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**Artist: Basudev Mondal. Title: Hope of a New Dawn.**

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## PREFACE

It is our pleasure that we have been able to publish our December, issue of our journal. We are grateful to our members for their continuous support and hard work. We have tried our level best without any compromise with the quality of the journal. We hope we shall be carrying out the publication of the journal in future. Our journal has been recognized all over the world which is a great achievement to us. A beautiful painting from renowned artist Basudev Mondal, has been placed on the cover page of the journal as usual, who is also a member of our journal society. The title of the painting is "Hope of a New Dawn".

Basudev Mondal is Assistant Professor & H.O.D, Bengali at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Satabarshiki Mahavidyalaya, Helencha, W.B. Apart from his teaching profession he is a renowned artist. He is one of the members of the board of associate editors of our journal. He has achieved various awards and honours in the field of art and painting. Some of the achievements are mentioned here:

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Always our effort is to present a good quality journal before the society as a whole and before the intellectual community in particular. Any valuable suggestion for the betterment of the quality of this journal from your end is highly appreciated.

Thank you.

**Dr. Barin Kumar Roy,  
Editor-in-Chief, IJIRD.**



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## PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SVADHARMA IN ANCIENT INDIAN SOCIETY

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(Paper published on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2025.)

### Abstract

“*śhreyānsvadharmaviguṇaḥparadharmātsvaanuṣṭhitāt*

*Swadharmenidhanamśhreyāḥparadharmā bhayāvahaḥ*”<sup>1</sup>

*Meaning of this verse is that it is far better to perform one's natural prescribed duty, though tinged with faults, than to perform another's prescribed duty, though perfectly. In fact, it is preferable to die in the discharge of one's duty, than to follow the path of another, which is fraught with danger. But there is a lot of confusions associated with the meaning of dharma. Some may think dharma means Hinduism, Buddhism all these or one may understand dharma and religion are same. Then a question may arise dharma is practiced by everyone in this world, but is it same thing which everyone practices? Is there any difference between dharma and religion? So, the meaning of dharma, prescribed by Śāstras, needs more attention because wrong interpretation of dharma can make a lot of trouble in our lives. Some may think the real nature of dharma is revealed only to those who are engaged in meditation in isolated place far away from social life. But in my paper, I will show this kind of thought is not completely right because in this world only dharma creates difference between man and the bestiality of man. So in first section of my paper, I will show-what is the meaning of dharma? Second section will be on-what are those dharmas common for all mankind? In third section I shall discuss about the specific dharmas of mankind. In fourth section different varṇa systems and their duties and difference between varṇaveda and jāti veda shall be discussed. In fifth section or in the last section I shall try to make understand the meaning of svadharma prescribed in Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā.*

*The methodology that I am going to use throughout my research is qualitative.*

*Key words: Duty (dharma), Svadharma, Varna-Āśrama (class divisions- stages of life), Varnaveda, Jāti veda, Svabhāva.*

### Introduction

As we know *dharmas* is one of our important pursuits or *Puruṣārtha*. It has many meanings. In *Mīmāṃsā* philosophy, Jaimini characterizes *dharma* as *Codonālakṣaṇaḥarthaḥdharma*<sup>2</sup> here *Codonā* means *vidhivākya* i.e., the sentences which are



conducive to Vedic sacrifices. Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsākas also considers *dharmaas* different kind of rituals and Vedic sacrifices prescribed in *Śāstras*. According to Prābhākara Mīmāṃsākas, *dharma* is *Apūrva*, which arises out of *yogādivehitokarmas*. Nayāya- Vaiśeṣika holds *dharma* as a quality which resides in the soul substance. Jainas think *dharma* is *pudgala*, which is subtle product of effects. Koutilya says *dharma* is root of happiness i.e., *sukhasyamūlamdharmah*<sup>3</sup>. In other words, there can be no happiness without *dharma*. Kanad says that *Yataḥabhyudayaniḥśreyassiddhiḥsaḥdharmah*<sup>4</sup> i.e., “*dharma* is that from which the accomplishment of exaltation and the supreme good results”<sup>5</sup>. Here ‘*abhudaya*’ means knowledge of the essence and ‘*niḥśreyas*’ means complete cessation of pain. As Ashoka mentions that *dharma* of a living body is to render service. So, it can be understood that meaning of *dharma* is not easy to grasp. One may understand *dharmaas* religion. But religion is not *dharma*. For example, we can say the property of fire (*āgunerdharma*) is to burn. But we cannot say religion of fire is to burn. Further, religion stands for certain human culture, behavior, attitude towards life of the conscious human being not for the sub-human or non-human beings. For example, we can talk about the religion of man, but we cannot talk about religion of bird, other animals or fire etc. But conscious animate or unconscious in animate objects do have *dharma*. But religion is a kind of opinion or it is always associated with ‘ism’ like Hinduism, Buddhism and so on. But *dharma* is neither opinion nor associated with any ‘ism’. *Dharma* stands for property, intrinsic nature or inherent quality of something. All kind of differences of opinion emanate and lose its purpose after understanding *dharma* as religion. So, a question may arise-what does *dharma* mean? From *Dharmasūtra*, the term *dharma* is borrowed from the Sanskrit *dhātudhṛ* which literally means to sustain or to uphold, *dhṛ* with *man*(*dhṛ+man*) is *dharma*. Let us now understand the meaning of *dharma* prescribed in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. According to the *Bhagavad Gītā* *dharma* means religious social duty, which is made for all men belongs to each class. In the ancient society duties were decided based on their *āśramas* and *varṇas*. *Varṇas* means social classes or divisions and *āśramas* means stages of life. There are four *varṇas* in *Bhagavad Gītā* (BG 13/4)<sup>6</sup> i.e. *Brāhmiṇ*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra*. The *āśramas* are *Brahmacārya* (the unmarried students), *Gārhastya* (married person), *Vānaprastya* (recluse), *Samnyāsa* (yogis or monks). There are some common duties or *sādhāraṇadharmas* and some specific duties or *Viśeṣadharmas*. The underlying reason for adhering to these duties is to show that one can achieve *mokṣa* on being dutiful and the purpose of this *varṇa* system is ‘pre-resolved or avoid all forms of disputes originating from conflicts within business and encroachment on respective duties’<sup>7</sup>. In the next section, I will be talking about the *sādhāraṇadharmas* and it will also be understood that in ancient Indian society that *dharma* could be achieved by all men respective of their classes though my discussion.

## I

*Sādhāraṇadharmas* is a kind of duty for all mankind irrespective of one’s stages of life and one’s own class, culture etc. The purpose of these kind of duties is to protect the society from all kinds of communal egoism and intolerance, which can break the feet of the society. Also to remind them all that they have some obligated duties for their society where they live



in. Prof. S.K. Maitra suggests in his book *the Ethics of the Hindus* that 'these *sādhāraṇadharmas* are obligatory for all men as men, not merely as a member of a particular society or community'<sup>8</sup>. In *Manu Samhita*, Manu describes ten obligatory duties<sup>9</sup>; these are- *Dhṛti* (steadfastness), *Kṣamā*(forgiveness), *Dama* (application), *Asteya* (avoidance of theft), *Śouca* (cleanliness), *Indriya nigraha* (repression of the sensibilities and sensuous appetites), *Dhī* (wisdom), *Vidyā* (learning), *Satya* (veracity), *Akrodh* (restraint of anger). According to *Manu Samhita*, the person is pious if he possesses or acquires those above ten qualities. It can be seen from the above list that these duties are meant to be performed for the attainment of an individual's perfection and not for the social service. So, we may say that the duties mentioned by Manu is merely for the self-purification. There are differences between Manu's classification of common duties & *Praśastapāda's* classification of common duties. *Praśastapāda* deletes some common duties from Manu's list (*Dhṛti, Kṣamā, Dama, Dhī, Vidyā*), and adds more duties; these are: when mind is extremely happy knowing *dharma* (*cittaprasannatā*) is called *Dharmeśraddha*, moral earnestness, regard for the spiritual refraining from injury to living beings (*Ahimsā*), seeking the good of creatures (*Bhūtahitatva*), speaking of the truth (*Satyavacana*), refraining from theft (*Asteya*), sexual continence (*Brahmacarya*), sincerity, purity of motive (*Anupadhā*), renouncing or restraining anger (*krodhavarjana*), ablution, personal cleanliness (*Abhiṣecana, Snāna*). The eating of linseeds and other specified substances on special occasions for the *śucior* purification of the body (*śucidravyasevana*), devotion to the deities recognised by the Vedas (*Viśiṣṭa-Devatā-bhakti*), fasting on specified occasions (*upavāsa*), moral watchfulness (*Apramāda*) i.e., the unflinching performance of the unconditional duties.<sup>10</sup>

So, as we see from the above list that these duties are not only for the self-purification of an individual but for the benefits of the society. Tapan Kumar Chakraborty suggests that the individual instead of remaining confined to his own realm can go beyond himself if he performs common duties prescribed by *Praśastapāda* religiously. He also says, "The moral life of the individual is constituted not merely by individual capacity of a moral agent but also by his social obligations."<sup>11</sup> These common duties are also the pre-conditions of the specific duties i.e., if there is a dilemma between common and specific duties, one must perform common duties first. Now in the next section, I am going to discuss about the specific duties of an individual according to their social classes and the stages of life.

## II

*Praśastapāda* on *Praśastapādabhasya* presented some other duties called specific duties or *Viśeṣadharmas*. All these duties are different according to their classes and their stages of life.

*Brāhmiṇ's* specific duties are: *Brāhmaṇasyapratigrahaadhyāpanayajñañisvavarṇavihitāścasaṃskāraḥ* i.e., *brāhmiṇs* can accept gifts from others to maintain their lives (*pratigraha*). *Adhyāpana* means *brāhmiṇs* can teach people belong to the different classes by means of recitation. The *brāhmiṇs* must sustain themselves out of *dakṣiṇā* received from disciples by imparting Vedic teachings to them. *Yajñañā* means the performance of sacrifices, worshiping etc. *svavarṇavihitāścasaṃskāraḥ* stands for the eligibility to perform Vedic rites of forty-eight

different varieties. But these duties are mandatory for some *brāhmiṇs*, not for all. These are forbidden for the people belong to the other castes<sup>12</sup>.

The specific duties for *kṣatriya* are: *Kṣatriyasamyakprajāpālanaṃasādhunigrahaḥjuddheṣuanibartanaṃ*, i.e., *kṣatriya* will protect people from external aggressions and internal disturbances as well as govern them with the way of peace and prosperity belonging to his territory (*prajāpālana*). To chastise the wicked is also a task of *kṣatriya* (*asādhunigraha*). Not to come back from the battlefield till the achievement of victory is one of the major tasks of them (*juddheṣuanibartanaṃ*). And to follow the way of life prescribed for them is also a specific duty for *kṣatriya*<sup>13</sup>.

Specific duties for *Vaiśya* are: *Vaiśyasyakaryavikrayakṛṣipāśupalanānisvākiyaścasaṃskaraḥ*. *Vaiśya* can buy commodities from others after paying a proper value or price for that thing (*karya*). They can sell commodities in a legitimate price or value to other (*vikraya*). Agricultural work and breeding, rearing of cattle (*kṛṣipāśupalana*) and to follow the way of life prescribed for them are the specific duties for *Vaiśyas*<sup>14</sup>.

The specific duties for *sūdra*'s are: *sūdrasyapūrvavarṇaparatantryāṃāmantrikaścakriyaḥ*. *Sūdra*'s duty is to be in the subjection to the other three classes (*pūrvavarṇaparatantrya*) and they only can observe rites but they have no right to utter any sacred mantras (*āmantrikakriyā*). And they also cannot perform any sacrifices<sup>15</sup>.

*Āśramas* like *varṇa*'s are also four different kinds. Such as *Brahmacārya*, *Gārhastya*, *Vānaprastya*, *Sannyāsa*<sup>16</sup>.

Duties for *Brahmacāryas* or the unmarried students practicing sexual abstinence are to serve, to attend, and to take care of the comfort of their preceptors (*guruśuśrūṣā*). They have to collect fuel for sacrificial ceremonies (*indhan- āharana*). They also collect alms to maintain their livelihood (*bhāikṣya*); And they will also offer incense to the sacrificial fire (*aguauhomaḥ*).

The stage at which a married person live with their family is called *Gārhastya*. They must perform five sacrificial ceremonies or *Yajñas* and also perform *nityakarmas* every morning and evening by means of their self-earning. Offering of something to the bhutas or elements is also their duty (*bhūtayajñas*). They will serve and entertain guests (*manuṣyajñas*). Offering incense to the sacrificial fire is *devayajñas*, *Pitṛyajñas* is paying respect to the dead by observing the funeral rites and other ceremonies. *Brahmayajñas* is reading the sacred texts such as Veda. Prof S. K Maitra said, "These five *yajñas* or sacrifices prescribed by *Praśastapāda* for the married person and their observance are binding on him only if he has necessary strength or capacity (*śakti*) to undergo the hardships involved"<sup>17</sup>.

Duties for the recluse (*Vānaprastya*): a person, who after completing the duties of his married life, is living a life of celibacy at home is called *Vānaprasti*. They must maintain



such duties like wearing the bark of trees (*valkalādidhāraṇa*), letting their hair grow (*keśādidhāraṇa*)<sup>18</sup>.

A person is *sannyāsi* or he becomes *sannyāsi* mendicant-seer after attaining the *śraddhā* (mental serenity) or *chittaprasād* (equanimity) in their lives. The duties of *Sannyāsa* or *yati*: to practise *Yamas* and *Niyamas*. i.e., some acts of self-discipline to become *sannyāsi*. These *yamas* are- they will not harm any creature (*Ahiṃsā*), they will be truthful to others (*Satya*), never steal others' property (*Asteya*), refrain from sexual activity (*Brahmacharya*). *Niyamas* are- they need to maintain cleanliness of their body and mind (*śauca*), contentment of the mind (*santoṣa*), devotion to the god (*tapas*), they have to recite Vedic texts (*Svādhyaya*), and they have to meditate on the glories and the perfection of god (*Īśvarapranidhāna*). These *yamas* are for the self-restraint or the refraining one's own senses from the other distractions. On the other hand, *Niyamas* are the rule of self-realization. *Yamas* are negative rituals but *niyamas* are positive rules of self-development<sup>19</sup>.

After discussing all these, one may ask- what is the difference between *varṇaveda* and *jāti veda*? Now I am going to show the difference between these two in the next section.

### III

One may think *varṇaveda* and *jātiveda* are same thing, but I am going to show that caste system prevailed in the ancient India is very different from the caste system prevailed in today's India. As I have said earlier, *varṇa* is created by god based on *guṇa* and *karma*. Usually *varṇa* means colour like red, black and so forth. But in Bhagavad Gītā, *varṇa* means three *guṇas* (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamaḥ*). In the introduction of *Sāṃkhyakārikā* by Īśvarakṛṣṇa, *prakṛti* is composed of three *guṇas* like-*lahitaśuklakṛṣṇa*<sup>20</sup>. According to *sāṃkhyas*, the *Prakṛti* is an *equilibrium* state of these three *guṇas* at the beginning of the creation (*svarūpapariṇām*). The changes start in the *Prakṛti* when these three *guṇas* began to operate. These three *guṇas* contradict, co-exist and cooperate with each other to create objects. *Sattva* or *śukla* is compared with white colour and the *rajas* or *lahita* and the *tamaḥ* or *kṛṣṇa* are compared with red and black colour respectively. Variations of these three *guṇas* give rise to the variation of different castes like *Brāhmiṇ*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra*. It is necessary to understand that these three *guṇas* are present in all men, but they are present in different proportion. For example, the proportion of *Sattvagūṇa* is high in *brāhmiṇs* more than other two *guṇas* so that the nature of *brāhmiṇs* is different from other castes. They are more interested in reading, teaching because the characteristic of *Sattva guṇa* is associated with knowledge, happiness, pleasure, harmony and goodness. *Rajaḥ* presents in *kṣatriyas* in higher amount than other two *guṇas*; they are involved in fighting, protecting people because the characteristics of *rajas* is associated with activity, passion, etc. Likewise, in *vaiśya*, *rajas* preponderate with lesser *tamaḥ* and in *śūdra*, *tamaḥ* plays the main role and so they act accordingly. *Varṇaveda* is not only for *guṇaveda*, but also for *karma veda*. We have noticed in the previous section that the duties for *brāhmiṇs* are reading, teaching; duties of *kṣatriyas* are protecting people from enemies, chastising the wicked; duties of *vaiśya* are selling and buying commodities in a right value and *śūdra*'s duty is to render service to upper classes. On



the other hand, *jātivēda* is due to heredity factor. For example, son of *brāhmiṇ* becomes *brāhmiṇ* by birth irrespective of what he does but in ancient India, son of *brāhmiṇ* became *brāhmiṇ* only if he acquired the characteristics of *sattva guṇa* and learnt other things prescribed for them. In *Mahābhārata* also, we can see Yudhisthira narrating that if the *guṇas* like *sama*, *dama*, are present in *śūdra*, he is not *śūdra*. He will be considered as *brāhmiṇ*. On the contrary, if the qualities are lacking in *brāhmiṇ*, he is not *brāhmiṇ*, but a *śūdra*<sup>21</sup>. So, we can say that *Varṇaveda* and the *jātivēda* were not the same thing in ancient India. Caste system was open then, i.e., *śūdra* could become *brāhmiṇ* after achieving qualities prescribed for the *brāhmiṇs*. But now caste system is closed since these castes are determined by birth only.

It is time for understanding the meaning of *svadharma* prescribed in *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*.

#### IV

As we have seen in first section, the meaning of *dharma* is not one. It has multiple meanings; so, one may ask- why do we need to know about *dharma* at all? It is an ambiguous term. The answer would be we need to know the meaning of *dharma* for the sake of the betterment of our lives. In *Hitopadeśa* (verse-25)<sup>22</sup> it has been written that a man cannot be distinguished from animal by taking food (*āhara*), having a sound sleep (*nidrā*), being afraid of something or someone (*bhaya*), or sexual gratification (*maithunāni*) for the preservation of race, only *dharma* creates difference between man and animal because *āhara*, *nidra*, etc. are common to both men and animals. Tapan Kumar Chakraborty states that only this possession of *dharma* is a special or *viśeṣa* and additional or *adhika* feature of men without which a man is equal to an animal. In western tradition, one may say it is rationality of a human being which present in all men but missing in the animals. But rationality is not enough to distinguish man from the animal. Because, in some researches, it has been shown that dogs are able to think rationally because they can remember past events, use different tools, and also can find various way to solve their problems. Mark Rowlands says in his article 'Can Animals Be Persons?': "There are no good reasons for denying that animals are rational, and many good reasons for thinking that they are. Many animals have displayed impressive capacities for causal reasoning. And some animals have displayed the ability to engage a logical reasoning operation such as *modus tollendo ponens*"<sup>23</sup>. So, rationality is not an enough criterion to differentiate a man from an animal. It is time to re-think about some other criteria. This criterion is *dharma* prescribed in *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*. In *Bhagavad Gītā* Bhagavan ŚrīKṛṣṇa puts emphasis not only on *dharma*, but also on *svadharma*. *Svadharma* is the only *dharma* (duty) that one should perform religiously to attend *mokṣa*. *Svadharma* is a specific *dharma* which is a combination of *Varṇa* and *Āśrama*, I have already discussed about it in the previous section. Biraj M Sinha says in his article that *svadharmas* are born out of one's self-being or *svabhāva*<sup>24</sup>. This *svabhāva* is the cause for the variety in the society and the individual. *Brāhmiṇs* are different from the other three castes based on their *svabhāva*. Similarly, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra* are different from each other based on their *svabhāvas*. i.e., all the works of the four castes are different from each other by their own inner dispositions, not by any external factor like heredity etc. According to *Bhagavad Gītā* these inner dispositions or *svabhāvas* are made of three qualities present in the individual. For



example, the inner disposition of the *brāhmiṇs* is reading or writing because proportion of *sattva guṇais* high in them and these are the characteristics of *sattva guṇa*. *Kṣatriyas* inner dispositions are firmness, protecting civilians because proportion of *rajaḡguṇa* is high in them and these are the characteristics of *rajaḡguṇa*. Similarly, Madhusūdhana Sarasvatī says in his commentary that *vaiśya's svabhāva* is also activity as discussed above, because *rajaḡguṇa* (quality) is also their primary quality and *śūdra's* inner disposition is to serve the other three upper castes because the primary characteristics of *tamaḡguṇa* are ignorance, inertia and so on<sup>25</sup>. It is the *svabhāva* which gives right to the agent to choose his *svadharma*. It can be said that *svadharma* is precisely determined by inward choosing or *svabhāva* of the agent. One may question- what is *svabhāva*? The exercise of intentionality i.e., act in accordance with one's own being is called *svabhāva*. That is why a *śūdra* could be *brāhmiṇ* by performing duties prescribed for the *brāhmiṇs*. In *Mahābhārata*, we see that Dronachārya, who was a *brāhmiṇ*, chose to become a warrior because he was interested in weapons or *astras-sastras*. Later he became the preceptor of both Pāndavas and Kouravas. So, he became a warrior, not by birth, but by his *svabhāva* or the inner disposition. This freedom of choice and decisiveness is the significant mark of an agent in ethics. Arjuna's cry is the cry as an ethical subject to learn to choose the right means in his difficult time. So, we may say *Bhagavad Gītā* puts emphasis on subjectivity through the idea of *svabhāva*.

### Conclusion

The central point of my discussion is if we understand *dharma* as religion which is practised by people around the world; it would be a partial understanding. And this understanding sometimes creates communal disturbances in the society. What will be the solution? The solution is that we must take *dharma* as duty (prescribed in *Bhagavad Gītā*). Common duties teach us to maintain relationships with other people in the society. On the other hand, specific duties teach us one can attain *mokṣa* by performing his duties or if we grasp this meaning completely, there will be no disturbance in the society. People can happily live ever after with other people who belong to the other castes. One more thing, I have addressed here, is one may think that since *varṇas* are made of three qualities, in *Bhagavad Gītā* there is no room for freedom of choice of amoral agent; moral subject becomes slave of these three *guṇas*. He cannot be an ethical being. But this is not a correct understanding because in 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Bhagavad Gītā*, Bhagabān Śrī Kṛṣṇa talks about *svabhāva* and he mentions that one performs their duties according to their *svabhāva*. For this *svabhāva* one can choose what he wants to do. It is a clear sign of subjectivity. And the subjectivity is a core concept of ethics. So, we may conclude with this observation that an individual in *Gītā* is an ethical being.

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## SUFI AND BAUL MUSIC'S MELODY: THE WAY TO PERFECT HUMANITY

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### Abstract

*This paper explores the melody of Sufi and Baul music as means to perfect humanity. Sufi and Baul are two religious groups. The word Sufi comes from the word safaa, which means cleanliness. Through this cleanliness, our hearts become pure and clean. Cleanliness helps us reach God. On the other hand, the inner meaning of the term Baul is mad. Here, Madness is connected to God. Both Sufi and Baul look to find out the Supreme Being. In Sufi terminology, the Supreme Being is known to us as "Fana" and in Baul tradition, it is known to us as "Moner-Manus". Sufis and Bauls express their love for the Supreme Being through their music and dance. Their songs and dances cultivate the message of love and peace towards humanity. So, the main aim for both Sufi and Baul is to love mankind. So, In this paper, there is a humble attempt to show the importance of Sufi and Baul Music's Melody Way to Perfect Humanity.*

**Keywords:** Sufi, Baul, Music, Dance, Moner Manus, Humanity

### Introduction

The word Sufi conveys multiple meanings. These are "safaa, sufi, sofa, safool-ul-qafa, siyusoofia" etc.<sup>1</sup> Among them, the widely accepted interpretation is purely derived from the term safaa means "cleanliness, particularly the purity of heart, soul actions of a man."<sup>2</sup>

Music is a medium that also purifies our hearts and souls and helps to go the way of self-realization. Sufi music is not different from it. The whole philosophy of Sufism is a journey, "The journey towards God". The final destination of this journey is to union with God. So it is a devotional journey that connects Humans and God. That is why in Sufism various types of devotional music make the road easier for this journey. Qawwali is one type of devotional

music that helps the devotee to go to their ultimate destination. Qawwali mainly originated in the 8<sup>th</sup> century Persia. That is today known as Iran and Afghanistan. Qawwali songs are mainly attached to three things. These are love, devotion, and longing (of man for the divine). There are various types of Qawwali songs.<sup>3</sup>

These are discussed as follows:

- i) A hamad:- Hamad is an Arabic term that mainly indicates praise. This type of Qawwali song is mainly in praise. This praise is for Allah. The performance of this song starts with a hand.
- ii) A naat: In Arabic terminology the meaning of the naat is -description. It is a song in praise. It is a praise of the prophet Muhammad. Qawwali music is mainly performed in shrines on dargahs. It starts with hamad and is traditionally followed by a naat.
- iii) A manqabat: Through a maqamat but also praise is possible. Praise of either Iman Ali or one of the Sufi Saints. It came after naat.
- iv) A marsiya: This type of Qawwali song is mainly for a dead person. It is mainly a song of lamentation.
- v) A ghazal: Ghazal is an Arabic term that means love song. Two types of metaphors are used for ghazals: the joys of drinking and the agony of separation from the beloved. When ghazal is used in Qawwali, it is mainly used for intoxication and yearning through this intoxication and to express the union between soul and divine.

There are three important things that we found in the intoxicating Gazal songs in Qawwali. These are “Wine”, “cupbearer” and “tavern”. “Wine” indicates – “Knowledge of the divine”. “Cupbearer” is God and the word “tavern” is mainly a metaphysical term that indicates a place where the soul exists. Intoxications help to gain spiritual knowledge.

- vi) A munadjaat: It is mainly a song of conversation in the night. It is a main gratitude song through which devotees express their thankfulness to God. It is sung in various linguistic techniques.<sup>4</sup>

Several people mainly perform qawwali songs. That is why it consists of musicians. The group of musicians is known as humnawa in urdu. This group consists of one main singer, two or three side singers, several chorus singers, and percussionists.



The longibility of Qawwali songs are only 15 to 30 minutes. The arrangement of these qawwali songs mainly follows certain rules:-

Qawwali songs' melody is usually played through harmonium besides that table is also used in qawwali songs. At the very first beginning of the qawwali song starts with an instrumental prelude. After that comes the alap. Alap is mainly a long tonal improvised melody.

Qawwali songs start with some preamble verses. These verses are sung by the lead singer. These are not the part of the main song. Then the lead singer sings a verse of the main song. The other side singers will repeat the verse. This is the technique of the qawwali song.<sup>5</sup>

### **Literature Review**

A vast literature helps to conduct this study and a few of these can be reviewed in this regard.

- ✚ Muhammad Isar Ahmad (2014) *The World of Sufism Beliefs and Practices* Mittal Publications New Delhi. Muhammad Isar Ahmad discussed very properly the chief content of Sufism and critically analyzed Sufi music.
- ✚ Pranab Bandyopadhyay(1989) *Bauls of Bengal* Firma KLM Private Limited Calcutta. Prof Bandyopadhyay has made an outstanding discourse on the origin and development of the Baul Philosophy their sadhana, songs, and other major issues related to Baul.

### **Methodology**

In this research work, would like to use the qualitative research method. As my search area is related to Perfected Humanity that is why first I used content analysis. So, I have gone through books, and articles to find out the real essence of Sufi and Baul Music's Melody Way to Perfect Humanity. I have also used Baul songs which is the primary sources of my research work. Besides that, there are other useful texts like 'Obscure Religious Cults' will also be used in my research work as a secondary source.



## Sama

Sama is a particular type of ceremony where dhikr is performed. Sama means – “listening” and Dhikr means –“remembrance ”of god.<sup>6</sup> In the Sama ceremony, various other things are included. These are -Singing, playing instruments, dancing, recitation of poetry and prayers, and wearing symbolic attire. Sama is mainly started from the 10<sup>th</sup> century and refers to a type of dhikr that is a spiritual concert. This spiritual concert ceremony was used by various Sufi orders mainly the chisti order.

Sama is mainly a mystical journey. The mystical journey is mainly for love to perfection. To achieve the goal one must uplift his inner love, demolish his ego, and go to the road of perfection.

In sama music takes a great role. But the playing of instruments is also important in sama. The singing of hymns is also used as an instrument in sama. It is called qawl and bayf. In this sama ceremony, poetry is certain times use. It is mainly used for spiritual contemplation.

The purpose of sama ceremony is to meditate on God. This purpose happened basically through melodies and dancing. The goal of sama is to reach “wajd”. Wajd is a state of sublimation.<sup>7</sup>

## Sufi Whirling

Sufi whirling is nothing but one of the important forms of Sama. This is also known in Sufism as active meditation. This practice is popular in the Sufi group of the Mevlevi order. It is mainly dance performers whose main aim is to reach the point of perfection. Throughout this performance, devotees left their egos and personal desires by listening to the music and mainly concentrating on God and circling his bodies in repetitive circles. This circling is the representation of planets in the solar system that orbiting the sun. When one starts his whirling his hands are open and his right arm is instructed to the sky and it is ready to accept God’s grace. On the other side, one’s eyes are strung into a person's left hand that rotates towards the earth. This rolling movement from right to left around the heart of one’s person is fastening all humanity with love. All the human being has been created with love.<sup>8</sup>

All the process, that follows by the Sufis help to attain the Supreme Being. Besides Sufi, Baul also searched their Monar- Manus through their songs and dances.



## **Baul**

Baul is mainly a sect that has its uniqueness. The word Baul contains various meanings. The etymological meaning of the term “Baul” is mad. This term Baul emerged from the Sanskrit word that is “Vatula” or forms “vyakula”. The word vatula or vyakula means – “Impatiently Eager.” From the context of Sufi, there is also a relative term Aul or Aulia that is also used for Baul by the Muslim Prophets.<sup>9</sup>

So, all the meanings of the term Baul are associated with the same thing which is madness for God.<sup>10</sup>

Baul is against orthodox Hindu thought. Their philosophy is against Vedic rites and rituals but they follow the path of the Upanisadic Ananda concept, Buddhist Sahajiya concept, Concept of Vaisnavism, and Sufism. So it is mainly a fusion version of everything.<sup>11</sup>

So all these groups of religions melt in Baul's Philosophy and help to build a new religion that believes in a formless God and blissful joy that means Ananda. Bauls also create a new form of Blissful joy or pure mood of joy which is called in their philosophy as “Moner Manus”.

## **Baul Song**

Baul songs mainly reflect two types of meaning. One is outer and another is inner. Outer meaning mainly expresses apparent meaning. If one once understood the inner meaning then he must be able to understand and go through the spiritual practice or the sadness of Bauls. The inner meaning of the songs of Baul's is always constructing a good relationship between the human mind and divinity. Bauls are always mystic in experiences. Baul songs are always attached to three things -subtle sentiment, devoted feelings, and innate emotion. But all these materials help to go the path of the Supreme Being. The songs of Baul are very rhythmic and the verses that we found in the Baul songs are human aspiration for the unknown the ultimate divine.<sup>12</sup>

Those who are the composers of Baul songs in the earlier days are known to us as “Sain”. Sain means spiritual teacher or Guru also considered as part of the ultimate reality. So, Sain is a very honourable designation that is acceptable in the Baul cult Oftentimes times their usage we found in the Baul songs. Baul songs are the true reflection of the inner thoughts of the



creator who created the song. This inner thought reflection is mainly found in the course of the making of Baul's song.<sup>13</sup>

It is noticeable that the tune used in the Baul songs allows the singer to apply his voice full-throated. In the Baul songs embedded various sharp and long-standing notes. These types of notes help to understand the inner idea of the verse.

