemplifying their capacity for leadership and resistance. One such prominent figure was Sarojini Mahishi, who worked closely with Jayaprakash Narayan and played a crucial role in organizing and leading anti-Emergency demonstrations.

Following the end of the Emergency, the landscape of women's political participation expanded further with the introduction of constitutional reforms aimed at enhancing women's representation in local governance. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of 1993 were landmark changes, mandating one-third reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions, which are local self-government bodies in rural areas, and urban local bodies respectively. This legislative move led to a significant increase in women's participation in grassroots politics, enabling them to influence local decision-making processes and represent their communities more effectively.

These amendments marked a critical step towards greater gender equality in the political arena, facilitating a more inclusive approach to governance. The rise of women in local governance roles has been instrumental in addressing local issues and ensuring that women's perspectives are integrated into community development strategies. Despite these advancements, women in India have faced ongoing challenges in achieving greater representation and influence in the broader political sphere. The struggle for political parity continues as women work to overcome barriers in a traditionally male-dominated system. Their persistent efforts to gain equal footing in politics reflect a broader commitment to challenging gender norms and advocating for systemic changes that promote equity and justice. This chapter explores the trajectory of women's political involvement in India, highlighting their contributions and ongoing challenges as they strive for more substantial representation and impact in the political landscape.

Conclusion:

The history of social movements in India since 1947 reveals a complex and dynamic interplay between various causes and the role of women in driving change. From agrarian struggles to environmental activism, feminist initiatives, and caste-based movements, women have been at the forefront of advocating for justice, equality, and socio-political reform. Their contributions have not only shaped the trajectory of these movements but have also been instrumental in redefining the discourse on social justice in India.

Women's involvement in agrarian movements, such as the Telangana Peasant Movement and the Chipko movement, underscores their critical role in addressing issues of land rights and environmental sustainability. In the Telangana Peasant Movement, women transcended traditional gender roles, actively participating in protests and organizing efforts to challenge feudalistic land practices. Similarly, in the Chipko movement, women from the Garhwal region demonstrated a profound connection to their environment by physically embracing trees to prevent deforestation. Their activism highlighted the intimate link between environmental issues and their livelihoods, showcasing how women's perspectives are crucial in shaping effective conservation strategies.

The 1980s witnessed significant strides in feminist movements, with women pushing for legal reforms and societal change. The Mathura rape case catalyzed a national conversation about sexual violence, leading to important legal changes, such as the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1983. Women's activism during this period successfully reframed sexual violence as a public and legal issue, rather than a private matter. Furthermore, the Shah Bano case illustrated the intersection of gender justice with religious identity politics, demonstrating how feminist movements navigate complex socio-political landscapes to advocate for women's rights. Caste-based movements have similarly seen the vital participation of Dalit women, who face dual forms of discrimination based on caste and gender. The Bhimabai Holkar case galvanized the Dalit women's movement, bringing attention to issues such as sexual violence and land rights. Dalit women's activism has highlighted the intersectionality of caste and gender, pushing for social justice and equitable treatment within their communities and beyond. Their efforts have been crucial in challenging both caste hierarchies and patriarchal norms, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable society.

In the realm of environmental movements, women have played a transformative role in advocating for ecological justice. The Silent Valley Movement in Kerala and other similar initiatives saw women leading grassroots campaigns to protect natural resources and preserve biodiversity. Their activism reflects a deep-seated understanding of the connection between environmental health and community well-being. Women's leadership in these movements has not only contributed to environmental conservation but has also reinforced their role as stewards of natural resources. The rise of women in political movements since independence further underscores their growing influence in shaping India's socio-political landscape. During the Emergency, women were actively involved in the resistance against authoritarian rule, with figures like Sarojini Mahishi emerging as key leaders. The introduction of reservations for women in local government through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments marked a significant advancement, increasing women's representation in grassroots politics and enabling them to play a more active role in governance.

Overall, the contributions of women to social movements in India since 1947 illustrate their pivotal role in driving social change and advocating for justice. Their involvement has been instrumental in addressing a wide range of issues, from land rights and environmental protection to gender justice and political representation. As India continues to grapple with evolving social and political challenges, the active participation of women remains essential in shaping a more equitable and inclusive society. Their efforts highlight the importance of integrating diverse perspectives into social movements, ensuring that

the fight for justice and equality encompasses all facets of human experience. The ongoing struggle for women's rights and social justice reflects a broader commitment to creating a society where every individual, regardless of gender, caste, or socio-economic status, can thrive and contribute to collective progress.

