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Dr. Bishwajit Bhattacharjee



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Reformation Of the Democracy Within the Concept of Spirituality

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Abstract

Democracy may be compared to the spiritual structure of Indian Philosophy, and the erosion of the democratic features, which is largely seen in the present era, can be prevented by having democracy reformed by spirituality. Like the individual soul (Jivātman) is the enjoyer of the consequences (phala) of the action (karma), people in a democracy enjoy the result of the action of implementing their voting rights in the ballot box. Like the individual soul loses its true nature in association with the body and its accessories, the ordinary people gradually forget their true nature of impartiality and consequently avoid their duty of watching the government's performance when the people come into contact and associate with the government. The mind strives to keep the true nature of the soul intact and is always vigilant to restrain the senses so that they do not go astray. Similarly, the opposition tries to make the people aware of their impartial nature and restrains the different wings of the government from doing anything adverse to the public interest. Like the body is the external abode of the soul, the government is the factor upon which the ordinary people of a state depend for getting uninterrupted service. The people, like the soul, throw out a government and take another government elected by franchising their votes. Above all, equality, the main pillar of democracy, truly can be had in terms of spirit.

Keywords: Democracy, Spirituality, Soul, Mind, Liberty, Equality

When India was under colonial rule, particularly under British rule, many great Indians tried their best to give Mother India Independence. This task then was not so easy. Those brave sons of Mother India, awakening their inner strength and values, embarked on the difficult task of freeing Mother India from the fetter of foreign ruler. As they adhered to their aim and tried their best to fulfill it, they had to give up everything they had, their own interest, even their lives in some cases. Their sacrifice was not only for independence from colonial rules but also for providing a healthy atmosphere for their successors to live in free India. The best way to live in an independent country, they then thought, is the perfect democracy where the people can take part, either directly or indirectly, in governing the country. But the hope of providing their descendants with a beautiful and suitable environment to live in a democratic system is doomed to failure, when the current democracy is dysfunctional. The present democracy is entirely different from the democracy expected by our great freedom fighters. If we want to pay homage to our great freedom fighters, we should stop this decline

in democracy. This degradation is forcing the ordinary people to think that they are not enjoying the proper status granted to them by their constitution, but rather that they are oppressed by a certain group of people chosen by them. The ordinary people are really oppressed by their representatives if they are not the supporters of the ruling party or merely apolitical people with voting rights. Naturally, ordinary citizens are accustomed to thinking that they are not really free at all in independent India, they were oppressed by the colonial rulers under colonial rule and are now being oppressed by their elected representatives. Oppressors have been changed, but not oppression. This is a very familiar scene in the current democratic systems of all countries, and our country, India, is no exception to this scene. Thus, the objective of the freedom fighters and the framers of the Constitution to protect the common citizen from the hands of opportunists by establishing a proper democracy is thwarted when democracy is misguided.

Democracy, as a political structure and form of government, has become politically quite popular in the modern world. It is often said to be the best and the most civilized form of political system. The term 'Democracy' is derived from two Greek words 'demos' which means the people and 'kratia' which means the power. Literally, in a democracy, all the power to form the government is vested on the people. Therefore, in a democracy, the people are the ones who hold the real power. Sardar Panikkar, a noted Indian Historian, writes,

"Democracy is in fact, not merely a form of government; it is a complex of social, economic and political factors, affecting the relationship of the state of the individual, guaranteeing essential freedoms, personal liberty, freedom of expression of organization and of governing activities."¹

U.S. President Abraham Lincoln has said in the Gettysburg Address on 19th November in 1863 "that these dead shall not have died in vain-- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." It is one of the best-known speeches in world history and perhaps one of the greatest and the most influential statement for any form of democracy.²

Democracy can be compared to the spiritual frame of Indian Philosophy, and the downfall of the democratic features, which is largely seen in the present era, can be prevented by having democracy reformed by spirituality. After having presented the essential features of democracy, now let us go ahead and see what democracy should be for being a perfect democracy through the comparison between the true concept of democracy and that of spirituality cited in Indian Philosophy.

Democracy requires some amount of political maturity and education on the part of its people. People in democracy, particularly those with voting rights can be compared to the soul. The absolute soul is unconditional (upādhirohātman) and so devoid of body, sense-organs, etc.; and consequently, can have no enjoyer ship. But the soul, due to the result of work (karmaphal), is associated with the body, sense-organs, mind, etc.; it becomes the enjoyer (bhoktā), the transmigrating soul. Actually, it's enjoyership is created by its limiting adjuncts or conditions (upādhi) such as body, sense-organs, mind and intellect, etc. So, here the soul, compared to people, is regarded as the individual soul (Jivātman), conditional soul (upādhi viśiṣṭāātman). For the sake of soul, the body is constituted and sensory organs, mind, intellect, etc. are there as the soul's instrument for doing work either for its development i.e., for having liberation or for its deteriorating condition i.e., for having bondage. Like the individual soul is the enjoyer of the fruits or results (phala) of the action (karma), people in

democracy enjoy the result of their action of exercising their voting rights in the ballot box. Though they are not directly participating in the formation of the government, the representatives, who are directly elected by the people, form the government from the political party having majority. Just as the soul takes on a body as a result of its actions, in a democracy the people receive the government as a result of their actions, i.e., the exercise of their voting rights. They should have the target of reaching the destiny, the target of getting good governance favourable for their well-being in the state. Though they have a government, they are not getting sufficient service from the government for fulfilling their basic demands. The people should remain always alert of their real nature and should release their duty according to their true nature. Like the individual soul becomes bound when it forgets its true nature of inseparability from the Supreme soul, people, too, forget their true nature and suffer in democracy from being deprived of good governance. But what should be the real nature of people? The real job on the part of the people is to elect the representative impartially and to watch or vigil the work of the government throughout the term. But now it is seen that people are, more or less, losing their impartiality and they often try to have the favour of the government and support the ruling party and therefore refrain from finding fault with the government. Nowadays, people behave like liquid and they, guided by their interests, are frequently changing their political base leaving ideology aside. After getting something from the ruling party, the people forget common and greater interests and offer the chance to that ruling party to oppress their neighbours. Of course, there are so many people supporting other political parties, who are trying their best to come into power and now playing the role of opposition. Robert A. Dahl rightly says,

“.....Politics is one of the unavoidable facts of human existence. Everyone is involved in some fashion at some time in some kind of political system.”³

Like individual soul loses its true nature in association with the body and its accessories, the ordinary people are gradually forgetting their true nature of impartiality and consequently avoiding their duty of watching the government's performance. Eternal vigilance is the best price of democracy and people should be alert to protect it at all costs. But the people, the soul of the democracy, are not educated adequately for getting awareness of their true nature and become bound by being attached to the political domain, either directly or indirectly. The individual soul, guided by the ignorance of inseparable state with paramōtman or Supreme soul and being devoid of the knowledge of Supreme Being (Brahma-vidyā), regards herself as conditional (upādhiviśiṣṭha) and regards the body as really belonging to her. So long as the people, like the individual soul, do not aware of their true nature, democracy would not get its proper importance. Democracy survives if people must have the strong desire of keeping their true nature intact.

Democracy works well if it holds a strong, well-organized, ever-vigilant opposition. The mind (mana) tries to keep true nature of soul intact and is always vigilant to restrain sense-organs from going astray. The opposition, like the mind, should restrain the government from doing anything which goes against the interest of the citizen and compels the government for doing the wellbeing of the people through the control over the unnecessary interference of the government in the work of legislative, judiciary and executive. In democracy, the government really rules the country depending on the three pillars of legislative, judiciary and executive. In modern era all types of Medias are regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy for keeping their eyes on the activities of the government. All

pillars should do their respective work without any bias from the government or the opposition. The work of the opposition is not only to oppose the government but to give good advice to it for the welfare of the people, for keeping the sense-organs, i.e., the sense-organs of legislative, judiciary, executive, and all types of Media in the right tract without any unnecessary interference from the government. The opposition must have an important role in running the democracy in the right way by guiding the government towards public welfare. So, the opposition has a significant role in democracy, in looking after people's interest. But in doing so the opposition must have suitable strength to bridle the government. When the members of the opposition are small in number, they become unable to raise their voices against the corruption and whimsical decisions made by the government, and the government can take any bill passed in the assembly by their majority. So, an insufficient number of members in opposition cannot force the government from taking any arbitrary decision through the control over the work of legislative, judiciary, and executive. The interest of the people will naturally be violated. Here also the people, the soul of the democracy, should be alert to cast their vote in such a way that the opposition can get enough strength in the democracy and it is one of the duties on the part of the citizen for getting favourable service in future. Moreover, sometimes we see that the opposition, motivated by political interest, does not raise voice against the government and the people also are included in the political party belonging to the opposition and lose their true nature of impartiality; and thus, democracy cannot be true democracy.

The government of a democratic state is like the human body. In Indian Philosophy, the Soul is eternal. Bhagavad Gita says that which is born, must be died and that which is dead, must be born again.

“Jātasya hi dhruvomṛtyurdhruvaṁjanmamṛtasya cha |
tasmād aparihārye ’rthe na tvaṁ śochitum arhasi | |”⁴

There is no birth or death in soul life. The soul is eternal and immortal. The body is its outward form and the outward form has its cause in the mental form. Death is the death of a particular outward form, and again birth is the reproduction of another outward form. Death and birth are not the death and birth of the soul, which is substance, the force. Death of one form reproduces or gives birth to another form, like death of seed form gives birth to the tree form. The change of the form, which is called evolution, is determined by the soul's desire, tendency, longing, work etc. The soul cannot be destroyed after death, and it has some purpose to fulfill, and it must continue to take another form according to its desires and works. When the soul cannot be able to fulfill its purpose with the body and its accessories, it again throws the body away. This idea is beautifully explained in the Bhagavad Gita:

“Vāsāsi jirṇāni yathā vihāya nabāni gṛhṇāti naro’parāṇi |
tathā śarīrāni vihāya jirṇānya nyāni sanyāti navāni dehī | |”⁵

As we throw away our old, worn-out garments and put on new ones, the living soul, after using the body, which is the gross physical garment, throws it away when it is worn out and manufactures a new one.

Just as the body is the external shelter of the soul, so too is the government an entity upon which the common people of a state depend for continuous service. In democracy, the political party/parties having won the majority in the election gets/get the responsibility to form the government. So, the people elect the government with a hope to fulfil their desire

of suitable livelihood in a democratic state. But, when the government avoids the welfare of the people and prefers their own interest to the people's interest, the people, like the soul, throw the government away and take another government to be elected by franchising their votes. Thus, in democracy, government is formed indirectly by the people and it is entirely an outward form caused by the people. Destruction and creation of a government does not mean destruction and creation of the people. In the democratic system people are the permanent force which is beyond the destruction and creation of the government. Thus, the existing government is destroyed and another government comes in its place when people take initiative after a scheduled period. A government may be survived for the next time if it succeeds to meet people's demand, otherwise it must be demolished. Just as the soul leaves the body when the body fails to fulfil the soul's expectations, similarly, the general public throws out a government that fails to fulfil its expectations and forms a new government through democratic means of voting. When a government cannot realize the nature of people, want of people, power of people; it considers itself overestimated and begins to underestimate people, the soul of democracy. It, as a consequence, does whatever it should not do and faces downfall ultimately

Democracy not only grants its citizens the right to vote, but also some fundamental rights enshrined in part-III of the Indian Constitution. These fundamental rights guarantee civil rights to all Indians, and prevent the State from encroaching on individual liberty while simultaneously placing upon it an obligation to protect the citizens' rights from encroachment by society. So, these rights are really the pivotal factors of individual freedom. The government and its different wings have their duty to preserve these fundamental rights so that no people can be deprived of these rights in any way. But the present scenario is quite different. The elected members of the empowered Political party compel the common people to stay with them, to obey what they say. They usually oppress the people who protest against their corruption. Nonetheless, they are elected by the majority of people; they seldom remember that they are for all the people. But they, after having the power in hand, begin to torture the people who have not cast their vote in favour of them. They try their best to bring these people under their umbrella by exercising their power. They never think of getting these people to their side by showing compassion, by doing what they want. This type of tendency of the empowered political party is repugnant to the ideal democracy. In modern political era, even the people are not free at all in casting their vote for electing the candidate of their choice. Very often the empowered political parties or regionally strong parties interrupt the people in casting their vote and they begin to proxy in voting station. So, the freedom of electing the representatives, which is the core feature of democracy, is violated enormously in India by the ruling parties. Here, the basic fault is that the members of the empowered Political party, who are elected to govern the country, cannot differentiate themselves from their political entity. Though the party having the majority to form the government; it is not the same as the government. When the parties get official responsibility, they have been ascribed to secure the prosperity of all the people apart from the particular political colour. Here also ignorance of reality, of the power of the people in democracy entices the government to avoid welfare of the people of different political opinion. They only give importance to the bodily aspect, the appearance, not to the spiritual aspect. If they look into the spirituality, they realize that souls have no difference among themselves; people have no difference although they may have different political views

which are their outward appearance. Giving stress on the outward appearance and neglecting the people, the government and the opposition behave like a political party and torture people in place of giving service. As a result, the people are cast off the government due to the lack of expected service from the government.

Political parties are an essential part of democracy. Different political parties participate in the election to represent their candidate. Though two or more than two political parties participate in democratic process, anybody apart from any political parties can participate in the election process and may be elected for his /her individual charismatic quality. But it is quite impossible for one or more than one non-political winning members to form a government with absolute majority. So, these non-political elected members are compelled to support either the political parties having majority for forming government or the parties holding the position of opposition. Thus, in democracy the so-called non-political elected members are like the golden earthen pot, and they are not so crucial in democratic system until and unless they support any political party, keep off their apolitical attitude. As part and parcel of the democracy all the political parties must be based on some ideology and all the members of a political party should abide by that ideology adopted by their party. After independence in India, when democracy began to flourish, political ideology was so important that the common people, too, chose the political parties in terms of their ideology to franchise their vote. In course of time the concept of ideology becomes fade, vague. Of late, so many members of political parties are frequently changing their political parties keeping the ideology aside and they are giving preference merely to their interest. Ordinary people having voting rights, too, like political personalities forget to give importance on ideology, instead they only think of their benefits. When ideology gets no importance and self-interest takes the place of ideology, democracy is in peril, as the ideology plays a significant role to form a party. If a party avoids maintaining its ideology, it can no longer unite its members. Ideology like a rope holds the people together. Ideology brings forth we-feeling instead of I-feeling, collectively in place of fraction.