There are various instruments used by the Bauls for their songs. The instruments are mainly - Ek-Tara or Gopi -Jantra, do-tara, dholok, dubki, etc. Baul singers also use different instruments that are attached to their body parts; nupurs are this type of instrument that is a very small instrument.<sup>14</sup>

Baul singers wear this instrument on their ankles. The jingle sound is coming from the nupurs. Besides that, there are also the rhythmic taps that come from the dubki. At the time of singing the Baul also danced. Songs and dance are the special characteristics of Baul Sadhana. This technique is imported into the Baul cult from the Vaishnavas.

Baul's are completely against social customs. There is a special name for Baul that one found in the Baul cult and that is "madcaps". Their song also echoes the same fact.<sup>15</sup>

Rabindranath Tagore the great poet was also influenced by one of the most renowned Baul Lalan Fakir. Lalan Shah Fakir was a Hindu by birth but he was brought up by a Muslim Fakir. That is why by the composition of the Lalan songs we found the effects of Baul and Sufi.<sup>16</sup>

In the other song Lalan beautifully expresses the Baul Philosophy:

"O madcap, where can you move,

Before you learn your message?

You will be puzzled outside,

Unless you know your home inside."<sup>17</sup>

So everything is present in our body. We cannot find out outside. Any scripture any religion cannot help to uplift us unless we know our real essence of self.

### **Similarities between Sufi and Baul**



There is a very close relationship between Sufi and Baul. These are the three major similarities found in the Sufi and Baul cults. The similarities are:-

1. Sufi and Baul believe that Paramatra or Allah who present in the body of man. Absolute is nothing but the reflection of man.
2. Self-realization is the ultimate destination that focuses on the sadhanas of Baul and Sufi In Sufism this self-realization is known to us as Fana or the passing away of consciousness in mystic union with God. On the other hand, this self-realization in Baul terminology is known as Moner-Manus -Manus which is an ecstatic state.
3. Baul and Sufi are completely free from religious dogmas and cannot accept rites and rituals in their philosophy.

Besides these three resemblances, other similarities were also invented in Sufis and Bauls.

Sufi and Baul's based on Guruvad. Guru is the master who mainly helps to go the way of enlightenment. Guru takes a great role in Sufis and Baul's philosophy.

Man plays a great role in the Sadhanas of Baul. Baul believes that the human body is identified as a microcosm of the universe. The ultimate reality is present in the human body that is the whole life is a sadhana for searching our moner-manus that resides in our body.

Sufis are also believed in the concept of Bauls. Our body is the Holy place for the beloved.<sup>18</sup>Therefore both Humans and God assimilate into one. That is why lover and beloved are unified.<sup>19</sup>

### **Conclusion**

All the methodology and the vast literature review help to conclude that Sufi and Baul are mainly coming to represent the cult of our society they are obscure and also the underground people of our society. That is why they are known to be an obscure religious cult. Their philosophy is expressed through their songs and dances. They do not believe in the caste system. They believe in humanity. The only identity for a people is Human. They do not believe in any form of God. Candida's (Famous Baul poet) also portrays the same truth. They only love human beings

“The truth about Man is the highest of all;

There is no other truth above that.”<sup>20</sup>



Islam is the symbol of peace. Sufis are the part of Islam that's main motto is to spread love and peace towards society. The same thing is reflected in the Baul tradition: -

“The Sain lives in all of us,

But we miss him as we don't know him

He exists in the Humanity of Divinity

In all of us .”<sup>21</sup>

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### **Notes and References**

<sup>1</sup>Masood Ali khan and S Ram ‘An Introduction to Sufism origin,philosophy and Development’ Anmol Publication, New Delhi, 2003,p-18

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p-18

<sup>3</sup>Muhammad Isar Ahmad ‘The World of Sufism Beliefs and Practices’Mittal Publications ,New Delhi, 2004,p-128

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p-129-130

<sup>5</sup> Ibid p-131

<sup>6</sup> Ibid p-132

<sup>7</sup>Muhammad Isar Ahmad ‘The World of Sufism Beliefs and Practices’Mittal Publications ,New Delhi, 2004 p-134-135

<sup>8</sup> Ibid p-137

<sup>9</sup>Rebati Mohan Sarkar ‘Bauls of Bengal : in the quest of man of the heart’ Gyan Publication, New Delhi,1937,p-29

<sup>10</sup>“The image which the Baul presented the world is like . . . . . that of a madman a man who tolerates no stricture of society who goes deliberately against society to prove his independence of it .” Dimock Edward C ‘The place of Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaisnava Sahajiya Cult of Bengal’ The University of Chicago press, Chicago, 1966 p-250

<sup>11</sup>“The Bauls are fitting hybrids the vaisnavas sahabiya and sufi strains yield beauty, sympathy and strength.”Ibid p-270

<sup>12</sup>Pranab Bandyopadhyay ‘Bauls of Bengal’ Firma KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, 1989, p-46-47



<sup>13</sup> Ibid p-48

<sup>14</sup> Ek-tara – A simple instrument made of an old bottle ground which is dried up in sun and brought to certain shape .

Do-tara – A similar instrument fitted with two strings instead of one .

Dholok- Small wooden instrument

Dubki – Kettle drum tied with their waist . Ibid p-49

<sup>15</sup>“That is why I become a khepa(madcap) Baul;

No master I obey,nor injunctions,canons or customs.”Pranab Bandyopadhyay ‘Bauls ofBengal ’Firma KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, 1989, p-51

<sup>16</sup>“Oh,my beloved sain stands there tied with love

He cares not if one is a Hindu,

A Muslim or from any other stream

He wants your devotion and love.”Ibid p-59

<sup>17</sup> Ibid p-73

<sup>18</sup>Therefore “ I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I We are two spirits dwelling in one body If thou seest me, thou seest Him, And if thou seest Him thou seest us body.”Shashibhusan Dasgupta ‘Obscure Religious Cults’Firma KLM Private Limited, Kolkata, 1946, p-180

<sup>19</sup>Phakir -cand famous Baul tells in a song –“ O my mind ,let me tell thee -the Man of the heart is in the heart and search for him there .why art thou roaming from country to country ?” Ibid p-184

<sup>20</sup>Pranab Bandyopadhyay‘Bauls of Bengal’Firma KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, 1989, p-59

<sup>21</sup> Ibid -99



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## CONVERGING PERSPECTIVES: RABINDRANATH TAGORE, ALBERT EINSTEIN & THE NATURE OF REALITY

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### Abstract

*In this article, it is discussed that the philosophical convergence between physicist Albert Einstein and poet-philosopher Rabindranath Tagore in the appreciation of The Nature of Reality. Emanating from disparate scientific and aesthetic traditions, their famous 1930 dialogue indicates a convergent, non-materialist position advocating that reality relies finally upon the human experience and consciousness. Einstein's skepticism regarding the exclusive observer-independent reality moderated by his admiration for the scientific method stands juxtaposed to Tagore's declaration of a "human universe" whereby the truth becomes inseparable from the subjective experience of the Universal Man. In analyzing their exchange and companion works, in this article we argue that the two thinkers critique the purely objective scientific edifice and direct us towards a relational and participatory ground for understanding the cosmos.*

**Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Albert Einstein, the nature of reality, realism, subjectivity, human universe, consciousness, philosophy of science.**

### Introduction

The early twentieth century is significant both philosophically and scientifically because the world's two great minds met together, which signified a fundamental and profound shift in both scientific and philosophical thinking that challenged the Newtonian system of absolute and objective reality. The Relativity theories presented by Albert Einstein essentially revolutionized the discipline of physics with the inclusion of the observer within the geo-temporal framework, whereas the aesthetic philosophy presented by Rabindranath Tagore highlighted the imperative to integrate art, science, and spirituality within the human experience. Though both approaches took divergent routes—Einstein being the objective seeker of universal principles and Tagore being the subjective evaluator of beauty—their celebrated conversation in 1930, translated in *The Nature of Reality*, is a critical point of convergence.

Scholarship hitherto prefers the science in Einstein's work/the literary flair in Tagore's and does so with minimal effort at synthesizing their metaphysics. Filling this vacuum, the paper



here compares the fundamental disagreement and implicit concurrence in the Einstein versus Tagore debate over testable, objective reality and reality founded in the human consciousness.

### 1. Problem Statement and Hypothesis

The central issue at hand is how much Einstein and Tagore concurred in the view that the essence of The Nature of Reality depends on, or stands in close relation with, human consciousness. While Einstein maintained a conditional belief in an independent, external reality necessary for the structure of science and his arguments and shared intellectual space with Tagore, they reveal a profound consensus that meaningful, comprehensible, and ethically valuable reality (Truth) is only established through its relationship with the 'Universal Man' or collective human consciousness.

#### Objectives

- 1.1. To extensively review the key points covered in the discussion held in 1930 between Einstein and Tagore.
- 1.2. To contextualize Tagore's concept of the "human universe" with his writings on *Jeevan Devata* (Life God).
- 1.3. In order to relate the opinions of Einstein regarding the limits of objectivity with his philosophical opinions regarding scientific endeavour and mystery.
- 1.4. In order to show that the converging perspectives require a relational ontology that moves beyond the ancient subject/object dichotomy in the science of the cosmos.

### 2. Methods

This is a comparative textual analysis and philosophical critique based on primary textual material (the 1930 dialogue transcript and secondary philosophical and scientific texts). The approach is qualitative and relies on semantic and conceptual mapping in order to unveil the metaphysical agreements lying beneath the texts.

### 3. Materials

- 3.1. **Primary Source:** Actual 1930 text of the meeting between Albert Einstein and Rabindranath Tagore regarding the "Nature of Reality."
- 3.2. **Einstein's Related Works:** Selections from *Ideas and Opinions*, including his opinions regarding scientific objectivity, "cosmic religious feeling," and the scope of physical laws.
- 3.3. **Tagore's Related Works:** Selections from *The Religion of Man*, *Sadhana: The Realisation of Life*, and relevant poems, focusing on the concept of *Vishva-Manav* (Universal Man) and the inherent unity of the subjective and objective.



#### 4. Procedure and Data Analysis

**4.1. Deconstruction of the Dialogue:** The transcript was deconstructed into key thematic exchanges (e.g., the potential for a reality independent from the observer, the role that truth plays in science versus aesthetics).

**4.2. Identification of Central Concepts:** Key terms were gleaned and defined according to how each philosopher used them (e.g., "Truth" for Tagore, "Reality" for Einstein, and "Man" or "Human" in each case).

**4.3. Comparative Analysis:** Arguments were compared. For example, Einstein's challenge ("If there would be no human beings anymore, the dollar would not exist") was compared with Tagore's response on the interdependence of truth and the value of a human being.

**4.4. Argument Construction:** The argument analysis was combined to construct the relational ontology argument: that in spite of their initial apparent disagreement, they concurred in the end that reality as understood is a human construct, although Einstein required an independent, structured scaffolding.

#### 5. Results

The analysis uncovered three key findings that circumscribe the converging explanations:

**5.1. The Relationality of Truth (Tagore's Triumph):** Tagore was successful in advocating that truth for mankind is not an abstract, independent fact but a value from the Universal Man. His stand is epitomized in the sentence: "I cannot prove that the chair has an existence independent of ourselves. The truth of the universe is a human truth."

**5.2. The Conditional Independence of Reality (Einstein's Concession):** Einstein agreed that the validity of a mathematical theorem is logically and humanness-dependent only. Although initially he stood his ground for the existence of an objective physical reality ("the moon exists even if no one looks at it"), his original premise was really one of "inter-subjective confirmation"—that the independence of reality is a logical necessity for the practice of science and not a transcendental, philosophical truth. He also agreed that all truth we utter is a "human method of apprehending it." The argument then concurred with the idea that the structure of the universes, laws of nature, or laws of beauty can only be comprehended because of some intrinsic correspondence with reason and sensibility in humans.

**5.3. The Emergence of the "Human Universe":** The correspondence suggests that truth does not merely get realized with the aid of consciousness but is attained in and from it. That's the shared ontological space: truth must be relational in order to have any meaning.

#### 6. Implication and Meaning

This convergence also carries profound ramifications for the philosophy of science. It frees us from simple scientific reductionism and challenges the idea that value, beauty, and truth are secondary qualities imposed onto a rugged, unresponsive universe.



**6.1. Epistemology:** It propounds the idea that the very process of knowing modifies the known, which agrees with the later advances in Quantum Mechanics (though the latter in itself does not get discussed in this paper by Einstein and Tagore).

**6.2. Ethics:** Because Tagore grounds reality in the Universal Man, he provides an ethical imperative. Our sought-after reality must be in harmony with the values embedded in the Universal Man.

**6.3. Aesthetics:** The argument does justify the existence of aesthetic feeling (art, poetry), not at all in the form of ornamentation, but in the mode of knowing which manifests the unity of the object (the world) and the subject (human spirit).

## 7. Discussion

**7.1. Tagore's Idealism:** Tagore's idealism is mainly based on the philosophical and religious orientation of seeing the importance of human consciousness to the building up of reality. Reality, for Tagore, must not now be seen simply as an objective, fixed phenomenon, but is an active construct that is intimately bound up with the perception and awareness of humans. Such a perspective itself suggests that our knowledge about the universe is always shaped through our cognitive capacity and cultural paradigms, thus making the reality inherently subjective.

**7.2. The Subjectivity of Knowledge:** Tagore's idealistic view suggests that knowledge is subjective per se and results from the interaction between the outside environment and human consciousness. With this point of view, the reality that we are experiencing is ultimately a product of our internal workings and social conditioning. Tagore also found that the universe with all that we subjectively experience it with is so intertwined with human experience that our knowledge about it is altered to become a special perceptual and cognitive system.

**7.3. Scope of Understanding:** Tagore's argument also indicates the finitude of human understanding, and our understanding and explanations are necessarily relative and limited. He believed that the richness and the interconnected character of the universe can elude complete understanding with the aid of science alone. It indicates the acknowledgment of the fact that our capacity for cognition and our senses can provide only a filtered and partial view of things, and the very nature of the universe can be something our senses and cognition are powerless to apprehend.

**7.4. Role of Consciousness:** Tagore also gave a central role to the human consciousness in the constitution of reality, suggesting that our perception, thought, and experience are part and parcel of the existence and nature of the universe. In harmony with philosophical schools that emphasize the mutual interdependency of the observed and the observer, this implies that reality is a combined product of the mind and the material. For Tagore, the conscious being does not act merely as an observer but also as an active participant in the creation of reality.

**7.5. Einstein's Realism:** Einstein's realism originates from the scientific method of observing empirically and concluding logically, which trusts in an objective reality independent from our perception. To Einstein, the universe abides in law-like regularity, and such laws are discoverable, and science can reveal such objective facts.



**7.6. Objectivity of Knowledge:** Einstein's realism asserts that knowledge exists objectively and the universe can be comprehended with empirical observation and rationality. He felt that there are things that are universally true regardless of how humans perceive them, and with the process of science, we can find those things. Its philosophy asserts that the laws of nature are invariant and can be discovered so that we can have a reliable grounding in understanding the universe.

**7.7. Progressive Insight:** Despite an admission of the limits of current scientific knowledge, Einstein felt that pursuit of scientific discovery can gradually extend our cosmic understanding and reveal its laws and principles governing the universe. He believed that the constraints of human knowledge are not barriers that cannot be passed through, but rather trials designed to be overcome with further questioning and exploration. According to Einstein, the universe operates through principles that are systematizable and discoverable, and through diligent and methodical scientific exploration, we are able to constantly expand our knowledge.

**7.8. Consciousness as Product:** Einstein construed consciousness to be a product that originates from the physical universe, operating according to the objective principles it is comprised of. According to this, consciousness is observed to be an emergent process from the operation and interaction among matter and energy, rather than something that is an ultimate constituent of reality. Einstein held the opinion that although consciousness happens to be an impressive and formidable phenomenon, it still falls in line with the physical laws operating in the universe in all its parts. Such a perspective places consciousness in the wider context of the processes in nature, and it stresses its reliance upon the physical brain and nervous structure.

## 8. Philosophical Importance

The philosophical aspects of their disagreement are deep and entail the type of knowledge, the boundaries of human understanding, and the constructivist role that consciousness plays in establishing reality.

**8.1. Nature of Knowledge:** Tagore's idealism suggests that all knowledge is subjective and the product of the human consciousness and sensing apparatus. Here, the understanding of the universe must always be filtered through the mental organs and the cultural conditions in which we exist. Einstein's realism suggests instead that all knowledge exists outside of us and can be comprehended from the objective procedures of empirical observation and rationality. This position argues that science can discern universally valid truths that exist independently from the viewpoints we take.

**8.2. Limits of Human Understanding:** Tagore's view points out the limitations of human understanding, the idea that our understanding and interpretations are always limited and relative. This argument recognizes the complexity and interconnected nature of the universe such that it can't be fully comprehended with the usage of scientific methodologies only. Einstein's view, while understanding the limits of the existing scientific understanding, believes that the endeavour for scientific understanding can continually widen our understanding of the universe, unveiling its governing laws and principles.



### **9. The Interaction between Science and Spirituality**

The conversations with Albert Einstein also indicate more profound interaction between spirituality and science, where the possibility for each field to educate and augment the other is fully realized. Rabindranath Tagore's style stands for the integration of spiritual and philosophical understanding with respect for scientific investigation. He perceived science as a beneficial instrument in the exploration of the material world but stressed the importance of supplementing it with a more profound, comprehensive understanding of the world's spiritual and moral dimensions. Pursuing the acquisition of knowledge was, with Tagore, something more than an intellectual exercise but a way of developing wisdom and harmony.

Einstein, though the first and foremost a scientist, revealed in himself awe and reverence for the universe. He often discussed the "cosmic religious feeling," an attitude of awe and humility in the presence of the large, unknown cosmos. Einstein's enjoyment of the order and beauty in the universe implies a recognition of the profound inter-connectedness of all things, which accords with the religious point of view.

### **10. Integrative Worldviews**

The meeting of Tagore and Einstein highlights the potential for integrative philosophies extending from science and religion. Such philosophies recognize the value of empirical discovery and the wisdom of the spirit in understanding the universe and our location in the universe.

### **11. Limitations**

The big trap here is the reliance on a tape-recorded conversation, which does not necessarily encompass the refined, complete philosophical progression over the lives of the two men. Moreover, the actual transcript very likely streamlined difficult metaphysical constructs. Coverage extends only to philosophy and science at large and avoids the close examination of the very specific equations in Relativity and Quantum Mechanics.

### **12. Future Studies**

Future studies should examine the potential link between the relational ontology of Tagore and recent theories in theoretical physics and consciousness studies. Studies should also move this debate onto alternative Eastern philosophical practices that also avoid a dualistic Subject/Object distinction.

### **Essence**

The Rabindranath Tagore-Albert Einstein conversation in 1930 does not talk about a simple disagreement but an enduring convergence defying the perception of a completely objective cosmos. Both the disciplined scientific mindset of Einstein and the integrative poetic philosophy of Tagore arrived at the same point: that reality is relational and requires the



conscious observing and appreciating human awareness for its full realization in the form of Truth. Both viewpoints lead towards a synoptic view of the universe in which the quest after scientific fact and the experience of artistic beauty are two inevitable paths toward the realization of the Human Universe.

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**A BALANCE OF CULTURE AND CONSERVATION: THE SUSTAINABLE  
HARVESTING OF PLANTS FOR “EU” BY THE TOTO TRIBE OF TOTOPARA,  
ALIPURDUAR DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL.**

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**Abstract**

*Ethno botany that is the traditional culture is the scientific culture of dynamic relationship that exists between people and plant. (Dawn et al, 2014). Ethno botanists aim to document, describe and explain the complex relationship between culture and plants. Focusing primarily how plants are used, perceived and practiced in human culture. This includes the uses of plants and its diversity in the local forests areas. They know the forest way of lifestyle only as forest provides them an abundance of food and protection (Xaxa, 1999). The forest resources nourishes them and Totos are one of them (Wenner-Gren Foundation, 1976). Totos are reputed as Mongoloid people, with flat nose, small eyes, broad and wide cheeks (Sinha and Pal, 1983).*

*'Eu' is a indigenous millet based fermented, mild alcoholic beverage that is popular among the Toto tribes of Totopara of the district Alipurduar, West Bengal. The principal ingredients of this beverage are boiled millet which is called "Maybay" in Toto language. The study highlighted the overview of the traditional process of EU preparation by this particular Toto tribe. The plant Eleusine coracana of the Family Poaceae is mixed as a traditional starter, called "Me"- in Toto language and fermented with in a heat sterilized earthen pot for 6to7 days in winter and 3to4 days in summer season.*

*The main objective of this study is to investigate the ethno botanical importance of Eu preparation as well as to document the entire process of preparation for the commercialization of EU can be an alternative source of this economically challenged endangered Toto tribe.*

**Keywords:** *Fermented beverage, Eu, Toto tribe, Marua, Biodiversity, Ethnobotany*

### Introduction

Cereal based foods are very popular throughout the world, and have a large impact on human diet and health. In India and Africa 80 percent or more of the average diet is cereal based products [Adebayo *et al.* 2010] they worked on Kunu preparation. They discussed the physic chemical and microbiological and sensory characters of this Kunu. This Kunu is prepared from different types of millets like maize, and guinea corn, they also discussed in their work the storing mechanism of Kunu in selected temperature. Traditional fermented foods are prepared from most common types of cereal such as rice, corn, wheat, millet and sorghum [Das *et al.*2014].

Fermented foods are prepared by the action of micro-organisms, either naturally fermented or by adding starter cultures which modify the substrates biochemically and organoleptically into edible products, and are thus generally palatable, safe and nutritious [Sarkar, 2015, Majumdar, 1998]. Dhal *et al.* in 2010 described the preparation and practice of Bakhar of the tribes of Orissa. They also discussed the medicinal property of this starch fermented preparation. In the same year Adebayo *et al.*, 2010 During the course of fermentation, a group of metabolites such as lactic acid, alcohol, enzymes, antimicrobial substances, aromatic compounds, and organic acids are produced, which enrich the quality of products in respect to availability of nutrients and therapeutic potentials [Ghosh & Saha, 2017]. Millets beer [Eu] is a nutritious and energy-enriching fermented beverage recognized worldwide, but its most popular in Toto tribes. The method adopted for this study was based on interactive questionnaires of the people of Totopara. Bhattacharjee *et al.*2021) focused light on the detail biochemical and microbial



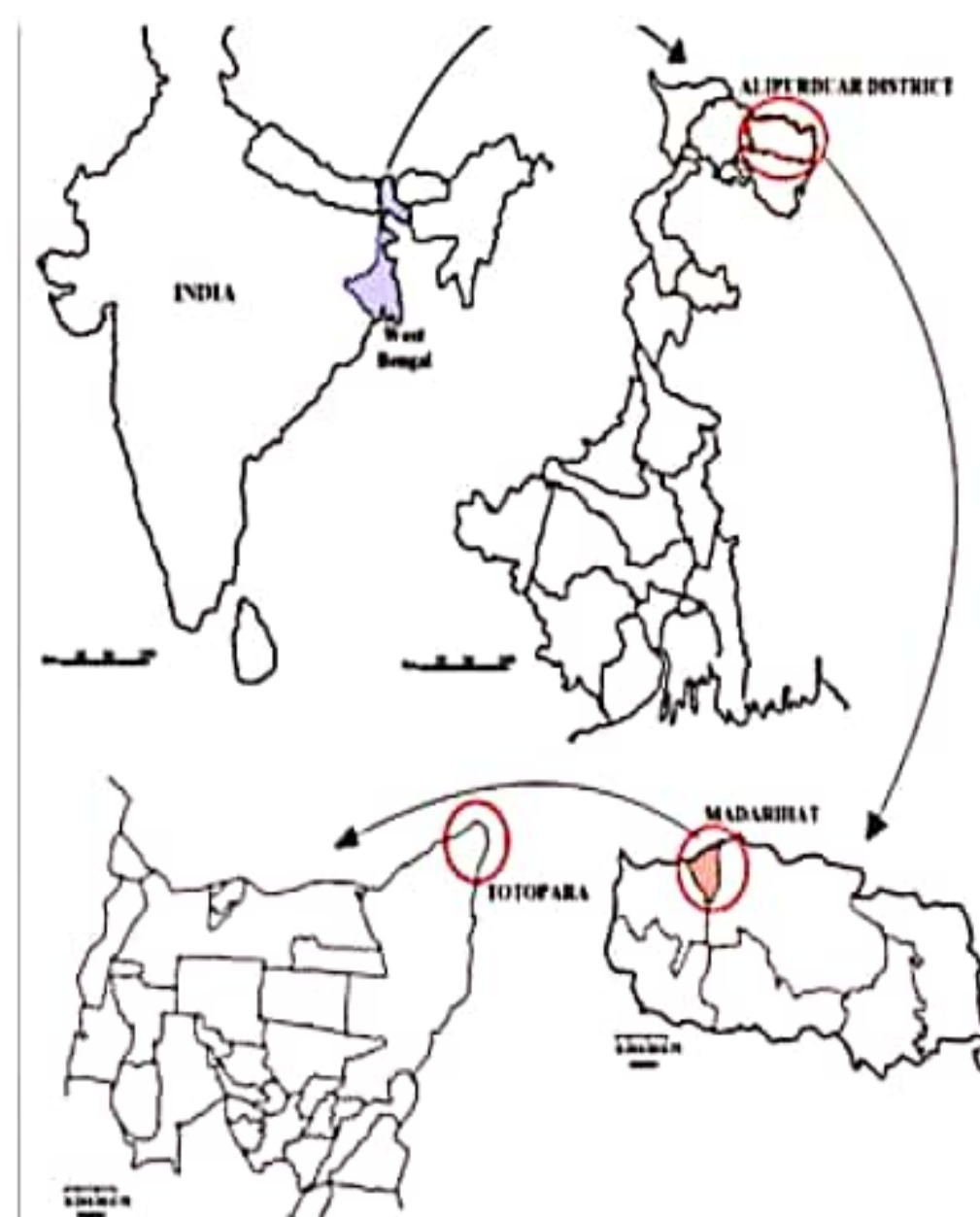


profiling of this traditional beverage to establish this as a probiotic health drink.

### Study site

**Totopra** is a small village on hill area located on 89 degree 20' E and 26 degree 50' N in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal, India. This village is home to the unique Toto tribe that is one of a kind in the world. The village is about 22Km from Madarihat, which is the entry point of the famous Jaldapara National park.

Administratively, this village falls under the Madarihat police station. It is bounded by the foothills of Bhutan to the North, Torsa river to the East, and Hauri river and the Titi reserve forest on the South-West separated by the Hauri river. The nearest village is Ballalguri, which is about 5 km to the South of Totopara. There is a single lane motorable road leading to this village from the National Highway 31 through Hantapara. The area of the village is about 8.08 km. The village has 5000 population; primary occupation of the people is cultivation, beetle nut. (District Census Hand Book, 2011).



Map of Toto inhabited areas of West Bengal. (Source: Earth.google.com)

### Methodology

Data collection about the ethnic preparation of EU, Household surveys and focus group discussions were employed for this study. The present documentation of EU preparation is based on data collected from the villages of Totopara of Alipurduar district, West Bengal. Through proper questionnaires and insight observation then after acquiring prior consent a total of 60 tribale people[ 36 women and 24 mens] including producers, sellers and consumers ranging in age from 25 to 65 years were involved in the interviews and discussions . A questionnaire was first translated into the local languages [Bengali and Toto] and pre-tested in front of the local people who have sufficient knowledge about the EU preparation [Ghosh *et al*, 2014].

### Procedure

Preparation of starter culture [which is called in toto language]; Equipments and ingredients for preparation of Me [one type rice biscuit which is used as starter for the preparation of Eu]. Socio-linguistic groups throughout India have traditionally used plants for fermentation and for brewing different types of beverages. Interestingly, almost every tribe has its indigenous alcoholic beverages and the preparation, as well as preservation techniques. There are several reports on the fermented beverages of different tribes like Judima, Haria, Jou, and Jaanr, but only a few pieces of literature are available on Eu (Roy, 20020).

Sl no.	Scientific name	Family	Parts use	Comm on Name	Local Name
1	<i>Oryza sativa</i>	Poacee	Seeds	Rice	Anku/ Merong
2	<i>Eleusine coracana</i>	Poacee	Seed	Finger Millet	Kodo/marua/mambai
3	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i>	Musaceae	Leaf	Banana plant	Kola pta
4	<i>Aborma augusta</i>	Malvaceae	Leaf	Ulat kambal	Ulatkambal
5	<i>Capsium frutescens</i>	Solanaceae	Fruit	Chili	Gajamuri
6	<i>Tectona grandis</i>	Lamiaceae	Leaf	Segun	Hatipata
7	<i>Plumbago zeylanica</i>	Plumbaginaceae	Leaf	Leadwort	Chetoar
8	<i>Drymaria cordata</i>	Caryophyllaceae	Leaf	Chickweed	Makabi
9	<i>Pterospermum acerifolium</i>	Malvaceae	Leaf	Bayur tree	Lassu/gaitra

**Table 1: Plant use for preparation starter culture Eu-**

### **Equipments preparation for starter culture Eu-**

Silver bowl

Morter and pistil [ called uugane in toto language]

Earthen pot

Mat/ thick cloth

### **Procedure for Preparation of EU**

At first they take some atop chal (1 kg) , and remove all the impurities from this ,after removing impurities clean this atop chal with clean water and soak the atop chal in water whole night after soaking this ,remove from the water kept this atop chal in mat or any type of thick cloth for remove all the water after removing water take this atop chal in mortar and mixed gojamori [*Capsicum frutescens*] ( 205 gm and 1 kg atop chal) and make powder of this rice and gojamori with the help of pistil and take this mixture powder of atop chal and gojamori in a bowl and mix some light warm water and make a cake in biscuit shape and wrap this rice biscuit with banana leaf or teak leaf or with the help of ulat kambal and spread this biscuit in a mat in a low temperature or in room temperature, after 3 to 4 days turn the side of the biscuit and again leave for 3 to 4 days , after complete dry unwrap the biscuit from the leaf and store in a sterilized earthen pot .this starter culture can be used up to 6 months of preparing. (Procedure documented during the interaction of Toto people).

### **Ingredients and utensils used for preparation of Eu-**

- 1) Millets [maybay in toto language , *Eleusine coracana* , Family – Poaceae]
- 2) Silver or earthen bowl
- 3) Sterilized earthen pot
- 4) Bamboo basket
- 5) Earthen pot
- 6) Starter culture Me



7) *Sterilization of earthen pot-*

Earthen pots are cleaned using a bundle of rice straw or the straw of millet plant [*Eleusine coracana*] and sterilized by directing heating and smoking. The rice or millet straw is burned for fume generation.

8) *Preparation of substrate-*

Millet 'may bay' is used as a main substrate for the preparation of Eu. Impurities in the 'maybay' grains are removed manually. These may bay grains are vigorously boiled with an appropriate quantity of water [millets: water- 1:1.5] in a large vessel up to the point of charring. Presumably boiling kills the pathogenic and undesirable microbes in the millet grains, a well enhances the availability of substrate to the starter culture by softening and increasing the surface area of the grains. This boiled millets is air dried under a shade by spreading on a clean mat of any type of clean thick cloth to remove the excess water and to separate the boiled millets grains.

9) *Addition of starter culture ME –*

The traditional starter used for the preparation of EU is me which is prepared by the Toto tribes.

After removing all the water from the boiled millets grain make the me powder with the help of mortar and pestle and mixed the me powder properly with the parboiled millet grains [ 2- 3 gm with 200gm of parboiled millets]. After mixing the starter culture me, a bamboo basket make ready as a bed with the Teak leaf [ which is called Hatipata by Toto] and store the starter mixed boiled millet In bamboo basket leaf bed and covered by the same leaf and leave for whole night. Next day morning the mixture poured in a earthen pot and the earthen pot is tightly closed with the straw of rice and earthen lid, finally store the earthen pot in dark room in room temperature.

10) *Fermentation-*

Fermentation is performed within the earthen pot. The inoculated boiled millet is packed in the pot, and the pot is tightly closed with rice straw and earthen lid, presumably creating an anaerobic environment. This is essential for anaerobic fermentation of millets with the



starter microbes. The pot is then incubated at room temperature for 3 to 4 days in summer season and 6 to 7 days in winter season depending on the season.