Further research strategies:

To deepen the understanding of social movements in India and the role of women since 1947, a multifaceted approach to further research is essential. First and foremost, an extensive literature review should be conducted. This involves expanding the search to include a broader range of academic books, journal articles, and theses that address social movements, gender studies, and political activism in India. It's crucial to not only focus on seminal works but also to incorporate recent publications to capture the latest developments and interpretations. Identifying key authors and their contributions is also valuable. Scholars such as Arundhati Roy, Nivedita Menon, and Gopal Guru have significantly contributed to discussions on these topics, and their works offer important insights into the dynamics of social movements and gender issues in India.

In addition to a literature review, detailed case studies are instrumental in gaining a deeper understanding of specific social movements. Case studies of movements like the Chipko movement, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, and various Dalit women's movements should be conducted. This involves analyzing primary sources such as official documents, participant interviews, and archival material. By focusing on individual movements, researchers can uncover the unique strategies, challenges, and impacts associated with each one. Comparative case studies are also valuable, allowing for the examination of different movements side by side. This comparative approach can reveal common themes, strategies, and outcomes, offering a broader perspective on the nature and evolution of social activism.

Field research adds another layer of depth to the study. Conducting interviews with activists, scholars, and participants involved in these movements provides firsthand accounts and perspectives. This qualitative data can illuminate the personal experiences and motivations driving individual and collective actions. Surveys can complement this approach by providing quantitative data on the impact and reach of various movements. Additionally, participant observation allows researchers to engage with ongoing social movements or organizations involved in activism. By immersing themselves in the environment, researchers can document and analyze the strategies, challenges, and successes of contemporary movements. Archival research is crucial for uncovering primary sources and historical records that offer insights into past social movements. Accessing archives in university libraries, national archives, and movement-specific repositories can provide original documents, letters, and other materials that are not available elsewhere. Reviewing historical newspapers and periodicals is another important aspect of archival research. These sources can offer contemporary accounts and coverage of social movements, including editorials, reports, and opinion pieces that reflect the public discourse and media portrayal of the time.

Data analysis plays a significant role in synthesizing research findings. Statistical analysis can be used to examine quantitative data from surveys and other sources, helping to identify trends, patterns, and correlations related to social movements and women's participation. This analysis can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and impact

of various strategies employed by these movements. In addition to traditional research methods, interdisciplinary approaches can enhance the understanding of social movements. Incorporating perspectives from sociology, political science, gender studies, and history can provide a more comprehensive view of the complexities involved. Engaging with theoretical frameworks related to social change, gender justice, and activism can also offer new ways to analyze.

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Minorities Crisis in Bangladesh and Concern of India.

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Abstract

With the fall of power of Sheikh Hasina, Mujib's daughter, on August 5, 2024, a significant change began in the political landscape of Bangladesh. From August 5 to 8, the lack of effective administration in the country and the inaction of the police resulted in terrible violence. We have all seen incidents of looting, extortion, one after other atrocities against the Hindu community. After the support of the army and negotiations with other political parties, an interim government was formed to fill the void in the country. Although the government has played a duplicitous role in stopping incidents like violence. During the rule of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Awami League leaders exploited Hindutva sentiments to garner India's support, but the government has largely failed to solve the systemic problems faced by the minority community. Between 2013 and 2021, there were more than 3600 attacks on minorities, unfortunately none of which have been fully prosecuted, which raises questions about the sincerity of the commitment to protecting minority communities. However, in the 2024 student revolution, the fall of Hasina, has thrown up a new challenge for India-Bangladesh relations and the Hindu minority community. The research paper basically explores and discusses the situation in Bangladesh and the protection of the Hindu community, the challenges and concerns of India. The research paper has been prepared with the help of various research papers, articles, articles, and current situation.

Keywords: political change, minorities issues, internal government, India, students' revolution

Introduction:

Today's Bangladesh was previously a part of Pakistan since the partition of India in 1947 and is known as East Pakistan. Based on that, it can be said that a 17-day war was fought with India in 1965 and in 1966, Pakistan declared India an enemy and issued an order regarding the seizure of enemy property. Although its origin is from the Land Acquisition Act issued during the Emergency of 1948. After that, over time, various laws and circulars were issued on the landlord property owned by the Hindu community, and even incidents like genocide and riots occurred. As a result, 9.3 million minority communities migrated from 1964 to 1991. The number of Hindus in Bangladesh, which was 22% in 1951, has now declined to 7.95%. The pressure of this migration has eased somewhat on India during the

liberal Awami League government. However, in today's situation, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has announced to provide shelter to the infiltrators, although the final decision on this matter lies with the central government. Incidents of persecution of minority communities in South Asian countries are not new because in countries like India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka where people of minority communities are present, they are being targeted and deprived of various rights. We have seen incidents of attacks on minority community Uyghur Muslims in developed countries like China. If we try to find the reason for this, then the responsibility lies on the political parties that believe in the various ideologies existing in the states. In today's democratic countries, politics is being focused more on the oppressed and deprived people. Looking at Bangladesh, it can be seen various roots of the crisis of minorities in Bangladesh. main roots of crisis over minorities are given in the following way:

Political Roots:

We all know that the vast territory situated across the Padma River was formerly known as East Pakistan, which emerged as the independent and sovereign state of Bangladesh following the Liberation War of 1971. Political analysts observe that India's provision of comprehensive aid and cooperation against Pakistan during this war created a global sensation in international politics; moreover, the country assumed a pivotal role in South Asia – particularly within the context of the Cold War era. On March 19, 1972, a historic Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Peace were signed between India and Bangladesh, marking the inception of a wide spectrum of relations ranging from political to other spheres between the two nations. Given that the country is bordered on three sides by India's vast territory and considering that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman served as the leader of the Liberation War and the principal face of independent Bangladesh it is undeniable that India has historically maintained robust and steadfast ties with the Awami League, the liberal political party he founded. However, following the collapse of the elected government on August 5, 2024, diplomatic tensions led to a severe deterioration in the relationship between the two countries.

As a result of this political transition, an interim government was established, with Dr. Yunus assuming the role of its head. Amidst this shifting landscape, incidents involving the persecution of minorities began to occur frequently within the country; furthermore, activities ranging from acts of terrorism to anti-India sentiments escalated to an extreme level. Consequently, India was compelled – for the sake of national security – to restrict and suspend visa issuance for travelers from that country. Simultaneously, a crisis situation has emerged between the two nations stemming from various contentious issues: pressure exerted upon the Indian government regarding the repatriation of Bangladesh's former Prime Minister (and daughter of Mujib), Sheikh Hasina – who is currently residing in India – as well as demands for India's assistance in apprehending the killers of Hadi, a popular youth leader of the country's **Inqilab Mancha**, and concerns regarding border killings. Moreover, circumstances such as the barring of the Awami League from participating in elections and the imprisonment of Chinmoy Prabhu have left India deeply surprised and dismayed. Nevertheless, the Indian government continues to strive toward normalizing diplomatic relations.

Cultural Roots:

Prior to 1947, neither Bangladesh nor Pakistan existed; there was a single, undivided nation known as India. Within this entity, the people of what are now the Indian state of West Bengal and present-day Bangladesh shared an identical language, literature, and cultural heritage—a bond that has served to forge an exceptionally strong relationship between the two nations. The tangible manifestation of this bond is most evident in the literary and cultural festivals held in Kolkata and Dhaka, where people from both sides participate with equal enthusiasm. For instance, just as Bangladeshi films, television programs, plays, and musical artists have garnered immense popularity in India, Bollywood and Tollywood movies enjoy a massive viewership across the border in Bangladesh as well. Furthermore, it has become customary for artists from both nations to be honored and felicitated at various award ceremonies. Moreover, the collaborative investment and support extended by both governments—channeled through their respective Ministries of Culture—towards the fields of arts and education represent a positive initiative that has further solidified these bilateral ties. However, the current geopolitical climate appears to have thrown everything into disarray; a case in point is the 2026 Kolkata International Book Fair, where Bangladeshi bookstalls were conspicuously absent. Nevertheless, the decisions taken by the newly elected Prime Minister—and President of the BNP—Tarique Rahman will be of paramount significance in determining the future trajectory of this relationship.

Economical Roots:

Here also is given that Bangladesh is inextricably linked to India's landmass and shares the Bay of Bengal—both nations hold significant commercial importance for one another. The proximity facilitates the easy transportation of goods for import and export, thereby contributing favorably to the national income of both countries. In the 2021–2022 fiscal year, bilateral trade volume surged to a noteworthy US\$ 18.2 billion. Furthermore, to support Bangladesh's infrastructure development, the Indian government extended loan assistance of US\$ 750 million in 2011 and US\$ 1 billion in 2014. Additionally, India pledged investments totaling US\$ 10 million across various small-scale projects. It is undeniable that, with the objective of countering China's growing influence, India continues to assist Bangladesh through the sharing of nuclear technology, expertise in artificial intelligence, modern agricultural techniques, and flood-related data. In this context, it is crucial to note that the livelihoods and incomes of countless ordinary citizens in both nations depend on this trade and commerce—a sector that currently faces significant threats due to the prevailing circumstances. Bilateral discord—stemming particularly from Bangladesh's increasingly close ties with Pakistan and a growing anti-India sentiment—has become a source of concern for India. Consequently, the suspension of import and export activities between the two nations has caused trade volumes to plummet to rock bottom.