The important features of democracy are equality, liberty and fraternity. These three ideals seem to be different from one another, but these are so inter-connected and interdependent that these are regarded as one. The constitution of a democratic state guarantees these for the people and all the three pillars of democracy namely legislative, judiciary and executive take the responsibility to restore these features for the people. Among these three i.e., equality, liberty and fraternity, equality is paramount; because if equality is maintained, rest others will automatically be in action. The need for establishing equality of opportunity in democracy is essential; otherwise economically and socially privileged group becomes a means of oppression on the less gifted. The sense of equality creates the fundamental consciousness of collectively in the mind of people living in democratic framework

“That no one could be called happy without his share in public happiness, that no one could be called free without his experience in public freedom, and that no one could be called either happy or free without participating, and having a share, in public power.”⁶

Though the constitution includes equality for the people, they only get political equality in exercising their voting rights. The value of the vote is equal to all people irrespective of caste, creed, religion, language, region, gender, etc. But without social and economic rights, these

political rights, in a true sense, are void. Above all, equality indeed can be had in terms of spirit. If we take body and realm of body as real, economic and social equality will never be implemented in true sense and then the political equality will be pseudo, only existed in records, nothing more. But, if we give importance to the spirit beyond body, we can realize that the soul is eternal entity, and remains above birth and death, production and decay, it is identical to the supreme self or part of the supreme self. No difference among the individual souls will be realised. They are same in quality, only differ from each other in terms of quantity and appearance. Thus, in respect of soul, all the people apart from the body and bodily aspects are equal. So, if the constitution of a democratic state wants to establish equality among the citizens, it should give importance to the inherent spiritual nature of the people. Considering spirituality, the government and its three pillars and the opposition and the people should follow the democracy.

Thus, when equality is established in true sense on the basis of spirituality, other two features viz., liberty and fraternity come in democracy automatically. In this context, Professor D.D. Raphael should be reminded as he makes a difference between these two democratic ideals and says,

“The concept of fraternity expresses the idea of common responsibility..... the concept of liberty expresses the idea of responsibility for oneself.”⁷

So, fraternity is essentially needed for the common welfare, the welfare of the entire group; and on the contrary, liberty for the self-development of the individual. In the democratic state like ours the concept of liberty has been preferred to the concept of fraternity. But, to make the democracy true democracy fraternity should be given more importance. From the concept of equality based on spirituality, liberty for individual development becomes faded and fraternity for common interest takes its place. Thus, when the democracy tries to restore equality with the concept of spirit, these three essential ideals begin to nourish democracy in such a way that the oppression on the less gifted by the affluent class will be stopped, because they begin to realize the equality of their eternal spirit.

On the way to having Spiritual equality, ego is the main road block. Ego is the mind's way of keeping us from having contact with our spiritual nature and is the greatest veil, which never allows you to see the truth. In democracy people, who are elected for ruling their co-fellows, consider themselves alienated from these co-fellows and make themselves people of different stature and as a consequence their ego hinders them to feel the reality. Their ignorance of transient power gives birth to ego and due to ego, they forget their real nature and consider themselves as the permanent authority of the country and behave in such a way that they will never be deposed from the power. They forget all about the people by whom they are empowered. This is the pivotal drawback of the modern distorted democracy.

Our journey of ego should be directed from individuality to collectively, from particular to universal, from self-welfare to collective welfare; we will surely reach spirituality. All the men of the great soul, known as Mahātmās, direct their ego to the welfare of the people and as a result, feel the true vision of the soul and realize inseparable unity with all. Our great freedom fighters, too, are Mahātmās who manifested the true meaning of the soul by guiding their own ego to the humanity, and proved to us the ultimate truth of humanity. As they made themselves free from the thralldom of ignorance that darkens consciousness and

tends to limit it within the boundaries of personal ego and self-seeking, they could devote themselves to the act of bringing freedom from the thralldom of colonial rule facing calumny and persecution, deprivation and death in their service for the country and humanity. Like our Mahōtmās, we, all the stakeholders of democratic India, must know with absolute certainty that essentially, we are spirit. This can only be possible by winning mastery over our ego, by rising above all pride and greed and fear, by knowing that worldly losses and physical death can take nothing away from the truth. The democracy, which was shaped in our constitution by great Revealers thinking that people of free India would get finest taste of independence, becomes distorted. This distortion of democracy can only be obliterated and true democracy can only be had if the democracy is run by the stakeholders guiding the ego towards the infinite, keeping the spirituality in mind. As a result, the difference among all human beings must be wiped out and all men would be independent equally within the purview of democracy.

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Contemporary Arabic Novels: Its Features and Principles

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Abstract

Contemporary Arabic novels differ significantly from their modern predecessors. It highlights the lack of originality in the early Arabic novel influence of Western culture. When we talk about the novel in Arabic literature, we can certainly find it in classical Arabic literature along with various other forms of literature. The Arabic novel passed through different periods from pre-Islamic period to the Modern era. But in the pre-Islamic era, it was not known as the novel because it was not an art form. But as time passed, the concept of the novel gradually came to people's minds. Many things have been written in this form of literature. The article aims to establish the unique characteristics of contemporary Arabic novels, distinguishing them from the works of authors like Naguib Mahfouz. It also differentiates between Modern Arabic novels (early 20th century) and Contemporary Arabic novels (early 21st century) which represent distinct literary movements. It analyses the impact of Western influence on Arabic literature and examines how contemporary works diverge from the established modern Arabic novel tradition. The key themes include defining the characteristics of Modern Arabic Novels, identifying the distinguishing features of Contemporary Arabic Novels.

Keywords: Arabic, Novels, Influence, Character, Literature

Introduction:

Many scholars consider contemporary Arabic novel to be the same as modern Arabic novel. Modern novels are heavily influenced by Western culture and literature. Heikal's novel *Zainab* (1913) ignited the modern Arabic fiction.¹ Then, Naguib Mahfouz gave the most perfect concept of a modern Arabic book, presenting a beautiful blend of Egyptian locations and themes on the one hand and Western philosophy and ideas on the other. Modern Arabic novels were divided into three categories: realistic, romantic, and awareness. By the middle of the 19th century the Arabs influenced by the novel of European literature, attempted this new form in their language. It was natural that the first attempt at writing the novel would be an extension of the Maqama. Muhammad al Muwailihi (1858 - 1930) wrote 'Hadith - Isa - ibn Hisham' on the model of the maqama. Al Muwailihi tried to adapt the Maqama to the times by taking his images from the society he lived in. He used his characters and events as instruments of social reforms written in

¹ M.M.Badawi, *Modern Arabic Literature*, Page 32

lively picturesque prose with witty dialogues. Al- Muwailihi's book marks the beginning of the modern novel. The early novel writers were not entirely followed the western models. They also included sermons to improve the behaviour of the common man which later on developed into didactic novel. Then they intended to write novel. Their ownership of journals like al Hilal, al Jamia and newspapers like al Ahram enabled them to publish their novels easily. They wrote detective or romantic stories in serials to increase the circulation of their periodicals. Among the émigrés, Jurji Zaydan (1861-1924) and Farah Antun (1864-1922) attempted more serious novels than those serialized in the journals. Antun wrote didactic or philosophical novels while Zaydan wrote historical series. Zaydan emphasized that history should popularize though novels. He was inspired by Aleixandre Dumas and Walter Scott to write the historical series. Zaydan wrote twenty -two novels which cover the historical span from pre-Islamic to modern times.² Among them Antun al-Saqqal, Marrash, Shukri, Salim al Bustani were most famous novelists. Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1888-1956) is the first original novelist in Egypt. His famous novel Zaynab was written in Paris in (1910-1911). It contains beautiful descriptions of the Egyptian countryside and is the first social novel based on the life and habits of Egyptians. Zaynab is written without having the pale of the traditional maqama. Its language is simple and approaching every day speech.

The first novel in modern Arabic was produced in a mature, artistic and beautiful form by Yahya al- Haqqi. He was Haykal's contemporary. Another outstanding and greatest novelist Najib Mahfuz of Egypt wrote eighteen novels in modern Arabic. His novels deal with various aspects of human life such as love, faith, death etc. His famous novel "New Cairo" presents a sketch of Egyptians life. Najib's another popular novel Midaq Alley where he indicates the social injustice of the Egypt and depicts the life styles of the urban lower classes people. With his numerous novels the Arabic novel literature has come into a matured position. Arab novel was found to embody national identity, individual judgments, and creativity in highlighting the elements of romanticism.

The article analyses the impact of Western influence on Arabic literature and examines how contemporary works diverge from the established modern Arabic novel tradition.

- Defining the characteristics of Modern Arabic Novels
- Identifying the distinguishing features of Contemporary Arabic Novels
- Analysing the influence of Western culture on Arabic literature
- Exploring the role of the "Egyptian Pocket Novels" series
- Examining the thematic and stylistic differences between the two periods

The main differences between Modern Arabic Novel and Contemporary Arabic Novel:

The Arab World had a great cultural contact with West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Shukri Al Madi describes contemporary Arabic novel is not the same as Modern Arabic novel. Alkabir Aldadisy defines that the contemporary Arabic novel as the novels that resulted from the Arabic crisis and events occurred in the last three decades. He adds that the American Invasion of Iraq and the Arabic Spring are the major drive for the contemporary Arabic novel. On dealing with contemporary Arabic novel, it is necessary to assert the important role played by Rewayat Masreyya Lel Geb (Egyptian

² M.M.Badawi, Modern Arabic Literature, Page 56

Pocket Novels, an Egyptian-Arabic series of stories and books published in Egypt by the Modern Arab Association.

The Syrian émigrés had an edge over the Egyptians in introducing western forms into Arabic, their ownership of journals like *al-Muqtataf*, *al-Hilal* and *al-Jamia* and newspapers like *al-Ahram* and *al-Muqattam* enabled them to publish their novels easily. They wrote detective or romantic stories serially to increase the circulation of their periodicals.³

However, Egyptian Pocket Novels are typical literary works, with complete literary elements. Egyptian Pocket Novels do not share any literary elements of Modern Arabic novel because they represent the soul of Contemporary Arabic novel rather than being “modern novels.” Arabic Novel lacks the originality and particularity of Arabic-Eastern soul. Arabic novel came too late as it appeared as a reaction to the Arabic interacts with Western culture through colonialism, missions, and Western cultural impact. The main differences highlighted involve a shift in literary styles, themes and responses to historical events. While Modern Arabic novels show a blend of Western and Arabic influences. Contemporary Arabic novels often exhibit a more distinct departure from traditional forms. Novels reflect the impact of significant political and social changes in the Arab world. The main differences highlighted involve a shift in literary styles, themes, and responses to historical events.

Novel is an art that is in consonance with the plaintive condition and reality of human nature and a replica of ancient story telling art. Novel is also defined as a literary genre more compatible to accommodate the clashing components and contravening expressions and voices with fluctuating properties as well as it accentuates the rapid changes of the contemporary age.

Growth and development of Arabic Novels:

In the contemporary Arabic literature, the genre of novel stands out with its outstanding characteristics. Over very short period of time, this modern literary genre expanded the mental horizon of readers. Thanks to this genre that peaked the interest of Arab readers and extensively increased their numbers. This genre was able to outpace the Arabic poetry. Naguib Mahfouz won noble prize in literature for his outstanding novels not for his contribution to poetry, and it is enough to prove that novel dominated the poetry. Moreover, the Arabic novelists at that time excelled their counterparts in Arabic poetry, and a large number of Arabic novels were diversely translated into the various languages of world.⁴ The term “Novel” is not a controversial or confusing one to make critics debate over its connotations. Such transparency is due to the coherence and intimate connection of novel with the art of storytelling which came into existence with the birth of humanity. Novel is an art that is in consonance with the plaintive condition and reality of human nature and a replica of ancient story telling art. In short, novel is a literary genre in the form of prose that gives a descriptive account of the glimpses and dimensions of multiple characters with a definite plot, setting, and time along with certain quantity and length. Novel is also defined as a literary genre more compatible to accommodate the clashing components and contravening expressions and voices with fluctuating properties as well as it accentuates the rapid changes of the contemporary age.

³ Ismat Mahdi, *Modern Arabic literature*, page 35

⁴ editor@iaeme.com <https://iaeme.com/Home/journal/IJM> 3112

It has been more than 130 years over the emergence of first Arabic novel in the modern age. Even in Europe, the novel did not evolve and developed within the specific period, rather it ran parallelly with the growth and the changes of society. Some historians of literature hold that there is an intimate connection between the rise of novel in Europe in middle age and the works translated at that time from Arabic. The first Arabic novel emerged in the last third of 19th century. Since its beginning, the Arabic novel has been under the influence of two factors; nostalgia and the intense. The critic Mustafa Abdul Ghani is of the view that, in the Arab world, the rise of novel is connected with two factors: First factor is that the influence of Egypt and Lebanon is equal to that of west and the second factor is that the art of novel. In its rise, is closely connected with the rise and development of Arab nationalism trend, and this factor overshadows all other factors. Such condition continued to remain inherent to the Arabic novel till the intellectual development and the drastic change of social relations. Arabic novel covers diverse literary characteristics and properties of past especially the style of narration, folk stories, heroic anecdotes and historical events.

In 1914, the novel "Zainab" authored by Haikal was published. This novel is conceived a quantum leap in the development of the Arabic novel, for it accommodates all the artistic features and qualities. It was published in a time when there was an intellectual uprising among the Arabic writers who were keenly interested in writing novels and stories and translating them as well. In universities, the intellectuals had feisty debates over literary genres and diverse topics in search of new ideas to bring about change. In this period, there emerged many prominent writers like Lutfi As-Sayyid, AliAbdur Razzāq, Mansūr Fahmī, Tāhā Hussein, and Taufiq Al-Hakim.

In this period, the novel became a permanent self-reliant literary genre, for it sifted out all the thematic and linguistic loopholes, drawbacks, and ambiguities, and it became diverse in all terms. Egypt had far reached impact on the development of the Arabic novel for its diverse scope of journalism and the intellectual churning. Egyptian novels were the quintessential models for writers to follow and emulate. The Arabic novel explored new scopes and was characterized by the outshining features when Naguib Mahfouz emerged as an extraordinary writer. The contribution of Naguib Mahfouz to the development of the modern Arabic novel is unprecedented. After his early efforts to write down the novel on the history of Egypt he came to realize the flaws and pathetic conditions of social life, and he shifted his attention from historical novels to the depiction of social issues and problems in his works. He brought about the drastic changes in literary productions. He diversely extended the horizons of novel and portrayed the real social problems in highly elegant language, mesmerizing writing style, eloquent expressions, and lucid and uncomplicated dictions. His writings are mirrors to reflect the subtle details and nuances of society and the world around him. He vividly portrayed the pains and sorrows of people in his realistic novels. In a nutshell, he laid down the real foundation stones of the Arabic novel. Egyptian novels were the quintessential models for writers to follow and emulate. The Arabic novel explored new scopes and was characterized by the outshining features when Naguib Mahfouz emerged as an extraordinary writer. The contribution of Naguib Mahfouz to the development of the modern Arabic novel is unprecedented. After his early efforts to write down the novel on the history of Egypt he came to realize the flaws and pathetic conditions of social life, and he shifted his attention from historical novels to the

depiction of social issues and problems in his works. He brought about the drastic changes in literary productions. He diversely extended the horizons of novel and portrayed the real social problems in highly elegant language, mesmerizing writing style, eloquent expressions, and lucid and uncomplicated dictions. His writings are mirrors to reflect the subtle details and nuances of society and the world around him. He vividly portrayed the pains and sorrows of people in his realistic novels. In a nutshell, he laid down the real foundation stones of the Arabic novel.

Conclusion:

Through this brief study it is evident that the Arabic novel blossomed in conventional fashion, and it continued to develop since the last third of 19th century until it entered the modern phase. The prominent Arabic writers continued to opened up the new horizon and introduce the innovative features into the Arabic novel till it entered the broader scope of new realism. In the contemporary age, the Arabic novel embraces the modernistic thoughts and ideologies, portrays the ordinary people, orients the society to the right direction, raises the issues of poor and underprivileged section of the society, speaks out against the injustice and tyranny, and unmasks the sinister and deceiving agents disguised as the champions of egalitarianism, liberty, and human dignity.