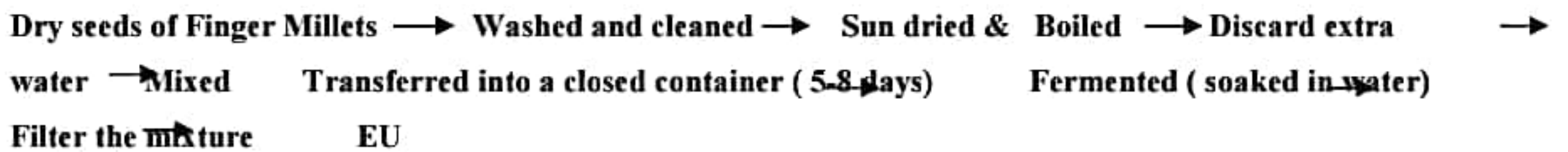
**Extraction and filtration**

After completion of fermentation, millets grain is gelatinized due to microbial activities. The fermented material is taken out of the pot and transferred in to a fine cloth. The glutinous material is diluted with drinking water and sieved using the cloth. The weak cream-colored, butter-milk like filtrate is then drunk by the people with some spicy vegetables. This type of dilution and sieving is done for removal of non-fermenting ingredients as well as particulate matter and for proper mixing.



**Different utensils used in Eu Preparation Procedure**

**Flow chart of EU preparation**



**Local and medicinal uses**

From the surveys of different Totopara areas it was found that Eu is mainly used as a alcoholic drinks in different occasion and it is prepare for commercial purpose. This tribe sells this drink in local hat [ Market] for earn money. Although Eu is a alcoholic drinks but it also have so many



medicinal uses- like it is applied as a remedy for many degenerative and infectious disease. Toto people believe that it can protect them from many gastrointestinal ailments, particularly dysentery, diarrhea, amebiasis, acidity and vomiting. Apart from these, the aged people of this community suggested that it as a skin, eye, hair and heart protective agent.

### Conclusion

Based on this work, it can be stated that Eu is a locally brewed millets beer. After the desired period of microbial activity, it is found to contain fermented millets residues, different reactive metabolites, and alcohol. They dedicate Eu to their spiritual God for their good health and protection of the natural resources. Eu is a harmless, source for plenty of beneficial bacteria. Thus, it may be used as an energy drink or as a food supplement. The probiotic nature of Eu should be explored further for its industrialization and recommendation as a health drink.

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# NEGOTIATING URBAN BELONGING: HOUSING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN FROM THE DARJEELING HILLS IN SILIGURI, INDIA

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## Abstract

*Urban spaces are often imagined as sites of opportunity and inclusion, yet for many marginalized groups, such as women migrating from the Darjeeling hills to Siliguri, these promises remain unfulfilled. This ethnographic study investigates the layered discrimination based on intersecting gender, ethnic, and regional identities confronted by women migrating from the Darjeeling hills as they seek housing and urban belonging in Siliguri, West Bengal. Through six informal discussions with 24 women, four focus group interviews with 32 participants informal discussions and digital ethnography, this research reveals how gender, ethnicity, and regional origin intersect to produce distinctive forms of housing exclusion, stereotyping, and social surveillance. Drawing on intersectionality theory, social exclusion frameworks, and Henri Lefebvre's right to the city, Siliguri emerges as a contested urban landscape where marginalized women continuously negotiate recognition and spatial legitimacy. The study also highlights the growing role of social media as a tool for resistance and advocacy. The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive anti-discrimination policies and institutional reforms to foster truly inclusive urban citizenship where all residents can exercise their right to the city.*

**Keywords: Urban, Housing, Exclusion, Social, Discrimination, Women.**

## Introduction

Urban migration in India has played a central role in transforming the socio-economic and cultural landscapes of cities across the country. While much scholarly attention has historically focused on megacities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, medium-sized gateway cities such as Siliguri offer unique insights into migration, urbanization, and social exclusion. Siliguri, situated at the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas, serves as a critical commercial and transportation hub linking the Darjeeling hills, Northeastern states, and broader Bengal plains. It functions as a dynamic site where diverse ethnic groups, languages,



and cultures intersect, creating both opportunities for inclusion and contestations over identity and belonging (Lama, 2001; Subba & Sinha, 2016).

Historically, Siliguri transformed from a sparsely populated, malaria-prone settlement surrounded by dense forests in the early 20th century to one of the fastest-growing urban centers in Eastern India. The city's strategic location connecting hill regions with the plains has shaped its urban and demographic growth, especially following Partition in 1947, which increased migration and settlement as refugees and workers sought new livelihoods here (Biswas, 2022). The establishment of railway links such as the New Jalpaiguri station and road networks further amplified Siliguri's role as a gateway, bolstering its commercial stature as a node for trade in tea, timber, and other goods (Lama, 2001; Siliguri Municipal Corporation, 2024).

This rapid urban growth was accompanied by the emergence of informal housing markets. Land alienation and proletarianization among the original inhabitants marked the city's urban development, as migrant populations increasingly dwarfed local agrarian communities (Basu, 2017). By the late 20th century, Siliguri had evolved into a cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse city, with dominant populations including Bengali speakers, Nepali-speaking Gorkhas, tribal peoples, and migrants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Assam. However, this diversity also incubated tensions around identity, cultural rights, and resource access, particularly evident in the housing sector where informal landlords and brokers exercise significant control (Bhan & Jana, 2013; Tamang, 2019).

Women migrating from the Darjeeling hills to Siliguri for education, employment, and greater urban opportunities often encounter a complex web of exclusion within these housing markets. Reports reveal instances of landlords refusing accommodation to single women, neighbors imposing restrictive social surveillance, and pervasive stereotyping about morality and ethnic identity (Phadke, Khan, & Ranade, 2011). These housing insecurities reflect broader societal anxieties about gendered mobility and ethnic belonging, shaped not only by patriarchal norms but also by regional political histories, including the fraught demand for Gorkhaland and perceptions of Nepali-speaking communities as outsiders within West Bengal (Subba, 1992; Tamang, 2019).

Despite such pressing challenges, the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and region in housing discrimination remains underrepresented in existing research on Indian urban migration. Studies frequently emphasize inter-state labour migration and focus on caste or religious discrimination, overlooking intra-state regional flows and the gendered dimensions of urban belonging (Gayer & Jaffrelot, 2012). This study addresses these gaps by focusing specifically on intra-regional migration from Darjeeling to Siliguri and employing an intersectional lens to analyze the compounded forms of exclusion experienced by women from the hills.

### Theoretical Framework

This research is framed by two core theoretical perspectives while invoking a third conceptual lens to link findings to policy implications. **Intersectionality**, as theorized by



Crenshaw (1989) and Hill Collins (2000), highlights how gender, ethnicity, and regional identities intertwine to produce unique modes of marginalization—illuminating how Darjeeling-origin women confront not singular but overlapping oppressions in Siliguri's housing markets. Complementing this, Henri Lefebvre's (1996) **right to the city** provides an urban theory lens to interpret housing struggles as claims to spatial justice, citizenship, and the collective right to participate in and shape the city's social life, thereby framing exclusion as denial of urban entitlement (Harvey, 2008; Bhan, 2009). The concept of **social exclusion** (Sen, 2000; Silver, 1994) is used here as a supporting idea to underscore how structural and institutional barriers institutionalize discrimination—linking individual experiences to broader governance and policy failures in housing access.

Guided by these frameworks, this study addresses three key questions:

1. How do intersecting gender, ethnic, and regional identities shape access to housing, employment, and urban services for women from the Darjeeling hills in Siliguri?
2. How do these women resist exclusion and negotiate a sense of urban belonging within contested spaces?
3. How does Lefebvre's right to the city elucidate their spatial claims and struggles for recognition?

By centering the voices and agency of women from the Darjeeling hills, this paper contributes to expanding knowledge about intra-state migration and intersectional urban exclusion in India. It also offers insights into the possibilities for resistance and transformation within contested cities, emphasizing the urgent need for inclusive policies and social change that uphold the right to the city for all inhabitants.

### Literature Review

This literature review synthesizes research relating to Siliguri's urban growth, migration dynamics, intersectional housing exclusion, and gendered experiences of Nepali-speaking women in Indian cities. It situates the current study within broader academic debates on urban belonging and spatial justice.

#### Urban Growth and Development in Siliguri

Siliguri has undergone rapid urbanization, transitioning from a small transit town to a crucial commercial and transportation hub in North Bengal and the Northeast. Gole (2023) documents Siliguri's urban sprawl from 1991 to 2021, reporting significant expansion fuelled by population growth and infrastructure development. Similarly, Roy (2024) reveals how peri-urban land changes are linked to improved highways and connectivity, which have intensified pressures on infrastructure and the natural environment. These studies highlight Siliguri's role as a gateway city facing spatially uneven development and governance challenges (Gole, 2023; Roy, 2024). The Siliguri Municipal Corporation's City Development Plan emphasizes the need for affordable housing and integrated growth management to



mitigate social inequalities alongside environmental concerns (Siliguri Municipal Corporation, 2015).

### **Intra-State Migration and Regional Mobility**

Indian urban migration literature predominantly focuses on inter-state labour flows and caste or religious discrimination (Gayer & Jaffrelot, 2012). However, regional intra-state migration, such as from Darjeeling to Siliguri, is largely understudied. Darjeeling-origin populations, especially women, face unique challenges shaped by ethnicity and regional politics linked to movements like Gorkhaland (Subba, 1992). Informal housing markets in Indian cities are frequently exclusionary toward marginalized groups, with market actors exercising considerable discretionary power (Bhan & Jana, 2013). Such dynamics underscore the complexity of regional mobility and urban integration in smaller urban centers.

### **Gendered and Intersectional Housing Exclusion**

Phadke et al. (2011) reveal that in Mumbai, women experience spatial restriction and moral policing that curtail their housing and mobility options. Tamang (2019) extends this analysis to Nepali-speaking women from the hills, showing how gender and ethnicity co-produce their marginalization amidst nationalist struggles. The experiences of Nepali women migrants in Delhi corroborate these findings, documenting housing insecurity compounded by ethnic and gendered discrimination (Women's Regional Network - India [WRN], 2024). Basnet and Sandhya (2020) discuss how Nepali domestic workers occupy a liminal space of economic necessity coupled with social exclusion, navigating a dual identity both welcomed and stigmatized. Regmi et al. (2019) highlight precarious living conditions, with Nepali women disproportionately residing in substandard or informal accommodation subject to exploitative rental practices (Basnet & Sandhya, 2020; Regmi, Naidoo, & Pilkington, 2019; WRN, 2024).

### **Informal Housing Governance and Migrant Agency**

Landlords, brokers, and neighbourhood committees are critical gatekeepers in informal Indian housing markets, often reinforcing stereotypes that exclude women from ethnic minority backgrounds (Bhan & Jana, 2013; Tamang, 2019). This form of discretionary governance amplifies housing precarity and highlights how institutional gaps perpetuate discrimination. These actors not only regulate access but impose social and moral surveillance, disproportionately affecting female migrants' sense of safety and urban belonging (Phadke et al., 2011).

### **Right to the City and Spatial Justice**

Lefebvre's (1996) right to the city theory offers a powerful framework to interpret these housing struggles as collective claims for spatial justice and urban citizenship (Harvey, 2008; Bhan, 2009). This concept asserts that access to housing embodies critical rights to participate in and shape urban life, framing exclusion as not just a market failure but as a political denial of citizenship (Lefebvre, 1996; Harvey, 2008). Understanding migrant women's housing discrimination through this lens situates localized struggles within global movements for equitable and inclusive cities.



While existing studies highlight broad patterns of urban exclusion (Gole, 2023; Tamang, 2019), this study's ethnographic approach captures how discrimination manifests in everyday housing negotiations—a gap the following methodology addresses.

### Methodology

This study employed an ethnographic approach to investigate housing discrimination experienced by women from the Darjeeling hills residing in Siliguri. Data were collected through six informal discussion sessions involving 24 women, which facilitated open sharing of personal experiences. Additionally, four structured focus group interviews were conducted with 32 participants to capture collective perspectives and community strategies in negotiating urban belonging.

Digital ethnography was used to analyse social media posts and videos documenting incidents of discrimination, providing insights into contemporary forms of resistance and solidarity. Document analysis of media reports and organizational responses contextualized these findings within broader socio-political frameworks. Participants were recruited via snowball sampling through community organizations and educational institutions to ensure trust and cultural sensitivity. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained through pseudonymization. This multimodal design enabled a nuanced exploration of the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and regional identity shaping informal housing access.

### Findings and Discussion

The ethnographic data revealed a deeply entrenched pattern of systematic housing discrimination against women from the Darjeeling hills in Siliguri, manifesting both through overt rejection and subtler social mechanisms. The participants' testimonies highlight how exclusion is not merely spatial but existential, undermining their dignity and rightful place within the city's social fabric.

#### Case 1: Housing Discrimination: *"They Don't Want Our Kind Here"*

The most pervasive form of discrimination reported by participants involved rental housing access. Meera (pseudonym), a 22-year-old student from Kalimpong studying in Siliguri, described her experience:

*"When I call about apartments, landlords ask about my background. The moment they hear I'm from the hills, the response changes. They say the flat is suddenly taken, or they quote impossible rents. Some are direct – 'we don't rent to hill people.'"*

*"It's not just the explicit questioning that creates a sense of vulnerability," said the respondent during the interview, her voice tinged with frustration. It's the way we are looked upon, the assumptions woven into every interaction."*

She described situations where being seen with a male friend automatically sparked negative judgments, ranging from being labelled "cheap" to being considered a "prostitute". This societal lens, she explained, extends beyond personal interactions, influencing fundamental



aspects of daily life, such as housing. *"When seeking a rented space,"* she elaborated, *"the questions quickly turn to 'who else is going to live there?' – implying scrutiny over female tenants' living arrangements and potentially restricting shared living with male friends or partners, even when entirely appropriate."*

"It's this constant need to justify and navigate a multitude of restrictions – regarding visitors, occupancy limits, and even seemingly trivial things – that ultimately feels suffocating and profoundly disappointing," she concluded, her sentiments highlighting the pervasive impact of gendered expectations and biases on women's autonomy and well-being.

The search for housing in Siliguri emerges, for many young people from Kalimpong and the Darjeeling hills, as an ordeal marked not by the friction of affordability or availability, but by the weight of prejudice. Discrimination here is rarely a single act; it is a slow unfolding of rejection, doubt, and devaluation—experienced through curt refusals, derisive comments, and rules that mark tenants as perpetual outsiders.

Her words capture a sentiment that ran through many testimonies: that the spatial denial thus operates as a questioning of moral worth, echoing broader literature on intersectional discrimination shaping urban belonging (Phadke et al., 2011; Tamang, 2019).

#### Case 2: Stereotypes That Stick

Rubina (27, from Kurseong, postgraduate student)

Rubina describes how stereotypes become shorthand for exclusion:

*"Landlords frequently assert: 'You hill people drink too much and disrupt buildings peace'".* I was repeatedly shown dilapidated rooms, never good flats in gated complexes."

The injury here lies less in the refusal itself, and more in the flatness of the stereotype—an entire region collapsed into a caricature of irresponsibility. As Rubina put it quietly:

*"You realize that no matter what you do, you are not looked at as an individual. You are simply 'hill girl'—loud, drunk, unreliable. Sometimes I wonder if we are only allowed in certain corners of the city, just as long as we don't disturb the rest."*

#### Case 3: Gendered Discipline Disguised as Protection

Anita (24, from Mirik, preparing for competitive examination)

Housing exclusions often came wrapped in the language of concern. Anita recalled:

"Every broker I spoke with explained that families don't want single girls in the neighborhood. They framed it as 'for our safety,' but the rules that followed made it clear—it was about control, not care. Landlords would prohibit male visitors, ask us not to return late, even dictate what kind of clothes we should avoid wearing if we wanted fewer questions from neighbours."

Her voice tightened when she recounted one exchange:

"A prospective landlord said to me: *'If you are from the hills and living alone, people will think you are doing bad things.'* How do you even respond to such sentences? They shame you before you've even entered the room."

#### Case 4: The Pain of Partial Belonging

Kriti (30, hairdresser, from Pedong, employed in Siliguri)

Kiran pointed to the contradiction of being treated as a stranger in familiar terrain:



"The minute I say I'm from Pedong, the line of questioning changes. Some landlords ask directly if I am Nepali, and when I say yes, silence follows. A few bluntly tell me: 'We don't mix with Nepalis, it creates problems.' Imagine being made to feel like a foreigner in one's own state."

More often, though, he encountered the quiet mechanics of exclusion:

"Suddenly they say: 'The flat is gone,' or 'the society won't allow it.' Rents are inflated overnight. I've even pretended to be from Jalpaiguri just to get a flat inspection. It is humiliating to erase yourself just to find four walls to stay in."

#### **Case 5: Familial Respectability and Its Limits**

Maya and Sunil (both teachers, married couple from Darjeeling)

Even marital status, often seen as enhancing tenants' respectability, could not dissolve the barrier of origin. Maya recalled:

*"When we pursue our search for a house, they first assume we are students or are jobless — party-going and careless. Once we explain that we are teachers and married, the suspicion softens, but not completely. Some landlords insist: 'We only want Bengali families here.' As if being a family from Darjeeling does not make us family enough."*

Her husband Sunil added ruefully:

"We show them everything—marriage proof, job proof, salary slips. But even then, you sense they are tolerating you, not welcoming you."

#### **Case 6: Surveillance After Settlement**

Deepa (21, student, from Kalimpong)

For those who did manage to find rooms, the struggle did not end at the signing of the agreement. Deepa recounted the ongoing surveillance she faced:

"My landlady often asks neighbours if any boy has visited, or calls me abruptly to check if I am home. She once warned me: 'Don't bring your hiñ friends here, people will talk.' We are not just being tolerated—we are being monitored, like suspects under watch."

Moments like these, Deepa reflected, hollowed out the meaning of "home":

"You pay full rent, yet you are constantly reminded that you don't quite belong. The space never becomes yours—it is always theirs, with you in it on borrowed terms."

#### **Overall Pattern of Exclusion**

Collectively, these narratives reveal how the exclusion of hill dwellers in Siliguri operates not only through overt rejection but through the subtler mechanisms of moral policing, inflated rents, ongoing surveillance, and the threat of neighbourhood disapproval.

The respondents' words underscore a larger contradiction: Siliguri presents itself as an urban hub of "opportunity" for students, professionals, and workers from the hiñs. Yet, in practice, people who come from a few hours away are met with suspicion deep enough to strip them of belonging.

As one participant articulated, before lapsing into silence:

"It is never only about rooms. It is about dignity. Every time they say no, every time they invent a reason, the message is the same: you do not belong here."



This pattern aligns with findings from other Indian cities where ethnic minorities face similar multifaceted barriers in housing access (WRN, 2024; Bhan & Jana, 2013). The study thus contributes to broader scholarship emphasizing the centrality of housing not just as shelter but as a terrain of rights, identity, and belonging. Two limitations qualify these findings. First, snowball sampling may over represent networked women. Second, digital ethnography's reliance on viral incidents risks overlooking quieter discriminations. Future research should combine randomized surveys with spatial analysis of rental patterns.

### **Video Evidence and Social Media Documentation: A Decade of Hate, Captured on Camera**

While these experiences have long been a painful reality, the last decade has seen a significant shift in how they are exposed and confronted. The rise of smart phones and social media has empowered these women to turn their cameras into shields and their online platforms into forums for justice. A series of documented incidents, captured in viral videos between 2015 and 2025, reveals the persistent and ugly nature of the discrimination they face. This pattern of hostility was starkly illustrated in the August 2025 attack in Hakimpura, an incident that encapsulated the violent intersection of all forms of prejudice. A video, bravely recorded by a victim named Ronita Lama, showed two local women launching a ferocious assault on a group of Gorkha women students. The attackers' words were as sharp as their actions; they spat casteist slurs like *"Tum log Nepali chota jaat ke ho"* (You are from a lower caste) and deployed gendered accusations of prostitution to debase the young women. The assault escalated beyond words to physical violence, with one assailant wielding a hammer to smash a window, a terrifying threat to the tenants' safety. According to reports from sources like "The Telegraph India" [(telegraphindia.com)](<https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/two-siliguri-women-held-for-racist-remarks-prnt/cid/2116631>) and *"Voice of Sikkim"* [(voiceofsikkim.com)](<https://voiceofsikkim.com/video-of-alleged-racial-abuse-in-siliguri-goes-viral-sparking-outrage/>), the video's rapid spread on social media ignited public fury, leading to protests and the swift arrest of the perpetrators.

This incident, however, was not an isolated outburst. It was the product of a social climate where prejudice has been allowed to fester and even finds legitimacy in times of crisis. During the **COVID-19** pandemic in March 2020, pre-existing racist undercurrents were amplified by global fear. A heartbreaking video from this period shows a Gorkha woman being verbally abused by a shopkeeper who weaponized the pandemic, calling her 'Nepali' and *"Chinese"* and accusing her community of spreading the virus (YouTube, 2020). The woman's tears in the face of this xenophobic attack, captured on YouTube, became a symbol of how marginalized communities bear the compounded weight of social crises.

The roots of such street-level animosity can often be traced to institutional attitudes that normalize prejudice.

In July 2016, a video captured a senior political leader in Siliguri making the sweeping claim that *"the majority of hill students are addicts"* (YouTube, 2016). Such a statement from a person in a position of power does immense damage; it lends a veneer of authority to harmful stereotypes, effectively sanctioning the marginalization of an entire community. It reinforces



a narrative that paints Gorkha youth as a social menace, creating a permissive environment for the kind of harassment and violence seen in the other documented cases.

While unique in their specifics, these cases are integral elements of one overarching and deeply concerning pattern. They show a clear and persistent pattern of discrimination that is racist, casteist, and deeply gendered. More importantly, they demonstrate the power of video documentation as an act of defiance. By capturing these moments of abuse, the victims and their allies have refused to suffer in silence. They have transformed personal trauma into public evidence, forcing authorities to act and compelling society to confront an uncomfortable truth. While the struggle for a truly inclusive and safe urban space in Siliguri is far from over, the courage to press 'record' has become a vital tool in the fight for justice.

These documented incidents reveal how discrimination operates not just through market mechanisms but through interpersonal violence and social stigmatization. As one focus group participant noted: *"The video made everything visible that we face daily. But for every video that goes viral, there are hundreds of incidents that nobody records."*

### **Collective Resistance, Solidarity, and Political Mobilization**

While the August 2025 assault on Nepali women students in Siliguri marked a critical moment of visible outrage and mobilization, such acts of violence and discrimination against Nepali women in the region have been ongoing for decades, often unnoticed or unaddressed. The sporadic interventions by local leaders and law enforcement tend to give voice to these women only after incidents go viral or generate public pressure, revealing inherent limitations in systemic responses.

Participants shared that this long history of marginalization cumulatively results in what many described as "second-class treatment" in their own state—a status deeply felt and widely recognized within the community. Women spoke of enduring an everyday hostility that rarely garners institutional attention unless captured through social media or public protest.

Social media has emerged as a double-edged tool in this context. On one hand, it enables the rapid documentation and dissemination of abuse, spurring organized protests, advocacy from Nepali organizations, and political condemnation from figures like Darjeeling MP Raju Bista and GTA chief Anit Thapa. These responses intensify calls for legal action and accountability and help build solidarity networks among marginalized women.

On the other hand, participants cautioned that much of the discrimination remains invisible: *"Social media helps when something goes viral, but most discrimination happens quietly, and nobody records it."*

In response, women have fostered strong communal bonds, living together and sharing resources to protect one another in a hostile urban environment. These solidarity networks function as essential lifelines, providing emotional support, practical assistance in housing and employment, and platforms for collective self-advocacy.

Political mobilization often follows these grassroots efforts, with leaders responding to public pressure and community voices by demanding justice and institutional reforms. However, the persistence of undercurrents of discrimination points to the need for sustained, systemic change beyond reactionary measures. The collective experiences, resilience, and activism of Nepali women in Siliguri underline a broader struggle for genuine inclusion, safety, and equity within urban spaces historically marked by exclusion and prejudice.

### **Policy Implications and Recommendations**

The study highlights how *Nepali women from the Darjeeling hills* encounter layered exclusion in Siliguri's housing markets, where stereotypes of morality, ethnicity, and gender converge to deny them access to a secure home and a dignified urban presence. These patterns of exclusion reveal a critical gap between the promise of urban opportunity and the reality of systemic barriers that undermine their right to the city. Addressing these challenges requires a combination of legislative safeguards, institutional reforms, and community-driven initiatives.

#### **1. Immediate Interventions**

- **Anti-discrimination in housing:** West Bengal currently lacks explicit legal measures to protect tenants from being denied on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, or regional origin. Introducing clear anti-discrimination clauses within tenancy laws would close this gap and establish housing as a matter of equal rights rather than landlord discretion.
- **Regulating brokers and landlords:** Informal brokers and landlords hold significant unchecked power in Siliguri's rental market. A regulatory framework overseen by the Siliguri Municipal Corporation—such as mandatory registration, standardized tenancy agreements, and penalties for exclusionary practices—could help curb arbitrary refusals and exploitative conditions.

#### **2. Structural Reforms**

- **Hostels and safe living spaces:** Educational institutions and municipal bodies should expand affordable hostels and purpose-built housing for single women and young professionals. Such options reduce dependence on informal and often discriminatory private rental markets.
- **Inclusive housing incentives:** Policies that reward landlords who rent to women and regional minorities, such as tax rebates or certification schemes, could gradually reorient rental markets toward inclusivity.

#### **3. Long-term Systems**

- **Sensitization initiatives:** Neighborhood associations often act as gatekeepers, reinforcing moral policing and ethnic biases. Mandatory sensitization programs, supported by state and municipal authorities in collaboration with civil society, could challenge harmful stereotypes and promote more inclusive community norms.



- Greater representation: Ensuring that *Nepali women from the Darjeeling hills* are represented in advisory committees within the municipal governance framework would bring their lived experiences directly into policy design and urban planning practices.

#### 4. Digital Advocacy and Community Solidarity

- Online grievance redressal: The use of social media to expose discriminatory incidents demonstrates its role as a form of civic resistance. Institutionalizing digital complaint mechanisms under municipal oversight could provide safer, more accessible pathways for reporting housing discrimination.
- Recognition of grassroots solidarity networks: Groups of women from the hills often support one another in navigating housing barriers. Formal partnerships with women's organizations and NGOs could strengthen these informal networks, offering legal literacy, rights awareness, and collective bargaining power.

#### 5. Housing as an Element of Urban Citizenship

The broader implication is that housing discrimination does not merely restrict access to shelter—it excludes *Nepali women from the Darjeeling hills* from full participation in urban society. Policies must therefore treat housing not only as a private market commodity but as a social right tied to urban belonging, dignity, and justice. Embedding the principle of the right to the city into municipal governance would help ensure that Siliguri becomes a space where diversity enriches rather than threatens urban life.

### Conclusion

This study set out to examine how *Nepali women from the Darjeeling hills* negotiate housing access and urban belonging in Siliguri, a city often celebrated as a gateway of opportunity yet marked by exclusionary practices. The ethnographic accounts presented here reveal that discrimination is not limited to overt refusals by landlords; it permeates everyday interactions through inflated rents, moral policing, neighborhood surveillance, and the persistent deployment of ethnic stereotypes. These forms of exclusion underscore the layered and intersectional nature of urban marginalization, where gender, ethnicity, and regional origin intersect to create distinctive barriers to secure housing and recognition as rightful city dwellers.

The theoretical frameworks of intersectionality, social exclusion, and Lefebvre's right to the city collectively illuminate the stakes of these struggles. Intersectionality demonstrates how the everyday challenges of these women cannot be reduced to a single axis of disadvantage. Social exclusion situates these barriers within broader institutional failures and governance gaps that normalize discriminatory practices. Meanwhile, the right to the city makes clear that denial of housing is not only a denial of shelter, but a denial of citizenship—the ability to participate fully, to be visible, and to belong in the urban space.



The findings also highlight how resistance takes shape within constrained environments. Social media and digital documentation have become powerful tools through which women from the hills expose discrimination and compel accountability, transforming moments of personal injury into collective forms of advocacy. Equally, localized solidarity networks—whether in the form of shared living arrangements or community alliances—underscore resilience in confronting systemic hostility. Yet these forms of resistance, while vital, cannot substitute for structural reforms that hold institutions accountable and safeguard rights for all residents.

What emerges, therefore, is a profound paradox. Siliguri, positioned as a hub of connectivity linking the Darjeeling hills, the Northeast, and the wider Bengal plains, draws strength from its diversity. Yet the very groups that sustain and enrich the city—such as *Nepali women from the Darjeeling hills*—are simultaneously subject to suspicion, stereotyping, and exclusion. This contradiction reveals that urban opportunity in Siliguri is unevenly distributed, filtered through hierarchies of ethnicity, gender, and respectability. The research calls for urgent interventions to bridge this gap: legal safeguards against housing discrimination, regulatory oversight of informal rental markets, institutional recognition of marginalized voices, and the embedding of inclusivity within urban planning. Only then can Siliguri transform into a city where the right to housing is recognized as inseparable from the right to dignity and belonging.

In closing, this study contributes to wider debates on urban inclusion by foregrounding the voices and agency of *Nepali women from the Darjeeling hills*—a community at once hypervisible as a target of stereotypes and invisible in formal policy discourse. Their experiences remind us that the struggle for housing cannot be disentangled from the struggle for recognition, and that the promise of the city will remain unfulfilled until all residents can claim it not as guests, but as rightful citizens.

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## DEMOCRACY AND ISLAM: HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF GANDHI AND AZAD

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### Abstract

*This paper explores the intellectual intersections between democracy and Islam through the interpretative lenses of Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, two pivotal figures in India's anti-colonial and nationalist discourse. Both leaders engaged deeply with questions of faith, governance, and moral community, yet articulated distinct visions shaped by their philosophical and religious commitments. Gandhi approached democracy as an ethical and spiritual ideal grounded in swaraj (self-rule), emphasizing moral autonomy, non-violence, and the collective pursuit of truth. For him, democracy was not merely a political system but a way of life that required self-restraint and the moral regeneration of the individual. Azad, drawing upon Islamic theology and Quranic principles, envisioned democracy as inherently compatible with Islam's emphasis on shura (consultation), justice, and equality. His writings and speeches reveal a synthesis between modern democratic values and Islamic humanism, rejecting both theocratic rigidity and Western secular absolutism. By comparing their frameworks, this study argues that Gandhi and Azad collectively advanced a pluralistic and dialogic model of democracy that transcended communal boundaries and rooted political freedom in ethical and spiritual foundations. Their interpretations remain vital to contemporary debates on religion, secularism, and democracy in South Asia and the broader postcolonial world.*

**Keywords: Democracy, Islam, Gandhi, Maulana Azad, Indian Nationalism, Theology, Amihsa, Quran**



Democracy in the garb of Islam is a political ideology which seeks to apply Islamic rules and regulation within the framework of public policy. Liberal democracies call for tolerance. Democracy seems to confine itself to the notion of secularism. There are many factors of democracy. Religion is one such important factor. Samuel Huntington in his 'clash of civilization' said that the whole world is divided into west and Islam. According to him Islamic rules are antithetical to political development. Taking the democratic views of Gandhi and Azad, we can try to perceive the values in Islam.

### GANDHI ON ISLAM

Mahatma Gandhi, one of the most prominent figures in the Indian independence movement and a proponent of non-violence, had a complex but respectful view of Islam. His thoughts and reflections on Islam stemmed from various influences, including his own experiences, interactions with Muslim leaders, and the broader socio-political context of India during British colonial rule. Gandhi's views on Islam can be understood through several key themes: his respect for Islamic principles, his critique of religious dogmatism, and his vision for Hindu-Muslim unity.