Legal and administrative Roots:

Minorities specially the people of Hindu community are deprived of more than 1 lakh 1.64 million acres of land. It is also claimed that Awami League has seized 17%, BNP 20%, Muslim League 44% of land mainly from this community, besides there are isolated groups. According to the information of the NGO Association for Land Reforms and Development, 10,48,390 families have been affected under the Transferred Property Act. Due to this situation, Hindus of Bangladesh are mainly taking refuge in neighboring states, which is

very worrying for India. The situation in Bangladesh today has shown the world that despite incidents occurring year after year, the majority community's attitude towards the minority community has not changed. Awami League and other political parties like BNP or Jamaat I Islami, exaggerated fundamentalist parties almost ignored the concerns of minorities. Because it cannot be denied that most of the heinous incidents of oppression, attacks, land grabbing, temple vandalism from houses, murder and extortion have been committed in the presence of leaders.

Psychological Roots:

Although Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country, it is a country of many religions and cultures. Apart from the Muslim majority, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and various indigenous communities live here. The psychological condition of these minority groups is deeply related to their social position, security, historical experience and cultural identity. A major psychological characteristic among minorities is the feeling of insecurity. Various communal conflicts in the past have left a lingering effect of fear in their minds. This fear increases especially during times of political unrest. A person's identity is formed through the development of his personality. But the critical situation creates an identity crisis among the minorities. As a result, there is a conflict between national identity and religious/ethnic identity. Minorities in Bangladesh feel socially isolated in many ways. This results in inferiority, limited social interaction and emotional distance from the majority. In addition, minorities may face discrimination in some cases. Difficulties in education, employment or property and uncertainty about legal and social security create frustration among them. As a result, many people tend to emigrate. Minorities are often targeted by political forces. Opposition parties or local influential groups also send political messages by attacking them. The psychological condition of minorities in Bangladesh is not one-sided; It is about fear, uncertainty and social challenges.

On December 18, 2025, a 27-year-old Hindu garment worker named Dipuchandra Das was hanged from a tree by a gathering of people and his body was set on fire in Bhaluka Upazila of Mymensingh district on charges of rape. The police later said that no evidence was found for the allegations. There was no evidence of blasphemy against him. At the same time this incident was widely condemned at the social and international level. This incident is one of the most horrific incidents of violence against minorities in recent times. Again, on 15 September 2024, an under-construction Durga idol was vandalized in a temple in Bandapur upazila of Faridpur district. At the same time, there was an incident of destruction of Durga temple idols in Kishoreganj area of Rajbari. These incidents are an example of violence against idols and installations of minority religions during Durga Puja. vandalized and set it on fire. 10 September 2025 In Jolhai village of Panchagarh, religious symbols were also vandalized in the Kali temple. These incidents describe the non-violent behavior of some minority communities. Attack on ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) Temple in December 2024, unidentified miscreants set fire to ISKCON in Dhaur village under Turag Thana, Dhaka. In this incident, the Radha Krishna and Lakshmi Narayan idols of the temple and the contents of the temple were destroyed. No one was injured, but such a fire at a religious place was alarming. The killing of Dipu Chandra Das created an atmosphere of fear among minorities, with many families starting to curtail temple visits or social events. The fire at the ISKCON temple symbolized the growing fear of the minority community's spiritual activities and religious practices.

In 2025, violence against religious and ethnic minorities in Bangladesh increased, including killings, destruction of temples, attacks and threats. The Government of India has expressed deep concern and demanded exemplary justice for the culprits. Indian political leaders have emphasized human rights and the rule of law. The news of this incident has caused concern especially among the people of West Bengal, Tripura and North-east India. Religious freedom, security of minorities and rule of law have gained importance in social and political discussions. In some cases, this situation has also created an opportunity to use it for political purposes. In general, this phenomenon is not limited to Bangladesh; It is a major discussion point in regional human rights, political and social uncertainty and international relations.