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Growth and Development of Arabic Poetry under the Umayyad Period: A Discussion

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Abstract

Arabic poetry got new development during the Umayyad period. This period witnessed the spread of new social, political and romantic poem (Ghazal) keeping the tradition of pre-Islamic. The poet patronized the Umayyad kalifat and enriched the literature through eulogies, satires (hija), and love poems. During this period, the provincial poetry movement was led by al-Farazdq (d. 728 AD), Zarir (d. 729 AD) and al-Akhtl (d. 710 AD). These three poets were famous for their satirical and admirable poetry. Apart from this a new genre of Arabic poetry (Ghazal) flourished during this period which was led by Umar ibn Abi Rabiyyah. In short, the Umayyad period was a fusion of Arabic poetic convention and innovation that make the step for the literary excellence of the later Abbasid period.

Keywords: Umayyad Poetry, characteristic, Ghazal, Hija etc

Introduction:

The Umayyad period was a time of intellectual advancement in poetry. During this period, poetry gained the poetic power of the pre-Islamic era. Therefore, the literature of this era refers to the entire poetic literature. In the early days of Islam, the obstacles to poetry were removed and thought was given to the development of poetry. However, no attention was paid to poets in winning wars and expanding their kingdoms at that time. The Umayyad poetry lovers' passionate attitude towards poetry drew attention to it. The poems of the Umayyad period were consistent with the themes and structure of ancient poetry. Instead of praising the victories and courage of Muslim heroes, poets wrote poems describing the abandoned abode of a lover in an unknown place outside the city, the desert and camels. It was during this time that the first Arabic romantic poets appeared. The lover was described as the mask of the pre-Islamic qasida. However, during the Umayyad period, a new type of Arabic love poetry was born called ghazal. These ancient qasidas gave birth to Arabic song poetry from the romantic melody 'Naseeb' in the words of the famous scholar Brockelmann-

“Fortunately, the imitation of the antique Qasida at any rate with the greatest Umayyad Poets, is to same extent only an accessory to another form of art that excites over historical interest in a high degree, namely the

occasional poems which are- suggested, by the mood of the moments can shed a vivid light on contemporary history.”¹

Fortunately, the famous poets of the Umayyad period recorded the qasidas of the past at such a stage that they introduced another form of art and drew attention to history. The poems, especially those written from time to time, referred to that particular time and gave a clear view of contemporary history.

Arabic lyric poetry was born in imitation of Persian singers. Arabic songs and poems were born from ghazals. Umar bin Abi Rabiya (d. 719 AD) was the main patron of this genre of love poetry. He was accustomed to writing love poems; even the beautiful women who came to Mecca and Medina made his passion of love unforgettable to pure sex. Umar bin Abi Rabiya called for free love. Another contemporary poet was Jamil (d. 701 AD). Jamil calls for simple love through his poetry. The poet, who lives in the Hijaz, describes his love for his girlfriend Busaina in most of his poems. They are composed of songs in later eras in view of the beauty and simplicity of the language of the poems. Another famous poet of the time was Majnun Laila, whose real name was Qais bin al-Mulawah. He became famous for writing song poems. He fell in love with a young woman from the tribe named Laila and became known as ‘Majnun’ His love failed and his girlfriend married another young man. Meanwhile, Majnun was desperate and wandered half-naked in the mountains of Najd, in the forests, with tears in his eyes to see Laila. Laila Majnun's name became a symbol of romance in Arabia, Persia and Turkey.

Apart from romantic poetry, political poetry flourished during the Umayyad period. Caliph Yazid ordered Mishkin al-Darimi to compose poems in praise of him. Hammad al-Raria took responsibility for compiling the pre-Islamic poems.²

During the Umayyad period, the provincial poetry movement was led by al-Farazdaq (d. 728 AD), Zarir (d. 729 AD) and al-Akhtl (d. 710 AD). These three poets are famous for their satirical and admirable poetry. All three are excellent poets. Al-Akhtl was a Christian, an alcoholic and a shameless man. Al-Farazdaq was the royal poet of the Umayyads and Yazid in the days of Abdul Malik, Walid, Sulaiman. Zarir was the assembly poet of al-Hajjaj. Al-Farazdaq and Zarir often attacked each other with poetry in vulgar and fierce language. Al-Akhtl sided with Farazdaq as a rule.

Salient Features of Arabic Poetry under the Umayyad Dynasty:

1. Free from rude speech:

Under the influence of the Jahili era, Umayyad poetry followed the description of the nature of rural life. The poetry of the Umayyad period retained the poetic rhetoric of the poetry of the Jahili period and refrained from strange descriptions and rude speech under the influence of the Qur'an and Hadith.

2. More use of tashveeb:

Tashabih is comparing women with other things. In the pre-Islamic era, he wrote praise poems about his lover. However, there are few examples of comparisons to other objects. When the Muslims conquered various cities during the Umayyad period, they gained a

¹ Brockelman, Gesck. d. Arab Litteratur, vol. I, P. 45. And quoted from Reynold A. Nicholson. A Literary History of the Arabs, P- 236.

² P.K. Hitti. Arab Zahir Itihas, P- 280-82.

large amount of war booty. Among the spoils they captured many slave girls who were Roman and Persian beauties. These attractive young maids were the source of metaphorical poetry. They were condemned during the reign of the Khulafa' al-Rashidin. However, in the Umayyad period, the mixture of non-Arabs removed the purity from the hearts of the people and began to write poetry in comparison. The author of this type of poetry was Jamil ibn Ma'mar.

3. Condemnatory Poetry:

The poets of the Umayyad period composed the most condemnatory poetry. Among Bani Hashim and Bani Umayya, slanderous poetry was written for political reasons. The famous poets on this subject are Farzdak, Zarir and Akhtal.

4. The Poetry of the newly educated Muslims:

The subject matter of the poems of the pre-Islamic period did not go beyond Arabia. During the Umayyad period, the conversion of various ethnic groups, Arabs and non-Arabs, created a new trend. As a result, new words entered the pre-Islamic world of poetry which were used for other than their true meanings.

5. Political poetry or praise in the hope of gifts:

In the Umayyad era, praise poems were found that were written in the hope of receiving donations. It was led by a group of poets who wrote such praise poems.

6. Description of the properties of alcohol:

Since the days of M'awiyah, who founded the monarchy, people have been luxurious and indulged in sports. Ralid ibn Yazid is famous as the first Muslim to describe the tune.³

Growth and development of Ghazal form of poetry during the Umayyads:

The word 'ghazal' has many meanings in the field of poetry. Among these, the ghazal al-Uzra points to the Uzra dynasty, the poet of which the story is world famous for true love, that is Majnoon. The poet was crazy about his girlfriend and wodered around mountain and forests. Such poems are called ghazal al-ujra. Among the poets who wrote these types of poems were Qais bin Juraiz, Qais bin Maluh (who is called Majnoon Laila), Tawba Bib al-Hamir and Laila al-Akhiliya etc. Qasir bin Abdur Rahman wrote poems in love with Uzzah, Qais bin Zuraiz, the most pioneering poet, wrote ornamental poems in love with his uncle's daughter Lubna. Then came Qais bin Maluh, the world-famous lover known as 'Majnoon' Qais's poetry is beautiful in meaning, full of simple explanation and powerful word structure. Qais bin Maluh said,

"سنبكي على نفسي بعين غزيرة بكاء حزين في الوثاق أسير"

"I wept for myself with copious tears, a sorrowful cry, a prisoner in chains."

Another ghazal poet was Tauba bin al-Hami, a famous lover of Arabia. He loved Layla al-Akhilya. But her father marries her to someone else. Tauba was killed in 80 AHS. Tauba composed sharp ghazal poems using the finest literature. The poem also shows her lover Layla being in love with her lover Tauba and appealing to her father for marriage. But her father did not fulfil her hopes and in this way, Layla died in 90 AHS. No one but Khansa is more pioneering in writing mournful poetry than Laila. Being devastated by the death of her husband Tauba, saying-

البيت ابكى بعد توبة هالكا اخا الحرب ان دارت عليه الدوائر

³ Faruqi and Al-Mujaddidi, *Al- Arabiya wa Adabiha*, p. 156-157.

The main poets who wrote Ghazal al-Abahi (free ghazal) are Walid bin Yazid, Umayyad Khalifa and Umar bin Abi Rabia. Umar bin Abi Rabiya paved a new path in ghazal through description of qualities and dialogue.

Ghazal al-am (General Ghazal), the general type of Ghazal was born in this era. The most famous poets on this subject are Adi bin al-Riqqa, al-Amili, Jul Rumma, Arzi and Urwa bin Aznia. They used tashveeh in ghazal poetry to praise Dimaskar as well as to write poems of praise and condemnation. He died in 96 AHS.⁴ Thus, ghazal poetry advanced through the efforts of other poets.

Shaer Al-Naqaid or Shaer Al-Hija (Satirical poem) in Arabic under the Umayyads:

The Umayyad period is famous for its blasphemous poetry in Arabic poetry. There are many poetic talents developed around condemnatory poetry and poetry literature flourished during the Umayyad period. Condemnatory poetry was born in imitation of pre-Islamic poetry. To protect the honour, reputation and heritage of one's clan, one writes slanderous poems to express the glory of one's clan through poetry and to undermine the opposing party. Sometimes it is made in honour of the king and sometimes it is made fun of another person or group or empire for the sake of religion. In the Islamic era, this changed and blasphemous poetry was permitted only for the sake of Islam by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Islamic poets refrained from exaggerating and obscene speech. However, during the Umayyad period, it showed an exceptional aspect. Zarir, Farzdaq and Akhtal are among the first to write blasphemous or satirical poetry of the Umayyad period. This was followed by the other poets who recited poems in groups of three and preached them to the public.

Zarir and Farzdaq belonged to the same lineage but were poets of different groups. Zarir and Farzdaq belonged to the Tamim tribe, but Zarir was born in the Qulayb branch of the Bani Hashmim tribe and Farzdaq was born in the Hikam branch of the Bani Umayyad tribe. Akhtal of the Taghlib dynasty was also a Christian. And he strengthened Bani Umayya through poetry. It was a natural feature of poets in that era to write condemnatory poetry which was written at an early age in different forms at different times through his father's condemnatory poems. As a young man, he wrote poems defamatory of the Taghlib poet Ka'b bin Zail, disrespecting and humiliating him. He was named 'Akhtal' for this stupidity. For the Umayyad caliphs to give him due dignity, Akhtal defended them all his life, sided with Farzad and wrote condemnatory poems against Zarir and shared his poetic talent with the world. Despite being born into a noble family, Farzad wrote poems denouncing the people of his tribe in Basra. Fortunately, he found Zarir and his scope of work expanded. Like his two companions, Zarir began writing poetry at an early age and began his condemnatory poetry with ancient rural scenes.

It is noteworthy that the forty-year war of condemnatory poetry at that time began with the first condemnation of a man named Gachchan Sulati by Zarir. In response, Gachchan turned to a poet named Buaz, who condemned Zarir. Zarir responds strongly. Later, Farzad entered the competition. The conflict between Zarir and Farzad intensifies. The poems of these two condemnatory poets became popular among the public and the powerful. The people also split into two factions. Farzad's supporters gathered at a place called Marbad and composed defamatory poems against their opponents. Zarir's

⁴ Rabi Nadwi Hasan, *Tarikh al-Adab al-Arabi*. P. 259-271

supporters gathered near the grave of Bani Hisam with his other poet-supporters to prove the superiority of their party. Akhtal judged Farzad to be the best in order to provide security to Qais or to take a bribe from Muhammad bin Umair. They got the news and rose up against Akhtal. Thus, the discussion of the condemnatory poetry of the three major poets became prolonged. The poems in the two places of poetry discussion were judged by people in terms of word structure, sweetness and various aspects to decide whose poem was the best. The famous poem "Kitab al-Agani" states that "a supporter of Farzadak gave preference to Farzadak for bribing the judge with four thousand dirhams and a horse."⁵ Thus, the Umayyad period saw the development of various condemnatory poems.

Conclusion:

The growth and development of Arabic poetry got an unprecedented level in Umayyad period. The fusion of pre-Islamic tradition and new Islamic ideals was very beautiful. During this period poetry was not only confined to tribal pride but also developed into political prose, love (ghazal) and praise songs (madah). The genre of poetry began to develop rapidly because of the patronage of the Umayyad Khalifa. Poetry of politics was one of the most important features in this period. During this period naqaid or satirical poetry achieved top position and the chief poets were Jarir, Farazdaq, and al-Akhtal. Moreover, urban love ghazals were popularized by Umar Ibn Abi Rabiyyah.

The poems of the Umayyad period were consistent with the themes and structure of ancient poetry. Instead of praising the victories and courage of Muslim heroes, poets wrote poems describing the abandoned abode of a lover in an unknown place outside the city, the desert and camels. It was during this time that the first Arabic romantic poets appeared. The lover was described as the mask of the pre-Islamic qasida. However, during the Umayyad period, a new type of Arabic love poetry was born called ghazal. These ancient qasidas gave birth to Arabic song poetry from the romantic melody 'Naseeb'.

Apart from this a new genre of Arabic poetry (Ghazal) flourished during this period which was led by Umar ibn Abi Rabiyyah. In short, the Umayyad period was a fusion of Arabic poetic convention and innovation that make the step for the literary excellence of the later Abbasid period.

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Christian Missionaries and Night Schools in Darjeeling: A Historical Analysis

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Abstract

The paper seeks to examine the educational contribution of Christian missionaries in the Darjeeling hills, with special focus on the emergence and role of night schools as a form of non-formal education. Christian missionaries are well known for their zealous endeavour when it comes to the formal education system. The study redirects its attention to the initiatives of the missionaries in the region, which complement formal schooling and specifically aim to address the needs of those excluded from mainstream education—particularly tea-garden labourers, women, adult learners, and school dropouts. The present work has incorporated historical records, missionary writings, and oral narratives as a part of research investigation to trace how night schools functioned as flexible learning spaces where working individuals could access basic literacy, numeracy, and social awareness after daily labour hours. The study argues that missionary initiatives in non-formal and night schooling in the hill regions long before government programs for adult education were established. In India, with its teeming millions of people, where formal education has not been able to reach all sections of society, such non-formal initiatives played a vital gap-filling role. The study examines the manner in which these institutions fostered education by acting as agencies of empowerment and social mobility. While missionary formal education is widely recognized, night school as one of the aspects of non-formal education represents an equally significant intervention in the educational and social development of the Darjeeling hills.