"He is the purest essence.... He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us."<sup>1</sup> God is everywhere. Here the essence is faith is mentioned. More than a politician, Gandhiji was a spiritualist but he internalized politics for the welfare of common man.

Although Mahatma Gandhi was a sanatani Hindu but Gandhi also advocated his views on Islam, which is another great world religion. Islam is a religion of strict one god discourse and diligent moral discipline. Gandhi had a very high value for this religion. He regarded it as a religion of peace, love, kindness and brotherhood of all men. It may be true that sometimes the followers of Islam often took to sword for the spread of their religion, but this was not in accordance with the teachings of Quran. As Gandhi himself said in this connection, "I do regard Islam to be a religion of peace in the same sense as Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism are."<sup>2</sup> The charges of fanaticism against Islam cannot be justified, according to Gandhi as there are several passages in the Quran which speak of religious toleration. Of course, there is a place for Jihad in Islam and this Jihad is generally interpreted as a holy war against those who are not the followers of Islam. But Gandhi give grounds for the true meaning of Jihad by uttering that the conditions laid down for the Jihad are very strict and they



are not capable of being fulfilled by everyone. Gandhi held admiration for the teachings of Islam. He admired the fundamental principles of Islam, especially its emphasis on monotheism, justice, charity, and compassion. Gandhi appreciated the concept of Zakat (charity), which is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. He believed that the Islamic emphasis on caring for the less fortunate resonated deeply with his own philosophies of social justice and non-violence. Gandhi often spoke about how elements of Islamic teaching could contribute positively to society, aligning with his principles of truth and non-violence.

Furthermore, Gandhi recognized the spiritual depth found in Islamic practices such as prayer (Salah) and fasting (Sawm). He drew parallels between Islamic devotion and the Hindu practices of prayer and meditation, often highlighting the universal quest for God that transcends specific religious traditions. Gandhi articulated that all religions, including Islam, strive towards the same ultimate truth.

Gandhi said that he has studied many works on Islam. He read Quran for more than once. His religion enables him, obliges him, to imbibe all that is good in all the great religions of the earth. This does not mean that he must accept the interpretation that may be put upon the message of the prophet of Islam or any other prophet. He was glad to find that Truth and non-violence are taught by the holy Quran. Surely, it is for every one of us to apply these principles to daily life accordingly to the light given to us by God. Live and let live or mutual forbearance and toleration is the law of life. That is the lesson I have learnt from Quran, the Bible, the Zend Avestha and the Gita.<sup>3</sup> Gandhi had never accepted in principle the theory of the Hindus and the Muslims being two separate nations. He tried to convince both of them of the poisonous character of this principle. He continued to the last day of his life to inculcate the lesson of unity among both the communities of India. It is amazing that how by his honest and fearless support for communal unity he had outraged many of the Muslims and a negligible few among the Hindus. The Muslims looked upon him as an enemy, while some Hindus felt that by showing humility, respect, regard and partially for the Muslims, he was jeopardizing the cause of the Hindus. The Hindus, who did not like his efforts, envisaged the idea of do away with him. Therefore he was shot to death.



Gandhi's religion was a conglomeration of various religious creeds, theological schools and sectarian faiths that was present in India from ancient times. People belonging to various religions would go to him for his advice and blessings on different matters. Gandhi, throughout his life devoted time and energy for the promotion of Hindu Muslim unity. He also fasted for his cause on many occasions. In the wake of the partition of the country, hundreds and thousands of Hindus and Muslims were killed in Punjab, Bengal and Bihar. Gandhi threw himself into a struggle to heal the breach between the two communities. The Ashram prayers of Gandhi had passages from holy books like the Gita, the Bible and the Quran. This tradition still continues in India in most of the public meetings and prayers. Going by gandhian analysis the empirical theory of democracy is congruent with Islam. 'Islam' Gandhi regarded 'believes in the brotherhood of man, but it is not the brotherhood of Mussalmans only, but it is universal brotherhood. The Allah of Islam is the same as the God of Christians and the Ishwara of Hindus.'<sup>4</sup> Gandhi was very much perturbed by the partition of India. He repeatedly said 'Religions are not for separating men from one another, they are meant to bind. It is a misfortune that today they are so distorted that they have become a potent cause of strife and mutual slaughter.'<sup>5</sup>

Despite his admiration for Islamic teachings, Gandhi was outspoken in his critique of religious dogmatism and extremism found in all religions, including Islam. He believed that the rigid adherence to dogmas could lead to conflict and division rather than fostering understanding and unity. Gandhi emphasized the need for reform within religious practices, advocating for a focus on the ethical and moral dimensions of faith rather than narrow interpretations that lead to violence and fanaticism.

In his writings and speeches, Gandhi highlighted incidents of violence committed in the name of religion, lamenting how communal tensions could arise from misinterpretations of sacred texts. He urged followers to rise above superstitions and prejudices that could lead to intolerance. Gandhi often called for interfaith dialogue, believing that a mutual understanding of different religions, including Islam and Hinduism, was crucial for communal harmony

One of Gandhi's most significant contributions to India's socio-political landscape was his unwavering commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity. He believed that fostering a



sense of brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims was essential for India's struggle for independence from British rule. To Gandhi, communal harmony was not just a political necessity but a moral imperative. He often used the analogy of the Indian subcontinent being akin to a "friendly family," where different communities could live together in peace and mutual respect.

In the 1920s and 1930s, during the rise of communal tensions in India, Gandhi took significant steps to bridge the gap between Hindus and Muslims. He sought to engage Muslim leaders such as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Ali Brothers (Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali). He encouraged joint endeavors and collaboration, such as the Khilafat Movement, which sought to protect the Ottoman Caliphate. Gandhi's advocacy for the Khilafat Movement illustrated his commitment to a united front against colonial oppression, regardless of religious distinctions.

Gandhi's interactions with Muslim leaders and communities further shaped his views on Islam. He engaged with several prominent Muslim figures, establishing respectful relationships that highlighted shared values. Gandhi believed that these relationships helped to foster a broader understanding of Islamic principles and paved the way for cooperative endeavors, facilitating a sense of unity in a diverse society.

Moreover, Gandhi's experiences in South Africa, where he encountered various religious communities, including Muslims, influenced his understanding of the importance of interfaith dialogue. His work in advocating for the rights of Indians in South Africa required him to engage deeply with various religious traditions, and this helped him cultivate a spirit of inclusivity.

In the tumultuous years leading up to India's partition in 1947, Gandhi's vision for a united India became increasingly difficult to realize due to rising communal violence. He undertook various fasts and peace marches to quell Hindu-Muslim riots, demonstrating his commitment to non-violence and reconciliation even in the face of deep-seated animosities. His fasts were not only protests against violence, but they also served as a method to invoke communal harmony and a collective commitment to peace.



Gandhi's last months were shadowed by communal strife between Hindu and Muslim. When he walked barefoot through the scorched villages in East Bengal, locals strewed shattered glass on his path. Gandhi pleaded for amicable settlement between India and Pakistan, but on January 30, 1948, he was assassinated in Delhi on his way to an evening prayer. A young Hindu Brahmin, named Nathuram Godse, viewed Gandhi's acceptance of partition as a betrayal of the Hindu population, and fired three shots point-blank.<sup>6</sup> When asked the question 'Do you cherish Islamic culture, as you would cherish your own Hindu culture?' Gandhiji replied 'Of course I do. I cannot do otherwise, as I believe Islam and other great religions to be as true as my own. India is the richer for the cultures that Islam and Christianity brought with them. I regard the present antagonism as a passing phase'.<sup>7</sup> Gandhiji was optimistic of religious unity in India. But at the same time, he was aware of the fanatical sections of the Muslims in India.

Mahatma Gandhi's views on Islam were characterized by a deep respect for its teachings, a commitment to non-violence, and a passionate advocacy for Hindu-Muslim unity. His life demonstrated the belief that spiritual and ethical values could transcend religious boundaries. While he acknowledged the challenges posed by communalism and dogmatism, he remained hopeful that a shared humanity could forge bonds of understanding and cooperation.

In today's context, Gandhi's reflections on Islam continue to resonate. They challenge us to maintain an open-hearted approach toward all faiths, promoting dialogue and cooperation in an increasingly polarized world. His legacy serves as a reminder of the potential for different communities to come together in a spirit of mutual respect and harmony.

According to Gandhi religion and morality are inseparably bound up with each other. To Gandhi, "There is no religion higher than truth and righteousness." Morality is prized by almost all the great religions of the world. The emphasis on morality, by Gandhi helped his ideas to acquire a universalistic outlook. He said that the very word of Islam means peace, which is non-violence. Gandhi on his son converting to Islam said he had no problem if the conversion was from heart 'The newspaper report that about a fortnight ago my eldest son Harilal, now nearing fifty years, accepted Islam



and that on Friday last 29th May in the midst of a large congregation in the Juma Masjid at Bombay he was permitted to announce his acceptance amid great acclamation and that after his speech was finished, he was besieged by his admirers who vied with one another to shake hands with him. If his acceptance was from the heart and free from any worldly considerations, I should have no quarrel. For I believe Islam to be as true a religion as my own. Gandhiji viewed Islam as a sacrosanct religion co-existing peacefully with all other religion. Islam has been misinterpreted by various tenants of Islam. But that doesn't mean Islam has lost its sanctity. It teaches the use of non-violence and regards forbearance as superior to vengeance.<sup>8</sup>

### **MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD ON ISLAM**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on the other hand, was a prominent Indian scholar, freedom fighter, and one of the key figures in the Indian independence movement. Born in 1888, he was deeply influenced by Islam and held a profound understanding of its teachings. His views on Islam can be encapsulated through his perspectives on religion, nationalism, and culture, emphasizing unity, progress, and humanism.

Abul Kalam Muhiyuddin Ahmed was a Muslim scholar and a senior political leader of the Indian independence movement. He was one of the most prominent Muslim leaders to support Hindu-Muslim unity, opposing the partition of India on communal lines. He is commonly remembered as Maulana Azad; he had adopted Azad (Free) as his pen name. Azad's family descended from a line of eminent Ulama or scholars of Islam, hailing from Herat in Afghanistan and had settled in India during the reign of the Mughal emperor Babur. His mother was of Arab descent, the daughter of Shaikh Muhammad Zahir Watri and his father, Maulana Khairuddin was of ethnic Afghan origin. The family lived in the Bengal region until Maulana Khairuddin left India during the Indian rebellion of 1857 and settled in Mecca, the holiest city in Islam, where he met his wife. The family returned to Kolkata (then Calcutta) in 1890 where his father earned a reputation as a learned Muslim scholar. Azad's mother died when he was 11 years old.

Azad was raised in an environment steeped in Islamic religion. He was given a traditional Islamic education, tutored at his home and in the neighborhood mosque by his father and later religious scholars. Azad mastered several languages, including



Urdu, Persian, Arabic, and Hindi. He was also trained in the subjects of mathematics, philosophy, world history and science by reputed tutors hired by his family. An avid and determined student, Azad succeeded in completing the traditional course of study at the young age of sixteen, nine years ahead of his contemporaries. At the age of thirteen, he was married to a young Muslim girl; Zuleikha Begum Azad was a follower of the Ahl-i Hadith school and compiled many treatises reinterpreting the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the principles of Fiqh and Kalam. His erudition led him to repudiate Taqlid, which asserted the tradition of conformity and accept the principle of Tajdid, which stood for innovation in transforming society and solving modern challenges.

Azad said - "I am a Muslim and profoundly conscious of the fact that I have inherited Islam's glorious tradition of the last fourteen hundred years. I am not prepared to loose even a small part of that legacy. The history and teachings of Islam, its arts and letters, its culture and civilization are part of my wealth and it is my duty to cherish and guard them. But, with all these feelings, I have another equally deep realization, born out of my life's experience which is strengthened and not hindered by the Islamic spirit. I am equally proud of the fact that I am an Indian, an essential part of the indivisible unity of the Indian nationhood, a vital factor in its total makeup, without which this noble edifice will remain incomplete."<sup>9</sup>

Azad believed that Islam, at its core, is a religion of peace, compassion, and brotherhood. He emphasized the importance of understanding the true teachings of Islam as conveyed by the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad. Azad argued that the essence of Islam promotes harmony among different communities and highlights the value of tolerance. He often spoke against the misuse of religion for political gains and advocated for a purified and honest interpretation of Islamic teaching

One of Azad's central beliefs was in the need for interfaith harmony. He envisioned a unified India where people of all religions coexisted peacefully. Azad argued that Islam, while a distinct faith, shares many values and teachings with other religions, particularly Hinduism, the majority faith in India. He promoted the idea that Muslims and Hindus could live together amicably, grounded in their shared cultural and social heritage.



Azad's ideology positioned Islam not as a force of division but as a foundational pillar of Indian nationalism. He believed that the fight for independence from British colonial rule transcended religious lines. Azad famously emphasized that Muslims should actively participate in the struggle for independence, viewing it as an obligation not just to their religion but to the nation as a whole. He stressed the idea that loyalty to the nation should surpass sectarian affiliation.

Azad placed a strong emphasis on education as a means of progress, both for Muslims and for India at large. He believed that Islam encourages knowledge and learning, and he called for a reform in Muslim educational institutions to align them with modern educational practices. Azad felt that an educated Muslim community would contribute positively to society and help dismantle stereotypes that often portrayed Muslims as backward or resistant to change.

Throughout his life, Azad was a vocal critic of communalism and religious extremism. He condemned actions and ideologies that sought to draw sharp divisions between Hindus and Muslims. Azad argued that communal strife undermined the very foundation of India's pluralistic society. He called upon both Muslim leaders and organizations to reject communal politics and to work towards national integration.

Azad celebrated the cultural syncretism in India, advocating for an appreciation of the rich tapestry of influences that shaped Indian civilization. He argued that Islam contributed to this synthesis, enriching Indian culture with its art, philosophy, and spiritual traditions. Azad appreciated the contributions of Sufi mystics who emphasized love and tolerance, viewing them as vital figures in fostering a tolerant Islamic narrative within the Indian context.

As a leader, Azad's views on Islam were not only theoretical; they were also reflected in his actions. As the first Minister of Education in independent India, he worked to create educational policies that promoted inclusivity and secularism, emphasizing that education should serve to bridge divides rather than deepen them.

'Islam's splendid traditions of 'thirteen hundred years', he declared at Ramgarh, are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose a smallest part of my inheritance. The



teaching and history of Islam its art and letters and civilization are my wealth and fortune. <sup>10</sup>Azad symbolized a reformist tradition within an Islamic framework.

According to him, the real objectives of the Quran are the following three principles:

1. It made faith and deed the sole means of salvation, and not affiliation to any particular group.
2. It emphasized the fact that religion revealed by God was but one for all mankind, and that therefore every deviation from this was a clear aberration.
3. It emphasized that real religion was direct worship of but one God without any mediating agency, and that this was the main teaching of all prophets, and that every belief and practice which conflicted with it was therefore a deviation from it and indeed a denial of it." Azad developed this principle in his Tarjuman al Quran which is, without any exaggeration unparalleled in Islamic literature. Unity of Faith is his central idea, but this does not mean that all historical religions as they exist today are true or that there is truth in every religion but that "All religions as originally delivered are true." Thus his unfinished Tarjuman-al-Quran was easily the most profound statement on multiculturalism and inter-faith understanding.

His political testament, delivered at the Congress session in 1940, was a neat and powerful summation of the ideology of secular nationalism: It is not at all surprising why history books in Pakistan make no mention of Azad, except to echo the Quaid-i-Azam's view that he was a Muslim "show-boy" Congress president. What is surprising is how a man of Azad's stature has been submerged beneath the rationalization of the victors – the founders of Pakistan -- in our own country. This is the man whom Jawaharlal Nehru called "a very brave and gallant gentleman, a finished product of the culture that, in these days, pertains to few".

During khilafat campaigns he commented very little on his role but in the post khilafat phase, he wrestled with the communal issue, which has become his prime concern and evolved a theory of inter-religious amity through an interpretation of Quran. Azad made a conscious, intellectual effort to distance himself from the Muslim League and its allies.<sup>11</sup> He found their narrow sectarian concerns to be incompatible with his vision of an Indian nation and his reading of the nationalist struggles in the world of



Islam, an area he knew best to his own country. He did not compromise his position despite the opposition and virulent criticisms of the Jamat-e Islami, the Barelwi ulema and the Muslim League. Moulana Azad, he believed in nationalism, as saints believe in God. He never deviated from his goal, never made any compromises thereafter, religiously worked for the integrity of the land in the process incurring the wrath and displeasure of his own people. What really sustained him in this path? It was the moral and spiritual power of Islam.

An in-depth study of Azad would reveal what Islam really stands for. Perhaps when others saw the exterior of Islam; he saw its real self. He said Islam stood for certainty, equilibrium and ethics. Certainty is the truth which centers on sacrifice Sadaqat-e-hayat Bajuz Khurbani-Ke Kuch Nahin. Islamic creed rests on Khurbani, as we belong to Ibrahimite tradition, where a father was willing to sacrifice his son. Azad would argue, 'should we distrust our brothers, Hindus, with whom we have lived in peace from centuries? With whom we live and die, and with whom we have built a composite culture of the fame of Qutub Minar, of Moti Masjid, of Taj-Mahal and of Gol-Gumbaz? Should we forget that together we evolved the Bhakti movement which demolished the barriers of caste, creed and class, and took the stand on the bedrock of humanity? Should we forget Nizamuddin Aulia, Amir Khusrau, Baba Farid, Moinuddin Chishti, Gesu Daraz and a host of others who reminded us that, to win the heart of people is a greater pilgrimage than Haj-e-Akbar? Azad very rightly pointed out that harmony of desires, emotions and ideas would result in Cosmos and their disharmony would result in Chaos. He saw that the Muslims were going off at tangent in their emotions, not knowing what would happen to the minorities in three-fourth of India, when one-fourth of India became Pakistan. It is the middle path and the equilibrium that he advocated, and not partitioning the land to solve the problem. In short Azad stood for united India, which was the only solution to the intractable problem. He failed to achieve this goal, and we are still facing the music of Partition. When two brothers quarrel, which is natural, separation is not the answer; compromise is the answer. Azad stood for compromise as he strongly felt reconciling the irreconcilable was wisdom, and not walking off in a huff.

Both Azad and Gandhi shared a deep passion for religion and Azad developed a close friendship with him. He adopted Gandhi's ideas by living simply, rejecting material



possessions and pleasures. He began to spin his own clothes using khadi on the charkha, and began frequently living and participating in the ashrams organized by Gandhi, Becoming deeply committed to ahimsa (non-violence) himself, Azad grew close to fellow nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru, Chittaranjan Das and Subhash Chandra Bose. He strongly criticized the continuing suspicion of the Congress amongst the Muslim intellectuals from the Aligarh Muslim University and the Muslim League.

Democracy blossoms with the interpretations of Gandhi and Azad. Gandhi and Azad were fierce opponent of communalism. Both of them believed in religious text of different religions. He read Islam and found many things interesting. 'The more I study the wonderful faith, the more convinced I become that the glory of Islam is due not to the sword but to the sufferings, the renunciation and nobility of its early Caliphs.'- Gandhi. Azad visioned a united and an independent India "It was India's historic destiny that many human races, cultures, and religions should flow to her, and that many a caravan should find rest here. One of the last of these caravans was that of the followers of Islam. This came here and settled for good. In India everything bears the stamp of the joint endeavors of the Hindus and Muslims. Our languages were different, but we grew to use a common language. Our manners and customs were dissimilar, but they produced a new synthesis. No fantasy or artificial scheming to separate and divide us can break this unity." Maulana Azad. He combined Islam with his composite nationalism.

Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were both influential figures in India's struggle for independence, yet they had different perspectives and approaches regarding Islam and its role in society. Here is a comparative analysis of their views on Islam, their understanding of its socio-political implications, and how their thoughts intersected and diverged.

Gandhi's view of Islam was deeply rooted in his overarching philosophy of non-violence (ahimsa) and truth (satya). He respected Islam as one of the world's great religions, emphasizing its teachings on compassion and brotherhood. For Gandhi, the values of Islam aligned closely with his principles of non-violence and justice, although he believed that its followers, like those of all religions, had sometimes



strayed from these core tenets. He often cited specific verses from the Quran to highlight the universality of spiritual truths shared among all religion.

Azad, on the other hand, was shaped by a more formal and scholarly understanding of Islam. He viewed the religion not only as a personal faith but also as a socio-political force in the Indian context. His Christian-oriented study of Islam allowed him to analyze its teachings critically while advocating for its reform and modernization. Azad's emphasis on education and cultural synthesis reflected his belief that Islam, when understood correctly, could promote unity amongst all Indians

Gandhi was an ardent advocate for Hindu-Muslim unity. He believed that the harmony of these two communities was critical to India's independence and future. Gandhi often engaged in actions aimed at bridging the divide, such as fasting during communal riots or addressing religious sentiments directly. He emphasized the shared values between Hinduism and Islam, underscoring that communal tensions stemmed largely from misunderstanding and mistrust rather than from the teachings of the respective faiths

Azad shared similar views on communal harmony but approached the issue from a slightly different angle. While he believed in fostering unity, Azad placed greater emphasis on the identity and political aspirations of Muslims within the Indian context. He warned against the dangers of communalism, seeing it as a threat to the national struggle. Azad stressed that Muslims must actively participate in the independence movement, framing it as a moral and religious duty, thus tying religious identity to political action.

Gandhi viewed education as a means for moral upliftment and social reform, advocating for a model of education that was not just academic but also character-building. He emphasized vocational education with a focus on rural self-reliance, which he believed would empower all Indians, including Muslims. His educational philosophy aimed to instill values of service, humility, and responsibility towards community welfare.

Azad's approach to education was more formal and broad-ranging, focusing on modernizing the Muslim educational system to encourage scientific thinking and



critical inquiry. As India's first Minister of Education, he worked tirelessly to improve educational access for all communities. He believed that an educated Muslim population would dismantle prejudices and stereotypes, thereby enabling Muslims to contribute more effectively to nation-building. Azad's agenda was centered on creating a sense of national consciousness that transcended religious identities.

In his political philosophy, Gandhi emphasized non-violent resistance as a means to achieve social and political objectives. He encouraged Muslims to participate in the non-cooperation movement and advocated for collective action against colonial rule. Gandhi believed that political freedom must be coupled with the moral awakening of individuals, where religious teachings could serve as guiding principles for governance and social justice.

Azad's political engagement was characterized by a more structured approach. He was a key figure in the Indian National Congress and sought to represent the political aspirations of Muslims within that framework. He believed in an inclusive nationalism that catered to the needs of all communities, seeing political engagement as essential for the community's progress. Azad was wary of any political formations that might isolate Muslims and advocated for cooperation among all Indian communities in the fight for independence.

Gandhi saw the need for reform within all religions, including Islam. He advocated for an internal renewal that would encourage followers to return to the core ethical principles of their faiths. In Gandhi's view, a true understanding of Islam would lead its followers to reject violence and embrace peaceful coexistence, similar to his vision for Hinduism.

Azad took a more scholarly approach to reform, engaging with Islamic texts and history to advocate for a renaissance within the Muslim community. He believed that Muslims needed to reinterpret their religious texts in light of modernity, focusing on the principles of justice, equality, and universal human rights. Azad's approach was more about practical engagement—as he sought to empower Muslims through education and political participation.



Gandhi had close personal relationships with various Muslim leaders and believed that understanding and empathy were key to fostering communal trust. His active engagement in Muslim festivals and rituals illustrated his commitment to spiritual inclusivity. Gandhi's relationship with Islam was thus characterized by deep respect for its tenets, alongside a call for mutual understanding.

Azad's relationship with Islam was both personal and intellectual. As a scholar and writer, he delved into theological discussions and was committed to articulating Muslim identity in the context of Indian nationalism. His writings reflect a profound understanding of Islamic principles, and he often sought to demonstrate how these could coexist with a broader national identity.

Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad both represented significant voices in the discourse surrounding Islam in India, yet their approach varied considerably. While Gandhi focused on the ethical and moral dimensions of Islam and sought to weave a shared narrative of Hindu-Muslim unity, Azad engaged with the socio-political implications of Islamic identity within the broader context of Indian nationalism.

Both leaders emphasized the importance of education, communal harmony, and political engagement, albeit through different lenses. Where Gandhi's vision was more about personal transformation and spiritual unity, Azad's was grounded in a scholarly and political response to the realities of a multi-religious society.

In the tumultuous era they lived in, both figures sought to counter communalism and promote a collective identity for all Indians, offering lessons that remain relevant in contemporary discussions about religion, identity, and nationhood. Their legacies encourage an ongoing dialogue about the connections between faith and collective action in the pursuit of justice and equality.

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## SUSTAINABLE ORGANIC FARMING PRACTICES IN PINGLA BLOCK, PASCHIM MEDINIPUR: A CONCISE OVERVIEW

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### Abstract

*This paper highlights organic farming practices of Maligram, Naya, and Jalchak villages of Pingla Block, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal. Prevalent organic inputs—vermin compost, FYM, neem cake, green manure, panchagavya, cow urine sprays—and ecological practices such as composting, mulching, crop rotation, intercropping, and integrated livestock-based nutrient recycling has remarkably enhanced crop productivity while limiting soil degradation and exhaustive chemical inputs. The studies document successful cultivation of paddy, mustard, vegetables, also high-value crops like strawberry, passion fruit, blueberry, ginger, and mango. Farmers reported improved soil fertility, reduced pest incidence, while conserving natural biodiversity. However, constraints include inadequate certified input supply, high labour demand, certification difficulties, limited training, and weak market linkages. Organic farming holds strong potential for sustainable agricultural development in Pingla, provided there is expanded institutional support, farmer training, and improved value-chain development.*

**Keywords: Farming, Crop, Organic, Soil, Paddy, Mustard, Vegetables.**

### 1. Introduction

Organic farming represents a holistic approach for production, without degrading ecological balance, soil quality and health, biodiversity, and sustainability. In contrast to chemical-intensive farming, organic agriculture prioritizes natural inputs and biological processes to ensure long-term productivity. Organic farming has dates back to ancient times in India though lost prominence after the Green Revolution. The region of Pingla Block, characterized by alluvial-lateritic soils and intensive cropping, has recently witnessed increased interest in organic and integrated farming practices.

Globally, trend of organic agriculture has increased due to growing concerns over food safety, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience. In India, organic farming has gained significant momentum under policies such as the National Project on Organic Farming (NPOF) and the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY).

This study aims at assessing the status of prevailing organic farming practices, patterns, the factors facilitating such adoption, the challenges faced by farmers, and policy measures required to strengthen sustainable agriculture in the selected area of Pingla block of Paschim



Medinipur.

## 2. Objectives of the study

1. To identify organic fertilizers, bio-pesticides, and natural inputs used in Pingla Block.
2. To document organic and integrated methods used for major crops.
3. To analyze the socio-economic and institutional factors influencing the adoption of organic practices; opportunities and challenges that hinder widespread adoption

## 3. Study Area & Methods (Condensed)

Pingla is located in Paschim Medinipur, co-ordinates 22°16'18.9"N 87°35'08.4"E; soil being alluvial type mainly. Alluvial soils in this region vary from sandy loam to clay. This area has diverse crops; paddy, vegetables, and oilseeds being prominent. Being a flood-prone area affected by water-logging, summer crop (Aus) of paddy is limited.

Both studies used:

- **Primary data:** Data were collected from three villages—Maligram, Naya, and Jalchak—via field visits, farmer interviews, and photographic documentation. Collected through structured questionnaires administered to farmers
- **Secondary data:** Sourced from government reports (APEDA, NCOF, FSSAI), academic studies, district agricultural records, and published literature.
- **Tools:** descriptive statistics (mean, SD, percentages) and qualitative interpretation.

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## 4. Results

### 4.1 Crops Grown Under Organic Practices

The major crops grown in this area include paddy, mustard, variety of vegetables such as brinjal, beans, chilli, okra, and cauliflower; fruits like mango, strawberry, blueberry, and passion fruit; spice and plantation crops such as ginger and turmeric, with saffron cultivated in special cases using organic compost bags.”

### 4.2 Organic Inputs Used

#### Fertilizers

- Organic inputs extend to application of farmyard manure (FYM), compost, and neem cakes; vermin composting using earthworms; green manuring with leguminous crops; crop rotation to maintain soil fertility; mulching for moisture conservation; use of botanical pesticides, especially neem-based formulations; and traditional bio-inputs such as Panchagavya, Jeevamrutha/Beejamrutha, banana pseudo-stem tonic and cow dung slurry



- Natural pest control measures included the use of neem oil and neem kernel extracts, cow urine solutions, ash–water sprays, and lime paste applied to mango trunks for aphid management, along with pheromone traps, manual pest removal, and the planting of flowering species to attract natural predators.
- Integrated farming practices such as cereal–legume intercropping, mixed cropping, apiculture within organic farms, and the recycling of livestock manure were also adopted. Together, these practices enhanced on-farm biodiversity, improved pollination, and contributed to higher soil fertility

#### 4.3 Farmers' Perceptions

- Organic farmers showed greater awareness to soil health and ecological sustainability.
- Conventional farmers preferred chemicals for immediate yield response.
- Both groups recognized the long-term need for sustainable cultivation.

#### 4.4 Challenges Faced by Organic Farmers

1. **Technical Gaps:** Lack of training on pest control, composting methods, and crop rotation designs.
2. **Certification Issues:** High cost, lengthy procedures, and poor awareness.
3. **Market Constraints:** Limited supply-chain infrastructure, low price incentives, and lack of dedicated organic markets.
4. **Yield Decline:** Many farmers experienced lower productivity during the transition phase.
5. **Labour Intensity:** Organic methods often require more labour, posing constraints for smallholders.

#### 4.5 Socio-economic Factors Influencing Adoption

Education level, landholding size, access to extension services, and participation in farmer groups positively influenced the adoption of organic practices. Farmers with prior exposure to training programs were more likely to adopt systematic organic methods.

#### 4.6. Sustainability of Organic Farming

Organic farming enhances long-term sustainability through:

- Improved soil fertility and organic carbon content
- Reduced environmental pollution
- Conservation of biodiversity
- Enhanced resilience to climate change



However, limited institutional support and inadequate market incentives threaten long-term sustainability unless strategic interventions are made.

#### 4.7. Policy Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Extension Services:** Provide technical training through farmer field schools.
2. **Develop Organic Markets:** Establish local organic markets and promote producer cooperatives.
3. **Certification Support:** Offer subsidized and simplified certification processes.
4. **Financial Assistance:** Provide transitional support and subsidies for organic inputs.
5. **Research Initiatives:** Promote district-specific organic farming models.
6. **Awareness Campaigns:** Increase consumer and farmer awareness through workshops and media.

#### 4.8 Key Observations

- Organic farms showed healthier crop appearance (mustard height, strawberry fruiting, ginger proliferation Fig 1-3).
- High-value horticulture performed well without chemicals.
- Apiculture increased pollinator population and fruit set.

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### 5. Discussion

This study reinforces that organic farming improves soil structure, boosts microbial activity, and enhances biodiversity. Ecologically beneficial practices such as composting, mulching, and leguminous cover cropping enrich soil organic carbon.

The combined evidence indicates:

- **Stronger resilience to climate stress**, especially drought.
- **Reduced dependence on chemical fertilizers**, lowering cost over time.
- **Better taste and shelf-life** of organic produce.
- **Growing consumer demand** for chemical-free foods.

However, organic farmers face:

- Difficulties in obtaining certification (NPOP, PGS-India).
- Limited access to quality organic inputs.



- Labour-intensive weed and pest management.
- Market uncertainties and lack of structured organic supply chains.

Government schemes (PKVY, NMSA, RKVY, MIDH) offer opportunities, but awareness and access remain low.