External Roots:

Nevertheless, prioritizing its national interests, the Indian government is actively striving to normalize the situation. Meanwhile, the global geopolitical landscape has also been thrown into disarray, primarily due to the United States and Israel becoming embroiled in a conflict with Iran. The resulting crisis in oil and natural gas supplies has severely afflicted the nations of South Asia – a predicament from which neither India nor Bangladesh is exempt. Despite these challenges, the Indian government has demonstrated its humanitarian spirit by continuing to supply oil to Bangladesh.

According to the information of USCIRF, the situation of religious minorities in Bangladesh is not encouraging even after the change of government, but rather the situation has worsened. The wave of attacks has come down on a specific community, although the interim government has dismissed the attacks as political revenge. An organization called Islamic Movement Bangladesh forced women to cancel football games, which is a sign of religious intolerance. In this situation, it is clear that Bangladesh's image is taking a big hit at the international level. According to experts, not only political change is needed to ensure the security and fundamental rights of religious minorities in the country, but also administrative responsibility and legal reforms. The president of the Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, Manindra Nath, told Deutsche Welle, except for the Media Reform Commission, the Election Commission, the Constitution Amendment Commission, etc., the minority community has not been given a place in the commissions related to this. This government has even ignored any of their demands. It is clear that there are many shortcomings in the current government, although it is undeniable that the government is thinking about the problems as much as possible and trying to solve them. The Bangladesh government must uphold the rights of minorities, establish justice for the recent violence, political parties must refrain from exploiting the issues of minority communities for electoral gains, and above all, I believe that the ruling party, as well as other political parties, should work towards the goals of this community for the sake of impartial progress.

However, India has given asylum to Sheikh Hasina for the sake of humanity, which is a matter of disagreement with the interim government of Bangladesh, on the other hand, India has suspended its visa policy considering its security, trade and commerce between the two countries have reached a low point, and all kinds of political and diplomatic relations seem to be waiting for a distant future. However, India has not remained silent about the recent violence and hatred and has issued strong statements to the interim government, while Bangladesh has also issued statements on various issues. Pulled by the pulse of language and culture, from Indian public leaders to ordinary people, everyone has joined the protest

march, regardless of religion or caste. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken to Yunus Saheb on the phone. India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, attended the funeral ceremony for former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and held a courtesy meeting with BNP leader Tarique Rahman. Furthermore, the country's general election was conducted peacefully on February 12, 2026, resulting in a two-thirds majority victory for the BNP – an outcome that offered India a measure of relief. Against this backdrop, Om Prakash Mishra, the Speaker of India's Lok Sabha, attended the swearing-in ceremony of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet as the chief guest representing India. Additionally, the exchange of greetings between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Tarique Rahman served to solidify the historic ties between the two nations. This lends strength to the historical ties between the two countries and conveys a positive message in global politics. It must be admitted that India has been maintaining a strategic relationship lately.

Nevertheless, the situation in the country has brought a storm of desire to India. Because foreign powers are constantly trying to destabilize India's neighbours. Who can say that the recent incidents like the recent Sri Lankan incident of seizing the residence of the head of state of Bangladesh and looting of property will not happen in Nepal or other neighboring countries? Rather, India should continue to communicate and discuss the future consequences with the governments, military personnel, and other stakeholders of neighboring countries.

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The Origin of Matua Philosophy and Namasudra Social Upliftment Movement Through the Lens of Foucauldian Power Relations

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Abstract

This paper examines the origin and evolution of Matua philosophy and the Namasudra social upliftment movement through the theoretical lens of Michel Foucault, particularly his concepts of power relations and governmentality. Methodologically, the paper employs discourse analysis of academic writings of eminent scholars like Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, Namasudra religious texts, and community-produced literature to trace the formation of an alternative epistemic and social order. It demonstrates that the Namasudras simultaneously resisted Brahmanical hegemony while strategically engaging with colonial education and socio-economic mobility. The main argument of this paper is that the emergence of Matua philosophy cannot be understood merely as a religious reform movement; rather, it constitutes a critical counter-discourse that challenged entrenched caste hierarchies and Brahmanical dominance in colonial and postcolonial India. By situating the Namasudra movement within broader dynamics of power, resistance, and discourse, the study highlights how marginalized communities actively negotiate and reconfigure structures of domination.