Keywords: Christian Missionaries, Night Schools, Darjeeling Hills, Non-formal Education, Adult Education, Social Mobility, Social Transformation, Historical Context

1.1. Introduction:

Access to quality education in society plays an important role in supporting the well-being of individuals and the progress of society as a whole. The process of education significantly influences and shapes an individual's thinking faculty, feelings and understanding of the world around us. By shaping an individual's intellectual and cognitive abilities, the process of education positively influences the social, cultural, political, and economic domain of the overall community involved in it. The idea of "education" encompasses a wide range of activities, such as teaching, learning and the

gradual building of knowledge. It also helps individuals to develop positive values, useful skills and constructive habits in their day-to-day life, which in turn support their overall growth. In 1959, Talcott Parsons, a prominent American sociologist, outlined one of the most familiar functionalist arguments about education in his piece titled 'The school class as a social system: Some of its functions in American society.' According to Parsons, the school acts as a "focal socializing agency" after the child has received primary socialization within the family. It prepares children for their future roles as adults in society and functions as a link between the family and the larger social world. While the family evaluates a child based on particularistic standards— that is, rules and expectations specific to that family – the wider society operates through universalistic standards, where individuals are judged in the same way as everyone else. In the process the family-based particularistic expectations are changed to the universalistic standards of societal rules, which helps the child adjust, participate, and integrate more fully in the larger community. Schools act as important agents of socialization and role allocation, both of which are essential and eventually enable an individual to develop the competencies needed for participation in the workforce. Hence, schools are the representation of not only a subsystem of society but also a small-scale version of the larger social structure or society itself (Parsons, 1959).

Night schools, encompassing evening classes, adult literacy programs, and work-based evening instruction, are typically classified as non-formal or adult education rather than components of the formal education system. This mode of education provides flexibility while concentrating on a certain demographic group (mostly adults). Alongside, it lacks and has no adherence to a standardized schedule like in the case of the traditional formal mode of educational institutions and often does not provide immediate pathways to formal certification or accreditation.

Non-formal education refers to educational activities organized outside the regular school system. It is straightforward and adaptable, and it can be provided at any location suitable for the learners. It is primarily intended to address the fundamental educational requirements of underprivileged populations and is accessible to individuals of any age. This program is open to out-of-school children, working children, and girls unable to attend school for the entire day. Non-formal education comprises organized and structured learning activities that take place outside the formal school system. It is deliberately designed to offer targeted educational opportunities to specific groups within the population. These encompass a wide range of initiatives, such as those aimed at improving adults' literacy rates, educating farmers and agricultural extension agents, providing non-traditional pathways to vocational skill training and educating communities about health and cooperatives. Simply put, learning and teaching that takes place in settings other than traditional schools is known as nonformal education (Coombes & Ahmed, 1974, p. 8). UNESCO (1997) states that "Any organized and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the definition of formal education. Non-formal Education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life-skills, work skills and general culture. Non-formal Education programmes do not necessarily follow the 'ladder' (A series of stages by which programme can be made)

system and may have different durations, and may or may not confer (Have discussions) certification of the learning achieved" (p. 41).

1.2. Genesis of the Darjeeling Hills and the Christian Missionaries:

The British East India Company saw potential for administrative and strategic growth in the Darjeeling Hills in the early nineteenth century; the region gradually emerged as a distinctive geopolitical and sociocultural entity. The area was traditionally under the ebb and flow of sovereignty between the Sikkimese and Nepalese kingdoms and had a small population prior to colonial invasion. Although the Raja of Sikkim regained a significant portion of the land after the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1816), the Treaty of Sugauli (1815), and the Treaty of Titalia (1817), the British maintained a keen interest in utilizing the highlands for administrative, military, and health-related objectives (Chatterji, 2007; O'Malley, 1907).

By the early 1830s, Darjeeling, with its cool climate and strategic position overlooking the Siliguri plains and the Himalayan range, had enormous potential to build a sanatorium, according to the British. To investigate the Darjeeling hills, the Governor General sent Mr. Grant and Captain J. D. Herbert, who was the Deputy Surveyor General of Bengal at the time. Lt. General Lloyd was sent by the East India Company to negotiate with the Raja of Sikkim for the cession of the Darjeeling Hills in exchange for equal land or money after the scheme was approved by the Court of Directors. The Raja of Sikkim initially rejected it. Lloyd was appointed to mediate a new border dispute that broke out in 1834 and 1835. Lloyd used this occasion to finally persuade the Raja of Sikkim to execute a deed of grant on February 1, 1835, ending the negotiation. "The Sikkimputtee Rajah, in the interest of friendship with the Governor-General, hereby presents Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is, all the land south of the enormous Runjeet River, east of the Balasur, Kahail, and Little Runjeet rivers, and west of the Rungno and Mahanuddi rivers." The Governor-General has expressed a desire to acquire the hill of Darjeeling due to its temperate climate, which would benefit government officials suffering from illness. The handing over of the hill area of Darjeeling to the British, initiating systematic colonial expansion, road building, and the establishment of a civil station. This settlement facilitated demographic transformations, the establishment of tea plantations, and the influx of several missionary organizations accompanying the developing colonial administrative framework. Bungalows at Mabaldirm, hotels in Kurseong, and subsequently in Darjeeling, along with approximately thirty private residences, began to emerge. Similarly, to fulfil their standard social requirements, a sanatorium, educational institutions, clubs, and hotels were established (Dozey, 1922; O'Malley, 1907; Pradhan, 2017; Ramachandra, 1989; Subba, 2011).

The topography of this colonial urban area in the hills is centered around the church, the district or state government offices, private English schools, clubs and theatres for the leisure of the British. Factors such as climate, geography, and architectural complexity endowed the hills with a sense of pride in their distinctiveness and superiority over the remainder of the Indian subcontinent. The sparsely populated hills provided solace as they established their own 'small area of England' (Kenny, 1995, p. 695). The enthusiasm for hill stations among Anglo-Indians demonstrated their desire for a social environment far from the dirt, grime, and congestion of the plains (Kenny, 1995, p. 695). Hill stations were widely regarded by the British as the sole favoured locations in the entire subcontinent, where the

selection of educational institutions and familial connections became particularly significant. The British strategically viewed the upbringing of children in the remote territory as an impediment to their enduring presence. The building of schools in the highlands enabled the British to foresee the enduring presence of their society in the colony without the apprehension of moral decline. Furthermore, English-style boarding educational institutions were imitations of schools in England (Kennedy, 1996).

The Charter Act of 1813 is regarded as a landmark in Indian history. This act granted Christian missionaries the freedom to disseminate Western education throughout the Indian subcontinent. It is essential to recognize that, historically in England, education was predominantly ecclesiastical in nature, administered by the church and intended for its congregation. It was only upon acknowledgment of the benefits and necessity of extending education to the laypeople to enhance and broaden the church's influence and authority that knowledge was widely transmitted (Basu, 1963, pp. 195–196). During the period of the East India Company's Charter of 1813, education in England was predominantly governed by the Church. Therefore, the Charter aimed to disseminate Western education in India with the assistance of Christian missionaries. The foundations of Christian missionary work appear to closely resemble those of the British Empire within the framework of Indian society. Accordingly, Christian missionaries were charged with the primary responsibility as an agency to civilize the “heathens” due to their perceived cultural resemblance to the colonizers. The colonial authorities, accompanied by Christian missionaries, sought to portray themselves not as ruthless oppressors but as protectors of indigenous populations and preservers of their culture through the propaganda of a ‘civilising mission’ (Panikkar, 2007; Sitlhou, 2009).

Consequently, under such favourable conditions, Christianity and its mission ventured into the hills to dominate the region through education. Since 1797, the efforts of Protestant missionaries among the Nepali and Lepcha communities had begun to influence the Darjeeling area, especially as Nepali was the language most widely spoken there during the nineteenth century. The early “Bootan Mission,” along with William Carey’s visit to the Bhutan border, helped pave the way for the “Nepala” New Testament to be translated into Nepali at Serampore in 1812. In 1815, Mr. Latter of the Church Mission Society (CMS) instructed Mr. Schroeter to travel to Titalya, a stretch of land under British control after the Anglo-Nepal War, and then attempt to return to Sikkim. Although Schroeter was expected to eventually make his way to Tibet, this aim was never fulfilled. The mission ended in 1822 following the deaths of both missionaries involved (Perry, 1997). Darjeeling’s strategic position and fertile landscape made it an appealing base for missionary work. Later groups, including the Foreign Missions of Paris – a Roman Catholic society – identified the highland area, especially Pedong (then within British Bhutan), as an important route for reaching Tibet through the South Tibet Mission and furthering their long-established goals. Although they did not succeed in entering Tibet, their presence contributed to the spread of Christianity and basic education among the Lepcha, Bhutia, and Nepali-speaking communities. They did their part by translating religious texts into local languages and opening schools for the people living in the surrounding areas. The Scandinavian Alliance Mission (SAM), a Protestant group, also wanted to get to Tibet. They settled at Ghoom, about six kilometres from Darjeeling town, where they focused primarily on the Tibetan community (Perry, 1997, p. 34). Various missionary organizations, while advancing their

own goals, also contributed— both directly and indirectly— to the dissemination of education within the Indigenous communities of the Darjeeling hills. G. Kottuppallil observes that “since the Middle Ages, mythical narratives regarding the remote territories of India, Tibet, and China have captivated Western Europe.” Vivid, dramatic, and often romanticised accounts by early travellers like Marco Polo stirred the curiosity of explorers and missionaries alike, motivating them to venture into these distant regions in search of the riches and potential Christian allies that were believed to exist there (Kottuppallil, 1991, p. 106). While traditional and indigenous educational methods, such as monastic systems, Pathsala, Tol, and Maktab, were popular in the hills, the advent of modern education occurred solely with the arrival of this Christian mission. Illiteracy was prevalent among the populace, although the mission addressed this obstacle and other disparities with considerable commitment and perseverance (Dewan, 1991). Likewise, in the latter half of the nineteenth century and continuing into the early twentieth century, educational institutions established by Christian missionaries from various denominations began to take root across the Darjeeling hills.

1.3. An Overview of Modern Education in India and Contextualizing the Night Schools in the Hills:

Macauley’s well-known Minute of 1835 is often seen as a turning point in the introduction of modern education in India. However, its scope was quite narrow, as it mainly aimed to produce a middle class that could serve as an intermediary between the colonial administration and the wider population. Later, the Wood’s Despatch of 1854 became equally significant because it stressed the importance of expanding education among the masses. This initiative created a sense of hope for a long phase of educational growth, during which the government gradually stepped back from directly running schools. Missionary organisations, helped by generous grants-in-aid, were then able to expand their work across the country. However, this move stirred debates and agitations in England, where many demanded that India should follow a strict policy of religious neutrality in education. The Indian Education Commission was established in 1882 in response to the ongoing protests and the counter-agitation from missionary groups. Later, by 1902, the missionaries themselves adopted a more cautious approach— choosing to focus on a small number of well-managed institutions rather than trying to dominate the entire educational system of India (Naik & Nurullah, 1974). The Bengal branch of the Christian Vernacular Education Society for India, founded in 1858 and consisting of various missionary agencies, persisted in its mission to furnish the Indian populace with enhanced opportunities for acquiring knowledge, both secular and religious, in their native languages. The objective of the Bengali branch of the association was primarily to enhance the existing schools rather than to construct new ones. The Baptist Missionary Society established an extensive network of educational institutions for the impoverished and marginalized populations of Bengal, particularly in the hilly regions and among indigenous tribes (Mukhopadhyay, 1984, p. 141).

The earliest Christian educators to arrive in the Darjeeling hills were Rev. William Start and Rev. Karl G. Nieble, who came in 1841–1842 as part of the German Moravian Mission. A few years later, in 1846, the Catholic Mission established its presence in the region, which soon led to the founding of Loreto Convent School in the same year. This institution was primarily set up to serve the educational needs of the domiciled European community

living in the hills. As the nineteenth century neared its end, the region experienced a surge of vigorous missionary engagement. Among these, the Church of Scotland Missionary Society (Scottish Mission) played an especially influential role in promoting education among the native communities – Nepalese, Lepchas and Bhutias. The British Government even relied on this mission as a key partner in expanding primary education into remote rural settlements and tea garden areas, where schooling facilities were largely absent. Despite objections from Protestant groups, Roman Catholic missionaries also stepped forward to work among the local population, gradually becoming part of the broader educational landscape of the hills (Annals of Loreto Convent Darjeeling, 1846, p. 4; *Bengal Catholic Herald*, 1846, p. 38; Dewan, 1991, pp. 81–82, 89–92, 108–109; Francis, 2016, pp. 45–51; O'Malley, 1907, pp. 170–171; Perry, 1997, pp. 31, 40).

Christian missionaries, apart from their broader educational initiatives in the Darjeeling hills, left a lasting imprint through their pioneering efforts in initiating night schools as one of the nonformal modes of education. Evidence for this claim can be found in early historical records. Evidence for this claim can be found in early historical records. O'Malley, in *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling*, notes that "Night schools have always formed a special feature of the Mission's educational work. These offer facilities for a class who, while out at work all day, desire to spend a few hours improving their minds at night. They are especially popular on tea gardens" (O'Malley, 1907, p. 173). Similarly, A. J. Dash's *Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling* (1947) records that "There are 57 tea garden schools including 17-night schools...as soon as they are able to do anything useful, children are put to work on the garden to earn money and supplement the family resources instead of being sent to school" (Dash, 1947, p. 269). Further insights are provided by Dewan, who observes that "The early schools founded by the Scots Mission invariably included some night schools for the labourers who would be at day time engaged in the field and in the tea-gardens...adult education was provided in 75 night schools of the primary school standards...Nine hundred and three students received instruction in these schools during the year ending 31st March, 1944...Reading, writing arithmetic upto the lower Primary standard and simple hygiene were taught" (Dewan, 1991, p. 201). Taken together, these accounts reflect the broader social realities of the hill communities in the early twentieth century, particularly the marginalised and poverty-stricken enclave societies of the tea gardens.

Although formal government-run night schools per se were not a major early strategy of the Government of India before independence, the concept of night schools in India emerged in the late 19th century as a social reform initiative to educate working-class and adult learners who could not attend regular day schools. Before independence, the Indian Education Commission of 1882 reported on night schools and adult literacy efforts in several provinces (Bombay, Punjab, and Bengal), showing growing official attention to such classes, often with government support for grants and teacher allowances for night schools in mill areas. For example, in the Bombay Presidency there were night schools as early as the 1870s, including night classes for mill workers established by religious and reform associations, teaching adult literacy (reading and writing), and evening classes for those unable to attend regular schools. Broadly speaking, in the pre-independence era, it mainly focused on the 3 R's, that is, reading, writing, and arithmetic. After independence, adult education became an official government programme. In the decades after 1947,

adult literacy and continuing education were progressively brought under state and central planning frameworks, though not always explicitly as "night schools." By the 1970s and 1980s, the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) and other schemes were developed by the Government of India to improve literacy, sometimes including flexible and evening learning approaches (Dutta, 1986). As the independence movement evolved, the notion of adult education expanded. The historical analysis indicates that in 1920, adult education included awareness elements. As previously said, the three Rs were provided through night schools. To enhance adult education, numerous awareness programs directly relevant to learners' lives were conducted through public lectures, discussions, and film screenings, in addition to literacy initiatives. They concentrated on health concerns, economic matters, and similar topics. Libraries were established to maintain the literacy skills acquired by individuals. Furthermore, community development initiatives were executed. Prior to this period, adult education was an unofficial endeavour. In response to the escalating fervour of the freedom movement and the mobilization of the populace, adult education was formalized as an official program by the 1940s (Shah, 1999). Post-independence, India embraced a welfare-oriented strategy for development. This necessitated structural adjustments across multiple domains. The effective execution of the Mass Literacy Campaign during the pre-independence era (1938-47) had already galvanized the populace. This also necessitated the formulation of a distinct policy for adult education. Upon attaining independence, India's literacy rate was 12.2 percent. In earlier programs developed during the pre-independence era, the concept of adult education was excessively limited. In the post-independence era, it was determined to expand this concept. Consequently, health and hygiene, recreation, enhancement of vocational skills, advancement in social, cultural, and economic life, and citizenship education were incorporated into the idea and designated as "social education" (Dutta, 1986, p. 59).