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## 6. Conclusion

Organic farming in Pingla Block is promising, environmentally sound, and economically viable for small and marginal farmers. The key strengths include improved soil health, environmental conservation, crop diversity, and the potential for niche high-value crops. Despite operational challenges—certification, training gaps, labour intensity—organic farming can be scaled up through better institutional support, farmer training, and market development.

Pingla Block can emerge as a regional hub for sustainable organic agriculture with coordinated efforts from farmers, researchers, and policymakers.

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**Fig 1: Saffron growing on organic manure and compost in gunny bags**



**Fig2: Organically grown mustard**



**Fig 3:Proliferation of ginger corms**



## জড়ের পরিণাম জড়ই- এ প্রসঙ্গে শ্রীঅরবিন্দের সমন্বয়বাদ

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### সংক্ষিপ্তসার-

শ্রীঅরবিন্দকে দুর্বোধ্য বলে এড়িয়ে যাওয়া আসলে তাঁর রচনাবলীর প্রতি আমাদের দীর্ঘদিনের অমনোযোগিতার ফল। অথচ যিনি তাঁর লেখাগুলি শ্রদ্ধার সঙ্গে, মনোযোগ দিয়ে ও একনিষ্ঠ পাঠকের দৃষ্টিতে পড়বেন, তিনি সহজেই উপলব্ধি করতে পারবেন যে ভারতীয় দর্শনের পরিসরে শ্রীঅরবিন্দ স্বীয় স্বকীয় মহিমায় এক অনন্য আসন অধিকার করে আছেন। শ্রীঅরবিন্দের দর্শনের অন্যতম মৌলিক অবদান হলো জড়বাদ (Materialism) ও ভাববাদের (Idealism) উর্ধ্বে উঠে উভয়কেই একটি উচ্চতর সমন্বয়ের আলোকে পুনর্ব্যাখ্যা করা। তিনি দেখিয়েছেন—জড়বাদের ভোগকেন্দ্রিক আদর্শ যেমন মানুষের জীবনকে অসম্পূর্ণ রেখে দেয়, তেমনি চিত্তবাদের ত্যাগ কেন্দ্রিক আদর্শ ও মানব সমাজের গতি মুখকে আংশিক ভাবে ব্যাখ্যাকরে। এই দুই জটিল ও আপাত-বিরোধী প্রবণতার গভীর সমাধান তিনি দিয়েছেন তাঁর ‘পূর্ণবেদান্ত’-এ, যেখানে “সৎ-চিত্ত-আনন্দের” দিব্য জগত এবং “অন্ন-প্রাণ-মন”-এর জাগতিক পরিমণ্ডলকে এক বৃহত্তর ঐক্যে সংযুক্ত করা হয়েছে। তাঁর অতিমানস (Super mind)-সিদ্ধিই এই দুই স্তরের মধ্যবর্তী সেতুস্বরূপ—যেখানে জড় ও চেতনা পরস্পরকে অতিক্রম না করে, বরং একে অপরের সত্যকে গ্রহণ করে সমন্বিত হয়ে ওঠে। শ্রীঅরবিন্দের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির আরেকটি মৌলিক দিক হলো প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্য—উভয় চিন্তাধারার গভীর সম্মিলন। ভারতীয় দর্শনের মূল কেন্দ্রবিন্দু, অর্থাৎ পরোক্ষ অনুভূতি ও প্রত্যক্ষ জ্ঞানের আধ্যাত্মিক অভিজ্ঞতাকে তিনি মিলিয়ে নিয়েছেন ইউরোপীয় দর্শনের যুক্তি বাদী অনুসন্ধান, বিশ্লেষণধর্মী প্রবণতা এবং বুদ্ধিবৃত্তিক দার্শনিক পরম্পরার সঙ্গে। এর ফলে জন্ম নিয়েছে এক নব-বেদান্ত—যা কেবল অতীতের বেদান্তের ব্যাখ্যামাত্র নয়, বরং তা এক সৃজনশীল, গতিশীল ও আধুনিক দর্শনচিন্তার রূপ।

শ্রীঅরবিন্দ যথার্থই বুঝতে পেরেছিলেন যে জড় এবং চিৎ—এই দুইয়ের যে কোনো একটিকে উপেক্ষা করলে অস্তিত্বের সামগ্রিক সত্যকে বোঝা অসম্ভব। তাই তাঁর দর্শনে ঈশ্বরীয় সত্য যেমন বাস্তব বিশ্বের মধ্যেই বিকশিত হয়, তেমনি বস্তুজগতকেও তিনি দেখেছেন ঈশ্বরীয় আত্মবিকাশের অপরিহার্য ক্ষেত্র হিসেবে। এই কারণে তাঁর দর্শন আধুনিক মানুষের কাছে যেমন বুদ্ধিগ্রাহ্য, তেমনি আধ্যাত্মিক উন্মোচনের পথেও তা একটি সক্ষম দিশারী। সংক্ষেপে বলা যায়, শ্রীঅরবিন্দের দর্শন হলো এক বৃহত্তর সমন্বয়ের দর্শন—যেখানে প্রাচ্য ও প্রতীচ্য, জড় ও চিৎ, বুদ্ধি ও অন্তর্দৃষ্টি, ভৌতিক জীবন ও আধ্যাত্মিক উৎকর্ষ—সব কিছুই একে অপরের সঙ্গে গভীর ভাবে যুক্ত হয়ে জীবনের পূর্ণতাকে নির্দেশ করে। এই দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিই তাঁকে ভারতীয় দর্শনের পরিসরে এক বিস্ময়কর ও যুগান্তকারী চিন্তকের মর্যাদা দিয়েছে।

সূচকশব্দ- জড়, চিৎ, আনন্দ, জড়বাদ, ভাববাদ, সমন্বয়বাদ, চিৎবাদ।

## সূচনা-

শ্রীঅরবিন্দের দর্শন শুরু হয়েছে তাঁর 'Life Divine' বা 'দিব্য জীবন' গ্রন্থ দিয়ে। উক্ত বই-এর দ্বিতীয় ও তৃতীয় অধ্যায়ে বর্ণিত 'জড়বাদের নাস্তিকতা' (The Materialist Denial) ও 'চিৎবাদের নেতিবাদ' (The Refusal of the Ascetic) শ্রীঅরবিন্দ দর্শনের জড় ও চিৎ এর সমস্যার আলোচনার সূচনা করে। এখানে একটি দার্শনিক সমস্যা উত্থাপিত হয়েছে। জড় ও চিৎ দুটি বিপরীত প্রান্তে অবস্থিত। এরা বিপরীতধর্মী হয়েও একটি অন্যটির সঙ্গে সমন্বিত। এটি কিভাবে সম্ভব? এটাই হল দার্শনিক সমস্যা। ভারতীয় দর্শনেও এই প্রকার জড় ও চিতের মধ্যে বিভাজনের সমস্যা দেখি, যেমন সাংখ্যমতে জগৎপুরুষ (চেতনা) ও প্রকৃতি (পদার্থ) এই দুই নিত্য তত্ত্বের উপর প্রতিষ্ঠিত। পুরুষ নিষ্ক্রিয় চেতন স্বরূপ, প্রকৃতি জড় কিন্তু সৃজনশীল। উভয়ই স্বতন্ত্র ও চিরকাল পৃথক। অদ্বৈত বেদান্তে শঙ্করাচার্য বলেছেন, ব্রহ্মই একমাত্র সত্য। জগৎ মায়া বা অবাস্তব, পদার্থ শেষ পর্যন্ত অবজ্ঞার বিষয়। যোগদর্শনেও পুরুষ (চিৎ) ও প্রকৃতি (জড়) পৃথক ধরা হয়। মুক্তি মানে পুরুষের প্রকৃতি থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন হওয়া।<sup>1</sup> প্রাচীন গ্রীক দর্শনেও আমরা দেখি, প্লেটো তাঁর সুবিখ্যাত ফেডো (Phaedo) ডায়ালগে কিভাবে মন বা আত্মা ও দেহ বা জড়বস্তুর মধ্যে পার্থক্য করেছেন। প্রত্যেক মন বা আত্মা সরল ও অবিভাজ্য এবং প্রত্যেক দেহ

<sup>1</sup>সমরেন্দ্র ভট্টাচার্য, ভারতীয় দর্শন, p- 5-10

বা জড়বস্তু যৌগিক ও বিভাজ্য। মন বা আত্মা ও দেহ বা জড়বস্তুর মধ্যে এই দ্বৈতবাদ আধুনিক পাশ্চাত্য দর্শনের ইতিহাসে, বিশেষ করে ফরাসী দার্শনিক দেকার্ত এর দর্শনে লক্ষ্য করা যায়। তিনি এদের মধ্যে ক্রিয়া-প্রতিক্রিয়ার কথা বলেছেন। কিন্তু সমস্যা হল মন ও দেহ (জড়) বিপরীতধর্মী হয়েও এদের মধ্যে মিথস্ক্রিয়া (interaction) কিরূপে সম্ভব? দেকার্ত এই প্রশ্নের উত্তর নানাভাবে দেওয়ার চেষ্টা করেছেন, কিন্তু তাঁর কোন উত্তরই সদুত্তর বলে গণ্য হয়নি।<sup>2</sup>

জড়বাদীদের কাছেও জড়ই একমাত্র তত্ত্ব। তাদের কাছে চেতনা বা চৈতন্য বলে পৃথক কিছু নেই, কারণ জড়ের পরিণাম জড়ই। জড় থেকে চেতনার পরিণাম নয়। এই সূত্র ধরে অগ্রসর হয়ে জড়বাদীরা বলেন যে, যা কিছু ইন্দ্রিয় দিয়ে বোঝা যাবে তাই-ই শুধু মনে নেওয়া যায় এবং ইন্দ্রিয়াতীত বস্তু যা প্রাকৃত বুদ্ধি ধরে না তা স্বীকার করা যায় না। জড়বাদীর কাছে অতীন্দ্রিয় মানার প্রশ্নই নেই, কারণ তা ইন্দ্রিয়গ্রাহ্য নয়। কিন্তু আমাদের মধ্যে এমন সামর্থ্য বা ক্ষমতা বা বৃত্তি অবস্থিত যা চর্চা করলেই সূক্ষ্ম বিষয়ের সন্ধান পাই। আমরা যেমন স্থূল ইন্দ্রিয় দিয়ে স্থূল বস্তুকে জানছি তেমনি সূক্ষ্ম ইন্দ্রিয় দিয়ে সূক্ষ্ম বস্তুকেও জানছি। এখন এ সামর্থ্য আদৌ সম্ভব কিনা তা নিয়ে জড়বাদীরা কোন প্রশ্ন তোলেননি। এটাই জড়বাদের একতা ত্রুটি। কারণ, এর ফলে জন্ম হল অজ্ঞেয়বাদ (agnosticism), অর্থাৎ ইন্দ্রিয় দিয়ে যা ধরা যাচ্ছে না তাকে বলে অজ্ঞেয়বাদ। যেহেতু অজ্ঞেয়বাদের কোনো সীমারেখা নেই তাই যা কিছু ইন্দ্রিয় দিয়ে বোঝা যায় না তাকেই অজ্ঞেয়বাদ রাজ্যে পাঠান হয়। প্রশ্ন কিন্তু থেকেই যাচ্ছে, যাকে অজ্ঞেয় বলা হচ্ছে তা কি সত্যিই অজ্ঞেয়? যদি তা না হয়, তবে অবশ্যই ধরে নিতে হবে জড়বাদ একটা নির্বিচারবাদ বা Dogmatism এ পরিণত হয়েছে এবং এই অজ্ঞেয়বাদ থেকেই নির্বিচারবাদের প্রশ্ন উঠছে।

‘একমাত্র ইন্দ্রিয়ের মাধ্যমে জ্ঞানলাভ সম্ভব’- জড়বাদীদের এই বক্তব্যের মধ্যে সখেট সংশয় আছে; কারণ আমাদের বাহ্য অনুভবের বিরাট অংশ কেবল ইন্দ্রিয়ানুভবে সীমাবদ্ধ থাকতে পারে না। জড়বাদীদের প্রস্তাব মেনে নিলে ইন্দ্রিয়ানুভবের সীমিত ক্ষেত্রকে অতিক্রম করে অতীন্দ্রিয় অনুভবের যে বিশাল ক্ষেত্র বিশ্বজগতে ছড়িয়ে আছে তা অস্বীকার করতে হবে। তাছাড়া, জড়বাদীদের প্রস্তাবকেই একমাত্র প্রস্তাব বলে স্বীকার করে নিলে, অবভাসিক জগৎ ছাড়া অতীন্দ্রিয় জগৎ বলে কিছু আছে কিনা, সেবিষয়ে অনুসন্ধানের প্রয়াসকে বন্ধ করে দিতে হয়। মানস ও অতিমানস কার্যের অনুসন্ধান নিয়জিত হলে এমন সব বিষয়ের সন্ধান পাওয়া যাবে যেগুলির উপর জড়বাদী সূত্রের আর কোন নির্ভরযোগ্যতা থাকে না। এর থেকে

<sup>2</sup>দিলীপ কুমার রায়, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ-দর্শন, p- 18

জড়বাদীদেত বক্তব্যের সীমাবদ্ধতা প্রমাণিত হয়। এজন্য বলা যায়, জড়বাদীদের অজ্ঞেয়বাদের তত্ত্ব মূল্যহীন।

আমরা কোথাও কোথাও যৌক্তিক জড়বাদের কথা পাই, যেমন প্রাকৃত বিজ্ঞান বা পদার্থবিদ্যা। যৌক্তিক জড়বাদ যুক্তি বা বুদ্ধি দিয়ে অনুধাবন করতে চায়। যৌক্তিক জড়বাদ বুদ্ধিকে পরিশীলিত করে তুলেছে। শ্রীঅরবিন্দের মতে এই পরিশীলিত বুদ্ধির প্রয়োজনীয়তা আছে, কারণ এগুলি দিয়ে বহু সূক্ষ্ম বস্তুকে উপলব্ধি করতে পারি। তবুও বলতে হবে যে, এই বিশ্বে যেখানে আমরা পরমার্থ তত্ত্বের প্রকাশের বিভিন্ন স্তর দেখি যার অবস্থান জড়, প্রাণ, মন ও মনের উর্ধ্বের নানা স্তরে, সেই সব প্রকাশ বুদ্ধি দিয়ে ধরতে পারি না, এমন কি পরিশীলিত বুদ্ধি দিয়েও প্রকৃত তত্ত্ব ধরতে পারি না। অতএব সহজেই অনুমেয় যে বুদ্ধি দিয়ে কিছু পথ অগ্রসর হওয়া গেলেও একটা জায়গায় থামতে হচ্ছে। কিন্তু শ্রীঅরবিন্দ মনে করেন, আমাদের মধ্যে সীমাবদ্ধতা থাকলে ও কোনো কিছুই অজানানয়। আমাদের অন্তর্নিহিত বৃত্তির বা ক্ষমতার চর্চার মাধ্যমে অজ্ঞেয়কে জানার অবকাশ পাই। যা অজ্ঞাত তা অজ্ঞেয় নয়। যদি আমরা জানার আগ্রহ প্রকাশ না করি, যদি আমরা প্রথমেই জ্ঞানবৃত্তির সীমার মধ্যে দৃঢ়ভাবে অবস্থান করি, তাহলে যা অজ্ঞাত তা আমাদের কাছে অজ্ঞাতই থেকে যায়। এই বিশ্বে অজ্ঞেয় নয় এমন সব বস্তুকে জানার জন্য জ্ঞানবৃত্তি মানুষের মধ্যে আছে; কেবল তাই নয়, এই বৃত্তির যথাযথ বিকাশের সামর্থ্যও মানুষের আছে। কিন্তু আমরা তা জানার চেষ্টা করিনা। কারণ আমরা সীমাবদ্ধ থাকতে ভালবাসি। আমরা চেতনার প্রসারণ ঘটাতে চায়না। অবশ্য 'আধুনিকজড়বাদ' পরিশীলিত জড়বাদ। প্রকৃতির কাছ থেকে মানুষ এগিয়ে যাওয়ার প্রেরণা পেয়েছে- জানার প্রেরণা, স্বরূপ উপলব্ধির প্রেরণা। অতএব আধুনিক জড়বাদে প্রেরণা কাজকরে চলেছে। তা যদি না করত তবে আধুনিক জড়বাদ কোন প্রশ্ন না তুলেই শুধুমাত্র জড়বাদকে মেনেনিত। আধুনিক জড়বাদের জ্ঞানের প্রতি স্পৃহা এতই প্রবল যে ইন্দ্রিয়জ্ঞানের শেষ সীমায় পৌঁছে বা প্রাকৃত বুদ্ধির প্রাপ্তে এসে আধুনিক জড়বাদ পরিদৃশ্যমান জগতের অনেক কিছুই জেনেছে। ইন্দ্রিয় গ্রাহ্য সীমায় আবদ্ধ থাকলে, শুধুমাত্র জড়কে আঁকড়ে ধরে থাকলে জড় বাদীদের জ্ঞানের ক্ষেত্র সঙ্কুচিতহবে- এই বাস্তব সত্যটা আধুনিক জড়বাদ বুঝেছে। আধুনিক জড়বাদের মূল কথাই হল জ্ঞানান্বেষণ, তাই এর অগ্রগতি কোনভাবেই থামতে পারে না। এই জড়বাদ যখন ইন্দ্রিয়জ্ঞানকে আশ্রয় করে কোনকিছু সম্বন্ধে অনুমান করা-কালীন বাধার সম্মুখীন হয়, তখন এর জ্ঞানান্বেষণের প্রতি প্রবল স্পৃহা থাকায় এর পক্ষে সহজেই ঐ বাধা অতিক্রম করা সম্ভব হয়। আধুনিক জড়বাদ যে শক্তি বলে দ্রুততা ও নিশ্চয়তার সঙ্গে দৃশ্যজগৎকে অধিকার করেছে

এবং সাফল্য অর্জন করেছে, সেই একই শক্তি দিয়ে লোকোত্তরের বিজয় অভিজানও সাফল্যমণ্ডিত হবে- এটা আশা করা যায়। ইন্দ্রিয়জ্ঞান ও বিচারবুদ্ধির সীমা লঙ্ঘন করে যে বিরাট পদক্ষেপ নেওয়া হয়েছে তাতে ঐ সাফল্য আসতে বাধ্য। বর্তমানে, বিজ্ঞানের ক্ষেত্রে অগ্রগতির যে ধারা লক্ষ্য করা যায়, তাতে এটাই মনে হয় যে, জ্ঞানের বিচিত্র সাধনা একটিমাত্র বিজ্ঞানে পরিণত হতে চায়। শ্বেতাশ্বতরোপনিষদে বলা হয়েছে, 'বহুনামেকং বীজং বহুধা যঃ করোতি'<sup>3</sup> অর্থাৎ বিশ্বশক্তির দ্বারা একই বীজ হতে প্রপঞ্চময় জগতের সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। বিশ্বের মূলে আছে 'একং সৎ'। এই এক সত্ত্বই 'বহুধা' হয়েছেন। উপনিষদীয় এই উক্তির সত্যতার প্রতিপাদন আধুনিক বিজ্ঞান করে থাকে গবেষণার মাধ্যমে। আজকের বিজ্ঞান অদ্বৈতবাদমুখী। আধুনিক বিজ্ঞান যে ধারাতেই চলুক না কেন তা এক বিজ্ঞানে (uniscience or monism) পৌঁছাতে চায়। এর গতি হল অদ্বৈতবাদের দিকে। শ্রীঅরবিন্দ মনে করেন সমস্ত বিজ্ঞানীরা একই জ্ঞানের দিকে ধাবমান।<sup>4</sup>

মানুষের মধ্যে প্রকৃতিদত্ত প্রেরণা থাকার জন্য জড়বাদীরা আস্তে আস্তে তাঁদের গণ্ডিকে অতিক্রম করে অধ্যাত্ম ও চিত্ত এর আলোচনায় প্রবেশ করেছে। প্রকৃতির প্রেরণাই মানুষকে উচ্চতর অনুভবের অধিকারী করে তুলেছে। জড়বাদীদের আসল কথা হল- সত্যের সাক্ষ্যপ্রমাণ। জড়বাদীরা কোন্টা সত্য এবং কোন্টা মিথ্যা তা বলেন তাঁদের অভিজ্ঞতা বা অনুভব যাচাই করে। জড়বাদ অতীন্দ্রিয় বস্তুকে অস্বীকার করে। তবুও জড়জগতে সূক্ষ্মবস্তু আছে, যেমন প্রাকৃত শক্তি যাকে স্থূল ইন্দ্রিয় দিয়ে ধরা যায় না অথচ জড়বাদ তাকে অস্বীকার করতে পারে না। যেহেতু জড়জগতে শক্তি সূক্ষ্মতত্ত্ব হিসাবে পরিগণিত হয়, অতএব গোঁড়া জড়বাদী শক্তি বা energy কে মানছেন। আবার একই সঙ্গে জড়বাদ বলছে অতীন্দ্রিয়কে মানা যায় না। তাহলে জড়বাদ তার তত্ত্বে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকতে পারছে না।

জড়বাদের মূল আলোচ্য বিষয় হল- জড়ই একমাত্র তত্ত্ব ও কেবলমাত্র ইন্দ্রিয়গ্রাহ্য বস্তুর সত্তা বা Reality আছে এবং জড়জগতের বাইরে যা ইন্দ্রিয়গ্রাহ্য নয় তা অজ্ঞেয়, কারণ তাকে জানতে পারা যায় না। অতএব তা কল্পনামাত্র। যদিও জড়বাদীরা ইন্দ্রিয়গ্রাহ্য বস্তুকেই সৎ (existent) বলছেন, চিত্তবাদীরা তাকে ভ্রান্তি বলছেন। চিত্তবাদীরা বলেন অতীন্দ্রিয় বস্তু আছে কিন্তু তাকে স্থূল ইন্দ্রিয় দ্বারা অনুভব করা যায় না। স্থূল বস্তুকে স্থূল ইন্দ্রিয়ের দ্বারা জানা যায় এবং অতীন্দ্রিয় বস্তুকে সূক্ষ্ম ইন্দ্রিয়ের দ্বারা বোঝা যায়। স্থূল বস্তুর উপাদান জড়পদার্থ। সূক্ষ্ম

<sup>3</sup>শ্বেতাশ্বতরোপনিষদ, 6/12

<sup>4</sup>The Life Divine, SABCL, Vol. 18, P- 14

বস্তুর উপাদান অতীন্দ্রিয় বস্তু যাকে চেতনতত্ত্ব (Consciousness) বলা হয়। যেমন স্থূল ইন্দ্রিয় দ্বারা স্থূল জগৎকে জানা যায় তেমন অতীন্দ্রিয় বিকশিত হলেই জড়াতীত জগৎকে সূক্ষ্ম ইন্দ্রিয় দ্বারা জানা যায়। এখানে উল্লেখ্য এই যে, সূক্ষ্ম ইন্দ্রিয় দিয়ে শুধুমাত্র সূক্ষ্মবস্তু নয়, পরন্তু সূক্ষ্ম এবং স্থূল উভয় বস্তুকেই জানা যায়। এটা চিত্ততত্ত্ব জড়তত্ত্ব নয়। যখন থেকে মানুষের চিন্তাশক্তি বেড়েছে তখন থেকেই অতীন্দ্রিয় জগৎ সম্বন্ধে মানুষের অনুভব শুরু হয়েছে। প্রাথমিক চিন্তার রূপ নিয়ে মানুষ জন্মায়। মানুষের মধ্যেই জড়াতীত জগতের অনুভব করার প্রচেষ্টা নিহিত। মানুষের মন অতীন্দ্রিয় জগতে ঝুঁকিয়ে এবং তাতে ব্যর্থ না হয়ে সাফল্য এসেছে। প্রামাণিক তত্ত্ব এসেছে, যেমন চিন্তা সংক্রমণ অর্থাৎ এক মন থেকে আর এক মনে চিন্তা সংক্রমিত তত্ত্ব। এখানে স্থূল ইন্দ্রিয়ের কোন ভূমিকা যে আদৌ নেই তা অতীন্দ্রিয় জগতের প্রমাণিত তত্ত্ব।

জড় জগৎ একমাত্র জগৎ নয়। অতীন্দ্রিয় জগতের তত্ত্বের যে আভাস দেখা যাচ্ছে তা সম্পূর্ণ না হওয়ায় অপূর্ণ রয়ে গেছে। এই অপূর্ণতার কারণ হল অতীন্দ্রিয় জগৎকে জানার যেসব পদ্ধতি ব্যবহার করা হয় সেগুলি ত্রুটিপূর্ণ। তবে ঐ সকল পদ্ধতির সাহায্যে কিছুদূর পর্যন্ত এগোনো গেছে। কিন্তু যদি সূক্ষ্ম ইন্দ্রিয়ের বিকাশ ঘটে তাহলে জড়াতীত জগৎকে সম্যক্রূপে জানা যাবে। অবশ্য শ্রীঅরবিন্দের মতে সূক্ষ্ম ইন্দ্রিয়ের ক্ষমতাও সীমিত। কেবল বোধি দিয়ে তাকে জানা যায়। আমাদের সকল অনুভবের মূলে আছে চৈতন্য। চৈতন্যের অনুভবের ক্ষেত্র হিসাবে একদিকে থাকে বিশ্বজগৎ আর অন্যদিকে থাকে ইন্দ্রিয়জগৎ। চেতনা ছাড়া বস্তুর কোন অস্তিত্ব নেই। সাক্ষিচৈতন্যকে বাদ দিলে জগতের আর কিছু থাকে না। তবে এখন যিনি জড়বাদকে মানেন তিনি চিত্তবাদ মানেন না, আবার যিনি চিত্তবাদকে মানেন তিনি জড়বাদকে মানেন না। অর্থাৎ যদি জড়বাদের সিদ্ধান্তকে চরম ধরা হয়, তবে জড়কেই তত্ত্ব হিসাবে মানতে হবে। আবার চিত্তবাদের সিদ্ধান্তকে চরম ধরলে চিত্ত-ই তত্ত্ব হিসাবে চিহ্নিত থাকছে। যদি এখন জড়জীবনের ধারা চার্বাকের দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে দেখা যায়, তখন মনে হবে যে, যেহেতু জীবন অস্থায়ী, অতএব যতক্ষণ বেঁচে থাকা যায় ততক্ষণ সুখে থাকতে হবে। আবার কারো কারো মনে বৈরাগ্যের ভাব আসতে পারে। অন্যভাবে বলা যায় যে, যে কোন মনোভাব গড়ে উঠতে পারে- তা জড়বাদীর নাস্তি হতে পারে অথবা সন্ন্যাসীর নেতিবাদ হতে পারে।

এখন যদি আমরা জড়বাদের সিদ্ধান্তকে চরম বলে ধরে নিই তাহলে দেখব- জড় যেখানে পৌঁছাচ্ছে, চিত্তও সেই একই বিন্দুতে পৌঁছাচ্ছে। তাহলে তো সমস্যার কোনো সমাধান হচ্ছে না। জড়বাদের চরম সিদ্ধান্তে পৌঁছলে দেখি ব্যক্তি ও জাতি মায়া ছাড়া কিছুই নয় অর্থাৎ

আছে, আবার নেইও। অনুরূপভাবে চিৎবাদীরাও ঐ একই সিদ্ধান্তে পৌঁছাচ্ছেন। কারণ নির্বিশেষ অদ্বৈত যে মায়া দেখছে তা সদসৎ থেকেই আসছে। অতএব জড় ও চিৎ দুই-ই একই বিন্দুতে মিলছে। চিৎ ও জড় এই রহস্যের সমাধান করতে পারছে না। জড়বাদীর দৃষ্টিতে আমাদের জীবনের নৈতিক আদর্শ সব ভ্রান্তিময়, কারণ আসলে যা মূলে কাজ করছে তা শুধু জড়ের তাড়না। আবার চিৎবাদীর দৃষ্টিতে দেখি সন্ন্যাসী বা বৈরাগী বলছেন এ জগৎ ভ্রান্তিময়। চিৎবাদীর মতে জগৎ সংসার থেকে রেহাই পেতে হলে প্রয়োজন 'যুক্তিসিদ্ধ নিষ্ক্রমণ' (rational escape) এবং তবেই নির্বিশেষ পরমাত্মাতে নিমগ্ন হওয়া যায়। অতএব চিৎবাদী ও জড়বাদী একই বিন্দুতে পৌঁছাচ্ছেন যেখানে জগৎ ও জাতি অলীক, অবাস্তব ও উদ্দেশ্যহীন। কিন্তু আমাদের জীবন যতই অস্থায়ী হোক না কেন, তার তো একটা অস্তিত্ব আছে। তাহলে এই সত্তার অনস্তিত্বের প্রশ্ন ওঠে কি করে? দ্বিতীয়ত, মানুষের জীবনের মূল্যটাই বা কোথায়? জড়বাদী ও চিৎবাদী তা তর্কবুদ্ধি দিয়ে ব্যাখ্যার চেষ্টা করছে। তবুও আমাদের জীবনের অভিজ্ঞতা যা তর্কবুদ্ধি দিয়ে বোঝবার চেষ্টা করি তাতে অনেক ফাঁক থেকে যায়। আসলে বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতার অনেক কিছুই তর্কে বোঝা যায় না। এখানে উদাহরণস্বরূপ বলা যায়, জড় থেকে কিকরে প্রাণ এলো, আবার প্রাণ থেকে কি করে মন এলো ইত্যাদির মধ্যে এমন সব ফাঁক আছে যা আমরা জানি না। এর কারণ জগতের বিবর্তনে যে সমস্ত অভিজ্ঞতা লাভ করেছি তার মধ্যে বহু ফাঁক রয়েছে। সেই সব ফাঁক তর্কবুদ্ধি দিয়ে বোঝা সম্ভব নয়। তাহলে যদি তর্কবুদ্ধি দিয়ে এ সব ফাঁক জানা না যায়, তখন তা জানার প্রকৃষ্ট উপায় কি? এর উত্তরে শ্রীঅরবিন্দ বলছেন, চেতনার সম্প্রসারণ ঘটিয়ে। আমাদের চেতনা যেখানে সীমাবদ্ধ হয়ে আছে সেখান থেকে চেতনাকে সম্প্রসারিত করতে হবে। চেতনার বিস্তারের ব্যাপারে মনে প্রত্যয় জন্মায় যদি তা আবশ্যিকভাবে এক আভ্যন্তরিক সম্প্রসারণে ব্যক্তিক অস্তিত্ব হতে বিশ্বাত্মক অস্তিত্বে পরিণত হয়। সাক্ষীচেতন্য বলে যদি কিছু থাকে, তাহলে তা ব্যক্তিবিশেষের শরীরী মন হবে না, তা হবে বিশ্বাত্মক চেতনা। আমাদের এই বোধ হয় যে, এই চেতনা যে কেবল বিশ্বকে অধিকার করে থাকে- তাই নয়; ঐসঙ্গে সকল কার্যের মধ্যে এটি অন্তর্ভুক্ত বৌদ্ধিক সত্তারূপে থাকে। আধুনিক মনোবিদ্যাতে ব্যক্তিচেতনাবিশিষ্ট মানুষের বিশ্বচেতনার বিকাশের সম্ভাবনা স্বীকৃত হয়েছে।<sup>5</sup> আধুনিক মনোবিদগণের কাছে যা 'সম্ভাবনা' রূপে স্বীকৃতি পেয়েছে, তা প্রাচ্য মনোবিদদের কাছে সর্বদাই 'বাস্তব' বলে গৃহিত হয়েছে। প্রচ্যের মনোবিদরা এটাও মনে করে যে, বিশ্ব চেতনা লাভের জন্য অহং বোধের দ্বারা আমাদের উপর আরোপিত সীমা লঙ্ঘনের

<sup>5</sup>দিলীপ কুমার রায়, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ-দর্শন, P- 32