Keywords: Matua Philosophy, Namasudra Movement, Power and Governmentality, Brahmanical Hegemony, Discourse and Resistance

Introduction:

The caste system has historically functioned as a central framework of social stratification in Indian society, with its ideological roots often traced to the Vedic Varna framework. Over time, the structure of social relations evolved through the interaction of caste hierarchies with changing socio-economic conditions, regional cultures, and diverse philosophical traditions. Within this context, religion frequently emerged as a significant medium for the assertion of dignity and collective identity among marginalized groups. Nineteenth-century colonial Bengal witnessed significant social and religious transformations that reshaped the dynamics of caste, identity, and social mobility. One of the most significant among these movements was the Matua movement, founded by Harichand Thakur in the mid-nineteenth century Bengal. Later, under the leadership of Guruchand Thakur, the movement expanded beyond religious teachings and actively promoted education, social reform, and collective mobilization among the marginalized sections of society. To understand the deeper significance of this movement, it is useful to analyze it through the theoretical framework of

Michel Foucault, particularly his ideas on power relations and governmentality. The origin of Matua philosophy can be realized through the lens of Foucauldian power relations, this paper will analyze the emergence and development of this philosophical school within the broader historical and social dynamics of power, resistance, and discourse in India. Examining the origin of Matua philosophy through a Foucauldian lens therefore enables a deeper understanding of how marginalized communities resist dominant structures of authority. This paper argues that the Namasudra movement should not be viewed solely as a religious reform initiative but as a counter-discourse that challenged caste-based power relations and facilitated the social upliftment and collective self-assertion of the Namasudra community.

Historical Background: Namasudras and Social Marginalization:

This paper will examine how, within the framework of Foucauldian power dynamics a subaltern group such as the Namasudras – the second-largest SC community in Bengal – developed their collective identity through their self-respect movement.

The Namasudras, who traditionally known by the derogatory term as "Chandala", were one of the marginalised communities in Bengal. They were formerly considered as untouchable by due to their 'avarna' or 'antyaaja' or out-sider of the four-fold varna system. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay has been stated in his book "Caste, Protest and Identity in Colonial India: The Namasudras of Bengal, 1872-1947" "The Namasudras were jealously referred to as 'Chandalas', or more disparagingly as Chanrals, and were described with various derogatory epithets as *durbritta* (evil persons), *naradham* (worst of all people), *ati adham jati* (the most lowly caste), *antyaaja* (low born) and *asprisyaa* (untouchable), with whom all sorts of contact had to be avoided and who should live outside the village or at least beyond the *bhadralok* neighbourhoods." (Bandhyopadhyay. S;2011 p 18)

Bipul Mondal wrote in his article "Problem of Caste and Identity: The Namasudras of Colonial India" - "The different synonyms of the Namasudras are 'Chandal', 'Charal', 'Namasud' and 'Namah'. The word Chandala, as surmised by Ballal Sen, ruler of the Sena dynasty of Bengal, was used as a generic term; to refer to all the lower caste people...they had descended from the particular mixed caste called Chandala described in the post-Vedic Dharmasutra literature." (Mondal, 2018 p 1539)

They experienced systematic social exclusion. The community, which is geographically centered in eastern Bengal's marshy riverine areas, especially Faridpur, Bakarganj, Jessore, and Khulna, has historically worked in boatbuilding and fishing, which are considered polluting by upper-caste standards. (Bandhyopadhyay. S;2011 p 5)

Sekhara Bandyopadhyay remark that- "The Namasudras lived mainly in the marshy tracts of eastern Bengal. Earlier known by a common denigrating generic term of Chandala, a unified caste identity was not a given thing for them, as they were divided into a number of endogamous sub-castes, with low but differentiated social status and restrictions on social interaction. Classified under a common caste name by the colonial ethnographers, these various sub-castes of fishing and boating people of eastern Bengal..." (Bandhyopadhyay. S;2011 p 5)

Namasudra scholar Jagadish Chandra Roy, in his book "Namasudra Koba Holo Purbe Tara Kiba Chhilo", references "Guruchandcharit" and several other archival sources. He examines the socio-historical and ethnic origins of the Namasudras, highlighting the efforts to change their derogatory label from "Chandala" to "Namasudra". Roy claims that during

the Buddhist Pala dynasty, the Namasudras, who were initially Buddhists and belonged to a warrior class, had considerable affluence. During the Brahmanical Sena dynasty, especially under Ballala Sen, whose policies resulted in the marginalization of Buddhists and the stigmatization of this community as "Chandala," their standing decreased. As a result, many moved to eastern Bengal's marshy regions, where they adopted agriculture and fishing while upholding their unique religious customs. Their previous Buddhist identity gradually faded, and gradually starting in the Islamic period, they were categorized as Hindus, albeit the disparaging term continued into the colonial era. (Roy, J 2018,39-50)