The District Census handbook of Darjeeling, 1961, shows that the first-ever high school for adults in the district was at the School Kumuddini Homes Kalimpong. It provided education to the adults, including those who worked in the daytime and attended the school in the evening. In 1972-73, three such adult high schools were set up in the Darjeeling Sadar and Kalimpong subdivisions. The primary objective of these schools was to provide free coaching to men and women so as to prepare them for the School Final Standard. One of these high schools was being run by the **Scottish Universities Mission Institution (SUMI)**. The success of this night school is reflected in the school magazine, *Sumite*, 1974, as it mentions the school having been officially running for the last three years, and it boasts of the excellent result in the Board of S. F. Examination, with 30 successful candidates out of 37. Under the Government of West Bengal Plan for the Darjeeling hill area 1980-85, the Development and Planning Department of the Hill Affairs Branch took up a project for the provision of part-time education, and it was being implemented in the hill areas of Darjeeling through the establishment of non-formal education centres for children of the age group 11-14 (Dewan, 1991, pp. 278-279). Under the social education programme of the Government of West Bengal after independence, a concrete drive to materialize and spread social education began with the implementation of adult education centres and night schools, managed either by the public bodies or private organization receiving aid from the government, and through social education

centres and community centres through folk entertainment units run by the social education wing of the Department of Education (Dewan, 1991, pp. 283–284).

Table 1.1. Adult Education Centres and Night Schools in the Hill Region of Darjeeling District (1950–51 to 1965–66)

Thana	1950–51	1955–56	1960–61	1965–66
Darjeeling	2	2	2	1
Sukhiapokhari	1	–	4	1
Pulbazar	–	6	8	7
Rangli–Rangliot	1	1	4	4
Jore-Bungalow	–	1	4	3
Kalimpong	3	12	13	12
Gorubathan	–	7	5	5
Kurseong	1	1	–	4
Mirik	–	3	1	3
Total for the hill areas	8	33	41	40
Total for the district	9	34	44	44

Source: Adapted from *Education in Darjeeling Hills: An Historical Survey, 1835–1985* (Table 27, p. 284), by D. B. Dewan, 1991, Indus Publishing Company.

Table 1.1 illustrates the spread of adult education centres and night schools in the hills of the Darjeeling district post-independence during 1950–51 and 1960–61. The period 1965–66 shows a slight decline. Alongside, it highlights the consistent records of higher numbers of centres in the regions of Kalimpong and Pulbazar. This trend indicates a greater focus on adult and non-formal education in these areas. Overall, the data reflect a growing post-independence emphasis on adult education in the hills, particularly to meet the needs of working and marginalised communities.

To give a clearer picture of the night school in the Darjeeling hills, the oral narratives have been presented. Mahendra Pradhan, former Headmaster, Turnbull High School, Darjeeling: In 1977, the Government of West Bengal (GoWB) initiated an ambitious and compassionate programme of adult education under its non-formal teaching policy, aimed at school dropouts, working youth, and adults from economically disadvantaged families. Most of them had been compelled to abandon formal schooling due to poverty and the need to support their families during the day. This initiative offered them a second chance at education, dignity, and social mobility. Under this policy, eligible candidates—irrespective of age—were admitted directly into Class IX or X and were allowed to appear for the Madhyamik (Secondary) Examination externally through the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. Age was not a barrier; students aged 20, 25, and even 30 years and above enthusiastically returned to classrooms. Overall, we can say that this night school can be tagged as the silent revolution in the Darjeeling hills. However, this silent educational revolution met a tragic interruption. During the Gorkhaland movement (1986–1988), marked by armed struggle and heavy paramilitary deployment, the safety of night-school students became a serious concern. Owing to escalating security risks, the Night School was ultimately abandoned (Interviewed: August 9, 2020).

In a similar vein, Mr. Shiwakoti (58), a resident of lower Rose Bank and the senior assistant teacher at Turnbull High School, Darjeeling: One of the most remarkable centres of this movement was the Night School at Turnbull High School, Darjeeling, managed by the Diocese of Eastern Himalaya, Church of North India Mission. The District Social Education Department reimbursed stationery costs and provided a modest honorarium of Rs. 50 per month to volunteer teachers – an amount more symbolic of dedication than compensation. With the proactive leadership of Mr. I. P. Rai, District Social Education Officer, and under the policy framework of GoWB, this night school became a benchmark institution for spreading higher education among the marginalized. Its impact was transformative. Many students who had once dropped out went on to secure positions in government services, police, defense forces, municipalities, panchayats, and as primary and high school teachers. Some even rose to become state civil service officers. The success of the night school and this programme owed much to the dedication of educators such as the late Mahendra Pradhan, headmaster, and the late Hemchandra Pradhan, assistant headmaster of Turnbull High School, whose efforts illuminated the lives of countless unsung heroes of society. Today, the children and grandchildren of these learners proudly carry forward their legacy, firmly established in modern society (Interviewed: October 6, 2024).

Mrs. Rupa (60), an ex-student of a night school who completed Class 10 in 1988 and is currently a resident of Rajbari, Darjeeling, recalled that night school classes were held from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., making it possible for working individuals to attend after their daily labour. She noted that Sundays, public holidays, festival days, and winter vacations were observed, which reflected a structured yet flexible learning environment for every student on those days. Having dropped out of school at an early stage, she rejoined education after marriage by enrolling in a night school in 1988. She remembered the dedication of the teachers, particularly one teacher, Nayan Sir, who taught multiple subjects and played a significant role in motivating students. Mrs. Rupa emphasized that the quality of teaching in night schools enabled learners to understand lessons effectively, as many of the teachers were also regular day-school teachers. She associated her ability to later support her daughter – who studied in an English-medium Catholic institution, Loreto Convent, Darjeeling – with the education she received through the night school. According to her, night schools attracted many learners who had a strong desire to study but were constrained by economic responsibilities, household duties, or the need to support their families. She further observed that several night school students went on to secure respectable employment, while many primary school teachers also attended night schools to upgrade their qualifications. Reflecting on the present situation, she expressed concern over the absence of similar educational opportunities in the hills today. In her view, night schools once functioned as a vital educational asset for the hill communities, especially for adults and working learners seeking a second chance at education (Interviewed: October 17, 2024).

Mr. Sharma (58), prior resident of Red Cross Quarter, S. N. Das Road: Parallel to this initiative was another notable institution – Arya Night School at Kagjhora, Darjeeling, established in the late 1970s with the support of the Arya Samaj Missionary. Late Prof. Kabindra Tamang, then Head of the Botany Department at Darjeeling Government College, played a pivotal role in nurturing this school. Classes were held in the evenings up to Class X, enabling students to pass the Madhyamik examination. Like Turnbull's

Night School, this institution too fell victim to the political unrest of the late 1980s. Yet, its spirit endured. The institution later reinvented itself by offering morning classes from 6:00 am to 9:30 am for working individuals and school dropouts. Many of its alumni today serve as senior civil servants and higher secondary school teachers, standing testimony to the enduring power of education. The struggle for educational access extended beyond secondary schooling. In the early 1980s, gaining admission to Classes XI and XII was extremely difficult for students who did not feature on college merit lists, as higher secondary education was then administered exclusively by colleges. Deprived students, along with their unions such as Sanyukta Vidyarthi Sangh, launched agitations—rallies, chain hunger strikes and protests—demanding their right to education. Facing limited seats at Darjeeling Government College, the administration initially struggled to respond. Eventually, the State Higher Education Ministry intervened, arranging evening college classes in humanities at Municipal Boys' High School, Darjeeling, as an extension of Darjeeling Government College's quota—recognising education as a fundamental right. This arrangement continued briefly but was discontinued in 1983–84 following the expansion of seats at Darjeeling Government College, St. Joseph's College, and Loreto College, facilitated by the District Administration and the Director of Public Instruction (DPI), GoWB (Interviewed: October 16, 2024).

There is significant light to be shed on the contribution of Father J. M. Abraham, S.J., of St. Alphonsus Social and Agricultural Centre. His initiative to start a night school stands out as one among his many contributions or educational services for the hill people through both formal and informal modes of learning. His efforts reflect not merely institutional expansion but a deeply humane engagement with the educational deprivation of labouring communities. Insight into this pioneering initiative emerges vividly from a personal letter dated November 1966, addressed to a friend in Canada, where he has written about the humble beginning of evening classes: "...It seemed silly to arrange special classes for one pupil, so I asked our 'buy-dar' to find out if any coolies would like to go to school in the evening. I didn't expect any would... After walking miles to get to work, after carrying heavy loads all day, after eating a handful of rice at noon... Who could stay on to face monotony of the Nepali A-B-C's? No one, I thought. I was gloriously wrong... The girls had left their tattered lunch-bags and their bamboo umbrellas on the top landing...to them going into one of our clean 'beautiful' classrooms was like going into a chapel, into a special, almost a sacred place. Some hadn't believed... that they were really going to be allowed in... It was a privilege they had no right to dream of... even if now they were Cinderellas entering the place of delight, still they had better not take with them their dirty bags and their wet umbrellas... The end of the story? Now we have three evening classes: one for the youngsters 10 to 13 like Lama; one for the coolie girls 14 to 20; and one for a dozen mother from villages around who come to school each evening—so shyly—to share unexpectedly in the privilege they are giving their own children at such cost and sacrifice... This is one small by-product of the school you are building... this is the loveliest fruit for your faithful generosity. I had often thought of adult education, but this is a nebulous 'someday' way. How happy I am that one of you bugged me into making that 'someday' today" (Abraham, 2004, p. 11). This narrative not only documents the origin of the evening classes but also reveals the emotional, social, and symbolic value that such educational spaces held for marginalized hill communities—particularly women labourers

and adult learners who had long remained outside the ambit of formal schooling. The initiative thus stands as a compelling testimony to missionary commitment toward inclusive and need-based educational outreach in the Darjeeling hills.

Conclusion:

The historical trajectory of night schools in the Darjeeling hills reflects a significant dimension of missionary engagement with non-formal education. Long before the colonial administration, and later the independent Indian government, formally recognised adult and continuing education as developmental priorities, Christian missionaries had already responded to the educational deprivation of the hill population through practical initiatives such as evening and night schools. These institutions emerged as accessible learning spaces for those structurally excluded from formal schooling— particularly tea-garden labourers, women, adult learners and school dropouts whose economic responsibilities made daytime education impossible.

In a country like India, where formal education has never been able to meet the needs of all parts of society, the importance of other systems is clear. Non-formal educational initiatives such as night schools thus played a crucial gap-filling role. They extended the reach of learning to those left outside the conventional classroom and ensured that education did not remain the privilege of the few but became accessible to the many.

From a sociological standpoint, these night schools functioned not merely as literacy centres but as agencies of socialisation, awareness building, and social mobility. They enabled the marginalised to acquire basic skills, develop self-confidence, and gradually reposition themselves within a changing social order. Even after Independence, when governmental adult education programmes and non-formal education schemes were introduced, missionary-run night schools continued to function actively at the grassroots. Operating through voluntary commitment rather than bureaucratic obligation, they complemented state initiatives and, in many ways, anticipated the framework later adopted by government agencies.

While the formal educational contributions of Christian missionaries— through schools, boarding institutions, and teacher-training centres— remain unparalleled in shaping the socio-cultural development of the hills, the significance of night schools is equally noteworthy. They represented education in its most inclusive and democratic form: flexible in structure, community-oriented in approach, and deeply sensitive to local realities. By reaching the downtrodden— women confined within domestic roles, plantation labourers tied to rigid work schedules and adults denied earlier opportunities— these institutions became powerful instruments of social upliftment and collective empowerment in the Darjeeling hills.

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The Narrative Voice of Sita in Contemporary Re-tellings of *The Ramayana*

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Abstract

The Ramayana has endured through time as a leading South Asian epic which defines feminine values through Sita's character. Throughout centuries Sita has received praise for her chastity and obedience yet her personal voice remains suppressed by patriarchal interpretations. This paper analyzes Sita's first-person narrative in *The Forest of Enchantments* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and *Sitayana* by Amit Majmudar to show how she uses her voice to challenge and reinterpret her story in contemporary re-tellings. The canonical Ramayana presents a predominantly patriarchal structure which frequently hides or removes Sita's direct voice. The study bases its analysis on the female and revisionist perspectives which appear in these contemporary works. The authors use different narrative approaches to create Sita's voice in their works. Divakaruni uses a confessional first-person perspective to create an emotionally powerful Sita who expresses her silenced emotions and experiences. Majmudar uses a performative and folkloric narrative style to present Sita's suffering and moral strength through a polyphonic structure that de-centered Rama's heroism. The two narratives work together to give Sita control over her voice which enables her to express her feelings, mental and emotional power against the traditional moral code of the epic.

Sita's narrative voice in these reinterpretations serves as a cultural tool for negotiating traditional values. The research demonstrates how contemporary Ramayana reinterpretations create a continuous dialogue between mythological traditions and feminist perspectives and traditional beliefs and contemporary values and suppressed voices and vocal expressions.

Keywords: Sita's Narrative Voice, Feminist Retellings of the Ramayana, Patriarchal Interpretation, Myth Reinterpretation in Contemporary Literature, Female Agency in Epic Literature

Introduction:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Amit Majmudar use their works *The Forest of Enchantments* and *Sitayana* to depict Sita as a forceful storyteller who fights against the conventional image

of a submissive dutiful wife. The Ramayana's original versions deny Sita a powerful voice because they depict her suffering as the perfect wife's sacrifice yet hide her actual emotions and decisions from view. The authors Divakaruni and Majmudar use their writing to bring Sita forward so she can express her feelings while fighting against unfair situations and gaining control over her life. The reinterpretations of the traditional "ideal Indian woman" stereotype present active independent actions against suffering which do not require silence within the boundaries of the original text. The Sita characters in these works show both inner strength and self-reflection instead of following the traditional path of silence and obedience.

An Understanding of *The Forest of Enchantments*:

The Forest of Enchantments (2019) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni functions as a strong feminist interpretation of the Ramayana through Sita's personal account. The author uses Sita as the central character in her novel to fight against the male-centered story which has neglected Sita throughout classical literature. The central theme of this book focuses on delivering a feminist reading of Sita. The novel shows Sita as an exceptional woman who combines personal strength with independence while being both self-aware and taking charge of her life story. The story shows Sita as a person who heals others and studies plants and demonstrates intellectual abilities and possesses an inner power to confront divine and royal authority.