প্রয়োজনীয়তা আছে। এর জন্য জ্ঞানসাধনের আরো উৎকর্ষ দরকার, কারণ জ্ঞানসাধনের উৎকর্ষ হলে তবেই চেতনার সম্প্রসারণ ঘটবে।

আমাদের ব্যক্তিসত্তা একটা অহংবোধে কেন্দ্রীভূত হয়ে আছে। এই ব্যক্তিসত্তাকে বিশ্বসত্তায় সম্প্রসারিত করতে হবে। এই সম্প্রসারণকে শ্রীঅরবিন্দ বলেছেন 'inner enlargement'। এই ব্যক্তিসত্তার থেকে বিশ্বসত্তার সম্প্রসারণ ঘটে চেতনায়। কিন্তু এ ব্যাপারে সাক্ষী কে? সেই সাক্ষী কি আমাদের শরীরী মন যা ব্যক্তি সত্তার সাক্ষী হিসাবে আসে? তাহলে বিশ্বসত্তার সাক্ষী হবে কি শরীরী মন? যেহেতু শরীরী মনের উৎপত্তি জগতের মধ্যে, অতএব শরীরী মন এই সৃষ্ট জগতের এবং সে ক্ষেত্রে শরীরী মন বিশ্বসত্তার সাক্ষী হতে পারে না। তবে সাক্ষী কে? সাক্ষী হল বিশ্বচেতনা যা প্রাণ ও মনের মধ্যে অন্তর্যামীরূপে লুকিয়ে আছে। রহস্যের বা বিরোধের সমাধানের জন্য ব্যক্তিচেতনার সম্প্রসারণ করে তবেই বিশ্বচেতনায় পৌঁছাতে পারা যায়। তবেই বিশ্বচেতনায় উন্নীত হয়ে ব্যক্তিসত্তা বিশ্বসত্তার সঙ্গে এক হয়ে যাবে। অতএব ব্যক্তিসত্তার পক্ষে বিশ্বচেতনায় অগ্রসর হওয়া সম্ভব। বিশ্বসত্তা বিশ্বচেতনার সঙ্গে এক হয়ে আছে। আমাদের যে চেতনা ইন্দ্রিয়ানুভূত হচ্ছে সেই চেতনার ধরণটা পাল্টাতে থাকে তখনই যখন আমাদের 'অহং'বোধ কাজ করা থেকে বিরত থাকে। তখনই চেতনা 'অহং'বোধকে অতিক্রম করে বিশ্বচেতনায় প্রবেশ করে। তাহলে আর আগের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি থাকছে না। কারণ আগের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি অহং-এর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি। অহংকে অতিক্রম করে বিশ্বচেতনায় প্রবেশ করে বিশ্বসত্তার সঙ্গে এক হলে তবেই চেতনার পরিবর্তন হয়। ব্যক্তিসত্তা বিশ্বসত্তাকে আশ্রয় করে আছে। বিশ্বসত্তা বিশ্বচেতনায় প্রকৃত সত্য বলে মনে হয়। যেহেতু সত্তাও আছে, চেতনাও আছে, অতএব সত্তা থাকলেই চেতনা থাকবে। সত্তা আছে, চেতনা নেই অথবা চেতনা আছে, সত্তা নেই এ রকম হয় না। কারণ সত্তাকে বাদ দিয়ে চেতনা থাকে না। জগৎ বিশ্বচেতনাকে আশ্রয় করে আছে, কিন্তু বিশ্বচেতনা জগৎকে আশ্রয় করে নেই। এই জগতের অস্তিত্ব বিশ্বচেতনায় বিধৃত হয়ে আছে। এখানে জগতের অস্তিত্ব স্বতন্ত্র নয় কিন্তু যে চেতনায় আছে সেই চেতনা জগতের অতীত হয়ে আছে। জগতকে আমরা মানি, কারণ জগৎ চেতনায় ধরা দেয়। জগতাতীত চেতনার থেকে বিশ্বাতীতের ধারণা। তাহলে বিশ্বকে অতিক্রম করেই বিশ্বাতীত চেতনায় পৌঁছতে পারি। বিশ্বাতীতের অর্থ পূর্ণশুদ্ধচিত্ত। এ জগতকে ধারণা করে আছে নিষ্প্রপঞ্চ সূক্ষ (transcendent) আবার সপ্রপঞ্চ (immanent) দুই ই। কিন্তু অদ্বৈত বেদান্তে এ কথা বলা হয়নি। সেখানে শুদ্ধচিত্ত অর্থে বিশ্ণোত্তীর্ণ, নির্গুণ, নির্বিশেষ তত্ত্ব। অদ্বৈত চিত্তসত্তা বিশ্বাতীত। অদ্বৈতরা চিত্তসত্তায় পৌঁছে চিত্তসত্তাকেই একমাত্র সত্তা হিসাবে ধরে নিয়েছেন। তাই জগৎ নিরর্থক ও অলীক।

শ্রীঅরবিন্দ পরিষ্কার দেখিয়েছেন যে বিশ্বচেতনায় প্রবেশ করতে হবে অর্ন্তবর্তী ধাপের মাধ্যমে। এই অর্ন্তবর্তী ধাপকে শ্রীঅরবিন্দ ইংরাজীতে বলেছেন- “intermediate transitions”। এই অর্ন্তবর্তী ধাপ বাদ দিয়েই বিশ্বচেতনায় পৌঁছনই অদ্বৈতবাদে শুদ্ধচিত্তের ধারণা। তাই অদ্বৈতরা ব্রহ্ম সত্য, জগৎ মিথ্যা বলেন। এখানেই সন্ন্যাসীর নেতি (The Refusal of the Ascetic)। এই প্রসঙ্গে শ্রীহরিদাস চৌধুরী তাঁর লেখা ‘শ্রী অরবিন্দের সাধনা’ বই-এ বলেছেন, “ উপনিষদ্ বলিয়াছেন ‘অন্নং ব্রহ্ম’ অর্থাৎ অন্ন বা জড়ও চিদঘন ব্রহ্মের অভিব্যক্তি। অন্ন ও ব্রহ্মের মধ্যবর্তী তত্ত্বগুলি সম্বন্ধে সম্যক্ জ্ঞানলাভ হলে আমরা বুঝিব যে উহাদের মধ্যে কোন দুর্লভ্য ব্যবধান নাই। পার্থিব চেতনা ও ব্রহ্ম সাক্ষাৎকারের মধ্যবর্তী অধ্যাত্ম উপলব্ধির স্তরগুলির সহিত সম্যক্ পরিচয় লাভ হইলে দেখা যাইবে যে, এক অখণ্ড সচ্চিদানন্দই ক্রমিক অবরোহণের মধ্য দিয়া অচেতন বা সুপ্ত চেতনা জড়ের মধ্যে আত্মগোপন লাভ করিয়াছেন এবং তিনিই আবার ক্রমিক আত্মঅভিব্যক্তির পক্ষে বিশ্বলীলা বিস্তার করিয়াছেন। আমরা দেখিব যে পরম সত্য যিনি তিনি এক হইয়াও বিচিত্র ছন্দে প্রকাশমান, অদ্বিতীয় হইয়াও অন্ততরুপে লীলায়িত। নিখিল বিশ্বের মূলগত এক-কে এভাবে অনন্ত ঐশ্বর্যশালী বলিয়া উপলব্ধি করা, চরম অদ্বিতীয় তত্ত্বকে নির্গুণ হইয়াও অনন্ত গুণ সম্পন্ন (নির্গুণোগুণী) বলিয়া অনুভব করা, প্রকৃত অদ্বৈতবাদ বা পূর্ণ বিজ্ঞানবাদের মূলকথা। পরাসত্যসম্বন্ধে এই অখণ্ড দৃষ্টিই পূর্ণ যোগের দার্শনিক ভিত্তি।”<sup>6</sup>

অবশেষে বলা যায়, শ্রীঅরবিন্দের মতে, জড় বা পদার্থ মূলত স্বাধীন কোনো চূড়ান্ত সত্তা নয়; এটি চেতনার এক সীমাবদ্ধ প্রকাশ বা আচ্ছন্নরূপ। অর্থাৎ, জড়পদার্থ আসলে চেতনাকেই আড়াল করে রেখেছে। তিনি বলেন, "Matter is only the form of Spirit in self-concealment."<sup>7</sup> তাঁর দর্শনে বলা হয়, পরম চেতনা (সচ্চিদানন্দ) নিজেকে আচ্ছন্ন করে জড় রূপে অবরোহণ করে। পরে সেই জড়পদার্থে চেতনার ধাপে ধাপে উন্মোচন বা আরোহনঘটে— প্রথমে প্রাণ (Life), তারপর মন (Mind), শেষে অতি মানস (Over mind) হয়ে অতি চেতনা (Super mind)-এর দিকে অগ্রসর হয়। এই ভাবে জড় ও চেতনার সম্পর্ক এক গতিশীল প্রক্রিয়া, যেখানে চেতনা নিজেকে পুনরাবিষ্কার করছে পদার্থের ভিতর দিয়ে। "Matter is the Spirit in its self-forgetfulness; Consciousness is the Spirit in its self-awareness."<sup>8</sup> অদ্বৈতবাদের মতো তিনি মানেন যে একটিই সর্বোচ্চ সত্তা—সচেতনব্রহ্ম। কিন্তু

<sup>6</sup>ডঃ হরিদাস চৌধুরী, শ্রীঅরবিন্দের সাধনা, P-35

<sup>7</sup>The Life Divine, SABCL, Vol. 18, P-15

<sup>8</sup>The Life Divine, SABCL, Vol. 18, P-6

পাশ্চাত্য বিবর্তন বাদের মতো তিনি এটিকে এক ক্রমবিকাশমান প্রক্রিয়া হিসেবে দেখেছেন— যেখানে জড় পদার্থের ভেতরেই চেতনা ধীরে ধীরে আত্মপ্রকাশ করছে। পাশ্চাত্যে সাধারণত Matter vs Spirit কে দ্বন্দ্ব হিসেবে দেখা হয়। কিন্তু শ্রীঅরবিন্দ দেখিয়েছেন, এরা কোনো পরস্পর বিরোধী সত্তা নয়। জড় আসলে চেতনারই ঘন আচ্ছাদন, আর চেতনা জড়ের মধ্য দিয়ে নিজেকে পূর্ণতায় আনতে চায়। মানুষের অবস্থান এই বিবর্তনের কেন্দ্রীয় ধাপ। মানুষের মধ্য দিয়েই জড় চেতনায় রূপান্তরিত হয় এবং পরিশেষে দিব্য চেতনায় (Supramental consciousness) উন্নীত হতে পারে। তাই মানুষের সাধনা কেবল মুক্তি (Moksha) নয়, বরং জড়কে চেতন করে তোলা, বস্তু জগতের মধ্যে ঈশ্বর চেতনার অবতারণা। তাই বলা যায়, শ্রীঅরবিন্দের মতে জড় ও চেতনের সম্পর্ক হলো আত্ম বিস্মৃত চেতনার ধাপে ধাপে আত্মপ্রকাশ। জড় কোনো চেতনার বিপরীত বা বিরোধী বাস্তবতা নয়; বরং চেতনারই নিম্ন তম ও আচ্ছন্ন প্রকাশ, যাক্রমে উচ্চ তর বিকাশে পরিণত হয়ে দিব্যসত্তায় উন্নীত হয়। "Life is already involved in Matter, Mind is already involved in Life, the Super mind is already involved in Mind; evolution is the process of the manifestation of that which is involved."<sup>9</sup>

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বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, নিখিলেশ, বিংশ শতাব্দীর ভারতীয় দর্শন, সদেশ, কলকাতা, ২০০৫

বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, সৈকত, বিংশ শতাব্দীর ভারতীয় দর্শন, নবোদয় পাবলিকেশন, কলকাতা, ২০২৩

<sup>9</sup>The Life Divine, SABCL, Vol. 18, P-6

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চাকী, বারীন্দ্রনাথ, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ অথবা চেতনার অভিযান, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ আশ্রম প্রেস, পণ্ডিচেরী, ১৯৯৯

ব্রহ্মচারী, মহানাম, ভারতীয় দর্শনের তুলনামূলক আলোচনা, (তৃতীয় সংস্করণ) শ্রীমহানামব্রত কালচারাল এণ্ড ওয়েলফেয়ার ট্রাস্ট, কলকাতা, ১৯৫৯।

রায়, দিলীপ কুমার, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ-দর্শন, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ পাঠমন্দির, কলিকাতা, ২০১৭।

রায়, সুনীল, শ্রীঅরবিন্দের দর্শন মত্বে, বর্ধমান বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, বর্ধমান, ২০০৭।

রায়, অনিলবরণ, গীতা-নিবন্ধ, (অনু.), শ্রীঅরবিন্দ আশ্রম প্রেস, পণ্ডিচেরী, ২০০১

রায়, অনিলবরণ, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ ও ভাবীসমাজ, গীতাপ্রচার কার্যালয়, কলকাতা, ১৯৪০

রায়, অনিলবরণ, শ্রীঅরবিন্দের যোগ ও বর্তমান জগৎ, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ পাঠমন্দির, কলকাতা, ১৯৪৬

রায়, দিলীপ কুমার, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ দর্শন, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ পাঠমন্দির, কলকাতা, ২০১৭

রায়, সুনীল, শ্রীঅরবিন্দের দর্শন মত্বে, বর্ধমান বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, বর্ধমান, ২০০৭

সেন, প্রমোদকুমার, শ্রীঅরবিন্দেরঃ জীবন ও যোগ, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ পাঠমন্দির, কলিকাতা, ১৯৮২

শ্রীঅরবিন্দ, দিব্য-জীবন, অনির্বাণ(অনু.), শ্রীঅরবিন্দ আশ্রম, পণ্ডিচেরী, ২০১৩

শ্রীঅরবিন্দ, নিজের কথা, পশুপতি ভট্টাচার্য(অনু), শ্রীঅরবিন্দ আশ্রম, পণ্ডিচেরী, ১৯৭২

শ্রীঅরবিন্দ, মানব যুগচক্র, মনোজ ভট্টাচার্য(অনু), শ্রীঅরবিন্দ আশ্রম, পণ্ডিচেরী, ২০০৩

শ্রীঅরবিন্দ, ভারতীয় সংস্কৃতির ভিত্তি, সুরেন্দ্রনাথ বসু(অনু), শ্রীঅরবিন্দ আশ্রম, পণ্ডিচেরী, ১৯৬৯

শ্রীঅরবিন্দ, যোগসম্বন্ধ, শ্রীশ্যামাচরণ চট্টোপাধ্যায়(অনু.), শ্রীঅরবিন্দ আশ্রম, পণ্ডিচেরী, ১৯৭২

শ্রীঅরবিন্দ, যোগসাধনার ভিত্তি, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ পাঠমন্দির, কলকাতা, ১৯৮৫

শ্রীঅরবিন্দ, উপনিষদাবলী, শ্রীঅরবিন্দ সোসাইটি, কলকাতা, ১৯৫৭



## কৃত্রিম বুদ্ধিমত্তা ও যুদ্ধনৈতিকতা: নৈতিক সংকট, সম্ভাবনা ও ভবিষ্যতের দিকনির্দেশ

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### সংক্ষিপ্তসার

কৃত্রিম বুদ্ধিমত্তা (Artificial Intelligence বা AI) সমসাময়িক যুদ্ধক্ষেত্রে দ্রুত রূপান্তরিত করছে, যার ফলে প্রচলিত যুদ্ধনৈতিকতার নীতিমালা অভূতপূর্ব চ্যালেঞ্জের মুখে পড়েছে। AI-নিয়ন্ত্রিত অস্ত্রব্যবস্থা, স্বয়ংক্রিয় ড্রোন, উন্নত নজরদারি ব্যবস্থা এবং অ্যালগরিদমিক সিদ্ধান্ত সহায়ক প্রযুক্তি যুদ্ধের গতি, নির্ভুলতা ও কৌশলগত কার্যকারিতা বাড়াতে ন্যায্যতা, দায়বদ্ধতা এবং মানবিক সংযমের প্রশ্নকে জটিল করে তুলছে। যুদ্ধ শুরু ন্যায্যতা (Jus ad Bellum) বিবেচনায় AI অনেক সময় ভুল তথ্য, ডেটার পক্ষপাত এবং যুদ্ধকে তুলনামূলক কম ঝুঁকিপূর্ণ মনে হওয়ার ধারণা তৈরি করে—ফলে রাজনৈতিক নেতৃত্ব যুদ্ধকে বাস্তবে যতটা ন্যায্যসঙ্গত নয়, তার চেয়ে বেশি গ্রহণযোগ্য বলে ভাবতে পারে। যুদ্ধের সময় নৈতিক আচরণ কেমন হবে তা নির্ধারণের ক্ষেত্রে (Jus in Bello) AI সবচেয়ে বড় নৈতিক সংকট তৈরি করে—বিশেষ করে যোদ্ধা ও নিরীহ মানুষের মধ্যে বৈষম্য নির্ধারণ, অনুপাত বজায় রাখা এবং ভুল সিদ্ধান্তের দায় নির্ধারণে। অ্যালগরিদমিক পক্ষপাত ও প্রসঙ্গ না বোঝার অক্ষমতা মানবিক ক্ষতির ঝুঁকি বাড়ায়। যুদ্ধ পরবর্তী ন্যায্যের (Jus post Bellum) পর্যায়ে AI-নির্ভর সাইবার আক্রমণের উৎসসনাক্তকরণ, যুদ্ধোত্তর ন্যায্যবিচার এবং পুনর্গঠন আরও জটিল হয়ে ওঠে। তবুও AI যুদ্ধনৈতিকতার কিছু দিককে উন্নত করতে পারে—যেমন লক্ষ্যভেদের উচ্চ নির্ভুলতা, মানব সৈন্যের প্রাণরক্ষা, দ্রুত উদ্ধার কার্যক্রম এবং আবেগমুক্ত সিদ্ধান্ত। তবে এসব সুবিধা তখনই নৈতিকভাবে গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে যখন মানুষের নিয়ন্ত্রণ, অ্যালগরিদমিক স্বচ্ছতা, পক্ষপাতমুক্ত ডেটা এবং শক্তিশালী আন্তর্জাতিক নিয়ন্ত্রক কাঠামো নিশ্চিত করা যাবে। সার্বিকভাবে বলা যায়, AI যুদ্ধকে নৈতিক বা অমানবিক—উভয় দিকেই নিয়ে যেতে পারে। তাই মানবিক মূল্যবোধকে অগ্রাধিকার দিয়ে AI-নির্ভর যুদ্ধব্যবস্থার নীতি ও নিয়ন্ত্রণ কাঠামো গড়ে তোলা বর্তমান বৈশ্বিক সময়ের অপরিহার্য দায়িত্ব।<sup>1</sup>

**সূচক শব্দ-** যুদ্ধ, নৈতিকতা, কৃত্রিম বুদ্ধিমত্তা, অ্যালগরিদম, সাইবার যুদ্ধ, প্রতিরক্ষা, প্রোগ্রামিং, ডেটা।

<sup>1</sup>Note: Jus ad Bellum, Jus in Bello, এবং Jus post Bellum — এগুলি লাতিন (Latin) ভাষা থেকে নেওয়া হয়েছে। যুদ্ধনৈতিকতা (Just War Theory)-র তিনটি মৌলিক দিক ব্যাখ্যা করতে এগুলি ব্যবহৃত হয়।

## সূচনা

একবিংশ শতাব্দীর আন্তর্জাতিক রাজনীতি, নিরাপত্তা ও প্রতিরক্ষা কাঠামোয় যে মৌলিক পরিবর্তনটি সবচেয়ে স্পষ্ট, তা হলো কৃত্রিম বুদ্ধিমত্তা (Artificial Intelligence বা AI)-এর দ্রুত বিকাশ। যুদ্ধক্ষেত্রের সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ, লক্ষ্যবস্তু নির্ধারণ, ড্রোন পরিচালনা, নজরদারি এবং সাইবার প্রতিরক্ষা—প্রায় সব ক্ষেত্রেই AI আজ একটি নির্ধারক প্রযুক্তিগত শক্তি। কিন্তু প্রযুক্তিগত এই অগ্রগতি যুদ্ধনৈতিকতার প্রচলিত ধারণাগুলিকে নতুনভাবে প্রশ্নের মুখে দাঁড় করছে। বিশেষ করে AI-নিয়ন্ত্রিত অস্ত্রব্যবস্থা বা Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) মানুষের সরাসরি নিয়ন্ত্রণের বাইরে গিয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে পারে—যা যুদ্ধের নৈতিক ভিত্তিকে জটিল করে তোলে। তাছাড়া যুদ্ধ শুরু করার ন্যায্যতার ক্ষেত্রে প্রশ্ন আসে: AI কি ভুল তথ্য বা ডেটার পক্ষপাতের কারণে রাজনৈতিক নেতৃত্বকে যুদ্ধের ঝুঁকি কম বলে ভ্রান্ত ধারণা দিতে পারে? এভাবে যুদ্ধ শুরুর ন্যায্যতার মূল্যায়ন প্রযুক্তিনির্ভর হয়ে পড়তে পারে। অপরদিকে যুদ্ধ আচরণের ন্যায্যতা তে সমস্যাটি আরও তীব্র হবে এবং প্রশ্ন হবে, AI কি শত্রু ও নাগরিককে নির্ভুলভাবে আলাদা করতে পারবে? মানবিকতা, ন্যূনতম ক্ষয়ক্ষতির মানদণ্ড কি অ্যালগরিদম রক্ষা করতে সক্ষম? LAWS - এর ক্ষেত্রে দায়বদ্ধতার প্রশ্নও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ—একটি ভুল হত্যার দায় কি রাষ্ট্র, প্রোগ্রামার নাকি অ্যালগরিদমের? এছাড়া সাইবার যুদ্ধ, সর্বব্যাপী নজরদারি প্রযুক্তি এবং অ্যালগরিদমিক পক্ষপাত আন্তর্জাতিক মানবাধিকার ও যুদ্ধনৈতিকতার জন্য নতুন ঝুঁকি তৈরি করেছে। সাইবার আক্রমণ সরাসরি প্রাণনাশ না করলেও রাষ্ট্রীয় অবকাঠামো অচল করতে পারে, যা যুদ্ধ শুরু করার ন্যায্যতাও যুদ্ধে আচরণের ন্যায্যতা উভয়ের সীমানাকে অস্পষ্ট করে। সব মিলিয়ে AI যুদ্ধের দক্ষতা বাড়ালেও যুদ্ধের নৈতিকতা, দায়বদ্ধতা ও মানবিকতা রক্ষায় অভূতপূর্ব চ্যালেঞ্জ তৈরি করেছে—যা সমাধানে নতুন আন্তর্জাতিক বিধান ও নৈতিক কাঠামো অপরিহার্য।

## যুদ্ধনৈতিকতার মূল ধারণা

যুদ্ধনৈতিকতা (Just War Theory) এমন একটি নৈতিক কাঠামো যা যুদ্ধ কখন ন্যায়সঙ্গত হতে পারে এবং যুদ্ধের ভেতরে আচরণ কেমন হওয়া উচিত—এসব বিষয়ে নিয়ম নির্ধারণ করে। এর প্রধান লক্ষ্য হলো যুদ্ধকে সম্পূর্ণভাবে সমর্থন বা সম্পূর্ণভাবে নাকচ না করে একটি নৈতিক সীমারেখা তৈরি করা, যাতে মানবিকতা, ন্যায় এবং রাজনৈতিক দায়িত্ববোধ যুদ্ধের মধ্যেও বজায় থাকে। যুদ্ধনৈতিকতার মূল ধারণাগুলো তিনটি প্রধান স্তরের ওপর দাঁড়িয়ে আছে—যুদ্ধ শুরু করার ন্যায্যতা (Jus ad Bellum), যুদ্ধে আচরণের ন্যায্যতা (Jus in Bello), ও যুদ্ধ পরবর্তী ন্যায় (Jus post Bellum)।

যুদ্ধ শুরু করার ন্যায্যতার (Jus ad Bellum) ক্ষেত্রে বিবেচ্য বিষয় হলো—যুদ্ধ কি ন্যায়সঙ্গত কারণে শুরু হচ্ছে, যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষ কি সিদ্ধান্ত নিচ্ছে, সব শান্তিপূর্ণ পথ ব্যর্থ হয়েছে কি না, এবং যুদ্ধের মাধ্যমে অর্জিত সম্ভাব্য ফলাফল তার ক্ষতির তুলনায় ন্যায্য কি না, এগুলি পর্যালোচনা করা। এই ধাপে মূল মনোযোগ থাকে রাজনৈতিক সিদ্ধান্তের নৈতিকতায়, কারণ এখানে ভুল সিদ্ধান্ত মানে অযথা প্রাণহানি ও দীর্ঘমেয়াদি

অস্থিতিশীলতা।<sup>2</sup>অন্যদিকে যুদ্ধে আচরণের ন্যায্যতার (Jus in Bello) নীতিটি যুদ্ধের মাঠে আচরণকে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করে। এটি দুইটি মূল নীতি-বৈষম্য (combatant-noncombatant distinction) এবং অনুপাত (proportionality)—এর ওপর ভিত্তি করে। যুদ্ধে আক্রমণ যেন কেবল যুদ্ধরত পক্ষেই সীমাবদ্ধ থাকে এবং ব্যবহৃত শক্তি যেন প্রয়োজনের অতিরিক্ত না হয়—এটাই এর প্রধান নির্দেশ।<sup>3</sup> যুদ্ধ শেষ হওয়ার পর ন্যায় প্রতিষ্ঠা করা 'যুদ্ধ পরবর্তী ন্যায়' (Jus post Bellum) - এর কাজ। যুদ্ধ-পরবর্তী পুনর্গঠন, মানবাধিকার সুরক্ষা, অপরাধীদের বিচার এবং স্থায়ী শান্তির ভিত্তি তৈরি—এসব নীতির অন্তর্ভুক্ত।<sup>4</sup> সুতরাং যুদ্ধনৈতিকতার মূল ধারণা একটি সমন্বিত নৈতিক কাঠামো, যা যুদ্ধের পূর্বে, সময়ে ও পরে ন্যায়, মানবিকতা এবং রাজনৈতিক দায়িত্ববোধ নিশ্চিত করতে চায়। আধুনিক আন্তর্জাতিক আইন, মানবাধিকার এবং কূটনীতির ভিত্তিতে এই নীতিগুলো আজও বৈশ্বিক শান্তি প্রতিষ্ঠার গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মানদণ্ড হিসেবে বিবেচিত।

### AI ও যুদ্ধ: একটি নতুন বাস্তবতা

বর্তমানে আধুনিক যুদ্ধ ক্ষেত্রে Artificial Intelligence (AI) শুধু মাত্র নজরদারি বা গোয়েন্দা কাজে সীমাবদ্ধ না থেকে, যুদ্ধের নানান কার্যক্রমকে দ্রুত, স্বয়ংক্রিয় এবং অ্যালগরিদমিক ভিত্তিতে গঠন করেছে। এই ব্যবহারের চারটি প্রধান দিক হলো: স্বয়ংক্রিয় অস্ত্র ব্যবস্থা (Autonomous Weapons Systems - AWS), নজর দারি ও বুদ্ধিমত্তা (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance - ISR), সাইবার যুদ্ধ ও প্রতিরক্ষা, এবং সিদ্ধান্ত-সহায়ক সিস্টেম (Decision-Support Systems - DSS)।<sup>5</sup>

প্রথমত, স্বয়ংক্রিয় অস্ত্র ব্যবস্থা— বিশেষত ঘাতক (lethal) বা সশস্ত্র স্বয়ংক্রিয় অস্ত্র — যেগুলো মানুষের নির্দেশ ছাড়াই লক্ষ্য নির্ধারণ এবং আক্রমণ সম্পন্ন করতে পারে — যুদ্ধের মাত্রা ও তীব্রতা এক নতুন স্তরে নিয়ে গেছে। এর ফলে যুদ্ধ আরো দ্রুত এবং কম মানবিক ঝুঁকি নিয়ে পরিচালিত হতে পারে; কিন্তু একই সঙ্গে মানুষের জীবন-মৃত্যুর মতো কঠিন ও মানবিক সিদ্ধান্তকে অ্যালগরিদমের হাতে তুলে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

দ্বিতীয়ত, নজরদারি ও বুদ্ধিমত্তা-এর ক্ষেত্রে AI সেন্সর, ড্রোন, স্যাটেলাইট ডেটা বিশ্লেষণ ও বড় ডেটা-প্রসেসিং-এর মাধ্যমে গোয়েন্দা, নজরদারি ও গোয়েন্দা বিশ্লেষণকে ব্যাপক ক্ষমতা দিচ্ছে। এই তথ্য বিশ্লেষণ দ্রুত সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ এবং যুদ্ধ পরিচালনায় সহায়ক হলেও, তথ্যের ভুল, পক্ষপাত বা অসীমায়িত ব্যতিক্রমিক পরিস্থিতিতে ভুল লক্ষ্য নির্ধারণের সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে — যা নিরস্ত্র জনগণের ক্ষতির কারণ হতে পারে।

তৃতীয়ত, সিদ্ধান্ত-সহায়ক সিস্টেম (DSS) — অর্থাৎ AI-নির্ভর কমান্ড এবং কন্ট্রোল, লক্ষ্য নির্ধারণ, রুট পরিকল্পনা, স্ট্রাটেজিক সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ ইত্যাদি — যুদ্ধ ব্যবস্থাপনাকে দারুণ ভাবে পরিবর্তন করেছে। AI-DSS দ্রুত বিশ্লেষণ করে পরিকল্পনা তৈরি করতে পারে; এতে যুদ্ধ পরিচালনায় সময় এবং সম্পদের অপচয় কমে; কিন্তু “অটোমেশন বায়াস” (automation bias)-এর কারণে মানুষ সিস্টেমের পরামর্শ দ্রুত গ্রহণ করতে পারে। এর ফলে ভুল নির্দেশ, অপ্রয়োজ্য হামলা বা অতিরিক্ত ক্ষয়ক্ষতির ঝুঁকি বাড়ে। এই সব ব্যবহার যুদ্ধকে

<sup>2</sup>Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 4th Edition, 2006, pp. 51–74

<sup>3</sup>Hugo Grotius, *On the Law of War and Peace*, Book III, Carnegie Edition, 1925, pp. 639–652

<sup>4</sup>Brian Orend, “Justice After War,” in *Ethics & International Affairs*, 2002, pp. 43–55

<sup>5</sup>Ali Naseeb, ‘The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Modern Warfare’, *International Journal for Conventional and Non-Conventional Warfare*, Vol. 1 No. 2 (2024), pp. 1-20



ক্রত, কার্যকর এবং কম “মানবিক” করে তুলেছে – কিন্তু একই সাথে যুদ্ধের মূল নৈতিক ভিত্তি, যেমন দায়িত্ব, স্বীকৃতি, মানব-দায়িত্ব, জীবন ও মর্যাদা, এসবকে ঝুঁকির মুখে ফেলেছে। যেহেতু অ্যালগরিদম নিজে নৈতিক বা আইনগত দায়িত্ব নিতে পারে না, তাই শেষ পর্যন্ত মানবিক নিয়ন্ত্রণ এবং দায়বোধ থাকা জরুরি। অতএব, AI-সক্ষম অস্ত্র ব্যবস্থা, নজরদারি, সাইবার যুদ্ধ ও সিদ্ধান্ত-সহায়ক সিস্টেম – সব কিছুকে যুদ্ধের নতুন বাস্তবতা হিসেবে আমরা বিবেচনা করতে পারি। তবে এই নতুন বাস্তবতা ন্যায্য, নৈতিক এবং সম্মানজনক হবে কিনা – সেটা নির্ভর করে আমরা কি ভাবে মানবিক নিয়ন্ত্রণ, জবাবদিহি এবং আন্তর্জাতিক আইন প্রয়োগ করি, তার ওপর।

### AI ও Jus ad Bellum – যুদ্ধ শুরু করার ন্যায্যতায় নতুন সংকট

বর্তমানে যুদ্ধ শুরু করার ন্যায্যতা (Jus ad Bellum) – অর্থাৎ কখন, কেন, ও কী ভাবে যুদ্ধ শুরু করা যায় – এই প্রশ্নে Artificial Intelligence (AI) একটি নতুন জটিলতা এনে দিয়েছে।

**ভুল তথ্য ও সিদ্ধান্তের বিকৃতি** - যদি AI-ভিত্তিক নজরদারি বা গোয়েন্দা (intelligence / surveillance) সিস্টেম ভুল তথ্য দেয় – যেমন ভুল ফেসিয়াল-রিকগনিশন, শত্রু বা লক্ষ্যকে ভুল শনাক্তকরণ, বা ডেটা ম্যানিপুলেশন – তাহলে যুদ্ধ শুরু করার সিদ্ধান্ত ভিত্তি হীন বা ভুল হতে পারে। এধরনের ভুল তথ্য প্ররোচিত সিদ্ধান্ত যুদ্ধকে অযৌক্তিক ও অনির্ধারিত করে তোলে। কিন্তু প্রশ্ন জাগে – এমন ভুল সিদ্ধান্তের দায় কার: মানুষ নাকি অ্যালগরিদম? কারণ AI কোনো নৈতিক সচেতনতা রাখেনা; সিদ্ধান্ত দেয় ডেটা ও প্রোগ্রামিং-র ভিত্তিতে। এমন দায় কে কেউ সহজে গ্রহণ করতে পারবেনা। এই সমস্যা বৃহৎ এবং গুরুত্বপূর্ণ।<sup>6</sup>

**অ্যালগরিদমিক পক্ষ পাত (Algorithmic Bias)-AI** প্রতিবিম্বিত হয় সেট-আপ এবং ব্যবহৃত ডেটার পূর্ব-ধারণা ও পক্ষপাত দিয়ে। যখন AI-ভিত্তিক সিদ্ধান্ত-সহায়ক বা শনাক্তকরণ সিস্টেম (decision support বা surveillance systems) ব্যবহার করা হয়, তখন পূর্ব-প্রচলিত সামাজিক, জাতিগত, সাংস্কৃতিক পক্ষপাত বা ডেটার অসম তুল্য প্রতিনিধিত্ব AI সিদ্ধান্ত গুলোকে পক্ষপাতিক করে তুলতে পারে। এর ফলে, একটিগোষ্ঠী, জাতি বা অঞ্চলকে ভুল ভাবে “শত্রু” হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করা যেতে পারে – যা যুদ্ধ শুরু করার ন্যায্যতার (just cause, just target) নীতির সঙ্গে অসঙ্গতি পূর্ণ।<sup>7</sup>

**যুদ্ধের গতি ও রাজনৈতিক দায়-AI-চালিত** সিস্টেম যুদ্ধ শুরু করার প্রক্রিয়া অনেক দ্রুত ও স্বয়ংক্রিয় করতে পারে – এমনকি রাজনৈতিক সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়ার সময় বিশ্লেষণ ও কম করে দিতে পারে। ফলে, রাজনৈতিক নেতা বা রাষ্ট্র হয়তো সহজ ভাবে সিদ্ধান্ত নেবে যে “মানব সৈন্যের ঝুঁকি কম” এবং “শত্রু শনাক্তকরণ সহজ” – যা যুদ্ধকে তীব্র ও কম-ঝুঁকিপূর্ণ মনে করাবে। কিন্তু এতে যুদ্ধের ন্যায্যতা হারিয়ে যেতে পারে, কারণ যুদ্ধ শুরু হয় কম প্রতিফলন, কম প্রশ্ন এবং দ্রুত তার সাথে। এমন যুদ্ধ, যা আদতে শেষ বিকল্প না হলেও, দ্রুত “লজিস্টিক” বা “কারিগরি সুবিধা” অনুযায়ী নির্বাচিত হতে পারে – যা পরম ন্যায্য বিচারের মাপ কাঠি কে

<sup>6</sup>Benjamin, Ruha. Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code. Polity Press, 2019, pp. 58–64.