The establishment of colonial power in Bengal during the nineteenth century brought about certain administrative and economic advances, but these developments did not significantly address the deeply ingrained caste disparities in rural culture. Marginalised Namasudra people were still subject to socially and culturally dominated by dominant caste landlords and local elites in many places. As a result, there were still very few prospects for social mobility. As Sekhara Bandyopadhyay said "it is only the standardising tendency of the colonial ethnographers which has given currency to the prevailing notion of a fixed universal rank for a particular caste.... standardised official constructions of rank that the Namasudras as well as their social neighbours began to define their actual social location - a situation which Bernard Cohn has described as the 'objectification' of colonial culture. (Bandhyopadhyay. S ;2011 p 16)

The twin deprivations of educational exclusion and religious segregation compounded the Namasudras' marginalization, with spiritual authority remaining the exclusive preserve of upper castes. This dual marginalization necessitated organized resistance, culminating in the Matua movement founded by Harichand Thakur, which propagated an alternative value system centered on devotion, dignity, and egalitarianism. Guruchand Thakur subsequently advanced this foundation by prioritizing education and social reform as transformative tools for community upliftment (Bandhyopadhyay, S;2011).

Socio- Historial Background of Matua religious philosophy:

The broader historical and socioeconomic transformations of the Indian subcontinent can be utilized to understand the origins of Matua philosophy. Its emergence is closely connected with changing power relations, social resistance, and the intellectual traditions that influenced marginalized communities.

By considering these elements, we gain deeper insights into how Matua philosophy has influenced and responded to the societal challenges and transformations throughout India's history. Buddhism's development initially provided an alternative to Brahmanical orthodoxy, with many Namasudra scholars arguing that a significant portion of their community were formerly Buddhists. (Bandhyopadhyay.S;2011p13) India's socioeconomic and political relationships were dramatically changed as a result of the advent of Islamic influences through invaders and later rulers, which led many marginalized castes communities to adopt to Islam due to its values of equality and brotherhood. In the subsequent phase, the Bhakti movement spread across the entire country, including Bengal. This was primarily through Sri Chaitanya's Gaudiya Vaishnavism, which embraced people of all castes and religions in the nectar of devotion. However, in the post-Chaitanya period, guru-centricism within Vaishnavism reinstated the caste system in a new form. Consequently, influences of Vaishnavism, Sahajiya, Islamic Sufism, and similar traditions became evident among lower-caste communities. During the nineteenth century, the

establishment of British colonial rule introduced significant changes in India's socio-economic and political structures through the development of a modern administrative system. It was within this historical context that the philosophy of Matua Dharma emerged from the teachings of Harichand Thakur. His ideas challenged the dominance of Brahmanical Vedic ideology and drew upon elements of Sankhya and Buddhist thought. At the same time, the philosophy reflected the egalitarian and devotional spirit of the Bhakti tradition. Through these ideas, the movement encouraged new cultural and social practices among the oppressed Namasudra community, fostering a stronger sense of dignity, unity, and collective identity.

The genesis of Matua philosophy can be better understood and the major philosophical and social elements that influenced its development can be identified in light of the previously described historical backdrop.

a. Influence Of Sankha Philosophy

b. Influence Of Buddhist Philosophy

c. Influence Of Vaishnavism

a. Influence of Sankha Philosophy:

Matua scholar Nityananda Halder, in his three-volume work *Sri Hari Darshan* written at the request of P. R. Thakur, describes Matua Dharma as "Sukkha Sanatan Dharma" (Halder, 1999). He argues that true Sanatana Dharma predates Vedic Hinduism, tracing it to the pre-Vedic Indus Valley Civilization, which was settled, labour-based, and showed matriarchal features. Drawing on Sankhya philosophy, particularly the concepts of Prakriti and Purusha, he rejects the Vedic idea of Brahma as creator. Citing Harililamrita, he highlights the influence of Sankhya thought on Matua philosophy.

b. Influence of Buddhist Philosophy:

Dr. Nityananda Halder has analysed the historical context of the origin and development of Buddhism in his book "Matua Dharma bonam Marksbad". Dr. Halder quoted from "Harileelamrita" and explained Harichand Thakur's criticism of Buddhism, saying that it was a big mistake to not give importance to the family system in Buddhism. He also said that Matuaism had emerged to rectify this shortcoming and thus it emphasizes religion as being in close association to the family and production system. He said about this context to quote "Sri Sri Harililamrita" -

"Ei bhul sere Bouddho dhormoke jugopojogi kore procharer jonno Matua dhormo praborton korte hoyechhilo. Shree Shree Harililamrite Maharshi Tarak tar jonno likhechhilen - 'Buddher kamona taha poripurno janya Yashomanto grihe Hari hoilo
("Sri Sri Harililamrita" pp 15)"
(Halder, Dr. Nityananda, 2010; P - 11)

("To address this mistake and to adapt Buddhism to contemporary needs, it became essential to establish Matua Dharma.")