An Understanding of *Sitayana*:

Amit Majmudar presents a new poetic interpretation of the Ramayana through female character perspectives starting with Sita in his book. The story uses dramatic monologues to shift its focus from Rama to Sita as the main character. The female characters Sita, Urmila, Mandodari, Surpanakha and Ahalya gain space to present their life experiences and emotional responses and their critiques toward patriarchal systems. Through her character Sita shows both wisdom and intellectual thinking while she examines the ethical system of dharma which supports male actions while requiring her to endure. The title 'Sitayana' serves as a deliberate inversion of Ramayana to demonstrate Sita's newfound mastery of the story. Majmudar unites traditional religious devotion with contemporary awareness through his poetic and novelistic approach and his employment of contemporary language to convey both intellectual ideas and poetic beauty. The book presents its story to reveal dharma's moral flaws while uncovering concealed female suffering to create a feminist reinterpretation of the original tale. Sita's portrayal in *The Forest of Enchantments* and *Sitayana* presents a different character than the traditional passive selfless Sita from traditional adaptations.

Sita transforms into a complete woman through her new status which grants her self-assurance and enables her to fight against injustice. *The Forest of Enchantments* presents Sita's innermost thoughts and doubts and secret acts of defiance through her direct storytelling to readers. The main character of Divakaruni's novel evolves into a self-aware individual through her experiences of being held captive and exiled or abandoned in the story. The main character of Divakaruni's novel fights against destiny while fighting for her choices and love and care-giving for Rama and the societal rules that seek to silence her. The Sita of *Sitayana* by Amit Majmudar presents a character who keeps her emotions stable while maintaining an unbreakable intellectual strength. Majmudar uses Sita to present a dual identity as an individual voice and philosophical voice when she discusses dharma and morality and autonomy. Sita confronts Rama about his decisions while she examines the

moral aspects of the epic before declaring her independence as a self-governing individual who rejects traditional wifely obedience.

Sita's Narrative Voice in *The Forest of Enchantments*:

The story unfolds through Sita's direct first-person account. The author presents the Ramayana through Sita's personal voice in this novel which traditional adaptations had excluded from the narrative. Sita's voice reveals deep emotions which blend her pain with inner turmoil to create a powerful yet controlled personality. The protagonist Sita presents as a complete conscious human being who understands love and duty and betrayal and freedom. Through her storytelling voice Sita alternates between poetic speech and grief while expressing both anger and resilience. The storytelling approach presents Sita as a complete human being who expresses multiple complex emotions instead of showing only virtuous behavior. Through her storytelling Divakaruni shows how Sita fights against patriarchal systems by questioning authority while showing her pain about the unfair treatment she receives. Through her storytelling Sita demonstrates empathy by showing how Rama and Kaikeyi treated her harshly while her complex characterizations of others enhance the story's moral depth. The main objective of this story is to present her personal account instead of blaming others for their involvement in her final decision. The story aims to establish her personal story while presenting authentic truth to create a completely feminist and human epic.

The Narrative Role and Narrator's Dialogue:

The Forest of Enchantments features Sita as its narrator who drives the entire novel toward its goal of presenting the Ramayana through a female perspective. The narrative functions as a tool to reclaim the Ramayana through Sita because Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni uses Sita as the narrator to transform her from an ideal mythical figure into a fully human character with personal desires and beliefs and fears. Sita narrates every experience from her Mithila childhood through her forest stay and Rama's desertion of her while explaining all the reasons behind what happened. Through her narrative Sita provides a witness-like perspective while using her experiences of patriarchal suppression to establish her own identity. Through her storytelling voice Sita develops alternative life stories and reveals the stories of other female characters from the epic including Kaikeyi, Ahalya, Surpanakha, Mandodari and the Rakshashi Trijata, the daughter of Vibhishana who protected Sita in the Ashok Vatika. Sita noticed that enemy women endured the same amount of suffering because they shared common experiences as wives and mothers and daughters and women. Sita uses her narrative function to serve both personal and political purposes. The main character Sita in *The Forest of Enchantments* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni undergoes a major transformation throughout the story. The novel begins with Sita showing her youthful romantic nature as a princess who dreams about her royal life with Rama. Sita dedicates herself fully to her new duties because she believes in the power of love and dharma and the justice that exists in both the external world and its inhabitants. The story ends with Sita experiencing exile and abduction and facing judgment from villagers and Rama's abandonment. The events Sita experiences throughout the story help her develop a more sophisticated understanding of her world. Sita faces multiple tests which include Ravana's seizure and the fire test and Rama's dismissal of her pregnancy and his court banishment that make her question traditional gender norms and religious teachings. Sita develops from a broken angry woman into a woman who demonstrates inner strength and moral direction

and subtle resistance against societal expectations. She learns to see her strength beyond social limits before choosing to establish a new life outside Ayodhya's ruling power. She establishes her independence by choosing Rama before choosing to join the Earth which represents her maternal origins. The novel concludes with Sita evolving from a romantic obedient figure into an independent woman who controls her life story. Sita's transformation reveals both personal empowerment and feminist awareness because she evolved from a mythological object into a voice for women who have endured silence and oppression.

Authorial Intention:

The Forest of Enchantments by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presents Sita through a unique narrative voice which creates a compassionate feminist interpretation of the Ramayana. Divakaruni seeks to establish Sita as the main character of her own story instead of keeping her in a secondary position defined by Rama. The first-person narrative voice in the text adds emotional depth and psychological complexity to Sita's character because she remains an idealized figure of sacrifice yet authors rarely show her inner thoughts. The author uses Sita's story to expose the hidden obstacles women face in their families and marriages and social environments while showing their ability to overcome these challenges. The narrative expands through Sita's meetings with Surpanakha, Ahalya and Mandodari to show that women share common experiences which break free from traditional social and moral restrictions.

Character Analysis of Sita in Sitayana:

Amit Majmudar uses *Sitayana* to present Sita as an empowered woman who speaks out against the traditional male-dominated view of female characters in the text. The character of Sita extends past her traditional depiction as a passive victim or flawless character. She fights an inner struggle about the multiple ethical and emotional aspects of her present situation. Majmudar gives Sita a strong voice through his writing as she examines dharma alongside her personal identity and her commitment to justice and loyalty. Sita participates in discussions about Rama and Ravana's conduct while presenting multiple personas that stop others from viewing her as only a wife or queen. The human Sita in *Sitayana* transforms her feelings of anger root from loss and betrayal and longing into a source of clarity and strength. Majmudar presents Sita as a strong moral figure through her monologues and social interactions which break free from conventional moral standards.

Growth Of the Character:

Sita's journey in *Sitayana* leads her through three stages of development which start with her youthful optimism before she discovers herself and finally emerges as a determined and powerful woman. The story introduces Sita as a devoted wife who shows gentleness and complete loyalty to Rama and his dharma principles. The story presents three major tests which start with Ravana's seizure of her and continue through the fire test until Rama rejects her. The process develops her inner character strength. The experiences she faces lead her to discover that being a wife and queen no longer defines her existence. The roles of wife and queen lose their connection to her inner self and emotional nature. She upholds her duties yet recognizes she contains attributes which transcend their definitions. She shows compassion instead of fighting against Rama's dismissal. Sita recognizes throughout the story that she has developed into a different person. The story ends with Sita refusing to reconcile because she wants to maintain her status as wife and queen and mother without

seeking validation from anyone. She decides to return to the earth with dignity. Sita demonstrates her strength through her refusal to diminish her true self rather than through enduring pain in Sitayana. Sita's path of resistance unfolds through her ability to find power in enduring challenges while maintaining her independence as a sovereign individual. Majmudar presents Sita as a character who possesses inner strength emerges from her refusal to let suffering diminish her identity.

Authorial Intention:

Through his retelling Amit Majmudar transforms Sita from a passive character into an independent woman who takes control of her own narrative. The traditional Ramayana portrays Sita as a devoted wife who exists in a state of suffering while being forced to make sacrifices. The author uses monologues to create intellectual and emotional depth by showing Sita's inner thoughts through deliberation. The monologues in this work present multiple layers which expose Sita's inner doubts and weaknesses through private reflections and challenge patriarchal norms through questioning and create direct confrontations with oppressive systems through interactive monologues that address absent figures. Majmudar uses resistant monologues to show Sita's voice evolving from sorrowful expressions into assertive statements which establish her moral independence. The retelling achieves feminist expression through Sita's autonomy instead of eliminating traditional elements because it reveals their discriminatory aspects. Through this transformation Sita evolves from being "Rama's consort" into a woman who thinks for herself while fighting against her circumstances to find her own path of memory.

The Forest of Enchantment:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni shows in *The Forest of Enchantments* that Sita maintains a deep spiritual bond with nature which represents her mental state. The Earth gives birth to Sita and she finds solace and assistance in nature while nature remains her constant companion throughout her life. Nature serves as a powerful link between Sita's feelings because it provides her peace during her time in exile and strength during captivity before accepting her back into its embrace when human bonds fail her.

Sita experiences her greatest sense of freedom and vitality during her time in the forest exile. Sita breaks free from palace constraints when she steps into nature's fluid world to listen to birds and experience the earth beneath her bare feet while observing how everything follows the earth's seasonal patterns. The forest provides Sita with a sanctuary where she can exist without royal or marital titles because she remains a woman who responds to the world. The forest receives Sita with peaceful acceptance. The natural world accepts Sita without criticism or expectation for her to use her titles because these belong to men and others who enforce their own rules upon her in Ayodhya. The forest provides Sita with complete liberty and she appreciates both its natural freedom and its structured patterns of time and space which enable her to understand her true self. Through natural imagery Sita frequently communicates her inner thoughts and emotions. The emotional language of Sita consists of flowers and trees and rivers and animals. During her time as a captive in Lanka she finds occasional strength through remembering and feeling the presence of nature. During her imprisonment she keeps the Ashok trees from the garden constantly in her thoughts. The ancient and massive trees function as silent guardians who understand her pain while providing her with gentle compassion which sustains her hope and life continuity.

Through her bond with nature Divakaruni establishes Janaki as Sita's true identity because she is the daughter of the Earth. Nature remains faithful to Sita throughout all times when others turn their backs on her. Her return to the Earth marks her recovery of her authentic self because the Earth remains the only entity that has never let her down. The final act represents her strongest moment because she chooses to return to the natural world that nourished her existence. *The Forest of Enchantments* presents Sita's bond with nature as a symbol of her strength and spiritual connection and feminine power. The story demonstrates her power to survive and heal and develop through all emotional challenges. Nature functions as her sanctuary and reveals her authentic self in this version of the story.

Sitayana:

The spiritual connection between Sita and nature in *Sitayana* presents itself through spiritual means as she finds strength and identity within this nurturing environment. Nature in *Sitayana* functions as Sita's supportive companion and observer and peaceful refuge. The story takes place within a natural environment which extends beyond being a mere backdrop. The natural bond between Sita and Earth exists because she was born from the ploughed earth. Sita's bond with nature reveals her pure character and strong will yet extends beyond cultural expectations to show her fundamental values. During her forest exile Sita found peace in nature which became both her sanctuary and her maternal source of comfort.

Sita finds joy in the basic way of life that exists in the forest during her time there. Sita spent her days with trees and rivers and animals and seasons because she recognized her place in a vast interconnected world beyond the palace's artificial environment. The forest received her without criticism while demanding nothing from her. The forest received her with complete understanding through its peaceful silence. Sita achieves her most genuine self when she escapes from royal life and social gender norms during these moments. Majmudar uses nature imagery in Sita's thoughts to show that her power stems from the peaceful and lovely atmosphere of the forest.

Sita discovered spiritual bonds with natural elements when she was held captive in Lanka through her connection with Ashok Vatika trees and flowers which silently observed her suffering while becoming her companions. The natural world brings life and beauty to her desolate situation even though her circumstances appear without hope. Nature functions as a symbol for Sita's determination because it flexes yet remains unbroken. The bond Sita shares with nature in *Sitayana* proves to be equal to her ability to endure and her power of renewal and strength. The Earth welcomes Sita back to its embrace at the story's conclusion because she returns to her natural origins rather than surrendering to anything. Majmudar uses this technique to show Sita's ecological understanding of the Earth while giving the Earth's authority a sacred feminine power that supports her dual nature as human and divine.

Analysis Of the Forest of Enchantments and Sitayana:

The two authors present different storytelling approaches in *The Forest of Enchantments* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and *Sitayana* by Amit Majmudar yet they create separate yet connected feminist interpretations of the Ramayana. The two versions of Sita's story follow different paths in their portrayal of the character.

Through *The Forest of Enchantments* Divakaruni presents Sita's narrative exclusively from her first-person perspective to let her reclaim her story from patriarchal control while

sharing her emotional depth and personal experiences. Through her choices including the Agni pariksha rejection Sita develops her own identity in Divakaruni's version of the story. Majmudar uses a third-person omniscient verse structure in *Sitayana* to shift between all characters while incorporating philosophical elements and witty dialogue and ironic commentary. Through his distant perspective Majmudar presents Sita as a complex observer who watches love and dharma and justice while being the central emotional and moral force of the story. The narrative of Divakaruni presents an experiential and embodied perspective which explores female survival and sisterhood and domestic politics. Majmudar presents a wide-ranging and playful interpretation of epic traditions while he celebrates Sita's agency and intelligence and dignity through his retelling. The paper shows how Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Amit Majmudar transform the Ramayana through their individual storytelling methods of storytelling which center Sita as an independent character instead of treating her as a secondary figure. *The Forest of Enchantments* by Divakaruni uses a personal storytelling approach to let Sita tell her own story which enables her to regain her lost voice and share her experiences as a woman who faces love loss and exile and motherhood and betrayal. Through her depiction of Mandodari and other female characters Divakaruni shows Sita as a powerful figure who breaks free from patriarchal limitations in the epic tradition.

The lyrical and performative style of *Sitayana* by Majmudar transforms Sita's story into a narrative of survival and personal empowerment. The author presents Sita as an active participant who makes deliberate choices about her life path in his version of the story. Majmudar uses his distinctive writing approach to showcase various Ramayana voices but he dedicates the most attention to Sita's narrative. The author presents a fresh perspective that reveals how women must bear the weight of dharma according to the original male-focused narrative.

The modern re-tellings of the Ramayana represent a major change in how people understand the epic because authors use feminist interpretations to question traditional female stereo-types. The character of Sita evolves from a traditional symbol of chastity and sacrifice into a powerful figure who demonstrates resilience and self-determination and ecological balance through her natural connection and her support of women and her return to the Earth. The two texts present Sita as a living voice which connects ancient mythology to present-day Indian women's experiences through powerful storytelling.

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Coalition Politics: Decline or Resurgence? An Evaluation of the Contemporary Indian Parliamentary Structure

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Abstract

Coalition politics has been an integral part of the history of parliamentary democracy in India. If we analyse national and regional politics over the last four decades, we find that India has transitioned from one-party dominance to a multi-party system. Against the backdrop of the present circumstances, an important question arises- is India returning to an era of majoritarian politics, or is it moving along a new path toward coalition politics? Analysis shows that despite a single party securing a clear majority in the Lok Sabha in 2014 and 2019, coalition (NDA) politics has not lost its relevance. In contemporary politics, pre-election coalitions and regional parties play a more decisive role than ever before. In a diverse country like India, single-party rule often fails to fully address the aspirations of marginalized communities. Coalition politics, on the other hand, opens up democratic space for regional and sectional voices, enabling them to participate in governance at the national level. At present, it can be observed that opposition parties are also attempting to maintain political balance by forming large scale alliance (such as INDIA) to counter single political force. Consequently, it is evident that coalition politics has not come to an end; rather, by means of new strategies and increasing political polarization, the Indian parliamentary system has re-established its strong position.