<sup>7</sup>Barocas, Solon & Selbst, Andrew. “Big Data’s Disparate Impact.” California Law Review 104 (2016): pp. 692–701.

(just cause, legitimate authority, last resort ইত্যাদি) অবজ্ঞা করবে। তাই বলা যায়, AI-ভিত্তিক নজরদারি, তথ্য বিশ্লেষণ এবং সিদ্ধান্ত-সহায়ক সিস্টেম যুদ্ধ শুরু ন্যায্যতার (Jus ad Bellum) নীতিকে গুরুতর ভাবে ঝুঁকিতে ফেলে।

### AI ও Jus in Bello: যুদ্ধ ক্ষেত্রে নৈতিক আচরণের সংকট

Jus in Bello বায়ুদ্ধ পরিচালনার নৈতিকতার মূল লক্ষ্য হলো—যোদ্ধাও নিরীহ মানুষের মধ্যে সঠিক বৈষম্য বজায় রাখা, অপ্রয়োজনীয় ক্ষতি এড়িয়ে চলা, এবং সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণে ন্যায্যবোধ রক্ষা করা। কৃত্রিম বুদ্ধিমত্তা-নির্ভর অস্ত্র ও পর্যবেক্ষণ ব্যবস্থা এই নীতিকে সবচেয়ে বড় চ্যালেঞ্জের মুখে ফেলেছে। প্রথমত, বৈষম্য (Discrimination) সমস্যা। AI কি সঠিক ভাবে যোদ্ধা ও অযোদ্ধাকে আলাদা করতে পারবে—এটাই সবচেয়ে বড় নৈতিক প্রশ্ন। মুখ চিনতে ভুল, সেন্সরের ত্রুটি, অসম্পূর্ণ ডেটা কিংবা প্রেক্ষিত না বুঝতে পারার কারণে AI ভুল সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে পারে। একটি শিশুর হাতে খেলনা বন্দুক থাকলে AI তা বাস্তব অস্ত্র ভেবে আক্রমণ করতে পারে। যেহেতু AI-এর মানবিক নৈতিক বিচার বোধ নেই, তাই এই সীমাবদ্ধতা যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতার মূল দ্বন্দ্বসৃষ্টি করে।<sup>8</sup> দ্বিতীয়ত, অনুপাত (Proportionality) নির্ধারণের প্রশ্ন। যুদ্ধক্ষেত্রে প্রতিরোধের জন্য কতটুকু শক্তি প্রয়োগ ন্যায্য—এ সিদ্ধান্ত মূলত মানবিক, রাজনৈতিক ও নৈতিক ভারসাম্যের উপর নির্ভর করে। কিন্তু AI বিষয়টি কে গণিতের সমীকরণের মতো বিবেচনা করে। যেমন—ড্রোন কোনো ভবনে শত্রুর উপস্থিতি শনাক্ত করলে AI হয়তো শুধুই হিসাব করবে: সামরিক সুবিধা কি সম্ভাব্য ধ্বংসের মাত্রার চেয়ে বেশি? কিন্তু মানব কমান্ডার বেসামরিক মানুষের জীবন, মনস্তাত্ত্বিক ক্ষতি ও নৈতিক দায় বিবেচনায় আনে। তৃতীয়ত, দায়বদ্ধতার (Accountability) সংকট। যদি AI ভুল তথ্যের ভিত্তিতে একটি গ্রাম ধ্বংস করে, দায়নেবে কে? অ্যালগরিদম নির্মাতা, সামরিক কমান্ডার, সফটওয়্যার কোম্পানি নাকি রাষ্ট্র—এই প্রশ্নের সুস্পষ্ট উত্তর আন্তর্জাতিক আইনে অনুপস্থিত। দায়বদ্ধতার এই অস্পষ্টতা Jus in Bello প্রয়োগে বড় বাধা। স্বয়ংক্রিয়তার মাত্রা বাড়ার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে মানবিক নিয়ন্ত্রণ কমে, আর নৈতিক ঝুঁকি বেড়ে যায়।<sup>9</sup>

### AI ও Jus post Bellum: যুদ্ধোত্তর ন্যায় প্রতিষ্ঠায় প্রভাব

Jus post Bellum—যুদ্ধোত্তর পরিস্থিতিতে ন্যায়, পুনর্গঠন ও দীর্ঘমেয়াদি শান্তি প্রতিষ্ঠার নৈতিক কাঠামো—আজ কৃত্রিম বুদ্ধিমত্তার কারণে নতুন ধরনের সংকটের মুখোমুখি। AI-নির্ভর অস্ত্র, নজরদারি এবং তথ্য-ব্যবস্থার স্বয়ংক্রিয়তা যুদ্ধ-পরবর্তী ন্যায়বিচার ও পুনর্গঠনের ক্ষেত্রে গভীরভাবে প্রভাবিত করেছে। প্রথমত, যুদ্ধোত্তর প্রমাণ সংগ্রহে জটিলতা। AI-চালিত ড্রোন আক্রমণ, স্বয়ংক্রিয় টার্গেটিং সিস্টেম, কিংবা সাইবার অস্ত্রের ক্ষেত্রে আক্রমণের উৎস নির্ধারণ করা অত্যন্ত কঠিন হয়ে দাঁড়ায়। স্বয়ংক্রিয় সিস্টেমে মানুষের সরাসরি নির্দেশ বা অনুমোদনের অনুপস্থিতি দায়ী পক্ষ সনাক্ত করা কে জটিল করে তোলে। এর ফলে যুদ্ধোত্তর বিচার, বিশেষত war crimes tribunal পরিচালনা, আরও কঠিন হয়ে পড়ে; কারণ প্রমাণের লজিং, ডেটা-ট্রেল ও দায়িত্বনির্ধারণ অস্পষ্ট থাকে। আন্তর্জাতিক আইনের অন্যতম ভিত্তি—দায়বদ্ধতা—এভাবে প্রশ্নের মুখে পড়ে।<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 4th ed., New York: Basic Books, 2006, pp. 144–150.

<sup>9</sup>Sparrow, Robert. "Killer Robots." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 24 (2007): pp. 67–72.

<sup>10</sup>Schmitt, Michael. *Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations*. Cambridge UP, 2017, pp. 112–118.

দ্বিতীয়ত, পুনর্গঠনে ডিজিটাল বৈষম্য। AI-নির্ভর অস্ত্র ব্যবস্থা যে অঞ্চলে তথ্যভিত্তিক নজরদারি দুর্বল, সেসর কম নির্ভুল অথবা ডেটার ঘাটতি বেশি—সেই অঞ্চলে অধিক ধ্বংস সৃষ্টি করে। কারণ AI ভুল বা অসম্পূর্ণ ডেটাকে হুমকি হিসেবে ভুল ভাবে ব্যাখ্যা করতে পারে। যুদ্ধোত্তর পুনর্গঠনের সময় ও দেখা যায়, প্রযুক্তিগত ভাবে অপ্রতুল ও দরিদ্র অঞ্চল গুলো পুনর্গঠনে পিছিয়ে পড়ে। এতে যুদ্ধোত্তর সমাজে নতুন ধরনের বৈষম্য জন্ম নেয়, যা দীর্ঘমেয়াদি স্থিতিশীলতা কে বিপন্ন করে।<sup>11</sup> তৃতীয়ত, শান্তি প্রতিষ্ঠায় আস্থাহীনতা। AI-নির্ভর যুদ্ধ সাধারণ মানুষের কাছে গভীর ভাবে অমানবিক বলে প্রতীয়মান হয়। যুদ্ধে মানুষের প্রত্যক্ষ অংশ গ্রহণ কমে গেলে ভুক্তভোগীরা মনে করে আক্রমণকারী পক্ষ নৈতিক দায়বোধ প্রদর্শন করেনি। ফলে শান্তিচুক্তি, পুনর্মিলন, এবং যুদ্ধোত্তর সহযোগিতার প্রতি মানুষের আস্থা দুর্বল হয়ে যায়। প্রযুক্তির ব্যবহারে বৃদ্ধি পাওয়া অবিশ্বাস দীর্ঘ মেয়াদি শান্তি প্রতিষ্ঠাকে আরও কঠিন করে তোলে।<sup>12</sup>

### সাইবার যুদ্ধ: নতুন নৈতিক প্রশ্ন

ডিজিটাল যুগে যুদ্ধের রূপ বদলে যাচ্ছে, আর সেই পরিবর্তনের কেন্দ্রে রয়েছে AI-চালিত সাইবার আক্রমণ। আধুনিক রাষ্ট্র সমূহ এখন এমন সাইবার অস্ত্র ব্যবহার করছে যা কয়েক সেকেন্ডের মধ্যে বিদ্যুৎ ব্যবস্থা অচল করতে পারে, হাসপাতালের ডেটাবেস হ্যাক করে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ চিকিৎসা সেবা বন্ধ করে দিতে পারে, গোপন তথ্য চুরি করতে পারে, কিংবা স্বয়ংক্রিয় প্রতিরক্ষা ব্যবস্থা বিভ্রান্ত করে সামরিক নিয়ন্ত্রণ সম্পূর্ণ ব্যাহত করতে পারে। এই নতুন বাস্তবতা যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতার সামনে অভূতপূর্ব প্রশ্ন উত্থাপন করছে।<sup>13</sup>

সাইবার যুদ্ধের সব চেয়ে বড় নৈতিক জটিলতা হলো এর অদৃশ্যতা। প্রচলিত যুদ্ধের মতো এখানে বন্দুক, ট্যাংক বা সৈন্য চোখে পড়ে না; আক্রমণ ঘটে নীরবে, কোডের মাধ্যমে। ফলে প্রশ্ন ওঠে—অদৃশ্য সাইবার আঘাত কি ন্যায্য যুদ্ধের আওতায় পড়ে? যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতার (Just War Theory) সাধারণ নীতি অনুযায়ী যোদ্ধা ও অযোদ্ধার পার্থক্য স্পষ্ট হতে হবে; কিন্তু সাইবার আক্রমণের ক্ষেত্রে সেই সীমা রেখা প্রায় হারিয়ে যায়, কারণ বিদ্যুৎ গ্রিড, হাসপাতাল, জল সরবরাহ কিংবা ব্যাংকিং পরিকাঠামো—সবই নাগরিক জীবনের অঙ্গ, যা আক্রমণের লক্ষ্য হলে তা সরাসরি নিরীহ মানুষের ওপর প্রভাব ফেলে। এই কারণে অনেক দার্শনিক ও আইনজ্ঞ বলেন, নাগরিক পরিকাঠামোতে ইচ্ছাকৃত সাইবার আঘাত কার্যত যুদ্ধ অপরাধ, কারণ এটি অসামরিক জনগোষ্ঠীকে বিপন্ন করে। কিন্তু আন্তর্জাতিক আইনে সাইবার যুদ্ধ এখনও স্পষ্ট ভাবে সংজ্ঞায়িত নয়, ফলে এনিয় আইনি ধূসরতা রয়ে গেছে।<sup>14</sup>

আরেকটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সমস্যা হলো AI-এর গতিও স্বয়ংক্রিয়তা। AI-চালিত সাইবার টুল কয়েক মিলি সেকেন্ডে আক্রমণ চালাতে পারে, প্রতিরক্ষা ভেদ করতে পারে, কিংবা নিজে নিজে নতুন আক্রমণ-পদ্ধতি উদ্ভাবন করতে পারে। এত দ্রুত প্রতিক্রিয়া মানুষের পক্ষে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করা কঠিন, ফলে আক্রমণ অনিচ্ছাকৃত ভাবে বিস্তৃত হয়ে যেতে পারে, এমন কি একটি স্থানীয় সাইবার আক্রমণ বৈশ্বিক সংকটে রূপ নিতে পারে। সব মিলিয়ে,

<sup>11</sup>O'Neil, Cathy. Weapons of Math Destruction. Crown, 2016, pp. 145–153.

<sup>12</sup>Benjamin, Ruha. Race After Technology. Polity Press, 2019, pp. 103–110.

<sup>13</sup>Lucas, G. Ethics and Cyber Warfare. Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 12–15.

<sup>14</sup>Walzer, Michael. Just and Unjust Wars. 4th ed., Basic Books, 2006, pp. 144–150.

AI-চালিত সাইবার যুদ্ধ মানবিক নীতি, আন্তর্জাতিক আইন এবং যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতার সামনে এক নতুন ও গভীর চ্যালেঞ্জ রেখে যাচ্ছে, যার সমাধান এখনো স্পষ্ট নয়।<sup>15</sup>

### নজরদারি ও ব্যক্তিগত স্বাধীনতা

আধুনিক সামরিক কৌশলে AI-ভিত্তিক নজরদারি (surveillance) প্রযুক্তি যুদ্ধের প্রস্তুতি, সীমান্ত নিরাপত্তা এবং counter-terror operations-এ গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে। উচ্চ ক্ষমতা সম্পন্ন সেন্সর, ড্রোন এবং ডেটা-অ্যানালিটিকস প্রযুক্তি দ্রুত তথ্য সংগ্রহ ও প্রসেস করতে সক্ষম। তবে এই প্রযুক্তির বিস্তার নৈতিকতা ও ব্যক্তিগত স্বাধীনতার ক্ষেত্রে গভীর সংকট তৈরি করেছে।

প্রথমত, Mass Surveillance বাগণ-নজর দারি প্রশ্ন তোলে ব্যক্তির গোপনীয়তা রক্ষার অধিকার নিয়ে। রাষ্ট্রীয় নিরাপত্তার নামে AI যদি পুরো একটি জনগোষ্ঠীকে ২৪ঘণ্টা পর্যবেক্ষণে রাখে, তাহলে ব্যক্তি স্বাধীনতাও গণতান্ত্রিক অধিকার সরাসরি হুমকির মুখে পড়ে। বিশেষ করে মুখ শনাক্তকরণ প্রযুক্তির ভুল ব্যবহার (false positives) এমন সব মানুষকে সন্দেহভাজন করে তুলতে পারে, যারা নির্যাতন বা নজরদারির যথার্থ কারণ ছাড়াই নজরদারির আওতায় চলে আসে।

দ্বিতীয়ত, Targeted Killing-এরক্ষেত্রে AI-চালিত সিস্টেম কখনও সন্দেহ ভাজনকে ভুল ভাবে 'শত্রু' হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করতে পারে। সন্ত্রাস বিরোধী অভিযানে ড্রোন-ভিত্তিক লক্ষ্য নির্ধারণ (target selection) যদি ডেটার ভুল বা অসম্পূর্ণতার উপর দাঁড়িয়ে হয়, তবে নিরীহ মানুষের মৃত্যু যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতার (jus in bello) মৌল নীতির বিরোধিতা করে। যেহেতু সঙ্কটপূর্ণ মুহূর্তে AI মানুষের মতো প্রেক্ষিত, অভিপ্রায় বা নৈতিকতা বিচার করতে পারে না, তাই ভুল লক্ষ্য নির্ধারণ বড় ধরনের মানবিক বিপর্যয় ডেকে আনে।

তৃতীয়ত, Minority Profiling বা সংখ্যালঘু গোষ্ঠীর প্রতি অ্যালগরিদমিক পক্ষ পাত সবচেয়ে বিপজ্জনক ঝুঁকি গুলোর একটি। যদি অ্যালগরিদম কোনো নির্দিষ্ট জাতি গোষ্ঠী, ধর্মীয় সম্প্রদায় বা অঞ্চলকে "বেশি হুমকি" হিসেবে শ্রেণিবদ্ধ করে, তবে সামরিক অভিযান বা নজরদারি কার্যত জাতিগত বৈষম্যের ভিত্তিতে পরিচালিত হতে পারে। ফলে যুদ্ধ ন্যায়সঙ্গত হওয়ার বদলে গোষ্ঠী ভিত্তিক দমন নীতিতে রূপ নিতে পারে, যা আন্তর্জাতিক মানবাধিকার ও ন্যায় যুদ্ধ তত্ত্বের মৌলিক নীতিকে লঙ্ঘন করে। সব মিলিয়ে, AI-ভিত্তিক নজরদারির বিস্তার রাষ্ট্রীয় নিরাপত্তা বাড়াতে ও, ব্যক্তিগত স্বাধীনতা, ন্যায্যতা ও মানবাধিকারকে মারাত্মক ঝুঁকি তেফেলতে পারে। এই প্রযুক্তির ব্যবহারে স্বচ্ছতা, জবাব দিহি এবং কঠোর নৈতিক কাঠামো নিশ্চিত করা তাই অপরিহার্য।

<sup>15</sup>Schmitt, M. (ed.). Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare. Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 25–28.

## AI কি যুদ্ধের নৈতিকতা উন্নত করতে পারে?—ইতিবাচক দিক

AI যুদ্ধ ক্ষেত্রে নৈতিক ঝুঁকি সৃষ্টি করলেও, কিছু ক্ষেত্রে এটি যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতা উন্নত করার বাস্তব সম্ভাবনা ও তৈরিকরে। প্রথমত, নির্ভুলতা বৃদ্ধি—উন্নত সেন্সর, ডেটা-প্রসেসিং এবং লক্ষ্য শনাক্তকরণ অ্যালগরিদম যুদ্ধের সময় ভুল আঘাতের হার কমাতে পারে। এর ফলে নিরীহ মানুষের ক্ষতি হ্রাস পায়, যা jus in bello-এর বৈষম্য ও অনুপাত নীতির সঙ্গে সামঞ্জস্য পূর্ণ। দ্বিতীয়ত, AI সৈন্যের প্রাণ রক্ষা করতে সহায়তা করে। উচ্চ ঝুঁকিপূর্ণ মিশনে রোবট, স্বয়ংক্রিয় ড্রোন বা বোমা নিষ্ক্রিয় করণ সিস্টেম ব্যবহার করলে মানব সৈন্যদের অপ্রয়োজনীয় ঝুঁকি নিতে হয়না। এটি যোদ্ধাদের মানবিক সুরক্ষা নিশ্চিত করে। তৃতীয়ত, AI যুদ্ধোত্তর বা চলমান সংঘাতে মানবিক সহায়তা ত্বরান্বিত করতে পারে। ধ্বংস স্তূপে জীবিত মানুষ শনাক্ত করা, বিপজ্জনক অঞ্চল মডেলিং করে আগেই সতর্কতা দেওয়া, অথবা চিকিৎসা ও খাদ্য সরবরাহে দ্রুত রুট নির্ধারণ—এসব ক্ষেত্রে AI কার্যকর ভূমিকা রাখতে পারে। চতুর্থত, AI কখনও কখনও আবেগহীন নিরপেক্ষ সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণে সাহায্য করতে পারে। মানুষের মতো প্রতিশোধ, ঘৃণা বা অতিরিক্ত উত্তেজনায় প্রতিক্রিয়া না দেখিয়ে এটি স্থির ভাবে পরিস্থিতি বিশ্লেষণ করে। যদিও ডেটায় পক্ষপাত থাকলে সমস্যা তৈরি হতে পারে, তবুও আবেগ জনিত ভুল সিদ্ধান্তের ঝুঁকি অনেক ক্ষেত্রে কমে। তাই বলা যায়, সঠিক নিয়ন্ত্রণ, স্বচ্ছতা ও নৈতিক কাঠামোর মাধ্যমে AI যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতা কে আংশিক ভাবে উন্নত করার বাস্তব সম্ভাবনা রাখে।

### AI ও যুদ্ধনৈতিকতা: একটি দার্শনিক বিশ্লেষণ

কৃত্রিম বুদ্ধি মত্তা (AI) যুদ্ধ ক্ষেত্রে ব্যবহৃত হওয়ার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতার মূলনীতি গুলো—মানবিকতা, দায়বদ্ধতা, ন্যায় এবং কর্তব্য—গভীর সংকটে পড়েছে। বিভিন্ন দার্শনিক গণ AI-ভিত্তিক অস্ত্র ব্যবস্থাকে ভিন্ন নৈতিক দৃষ্টিতে বিচার করে, এবং সে সব দর্শনের আলোকে AI-এর নৈতিক অবস্থান আরও জটিল হয়ে ওঠে।

প্রথমত, কান্টিয়ান নৈতিকতা মানুষের স্বায়ত্ত শাসন ও মর্যাদাকে নৈতিকতার কেন্দ্র বিন্দুতে স্থাপন করে। কান্টের মতে মানুষ কোনো দিনই কেবল “উপায়” নয়, বরং “উদ্দেশ্য” হিসেবে বিবেচ্য। কিন্তু AI-নিয়ন্ত্রিত অস্ত্রের ক্ষেত্রে প্রাণঘাতী সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয় অ্যালগরিদমিক গণনার মাধ্যমে, যেখানে মানুষের আত্ম মর্যাদা, উদ্দেশ্য বা নৈতিক সম্মতি বিবেচনার জায়গায় নেই। ফলে AI এমন এক যুদ্ধ-পরিবেশ তৈরি করে যেখানে মানব জীবন যান্ত্রিক ভাবে মূল্যায়িত হয়, যা কান্টের নৈতিক দর্শনের সম্পূর্ণ বিরোধী। মানুষ-নিয়ন্ত্রিত নৈতিক সিদ্ধান্তের বদলে AI-এর অমান বিক, অনুভূতি হীন গণনা যুদ্ধের নৈতিক সীমা রেখাকে ক্ষুণ্ণ করে।

দ্বিতীয়ত, উপযোগবাদী দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি মোট উপকারিতা বা সামগ্রিক ক্ষতি-হ্রাস কে নৈতিকতার মূলমানদণ্ড হিসেবে গ্রহণ করে। এই দৃষ্টিতে AI যদি নির্ভুলতা বাড়িয়ে নিরীহ প্রাণ হানি কমাতে পারে, তবে তা নৈতিক বলে বিবেচিত হতে পারে। উদাহরণস্বরূপ, AI-নির্ভর লক্ষ্য চিহ্নিতকরণ ভুল আঘাত কমাতে সহায়ক হতে পারে। কিন্তু AI-এর “নিরপেক্ষতা” প্রশ্নবিদ্ধ: ডেটা পক্ষপাত, অসম্পূর্ণ তথ্য বা অ্যালগরিদমিক ভুলের কারণে AI মোট ক্ষতির হিসাব ভুল ভাবে করতে পারে। ফলে উপযোগবাদী নীতি ও AI-এর কাছে অরক্ষিত হয়ে পড়ে।

শেষত, ভারতীয় যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতা, যেখানে ধর্ম, ন্যায়, কর্তব্য, সংযম, মানবিকতাও আত্মনিয়ন্ত্রণ যুদ্ধের নৈতিক ভিত্তি স্থাপন করে। এই নীতিতে যোদ্ধার ব্যক্তিগত ধর্মবোধ, আত্মসংযম এবং নৈতিক অভিপ্রায় অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। কিন্তু AI-এর নেই কোন ধর্ম বোধ, নেই সংযম, নেই নৈতিক আত্মচেতনা। ফলে AI ধর্ম যুদ্ধের ন্যায় নীতির মূল শর্ত—নৈতিক আত্মনিয়ন্ত্রণ ও মানবিকতার চর্চা—একে বারেরই পূরণ করতে পারে না। সব মিলিয়ে, দার্শনিক ভাবে AI যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতার মূল ভিত্তি গুলোকে চ্যালেঞ্জ করে। AI হয়তো যুদ্ধ চালাতে সক্ষম, কিন্তু যুদ্ধকে ন্যায়সঙ্গত করতে প্রয়োজনীয় নৈতিকতা, আত্ম সচেতনতা এবং মানবিক বিচারবোধ তার নেই—এটাই এই বিতর্কের মূলে থাকা সবচেয়ে বড় দার্শনিক সংকট।

### উপসংহার

কৃত্রিম বুদ্ধি মত্তা (AI) ও যুদ্ধ নৈতিকতার সম্পর্ক গভীর ভাবে দ্বিমুখী। এক দিকে AI যুদ্ধ কে অধিক নির্ভুল, কম প্রাণ হানিকর এবং দ্রুততর করার সম্ভাবনা তৈরি করে। উন্নত সেন্সর, স্বয়ংক্রিয় বিশ্লেষণ বা টার্গেটিং প্রযুক্তি যুদ্ধক্ষেত্রে ভুল সিদ্ধান্ত কমাতে পারে এবং মানব-যোদ্ধার ঝুঁকি হ্রাস করতে সাহায্য করে। ফলে প্রযুক্তি যুদ্ধের কার্যকারিতা বাড়ালে ও একই সঙ্গে মানবিক ক্ষয় ক্ষতি কমানোর একটি নতুন সম্ভাবনার দিক খুলে দেয়।

অন্য দিকে এই একই প্রযুক্তি নৈতিকতার জগতে গুরুতর চ্যালেঞ্জ উত্থাপন করে। অ্যালগরিদমিক পক্ষপাত যুদ্ধ ক্ষেত্রে ভুল ভাবে লক্ষ্য নির্ধারণ করতে পারে; স্বয়ংক্রিয় অস্ত্র মানবিক মূল্যবোধকে উপেক্ষা করে যান্ত্রিক সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে পারে; এবং দায়বদ্ধতার সংকট—যেখানে ভুল সিদ্ধান্তের জন্য কে দায়নেবে—একটি বড় নৈতিক সংকট তৈরিকরে। মানবিকতা-বিহীন, অ্যালগরিদমিক সহিংসতা যুদ্ধকে আরও নির্মমকরে তুলতে পারে, যা যুদ্ধনৈতিকতার মূল লক্ষ্য—ন্যায়, মানবিকতা ও অপ্রয়োজনীয় ক্ষতি কমানো—এর পরিপন্থী। এই বাস্তবতায় প্রয়োজন আন্তর্জাতিক সহযোগিতা, শক্তি শালী আইনগত কাঠামো, স্বচ্ছ নৈতিক নীতিমালা এবং সর্বো পরি মানবিক নিয়ন্ত্রণ। AI-নির্ভর যুদ্ধ ভবিষ্যতে অনিবার্য—এই প্রযুক্তিকে নিষিদ্ধ করা সম্ভব নয়। তাই প্রশ্ন হচ্ছে, আমরা কি এর গতিপথ নৈতিকতার ভিত্তিতে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করতে সক্ষম হব, নাকি প্রযুক্তি যুদ্ধকে আরও অমানবিক রূপ দেবে?

এই আলোচনার সারমর্ম স্পষ্ট: AI স্বয়ংক্রিয় শক্তি নয়—এর নৈতিকতা নির্ভর করে মানুষের হাতে। তাই AI-কে মানবিক মূল্যবোধ, দায় বদ্ধতা ও ন্যায়নীতির দ্বারা পরিচালিত প্রযুক্তি হিসেবে গড়ে তোলাই ভবিষ্যতের এক মাত্র টেকসই ও নৈতিক পথ।



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## CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN DARJEELING AND KALIMPONG HILLS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY AND THEIR IMPACT UPON THE LEPCHAS

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### Abstract:

*As one of the original inhabitants of the districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong in the state of West Bengal and in the state of Sikkim, Lepchas are known as Rongs or Rongkup which means sons of the snowy peak or children of the Himalayas. As a community their history has been marginalized by hordes of migration that took place since the early seventeenth century with the arrival of the Tibetans; later in the eighteenth century with the coming of the Gorkhas; and then the British in the late nineteenth century. The development policy that followed with the coming of colonialism led to the capture of their land and resources, uprooting them from their natural moorings; thus, culminating to their marginalized existence. Although Lepchas consider themselves to be believers in nature- worship and their traditional form of religion is also known as Munism and Bongthingism. Due to colonial development policies, their language and religion got eclipsed as a result of their conversion into Buddhism and Christianity. By viewing the arrival and activities of the Christian missions as a form of colonialism, the present article attempts to highlight on the activities of the Christian missionaries in the districts of Kalimpong and Darjeeling and their impact upon the Lepcha identity.*

**Keywords: Colonialism, Orientalism, Identity, Proselvtization, Marginalization**

### Introduction

The foundations of the British empire in India were legitimized by an ideology that projected them to be a nation of modern, superior and civilized people, with a divine mission to alleviate the backwardness, darkness and the frightening image of the East. Proclaiming themselves to be the messiahs, projectors of enlightened rationality and modernity, they travelled to distant parts of the world in an attempt to know, understand and ultimately



conquer the other i.e. the East. Categorizing oneself as 'superior' and 'civilized' implies that the Other is 'inferior' and 'uncivilized'. So, the entire project of colonial modernity is entwined within this dualism. This ideology was given a powerful exposition by Edward Said in his seminal work "Orientalism" in the late eighteenth century, as the western way of understanding, dominating and exercising control over the natives. The ideology of Orientalism was thus used to consolidate and ensure colonial control over not only over land and resources, but also as to make intrusion into the language and religion of the community, making the very existence of identity of the community at stake.