Acharya Mahananda Halder wrote in his text "Sri Sri Guruchandcharit" in this context -

"Ekada Bharat khonde, Asiya Uttar Bonge, Rajar aloye jnana gyan-avatara.
Buddha name porichito, Korilen jiba-hito, Bheda-bheda bhuli sobe holo ekakar."
(Halder, A. M. ,2009, pp 124)

(Once, in the land of India, Arriving in North Bengal,
In the royal palace was born the embodiment of
knowledge. Known as Buddha, He worked for the welfare
of all beings, erasing all distinctions, uniting everyone as
one.)

C. Influence of Vaishnavism:

Vaishnavism or more specifically Sri Chaitanya's Vaishnavism was a direct influence on Matua philosophy. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay wrote – that “What had further inspired the Namasudras to hold their heads high was the influence of the Bhakti movement, particularly its more nonformal and equalitarian rural variants.” (Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar;2011; P- 31) Sri Chaitanya established the Gaudiya Vaishnava Sampradaya in Bengal, leaving the question of caste status ambiguous. However, following his death, his followers diverged significantly. While Nityananda and his associates embraced the more egalitarian Sahajya tradition, figures like Advaita Acharya reasserted Brahmanical dominance within the sect. Consequently, Brahman devotees retained ritual privileges, while untouchable converts were marginalized and stigmatized as Jat Vaishnava. (Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar; 2011; P-33) Namasudra Vaishnavas are also included in this 'Jat vanishnava sampradaya '. However, in the philosophy of Matua religion defined by abandoning the liberal sexual relations principle of "jatvanishnava sampradaya" and instead integrating it with the family and the production system.

Foucauldian Analysis and Matua Movement as Resistance:

This paper seeks to revisit Michel Foucault's framework of power relations, particularly his conceptualization of power, knowledge, and governmentality, by analyzing the historical emergence of Matua religious philosophy and the Namasudra movement for social upliftment.

Power is the ability to control others. According to Foucault, power is relational and dynamic. Michel Foucault explored in his book “Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison” (1975), how the punitive system has evolved from inflicting physical pain on the body to focusing on the mind, soul, and behaviour through regulation and normalization. “The body as the major target of penal repression disappeared.

By the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the gloomy festival of punishment was dying out, though here and there it flickered momentarily into life”. (Foucault, 1975, P. 08)

He reinterprets power as a diffuse and interdependent force, embedded in institutions and daily activities, rather than a top-down imposition by the state or authority figures.

Foucault's conception of **disciplinary power** draws attention to the methods by which modern societies exercise control over their populations. In his book “Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison” (Foucault,1975) Foucault illustrates the concept of disciplinary power through the example of the Panopticon, a prison design that allows for continuous surveillance of the prisoners.

Thus, our discussion so far reveals that the Namasudra community – suppressed within the confines of the Indian caste system – identified Brahmanical caste hierarchy as the root of their economic, socio-political, and cultural backwardness. In response, they constructed the Matua religious ideology as an alternative to Brahmanism. This development can be

analyzed through Michel Foucault's concepts of power, disciplinary power, and governmentality: the caste system functions as a disciplinary mechanism, establishing a hierarchical stratification across society. In opposition, under the leadership of Harichand Thakur and Guruchand Thakur, the Matua ideology formed a counter-discourse that challenged the Brahmanical knowledge regime and established an alternative epistemic framework. Through this process, a collective consciousness emerged among the lower-caste Namasudras, directly confronting the dominant power structures.

Conclusion:

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the construction of Matua philosophy serves not only as a resistance against Brahmanism but also as a means of developing an alternative knowledge system and fostering socio-economic progress. This demonstrates that the Namasudra, an oppressed and marginalized group, simultaneously protests and resists Brahmanism while also engaging in colonial education and socio-economic advancement.

Resistance, therefore, is organized from within the power structure itself, aligning with the existing power dynamics. This supports the validity of Foucauldian power theory. It may be concluded from the history of the Namasudra movement that, although this oppressed community engaged in forms of resistance within existing power structures, their own agency has been largely overlooked within a Foucauldian analytical framework. This issue requires further critical examination in future scholarship.

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