This paper presents a comprehensive discussion on the future trajectory of coalition politics and the qualitative transformations in the context of the Indian federal structure.

Keywords: Coalition Politics, Parliamentary Democracy in India, Majoritarianism, Federal Structure and Regional Parties, Political Alliances (NDA & INDIA Bloc)

Introduction:

In the history of Indian parliamentary democracy, coalition politics played a pivotal role in forming the government over the years. When no single party is able to secure majority after election results in democracy, political parties choose the path of forming coalition governments. Indian National Congress had been playing dominant role in the Indian Parliamentary since 1952, but this dominance of Indian National Congress in Indian politics came to a halt when the coalition government was formed in 1977 under the leadership of Morarji Desai. Rajni Kothari, an Indian political theorist, coined the term 'congress system' to describe the dominance of Indian National Congress in the Indian parliament over the years. He also termed this political system as 'multiple party system with one party

dominance. However, the influence of Congress party began to decrease after the imposition of emergency during the regime of Mrs Indra Gandhi. A rift in the congress party developed after the demise of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the rift widened when Mrs Gandhi was expelled from the party over the issue of the Presidential Election of 1969. Immediately after her expulsion, he formed a new party named Congress (Requisitionst). Consequently, the Indian National Congress divided into two factions. The old group known as Congress (organisation). Later Congress party led by Mrs Gandhi survived as the main Congress party. In the 1971 election, Congress gained massive victory under Mrs Gandhi's charismatic leadership. Proclamation of nationwide emergency by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister temporarily tarnished her charismatic leadership. As a result, people of India paid her back in her own coin in the 1977 General election. In this election she suffered a heavy loss.

Thus, the first Non-Congress Government was formed at the centre in 1977 under the leadership of Morarji Desai. Though in the 1980 and 1984 election the Indian National Congress got a clear majority, India was at the hands of coalition governments with no major single party between 1996 and 1999. From 1999 onwards India was governed by the coalition governments namely National Democratic Alliance and United Progressive Alliance. India witnessed this phase of coalition governments but not likely the phase of instability from 1989 to 1999 with the election of 1991 as exception when INC led by P.V. Narsima Rao came back with simple majority and completed its full term. From 2014 -2024 India once again witnessed a strong government with a single majority party led by Bharatiya Janata Party. Once again regional parties showed their strength in the 2024 Lok Sabha. In this Lok Sabha, JDU of Nitish Kumar and TDP of Andhra Pradesh are the two main pillars to hold the coalition government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party. In these circumstances, a question is uppermost in the mind of political theorists. Is India returning to the phase of Coalition politics? (Kothari, 2006)

Coalition Politics in India over the years:

From the first election of 1952 Indian National Congress had been enjoying power in parliament till 1975. But declaration of Emergency during the regime of Mrs. Gandhi in 1975 acted as a boomerang and Morarji Desai made most of it by organising non congress parties. Consequently, in 1977 the first non-congress government was emerged under the leadership of Morarji Desai at parliament. However, this government did not show its potential for long. On the other hand, Indra Gandhi tried to regain public support. Morarji Desai resigned from the head of the Government due to internal conflict within the party. Accordingly, the government broke apart before long. Chowdhury Charan Singh took the lead of the Government which was supported externally by the INC. However, very soon, Chowdhury Charan Singh Govt collapsed due to the withdrawal of support of Congress from the Government and the Lok Sabha was dissolved accordingly. (Chakraborty, 2014)

Mrs. Indra Gandhi again rose to power with a striking majority. In this phase of her political career, she faced the instability marked by the rise of separatist movement called Khalistani movement. Mrs. Gandhi confronted the situation with an iron hand. On the order of the Prime Minister, Operation Blue Star was launched in the Golden Temple to eradicate the armed rebellion. This Act shook the many Sheikhs with fury leading to her assassination by her own body guard on 31st October, 2024. At this juncture, her son Mr. Rajib Gandhi assumed the post of Prime Minister. Soon after he was sworn in as the Prime Minister, Lok

Sabha election was declared in the month of December, 1984. Congress party with the face of Rajib Gandhi and the public sympathy following his mother's assassination was given huge mandate by the people in the 1984 General Election forming the govt. However, in 1989 the Indian National Congress again faced the set back as the party was unable to obtain majority. The Indian Parliament again became hung parliament. V.P. Singh became Prime Minister of the coalition government by forming a post poll alliance under the banner National Front Govt and getting support externally from Left and BJP. The introduction of the Mandal Commission for the reservation of the Other Backward Classes during this regime ignited nationwide protest and political unrest. L.K. Advani, the then President of Bharatiya Janata Party, utilized the opportunity of coalition government by organising Rath Yatra all over India to inject the Hindutva Nationalism among the masses and to mobilize the support for constructing Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. BJP an insisted on getting support from V.P. Singh government for Ram Temple cause. V.P Singh refused to surrender his demand and Mr Advani was arrested in Bihar to prevent communal clash. Arrest of Party president evoked strong sentiment within party against the government. The BJP, consequently, discontinued its support from the government leading to the collapse of V.P. Singh Government. After resignation of Mr Shing, Chandra Sekhar took the office as Prime Minister by receiving external support from Congress but Chandra Sekhar Government did survive for long due to many issues such as oil crisis in the Middle East during this time which had unfavourable impact on Indian economy. Besides Chandra Sekhar had developed a dispute with the Congress over the matters of policy making and governance; as a result, congress withdrew its support from Chandra Sekhar paving the way for fresh election. (Khanna, 1999)

In 1991 during the election campaign Mr Rajib Gandhi was assassinated which was a big setback for the Congress Party. A vacuum created within the Congress regarding the leadership. However, in the 1991 election, The INC emerged as the largest single party but did not get absolute majority in spite of that congress managed to form Government by receiving external support of left parties and regional parties. Amid the vacuum of leadership, the veteran congress leader chose Mr. P.V. Narsima Rao as leader of the government and finally broke the political deadlock situation of 2 years. In spite of being a coalition government, the government emphasised the liberation of the economy. If we call the ten years (from 1989 to 1999) an age of coalition govt characterized by instability of govt, the utmost phase of instability occurred between 1996 and 1999 with three Prime Ministers along with Atal Bihari Vajpayee- who served as the Prime Minister of India for 13 days, in the span of three years. Bajpayee assumed the head of the govt throughout 1996-1999. In the 1996 election, BJP showed its strength by becoming the largest party under the leadership of Bajpayee but very soon Bajpayee had to resign after 13 days due to its failure to prove majority in parliament. This initiated the instability in the parliament. Then, soon a new coalition named United Front alliance under the leadership of H.D. Deve Gowda by taking outside support from Congress. But he faced wrath from Congress as there had been disagreement with his leadership. This government, under the leadership of H.D Deve Gowda, remained in power for almost 11 months. However, before facing no confidence motion, he resigned from the post of Prime Minister after the Indian National Congress pulled back its support from the government. In this these circumstances the congress gave their support to the United Front coalition but did not continue to support Deve Gowda as

prime minister. I.K. Gujral entered this scenario of the political stage and he swear as Prime Minister of India in 1997. But very soon after remaining in power for almost one year he had a tussle with the congress party regarding the Jain commission report. On the basis of the report of the Jain commission congress put pressure on I.K Gujral to remove DMK from United front coalition. I. K Gujral refused congress' demand of removing DMK from cabinet. As a result, congress withdrew its support from I.K Gujral government resulting in his resignation from the post of government and subsequently dissolution of Lok Sabha. In the 1998 general election BJP emerged as the largest party. The National Democratic Alliance under the leadership of Bajpayee came to power in 1998. After one year of the formation of the government, Mr. Bajpayee faced no confidence motion and lost by 1 vote. A fresh election was declared accordingly. In this election govt. was formed by NDA with clear majority under Leadership of Bajpayee. This time Bajpayee returned to power with more confidence and completed a five-year tenure in parliament. Bajpayee announced early election in 2004 hoping for a good mandate but he was unable to fathom the strong anti-incumbency against the Govt leading to his defeat in the election.

A new coalition, namely United Progressive Alliance, came to power under the leadership of Dr. Monmohon Singh. This alliance government was given support externally from the Communist Party of India and left parties. In 2008 this government was about to collapse when left parties pulled back its support from the coalition government over the nuclear deal. But Govt continue to exist after some parties and independent parties backed the coalition government. Social welfare schemes, right to education, right to information and economic growth and stability helped UPA come into power again. UPA-II Government entangled themselves with various corruption charges and other economic issues during this period. These issues of UPA-II Govt helped BJP counter the congress and consolidate themselves as an alternative party against corruption in the 2014 election. (Basu, 2019)

Revival of single party in 2014 and 2019:

From 1989 to 2014 Indian parliament was run by several coalition governments. Scenario of government began to change since 2014 when the BJP with the face of Narendra Modi was given huge mandate by the people of India Though BJP contested elections with its alliances, the BJP turned out to be the biggest single largest party that easily passed the magic figure of Indian parliament. Apart from alliances, the BJP alone gained 282 seats. Undoubtedly, it's a great achievement for Narendra Modi as India witnessed after a long period of time that a single party gained absolute majority under the leadership of Mr Modi came to power. Hindutva agenda along with advertisement of Mr. Modi's Gujrat model pave the way of coming to power. In the 2019 election BJP alone utilizing Hindutva politics obtained more seats than that of 2014. Mr. Modi again came to power with more confidence. The presence of Congress as the opposition party failed to act in parliament. In spite of being a coalition government the BJP, having achieved absolute majority, played a significant role in decision making without much consideration of its alliances. In this Lok Sabha, roughly speaking, the role of opposition parties had been reduced in governance.

The 2024 Election: Indian parliament again embraced the coalition politics:

Majoritarian politics came to halt in the 2024 election. Most of the political analysts thought the BJP alone would break the record of Congress under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi in 1984 when congress alone got 400 seats out of 514 Lok Sabha seats. In democracy people would finally decide the mandate. Modi's chariot with the aura of Hindutva stopped at 240.

On the other hand, if the opposition alliance namely, INDIA had wanted to form the government, they would have depended on the two bigger alliances. After a period of ten years opposition parties asserted their role in governance. Once the giant BJP had to depend on two alliances- one is Chandrababu Naidu and the other is Nitisha Kumar's JDU. On the other hand, if the opposition alliance namely, INDIA had wanted to form the government, they would have depended on the two bigger alliances. After a period of ten years opposition parties established themselves as formidable forces in parliament. People of India again showed the Single Majority party that India, like its unity in diversity, has also diversity in the field of politics.

Coalition government and federal structure of Govt:

Coalition politics play a significant role in the federal structure in parliamentary democracy of India. Parties that have a bigger presence all over India become dependent on regional parties as their alliances are required to form government. As a result, regional parties play crucial roles in shaping policies and decisions including financial aid to the states. When coalition governments run, other political alliances particularly regional parties can assert their other political priorities which sometimes become very effective to the marginalized sections of people in a country like India. Coalition politics has demerits too. Coalition government, no doubt, strengthens the regional interest, but principal political party in the coalition government, sometimes, has to compromise with the demand of other alliances which sometimes can hamper the national interest and can also challenge national stability. The principal party in the coalition Government sometimes cannot take firm decisions in shaping decisions that matters national interest. In coalition politics, sometimes, the government faces the risk of collapse due to internal conflict within the alliance which is not good for the stability of a country.

Coalition politics in West Bengal:

Coalition politics West Bengal is not exceptional. Coalition politics in West Bengal started in 1967 when Bangla Congress made alliance with left parties. Though this coalition government did not last long, this coalition government showed how two ideologically different parties formed government for the sake of political interest. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) along with left parties namely Forward Block, RSP was in power for 34 years. Left parties exerted influence on the elite class as well as on the masses through its ideologies and activities. During this left regime, common people actively participated in the politics.

In 2011, 34 years of 'left regime' lost to the coalition namely Trinamool Congress and Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee. From 2016 onwards TMC alone contested elections in West Bengal. Though the ruling TMC govt fought alone in the election, the opposition parties making alliances fought election in West Bengal. In 2016, Communist Party along with left parties of India made alliance with their arch rival-INC. In spite of its alliance with its arch rival, the left front was defeated by the ruling TMC.

In 2021 also the left parties made alliance with the INC and Indian Secular Front but faced the fate of miserable defeat. While the Indian Secular Front in the coalition managed to get one 1 seat, the CPIM and INC did not get any seat in the election. The ruling TMC emerged victorious with a clear majority, winning more seats than ever before. Worth mentioning in the history of West Bengal politics is the emergence of BJP as opposition party.

Conclusion:

Coalition politics is not unusual in the largest democracy of the world, rather it reflects the basic characteristics of the country- unity in diversity. Congress was given mandate consistently by the people of India over the years. With the passage of time people shifted their mandate to another party in hope that their grievance would be addressed. Unfortunately, successive govt failed to fully resolved issues. It is true that a stable govt is much more capable than an unstable one. In this context we can affirm that a coalition government which often face the risk of collapse due to internal conflict among the alliances sometimes struggle to meet the demand of the people. In the whirl of the Modi wave many believed that the coalition politics lost its credibility. The scenario started changing after the general election of 2024 when coalition politics once again came to the forefront. In this scenario regional parties as usual, would emphasise their demand more than ever in the coming days. Upcoming 2029 elections both the alliances of NDA and alliances of INDIA will try to achieve their respective goal- one striving to retain power and the other aiming to gain the power. Anticipating the 2029 election it is quite obvious that the Indian parliament will again embrace coalition government.

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Development Induced Displacement and Resettlement in India

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Abstract

Displacement and resettlement due to developmental projects have emerged as a major public policy and human rights concerns in contemporary India. Since independence, large dams, coalmines, industry, power plants, infrastructure construction and urban expansion projects have evicted millions of people from their land, livelihoods, communities and social environments. According to various studies, after independence more than 60 million people have been displaced due to development in India of which the proportion of tribals and Dalits are very high. This displacement is not just a physical displacement; rather, it creates multidimensional issues such as loss of livelihoods, breakdown of social networks, cultural erosion, loss of access to common resources and psychological trauma.

The article analyses the historical context of development-related displacement, starting from colonial land acquisition policies to post-independence large-scale industrial and river valley projects. The real picture of eviction and rehabilitation is highlighted through discussion of various incidents, including the Narmada Valley Project, Rourkela Steel Project, Delhi Metro, Tata Nano Project in Singur. The National Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Policy (2003, 2007) and the policy limitations, lack of transparency, lack of gender sensitivity and problems of effective implementation are also reviewed.

Keywords: Development, Displacement, Resettlement, Rehabilitation

In India and around the world development and displacement have become major concerns in public policy as well as in administration. Displacement is happening as a consequence of developmental projects, with farmers, agricultural labourers, especially tribals and Dalits being the main victims. In India, more than 60 million people have been displaced in the past few years. Out of these, 50 percent are tribals and 20 percent are Dalits. Displacement of people usually gives rise to severe socio-economic and cultural problems.

Since independence, developmental projects induced displacement has emerged as a severe human rights concern in the country. Development is crucial for the economic growth of the nation; on the other hand, the people of the country have to pay some social, cultural and human costs as the results of this development, which are rarely measured. However, over the past few years, policy makers have acknowledged displacement as a serious concern and this concern has flagged the way for the rise of several perspectives related to this field. However, it is true that a complete and inclusive solution to this issue

has not yet been accomplished. Many studies on development induced displacement and resettlement have revealed that displacement not only moves affected peoples from one place to another, but that displacement is often forced and involuntary. However, it is not a one-time event. It creates interconnected problems such as the destruction of livings, the breakdown of social networks, the loss of traditional cultures, the loss of access to common property and psychological impacts that cannot be compensated. Many studies have also revealed that resettlement measures often fail to re-establish sustainable livings for project-affected persons because they are not long-term oriented and lack public participation. In many developmental projects that result in displacement, it has been observed that the difficulties of displaced people remain unsettled for years after relocation.

Development Induced Displacement in Indian Context:

Displacement of people from their land and livelihoods became a feature of Indian history even before the British arrived. Before British authority, highly trained agricultural organizations ousted tribal farmers and unorganized groups from their ancestral lands. Colonialism's economic objective resulted in the stealing of natural resources in order for the colonial state to satisfy its needs through quick industrial and trade expansion to the West. Legal measures like the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) of 1894 strengthened governmental power and legitimized any type of state-sponsored acquisition. The collapse of colonialism resulted in a change from one type of progress to another. The biggest justification for advancement and modernization in India was that modern science and technology, as well as the development of basic infrastructure, could improve people's level of living. This development has only benefited a small number of people, while thousands have paid the cost without benefiting. The Indian experience with dislocation caused by development initiatives indicates that government has made little effort to decrease the scope and trauma of dislocation and to reintegrate the displaced on a wide scale. One major cause is the lack of respect of basic human rights. Sometimes even when growth is planned, the impact on individuals is not considered. Displacement is frequently viewed as an insignificant issue because planners and policymakers fail to recognize the actual truth.

A brief history of Development Induced Displacement in India:

Development-caused displacement in the country is not a new issue; nevertheless, prior displacements were generally as a consequence of multifaceted river basin projects such as reservoirs and mining operations. We have considerable evidence of displacements dating back to the Gupta dynasty. In the medieval era, the Jai Samand Lake, created near Udaipur in the eighteenth century, evicted many residents from their ancestral homes. However, due to the small population and large amount of barren territory, displacement occurrences did not entirely disrupt or disrupt the lives of the people affected. During the colonial period, displacements occurred in a variety of places for raw resources for the development of industry in England, including the Raniganj coalfields, Assam tea gardens, Karnataka coffee fields, and so on (Fernandes, 2008).

Forced migration increased in India after independence due to growing populations, increasing population density, and the need to address the developmental requirements of millions of individuals. Apart from enormous enterprises, mining, river valley dams and other infrastructure initiatives, various newly launched construction projects across India

have resulted in massive involuntary migrations. Muchkund Dubey (2008) states in this context,

“Now human population is being uprooted by economic development, development of infrastructure, including the construction of roads, ports, airports, power stations, slum relocation, the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), and other developmental initiatives like acquiring land for entrepreneurs to build factories, shopping centers, parks, swimming pools, hotels, and night clubs.” (Dubey, 2008)

Independent India is littered with examples of growth-related migration of people in the pursuit of national objectives. Be it the construction of dams on Narmada, Sardar Sarovar, and Tehri involving several states or the building of dams at Hirakund, Pong, Koelkaro, Silent Valley, Tipaimukh, Dambur, Pagladia; energy and transmission initiatives across states implemented by National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL); the mining sectors run by Coal India Limited (CIL), Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), and Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC), mineral extraction in the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha. More steel manufacturing facilities have been built in Jharkhand and Odisha, including Rourkela, Bhilai, Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO), Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), Pohang Iron and Steel Company (POSCO), Nilachal Ispat Nigam Limited, Jindal Steel Company, and, in recent times, Special Economic Zones in Nandigram and Singur in West Bengal, Jhajjar in Haryana, Raigarh in Maharashtra, and Kashipur in Odisha. The Narmada Sardar Sarovar Reservoir project, which has displaced approximately 12.7 million people, is possibly the most well-known forced migration project in human history (Dreze et al., 1997).

The World Bank removed itself as a funding agency from the Sardar Sarovar initiative after receiving strong criticism from several groups, including civic organization members, NGOs, environmentalists, and social activists, for being apathetic and indifferent to the matter of resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) and human rights breaches by residents.

Because to policymakers' negligence and ignorance, there are currently no exact numbers on the total amount of persons uprooted. According to the World Bank's Environment Department, dams' construction, urban growth, and infrastructure and transportation initiatives cause around 10 million people to be displaced each year throughout the world. According to a single estimate, infrastructure projects have displaced 80 to 90 million people over the previous decade. This figure is surprisingly high, but it fails to compensate for the large amount of displaced people living near the construction project, whose livelihoods and socioeconomic status have been seriously affected by the initiative, even if they aren't forced to leave their legally acquired lands.

When we look at the scenario in India, the magnitude of this issue is worrying. According to a single estimate, India has relocated more than sixty million people since its independence. The majority of them didn't get adequate rehabilitation (Mathur, 2008). According to rehabilitation studies, approximately 20 million people have been relocated in India as part of development programs in the past, yet nearly 75 percent of them are still not rehabilitated. Surprisingly, more than 40% of the displaced individuals were tribals and disadvantaged farmers who depend solely on agriculture and woods. According to the Working Committee on Development and Welfare of Scheduled Tribes' report, the consequence of development initiatives on the disadvantaged is being studied. According

to an inquiry conducted during the Eighth Five Year Plan (1990-95) on the condition of tribal rehabilitation programs, about 8,14,000 of the 16,94,000 individuals uprooted in the 110 projects reviewed were tribes. Taneja and Thakkar (2000) estimate that dam construction alone will cause 20 to 40 million people to be dislocated in India. The displacement figures explicitly show that development planners have planted the seeds of unrest and aggression among the population by removing millions of farmers and underprivileged people from their ancestral homes. The evolving condition has resulted in a contemporary battlefield in which the bourgeoisie (the affluent and capitalists) and the proletariat (peasants and marginalized) will compete for supremacy. The evolving circumstance warns that an increasing number of unemployed disadvantaged individuals, along with settlers' discontent, has the potential to burst and disrupt the peaceful social order. 'Sacrificing' people for the protection of biodiversity, animals, and advancement is objectionable not only from a human rights and social perspective, but also from an ecological and financial one (Modi, 2009).

Development-related migration has increased many of India's social and economic challenges. It has been neglected in the context of societal aims such as preserving ownership of land, executing land reforms and distributing land, to which the authorities has committed. By depriving a huge number of displaced individuals, it has intensified the complex matter of poverty alleviation. Statistics from the Planning Commission demonstrate this point of view. According to a poverty forecast presented by the Tendulkar Committee (Government of India, 2009), established by the Planning Commission, 37.2 percent of the national population lives below the poverty level, with 41.8 percent in rural areas and 25.7 percent in urban regions, which is in contrary to the nation's rapid economic expansion in the era of globalization, privatization, and liberalization (LPG) (Government of India, 2009).

Development-related Displacement incidents in India:

Delhi Metro Project:

In this endeavour, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation has accelerated the eviction process by relocating slum people to make space for the metro line. It has been stated that the metro routes were designed to exclude the impoverished while benefiting the middle class. Approximately 2,502 slum residents were relocated during the initial phase of development. According to data collected under the Right to Information Act in 2005, 699 slum-dwelling households (about 3,500 individuals) were relocated from land administered by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). The Delhi Metro Rail initiative has been modified amended multiple times since its inception, and there is a scarcity of solid government statistics on the number of persons affected by it. The initial proposal called for four stations to provide direct access to slum areas, but during execution, this was modified to promote and connect the middle-class society with businesses and markets throughout the National Capital Territory (NCT) as well as the National Capital Region (NCR) (Sharma, 2016).

Simhadri Thermal Power Project:

This project in Andhra Pradesh's Visakhapatnam district evicted 3120 households across 14 villages by acquiring 3384 acres of land. Displaced individuals were forced to migrate and suffered while others benefited. The governing body has often justified these programs by claiming the need for greater development and growth. The displaced people

have been unable to restore their old standard of living and have suffered losses in the advancement process. The project has caused unrest and deprivation among those affected by it. With the commencement of this project, 87 percent of the residents were forced out of their lands, and around 716 acres of land being used by the villagers for feeding their cattle have been lost. Many families have switched from joint to single family units (Sharma 2016).

Narmada River Valley Project:

The Narmada River, one of the country's seven rivers, is 813 miles long, starting in Madhya Pradesh and flowing westward to the ocean. The Narmada River Valley Project first came up in 1947, with plans to build 30 massive dams and dozens of minor dams. The project intended to supply hydroelectricity, irrigation water for agriculture, and sanitation facilities, particularly in drought-prone regions. The four states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan battled over electricity and water sharing. The state of Gujarat gained the most benefit from the Narmada Dam Project, while bearing the majority of the costs. However, the states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have experienced the biggest environmental and social damage. Although water concerns are primarily state-level, the government of India was forced to intervene in 1969 to mediate a solution between state governments via the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT). Over several years, the states negotiated an agreement on each state's rights and obligations, as well as enhanced the basin-wide strategy to the project. The Sardar Sarovar Dam is the world's largest dam, submerging 37,000 hectares (142 square miles) of land in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh and expelling over 200,000 people (Wet, 2006).

Mandira Dam Project:

The Mandira Dam Project is part of Odisha's Rourkela Mega Steel Project, also known as the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP), which is an initiative of the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), a government agency. In the mid-1950s, one of the world's most modern steel factories was established in Rourkela, Odisha. In 1953, the Indian government met with German steel corporations. The initial declaration came out in 1954 to acquire land for the steel factory and the new settlement. The Odisha government bought 19722.69 acres of land for construction of the Rourkela Steel Plant, displaced 2465 residents from 32 villages. In 1955, German engineers and architects went to the site. The Mandira Dam announcement was made in 1957. In 1957-58, the Hirakund Dam Company established the Mandira Dam on the Shankh River to supply water to the Rourkela Steel Plant. For the Mandira Dam project, 11923.98 acres of the most fertile land were bought and 1193 families from 31 villages were displaced. The overall number of displaced people was 8785. Thus, more over 30,000 acres of tribal lands were bought for the Rourkela Steel Plant, Ispat Janpad, Railways, Fertilizer Janpad, and Mandira Dam projects. It is known as the Mandira Dam project because the dam is near Mandira village in Dumerjore Gram Panchayat, Kuanarmunda Block, Sundargarh District (Sharma, 2016).

In addition, development initiatives such as the Tehri Dam construction project, the Jaipur Ring Road construction in Rajasthan, the Sita Mata Sanctuary, the Haldia Industrial Estate in West Bengal, the Kochi Airport in Kerala, the Polavaram Dam construction in Andhra Pradesh and others have uprooted thousands of people across India.

Issues of Resettlement & Rehabilitation in India:

India's after independence prosperity has been centred on huge dam building and significant businesses such as coal extraction, power stations, and highways, which have led in widespread population displacement. The bulk of development initiatives have displaced many people from their original residences and altered land use, water, and resource utilization patterns. It is apparent that numerous development initiatives were initiated without account for rehabilitation or relocation prerequisites. When there was no national resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) policy in place, state governments or even project agencies implemented their own principles and ad hoc strategies to handle the displaced people's rehabilitation and resettlement (Pandey and Rout 2004).

The National Policy for Resettlement and Rehabilitation or NPRR (2003), specified the minimum amenities and compensation necessary for the resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) of persons uprooted as a consequence of a land acquisition for "public purposes". It created a grievance and monitoring procedure at the state and the national levels, as well as shared accountability for R&R between the state government and the Project Implementing Authority (PIA). Its main objective has been to assist Impoverished and indigenous families, particularly those who are at risk of losing access to their ancestral resources and livelihoods. The law stipulates that displaced individuals should have a better opportunity of living respectfully and achieving a living in the rehabilitated areas. The Supreme Court of India (2004) held that the rightful spirit of the Constitution is frequently neglected when it comes to the displacement and rehabilitation of displaced persons (Das and Das, 2014).

Most of state governments' rehabilitation initiatives and strategies, which relied on the 1984 LAA, had a very specific concept of compensation. It was determined that there was no such policy for displaced people between the 1950s and the 1980s. Opposition to unfair rehabilitation among displaced people and civic organizations emerged in 1946 with the Hirakud dam in Odisha. However, the resistance gained strength in the late 1970s with the construction of the Narmada dam, resulting in the Anti-Dam movement. This campaign was significant in persuading the state to revise its resettlement and rehabilitation initiatives. Furthermore, it heavily affected the Indian government's decision to develop a national resettlement and rehabilitation program (Kumar & Mishra, 2018).

In 1985, a group from the Ministry of Welfare produced the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy. It took a long time, with arguments over multiple draft rules spanning more than 20 years. In 2004, the National Policy for Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R) for Household Displaced in 2003 was implemented. However, in order to mitigate the negative consequences of relocation, this method must be more transparent and democratic. As a consequence, the national R&R policy was revised, and the R&R law was enacted in 2007. However, because the gender issue was overlooked, this strategy failed once more. Since 1985, there has been debate regarding relocation and rehabilitation initiatives (Pervez 2008). India's resettlement and rehabilitation initiatives suffer from a lack of transparency. According to the available literature, academia, NGOs, and government departments all provide divergent data about the displaced. Resettlement and rehabilitation programs continue to get little consideration from government officials, despite the fact that involuntary transfer is particularly sensitive. Viegas (1992) stated that the Hirakud dam displaced 1.6 lakh people, despite official estimates of only 1.1 lakh. This

data shows that government personnel are underestimating the population (Kumar & Mishra, 2018).

Furthermore, the displaced people were seriously hurt by a scarcity of land for compensation, making harder for them to acquire a plot of land elsewhere with the poor compensations they received. The displaced individuals who were cultivating the forest land experienced much more as an outcome of government's inability to pay monetary or land compensation. Given that the government had identified the land they were cultivating as state property. It put a lot of burden on the displaced people, who were already suffering tremendously (Nayak, 2013).

Conclusion:

India is a prospering nation with various development initiatives underway each year. Displacement, particularly involuntary displacement, results in the forced removal of millions of people from their ancestral homelands. The multitude of ecological risks resulting from poorly planned and implemented development projects have a severe influence on the lives of millions of people. Displacement disrupts social life, resulting in social disintegration, loss of access to common property resources, homelessness, unemployment, poverty and shortages of food, landlessness, and increased morbidity. Financial growth for displaced people, as well as resettlement within socially secure and institutionally effective communities, appear to be conditions for successful relocation and rehabilitation. Humans' intricate relationship with environment has tremendous effects on their political, social, cultural, and economic well-being. These connections must not be overlooked while preparing to relocate people from their home communities. Relocating people from one culture to another without taking into account these elements produce long-term discomfort and difficulties since rural traditions, faiths, and social behaviours are heavily influenced by their close relationship with their surroundings. To provide a responsible vision of fair progress, a development ethics based on social fairness, ethical principles, and the rights of the displaced must be formed.

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