### **Strategies of the Colonial State**

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the colonial state devised various strategies to exercise control and domination over the natives. The colonial state started controlling and dominating the natives through the production of knowledge about their ways and living. This led to a veritable explosion of Gazetteers and Manuals on the manners and customs of the castes, tribes and religion of the specific regions being studied. L.S.S.O.' Malley who was entrusted with the task of preparation of Bengal District Gazetteers had described the Lepchas as 'simple, timid, placid and indolent and unenterprising and could therefore make excellent servants'.<sup>1</sup> This systematic production of stereotypes and other ethnographic details were undertaken primarily for administrative purposes, to rule over the natives. Extensive surveys were carried out to enumerate the population inhabiting the area. Botanist and naturalists like Hooker conducted studies on the flora and fauna of the region. Voluminous treaties were written about them highlighting the superiority and civilising mission of the white race and inferiority of the savages.

The missionaries and their activities played an important part in shaping the European's attitude towards the natives. Being the first Europeans to mingle with the remote people, they provided the first documentation about the native ways of life. Taking advantage of mass poverty, illiteracy, ignorance poor health, the Christian missionaries, sought to educate the illiterate and the uneducated. The animistic and traditional Lepcha belief systems and practices were condemned as backward, superstitious and unscientific without any basis in practical life. Subsequently, a large number of Lepchas got converted into Christianity.

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<sup>1</sup>L. S. S. O'. Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling Logos Press, New Delhi, 1989, p.44



Thus the activities of the Christian missions can be understood as a form of Orientalism.<sup>2</sup> By the portrayal of the natives as backward, illiterate and degenerate; and by advancing the zeal of “civilizing mission”, the narratives for missionary activism provided justification for expansion of the colonial state.

### **Early Christian Missions: Arrival and Activism**

The need for sending Christian missionaries to India for the purpose of ‘conversion and education’ of the natives was first made by Charles Grant, the Christian Director of East India Company. The Charter Act of 1813 and 1835 opened India for the missionaries’ activities.<sup>3</sup> After acquiring Darjeeling in 1835, the first Christian mission to set foot in Darjeeling was Rev. William Start, an independent Baptist from the Church of England subsequently followed by missionaries from Germany and Scotland missionary from the Church of Scotland. The strategies adopted by these early Christian missions were education, medical work, social work and ultimately proselytization. Their activities were primarily directed upon the weakest and economically deprived sections of the society, which were formed by the Lepchas. To ameliorate the Lepchas from their backwardness and economic deprivation, along with conversion to the new faith, education among the natives was also promoted.

Rev. William Start, and Carl Gottlob Niebel were the first Europeans and the first missionaries to establish a Lepcha school at Tukvar, in Darjeeling and to translate the Bible from English to Lepcha language. Further, the Gospel of St. Matthew and St. John, along with Genesis and Exodus were also published by the Baptist Mission Press based in Calcutta. The medium to promote evangelism in the earlier period among the natives was based in Lepcha language since Lepcha was the dominant language spoken in the region. Lepcha book on Catechism and Lepcha hymn book was also published. Hymns were sung in Lepcha language and church sermons were conducted in Lepcha language.

With the British takeover of Kalimpong from Bhutan through the Treaty of Sinchula, Kalimpong became an attractive destination for the Scottish missionaries during 1870s. Like the earlier missionaries, the chief concern for them was also evangelism and education along with taking care of the health of the native people and performing social service. Macfarlane,

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<sup>2</sup>Geoffrey A. Oddie, ‘Orientalism’ and British Protestant Missionary Constructions of India in the nineteenth Century’, *South Asia*, Vol XVII, no. 2 (1994), p. 28

<sup>3</sup> Dick B. Dewan, *Education in the Darjeeling Hills: An Historical Survey: 1885-1985*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1991, p. 78



the first Scottish missionary to visit Kalimpong in 1871 established a Scottish Mission and a Teachers' Training School at Kalimpong, also called Normal School 'to set himself to the gigantic task of spreading elementary education among the vast illiterate masses'.<sup>4</sup> Elementary schools were established initially as teaching rather than proselytizing, so as a way to establish a good rapport with the native population.

As Macfarlane had remarked that:

*"without schools, how can the people learn to read? And if they cannot read, of what use will it be to send Bibles and tracts among them? We therefore think that it is the duty of the missionaries, in subordination to the great work of preaching, to do their utmost to establish such schools where ever they can be set up."*<sup>5</sup>

Unlike Darjeeling, Kalimpong had more Lepcha converts. By 1880, the number of converts in the Kalimpong area had outstripped those in Darjeeling and Kurseong combined. Some Lepchas were chosen and trained for the mission and given the responsibility of taking care of Lepcha Mission stations; namely Bom, Chhibo, Pudung, Gitabling, Sitong etc. In each station, a school popularly known as the 'Mission School' were established and a catechist-cum-teacher trained in the Scottish Mission's Normal School were appointed, for the purpose of educating the children of the new converts and Christian families. All teachers appointed were Christians, with the primary responsibility of preaching the Gospels, among the villages who were mostly Lepchas.<sup>6</sup> A. R. Foning in this respect had remarked that Lepcha became synonymous with the word Christianity.<sup>7</sup>

Owing to the encouragement given by the government, and enlisting support from the tea planters' association, he was able to win the hearts of many cultivators and village headmen, who offered him lands to build schools, many primary schools were established throughout the district under his initiative.<sup>8</sup> L.S.S.O' Malley in his Darjeeling Gazetteers, has recorded that owing to MacFarlane's scheme of education, the total number of primary

<sup>4</sup> Dick B. Dewan, Education in the Darjeeling Hills: An Historical Survey: 1885-1985, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1991, p. 104

<sup>5</sup>Macfarlane's letter to his supporters in Scotland dated 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1871 recorded in Home and Foreign Mission Record, Vol. VII, 1872, p. 564

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Laban Tshering Lepcha, Christian Missions Among the Lepchas of Eastern Himalayas, ATC Publishers, Bengaluru, 2020, p. 128-129

<sup>7</sup>A.R. Foning, Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe, Chyu Pandi Farm, Kalimpong, 1987, p. 160

<sup>8</sup>Dick B. Dewan, Education in the Darjeeling Hills: An Historical Survey: 1885-1985, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 102-103



schools that stood in the district in 1873 was 25 with 615 girls and boys receiving instruction.<sup>9</sup> The activities and contribution made by the Scottish Mission was highly appreciated by the government for civilizing the natives and freeing them from various evilness. Thus, the burden of civilizing the subjects were handed over to missionaries and the task of the government was made easier. Education imparted by the missionaries not only civilized the natives but also made them peaceful and loyal subjects. Thus, the works of reforming the natives from within were handed over to the missionaries.<sup>10</sup>

The history of missionary activism will remain incomplete without making a brief reference to the works of Reverend John Anderson Graham, the most influential missionary in Kalimpong. He arrived in 1887 and continued with the legacy of Macfarlane for a period of fifty-two years in Kalimpong. He found the Lepchas to be “simple, open, amiable, non-aggressive and indolent” people; living a marginalized existence under the servitude of superstitious belief systems, and who were in need of “liberation”. Subsequently, a number of churches were established not only to spread the words of Bible but to “civilize, tame and educate” the wild tribes. Apart from promoting education to the backward and illiterate natives, he promoted female and vocational education with an emphasis on honing marketable skills and crafts which included knitting, sewing, cooking and handicrafts, with the active support of his wife Katharine Graham. He focussed on preaching the gospels in the weekly *haats* of Kalimpong town. Local boys and converts were appointed as teachers, translators and catechists. Health was another area that gained their attention, and from 1870s, a small dispensary staffed by local nurse was started by Katharine Graham.<sup>11</sup>

Christian missionaries not only transformed the religious outlook of the natives and instilled upon them civilized behaviour but like the colonial state, missionaries perceived of their zones as ‘strategic areas’. J.A. Graham perceived of Kalimpong as a strategic zone for the training of native catechists, who would further enter the three close lands i.e., Nepal, Bhutan and China; well-connected through trans- Himalayan trading networks. Since foreign missionaries were barred from entering these countries, the native converts were expected to enter these foreign lands and spread the words of the Gospels. Owing to the towering

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<sup>9</sup> LSSO’ Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1989, p. 171

<sup>10</sup> Hoineilhing Sitlhou, Straying Beyond Conquest and Emancipation: Exploring the Fault lines of Missionary Education in North East India, Indian Anthropologist, Jan- Dec 2009, Vol. 39, No. ½ (Jan- Dec 2009), pp.65-84

<sup>11</sup> Jayeeta Sharma, Kalimpong as a Transcultural Missionary Contact Zone, in Markus Viehbeck (ed.) *Transcultural Encounters in the Himalayan Borderlands Kalimpong as a “Contact Zone”*, Heidelberg University Publishing, 2017, p. 38



personality of J.A. Graham, Kalimpong was systematically developed as an urban centre by the interactions and encounters between Christian missionaries and local agents by the mediation of print culture, education, health and social welfare. His publications and magazines enabled him to share information across borders between European metropolis and the colonies in the peripheries and raise funds and support for his missionary projects. As a representative of Young Men's Guild of Scotland, he expanded his second career as an imperial reformer by trying to solve the problems for the 'poor whites' and mixed-race children by the establishment of St. Andrews Colonial Homes. Sharma says that missionaries were able to complete their projects owing to local and international sponsors and more particularly owing to considerable political freedom that was granted by the government for missionary activity.<sup>12</sup>

It must be said that missionaries for the most part aimed at conversion of individual souls. This led them to undertake social and economic reforms and crusade against poverty so as to create the right type of environment in which conversion could be easily facilitated.<sup>13</sup> Medicine became a key strategy of proselytization owing to the efficiency of western medicine technologies over the indigenous system of healing.<sup>14</sup> Missionaries were able to cure both the body and the soul. Missionaries functioned with the active cooperation of the government and were thus 'perceived to be active collaborators in the colonial enterprise'.<sup>15</sup>

### **Impact of Missionary Activism upon the Lepchas**

The indigenous Lepchas emerged as prominent subjects for Christian conversion. They differed from the Hindus and the institutions of the caste system. Owing to their simple social system and the absence of priesthood, they were less bound by their traditional religion and customs. In such a condition they became easy targets of the missionary activities. While

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<sup>12</sup>Jayeeta Sharma, Kalimpong as a Transcultural Missionary Contact Zone, in Markus Viehbeck (ed.) *Transcultural Encounters in the Himalayan Borderlands: Kalimpong as a 'Contact Zone'*, Heidelberg University, 2017, pp. 25-54

<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey A. Oddie, 'Orientalism' and British Protestant Missionary Constructions of India in the Nineteenth Century, *South Asia*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, 1994, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup>Jayeeta Sharma, Kalimpong as a Transcultural Missionary Contact Zone, in Markus Viehbeck (ed.) *Transcultural Encounters in the Himalayan Borderlands: Kalimpong as a 'Contact Zone'*, Heidelberg University, 2017, p. 38

<sup>15</sup> Joy L.K. Pachuau, Why do People Convert? Understanding Conversions to Christianity in Mizoram, in Neeladri Bhattacharya and Joy L.K. Pachuau (eds.) *Landscape, Culture and Belonging: Writing the History of North east India*, Cambridge University Press, 2019, p. 298.



preaching to the Lepchas, missionaries made use of Lepcha folktales and folklores that sounded similar to the Biblical stories of Adam and Eve. The missionaries made extensive use of Lepcha language in the first phase of proselytization project. In the words of Foning, Lepcha became synonymous with Christianity. However, their activism was short lived as with the World War I i.e. from 1914, the missionaries stopped taking an active interest in Lepcha language, and promoted the Hindustani language and the dominant Nepali language for evangelical mission; in pursuance with the language policy adopted by the colonial government.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the missionaries were not propelled by a genuine desire of making a change in the life of the aborigines. They were merely 'religious arms' of the colonial government.

Proselytizations of the Lepchas were influenced by both internal and external factors. Conversion took place owing to the very idea that *Rum* or God could deliver them from evil mungs, which were rampant, causing sickness and death among the Lepchas. Being open, mild and simple, as understood in colonial parlance, Lepchas responded quickly to proselytization project. Since Lepchas were generally looked down by the Nepalis and the Bhutanese, they became more closer to the missionaries.<sup>17</sup> They hoped that Christianity would give them wealth, power, prosperity and modernity. Christianity was found to be less expensive than the elaborate and expensive Buddhist rituals and the superstitious traditional Lepcha religious beliefs and practices. And above all, Christianity offered a possibility of an altered lifestyle through education with a particular set of moral values. It accorded them a better social and economic status in society.

Arrival of the Christian missionaries had a profound and a mixed impact upon the Lepchas. Converted Lepchas ignored the important elements of their traditional knowledge and culture. Although it is proclaimed by many that there are similarities between Lepcha folk tales and Christian biblical stories, however, the fact remains that Christianity and Lepcha culture could not truly accommodate with each other. Belief in monotheism and abhorrence of animal sacrifices, drinking and the practice of *Munism* and *Bongtheism* has created a big divide between Christianity and Lepcha culture. Christian Lepchas are often criticised for neglecting Lepcha religion, customs and culture, and considering themselves to be too advanced and modern to interact with their Buddhist counterparts.

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<sup>16</sup>A.R. Foning, *Lepcha My Vanishing Tribe Chyu Pandi Farm*, 2003 p. 164

<sup>17</sup>R.N. Thakur, *Himalayan Lepchas*, Archives Publishers, 1988, p. 96



Though Christian Lepchas are trying to reinvent their Lepcha-hood by wearing Lepcha dress, participating in traditional festivals and involving themselves in community life.<sup>18</sup> However, the religious rift has been a major bone of contention and prevented unity within the community. Buddhist Lepchas have alleged that their Christian counterparts shy away from nature worshiping festivals, which forms an important part of their culture and tradition. A Christian Lepcha, and once a secretary of Lepcha Association had remarked that '*we are pacca Christians. We do not follow any animist faith. Gayboo Achyok is a mythical leader not real. All are folktales*'.<sup>19</sup> This deep-rooted religious divide has prevented and hindered the emergence of a pan-Lepcha identity.

### Conclusion

The Christian missionaries introduced the Lepchas to a new religion, alien to their tradition and culture. The introduction of western education, modern value systems, social and economic reforms, cultural shifts in terms of dress, names and lifestyles made a significant impact upon their world view. However, their arrival and activism can be understood as a sword with two edges; bringing education and reforms on the one hand but creating a big divide between the converted Lepchas and the traditional ways of Lepcha life; which is the essence of Lepcha cultural identity. This religious rift has emerged as the greatest impediment in the emergence of a pan-Lepcha identity. The Buddhist Lepchas consider themselves to be the true custodians of Lepcha cultural heritage and accuse the Christian Lepchas for buying land of the Lepchas with the help of foreign donations to build churches. The Christians accuse the Buddhists for being addicted to *Chi*, a traditional drink. Such prejudiced views between the two can be detrimental to the interests of the community. Of late, though movements have been waged unitedly both by the Christian and the Buddhist Lepchas for the protection and recognition of their language. But it is time for the community to set aside their differences and unitedly work for the protection and promotion of Lepcha language and culture.

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<sup>18</sup> Roshina Gowloog, Identity Formation among the Lepchas of West Bengal and Sikkim, in *Studies of Tribes and Tribals*, Volume 11, No. 1, 2013

<sup>19</sup> Conversation with C.D. Simick; 1998. Cited by Tapan Kumar Das, From Acquiescence to Agency Transformation of the Lepcha Political Self, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata 2021, p. 73



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# समकालीन नेपाली पर्याकविताका सन्दर्भमा अविनाश श्रेष्ठका कविताहरूको विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन

(Paper published on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2025.)

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गोरुबथान सरकारी महाविद्यालय, कालेबुङ

## सार

समकालीन साहित्यिक विमर्शका क्षेत्रमा एउटा महत्वपूर्ण सङ्कथनका रूपमा विश्वस्तरमा उठेर आएको पर्यासाहित्य समकालीन नेपाली कविताका क्षेत्रमा पनि उल्लेखनीय विषय रहेको छ। पृथ्वीको बड्दो तापक्रमले निम्त्याएका विभिन्न समस्याहरूलाई साहित्यले पनि सम्बोधन गर्नुपर्छ भन्ने सिद्धान्तका साथ अघि आएको पर्यावरण विमर्शलाई समकालीन साहित्यको एउटा नितान्त आवश्यक वैचारिकी मान्न सकिन्छ। यस सिद्धान्तले मुख्यतः यसरी तापक्रम बड्ना कारणहरूको सन्धान र आलोचना साहित्यका रचनाकारहरूले आफ्नो रचनामा कसरी औ कति गरेका छन् भन्ने विषयको अध्ययन गर्दछ। सांस्कृतिक अध्ययनका रूपमा विकसित भएर आएको यस सिद्धान्तभित्र पनि एकाधिक भङ्गालाहरू छन्। यस्ता भङ्गालाहरूमध्ये कुनै कवि, लेखकले आफ्नो रुचि र सन्दर्भअनुसार विशेष भङ्गालोलाई समाएर लेखनरत हुन सक्छन्। समकालीन नेपाली कविताका क्षेत्रमा उल्लेखनीय एक नाम हो कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठ । कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठ नेपाली पर्याकविता लेखनका एक अग्रिम पङ्क्तिका कवहि हुन। इ सं ८० को दशकदेखि नै छुटपुट मात्रामा पर्यावरण सङ्कटका विषयमा कविता लेख्दै आएका कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठले पछिल्लो कालमा आएर यसतर्फ उल्लेखनीय कार्य गरिरहेका छन्। यसर्थ, यस शोध पत्रमा कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठको कवितामा रहेको पर्यावरण विमर्शका विभिन्न पक्षहरूको अध्ययन साथै मूल्याङ्कन गरिने छ। यसरी अध्ययन गर्ने क्रममा नेपाली कवितामा पर्याकविता लेखनको थालनी र विकासमा कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठको योगदान बारे प्रकाश पार्दै उनले आफ्नो लेखनमा पर्यावरण विमर्शले उठान गरेको कुन कुन पक्षलाई कसरी प्रयोगमा ल्याएका छन् भन्ने विषयको सन्धान पनि गरिनेछ।

वीज शब्द- समकालीन, पर्याकविता, गहन पारिस्थितिकी, सांस्कृतिक पारिस्थितिकी

## १. सीमा समय र अर्थ शब्दको समकालीन

समकालीन शब्दको शब्दकोशीय अर्थ एकै समयको एकै वा भएको समयमा एकै , बखतकोबखतको<sup>१</sup> भन्ने लागे तापनि विद्वानहरूले यसलाई साहित्यका सन्दर्भमा विशिष्ट अर्थ दिएर बुझ्न पर्ने सुझाव दिएका छन्। विशिष्ट अर्थअनुसार कुनै पनि गतिशील साहित्यले प्राप्त गर्दै आइरहेको नौलो तथा वर्तमान स्वरूप नै समकालीन साहित्य हो जो आफूभन्दा अधिको समयबाटै विकसित भएर आइरहेको हुन्छ<sup>२</sup>। समय सीमामा बाँध्न परे यसलाई चालु वर्तमानको दुई वा तीन दशक मान्न सकिन्छ।<sup>३</sup> प्रस्तुत शोधपत्रमा समकालीन शब्दको त्यही विशिष्ट साहित्यिक अर्थलाई आधार मान्दै लगभग सन् १९९० को दशकयता प्रकाशित कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठका कविताहरूको अध्ययन गरी निष्कर्षमा पुग्ने कार्य गरिएको छ।

## २. समकालीन नेपाली पर्यायकविता

सन् १९६०-७० को दसकदेखि प्राज्ञिक वहसका रूपमा प्रारम्भ भएको<sup>४</sup> साहित्य र पर्यावरणसँगको सम्बन्धको विमर्शले पछिल्लो कालमा साहित्यिक आलोचनाका क्षेत्रमा उल्लेखनीय ठाउँ ओगटेको छ। साहित्यको सांस्कृतिक तथा सन्दर्भवादी अध्ययनको एउटा उल्लेखनीय उदाहरणका रूपमा विकसित यो सिद्धान्त समकालीन नेपाली कविताका सन्दर्भमा पनि उल्लेखनीय र सान्दर्भिक विषय रहेको छ। साहित्यिक सिद्धान्तका रूपमा विकसित पर्यालोचना (इकोक्रिटिसिज्म)-ले साहित्य र पर्यावरणमाझको सम्बन्धबारे अध्ययन गर्दछ। यसले साहित्यिक पाठमा पर्यावरणको अङ्कन कसरी

<sup>१</sup> त्रिपाठी वासुदेव ( सम्पा.), **नेपाली वृहत शब्दकोश**, काठमाडौं : नेपाल राजकीय प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठान, वि.स. २०५५, पृ- १२३१.

<sup>२</sup> राई इन्द्रबहादुर, **साहित्यिक समकालीनता: शब्दार्थिक र पारिभाषिक**, नेपाली जर्नल, वर्ष १, अङ्क १, मोहन पी दाहाल र नरेशचन्द्र खाती (सम्पा.) दार्जिलिङ : विष्ट पब्लिकेसन्स प्रा लि, सन् २००१, पृ- १.

<sup>३</sup> दाहाल मोहन पी, **नेपाली जर्नल**, पूर्ववत्, पृ- xiv.

<sup>४</sup> जे ए कुडोन (सम्पादक) सन् १९१३, लिटरेरी टर्मस् एन्ड लिटरेरी थ्योरी, पेडग्विन बुक्स लिमिटेड, इङ्ग्लेन्ड पृ १७७

गरिएको छ भन्ने विषयलाई प्रकाश गर्दछ।<sup>5</sup> पर्यावरण सङ्कटको चित्रण र त्यसको समाधानहेतु साहित्यिकले सिर्जना गर्ने काव्यात्मक अभिव्यक्ति नै पर्यासाहित्य हो। गहन पारिस्थितिकी, सामाजिक पारिस्थितिकी, पारिस्थितिकी साम्यवाद, पारिस्थितिकी नारीवाद, हरित आध्यात्मिकता आदि शाखाहरू यस क्षेत्रमा विकसित प्रमुख शाखाहरू हुन्। कविले आफ्ना रचनामा पर्यावरणसम्बन्धी कस्तो धारणा राखेका छन् र त्यसको प्रभाव पर्यावरणसम्बन्धी निर्माण हुने सङ्कथनमा कसरी औ कस्तो पर्दछ भन्ने विषयको आलोचनात्मक अध्ययन हुनु समकालीन साहित्य अध्ययनको एउटा महत्त्वपूर्ण पक्ष हो।

समकालीन नेपाली कविताले विविध विषयहरू आत्मसात गर्दै आइरहेको छ। विविधतामुखी हुनु समकालीन नेपाली कविताको एउटा प्रमुख विशेषता हो। यस्ता एकाधिक विषयहरू मध्ये नेपाली साहित्यमा पर्यावरण विमर्श पछिल्लो कालमा सक्रिय लेखनका रूपमा अघि आइरहेको छ। नेपाली कविताका क्षेत्रमा परिवेश काव्यका पहिलो प्रयोक्ता लेखनाथ पौड्याल हुन् भनी अध्येताहरूले तर्क पेश गरेका छन्।<sup>6</sup> यद्यपि पर्यासाहित्य वा पर्यावरण सङ्कटलाई सम्बोधन गरी नेपाली कविता लेखन भने नेपाली कविताको पछिल्लो काल वा समकालीन कालमा प्रारम्भ भएको हो भनी भन्न सकिन्छ। समकालीन नेपाली कविताका क्षेत्रमा पर्याकविता लेखनमा एकाधिक कविहरू लागेरहेका छन् यद्यपि यसतर्फ सचेततापूर्वक कलम चलाउने प्रथम समकालीन कविका रूपमा कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठलाई मान्न सकिन्छ। यसैले कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठले आफ्नो काव्य रचनामा पर्यावरण सम्बन्धी कस्तो धारणा व्यक्त गरेका छन्? भन्ने विषय महत्त्वपूर्ण रहेको छ।

<sup>5</sup> प्रमोद के नायर, सन् २०२२, कनटेम्परेरी लिटरेरी एन्ड कल्चरल थिअरी, पियरसोन इन्डिया एडुकेसन सर्भिसेस प्राइभेट लिमिटेड, उत्तर प्रदेश भारत, पृ. २४२

<sup>6</sup>डा देवचन्द्र सुब्बा, सन् २०२१, नेपाली कवितामा परिवेश, उपमा पब्लिकेसन, कालेबुङ, पृ ८१

## २.२. कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठको परिचय

कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठ समकालीन नेपाली कविताका क्षेत्रमा एउटा उल्लेखनीय कवि हुन्। उनका संवेदना/ओ संवेदना ( इ सं १९८१), परेवा: सेता-काला ( इ सं १९८४), अनुभूति यात्रामा... (इ सं १९९०), तुमियेइ मोर नेपथ्याप्रिया (इ सं १९८४), हेर्नुस् यस शहरलाई (नेपाली-जर्नल संयुक्त, इ सं १९९७) , करोडौं सूर्यहरूको अन्धकार (इ सं २००३), कडोरौं सूर्यहरूको अन्धकार (इ सं २०२४) प्रकाशित छन्। उच्च कल्पनाशीलता र नवीन बिम्बको संमायोजन र प्रयोगशीलता उनका कविताका प्रमुख प्रवृत्ति हुन्। उनको लेखनको प्रमुख प्राप्तिहरूमध्ये नेपाली कविताका क्षेत्रमा पर्यावरण विषयका कविता प्रारम्भ गर्नु एउटा रहेको छ। उनलाई नेपाली कविताका क्षेत्रमा घोषित रूपमा पर्याकविता लेखन थाल्ने कविका रूपमा लिइन्छ।<sup>७</sup>उनको कविता लेखनको पछिल्लो समय पर्याकविता लेखनमा उन्मुख रहेको छ।

नेपाली कविताका क्षेत्रमा पर्याकविताको आधिकारिक लेखनको आरम्भ कसबाट भएको हो भन्ने विषयमा मत मतान्तर रहेको छ। यद्यपि आजसम्मको अध्ययनले 'पर्यावरण' शब्द नै प्रयोग गरेर कविता प्रकाशित गर्ने पहिलो नेपाली कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठ देखा पर्दछन्।<sup>८</sup> उनले आफ्नो करोडौं सूर्यहरूको अन्धकार (सन् २००३) कविता संग्रहको नेपथ्य अथवा प्राक्कथनमा विगँदो विश्ववातावरणको चिन्तालाई केन्द्रीय महत्त्व दिँदै लेखिएका कविताहरू भनेर स्पष्ट उल्लेख गरेकाबाट पनि यो तथ्य पुष्टि हुन्छ। यसभन्दा अघि उनको पञ्चमहाभूतःएउटा वातावरण कविता शीर्षकको कविता मधुपर्क पत्रिका, पुस अङ्क, वि सं २०५३ तदनुसार सन् १९९६ मा प्रकाशित भएको थियो। यसबाहेक कठमाडौंमा जर्मनेली कवि गोथेका नाममा स्थापित गोथे इन्स्टिट्युटले एउटा परियोजना चलाएर कविता लेखाएवापत् हेर्नुस् यस शहरलाई ( सन् १९९७) कविता लेखिएको हो।<sup>९</sup> यी विभिन्न तथ्यहरूका आधारमा कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठलाई नेपाली कविताका क्षेत्रमा पर्याकविताका पहिलो सचेत प्रयोक्ता मान्न सकिन्छ। यसप्रकार नेपाली विषयका कविता प्रारम्भ गर्नु एउटा रहेको छ। उनलाई

<sup>७</sup> ड गीता त्रिपाठी, सन् २०२४, अविनाश श्रेष्ठका कवितामा पर्यावरण, करोडौं सूर्यहरूको अन्धकार (सन् २०२४, दोस्रो संस्करण), माया पब्लिकेसन प्राची, काठमाडौं, पृ १३९

<sup>८</sup> अविनाश श्रेष्ठ, २००३, नेपथ्य, करोडौं सूर्यको अन्धकार, कालचक्र, नेपाल

<sup>९</sup> अविनाश श्रेष्ठ, पूर्ववत्



नेपाली कविताका क्षेत्रमा घोषित रूपमा पर्याकविता लेखन थाल्ने कविका रूपमा लिइन्छ।<sup>10</sup>उनको कविता लेखनको पछिल्लो समय पर्याकविता लेखनमा उन्मुख रहेको छ।

कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठका कविता संग्रह मध्ये **कडोरौं सूर्यहरूको अन्धकार**-का दुईवाट संस्करणमा सङ्गृहीत कविताहरू उनका पर्याकविताका प्रतिनिधि कविता रहेका छन्। उनको यस कविता संग्रहको पहिलो संस्करणमा एकाधिक कविताहरू पर्याकविताका नमूना रहेका छन्। उनका पर्याकविताहरू मुख्यतः सांस्कृतिक पारिस्थितिका आधारमा अध्ययन गर्न सकिन्छ। यद्यपि उनका कविताहरूमा पर्यावरण मैत्री नेपाली लोकसंस्कृतिको चर्चा भने स्पष्ट रूपमा गरिएको पाइन्छ। त्यसकारण उनको आलोचनाको केन्द्रबिन्दु ठिम्याउन गाह्रो पर्दछ। उनले पर्यावरण सङ्कटमा सम्पूर्ण मानवलाई आलोचना गरेका छन् । उनका कविताहरूमा पर्यावरण प्रदुषण, शहरीकरणप्रति तीव्र असन्तुष्टि प्रकट गरिएको छ। उनको दोस्रो संस्करणमा रहेको **हेर्नुस् यस शहरलाई** , 'वाग्मतिको किनारमा उभिएर' कविता यसका उदाहरण मान्न सकिन्छ। जङ्गलको फाँडनी र जलस्तरको घटदो अवस्थामाथि उनका कविताहरूले चिन्ता व्यक्त गरेका छन्-

एउटा उदाहरण-

जङ्गललाई मरुभूमितिर लखेट्दै

जङ्गलको अमरत्वको गीत गाइरहेछु म

जङ्गलसँगै जानेछ सौन्दर्य

रूखसँगसँगै बिदा हुनेछ रूप

शृङ्गार चहाहरूसितै उड्नेछ

विदीर्ण हुनेछ नदीसँगसँगै वैभव

<sup>10</sup> ड गीता त्रिपाठी, सन् २०२४, अविनाश श्रेष्ठका कवितामा पर्यावरण, करोडौं सूर्यहरूको अन्धकार (सन् २०२४, दोस्रो संस्करण), माया पब्लिकेसन प्राली, काठमाडौं, पृ १३९



अविनाश श्रेष्ठका पर्याकविताहरूमा बिम्ब संयोजन र कल्पनाशीलताका सुन्दर नमुना रहे तापनि कुनै कविताहरूमा पर्यावरण विमर्शका पक्षमा वैपरित्य राख्ने मानवकेन्द्री जीवन दर्शन स्पष्ट रूपमा आएको पाइन्छ। एउटा उदाहरण-

फेरि पनि

अकाल मृत्युबाट जोगाउँदै धरतीलाई

बनाउनैपर्छ दीर्घजीवी.....

तर पृथ्वीको आयु

लम्ब्याउन सक्छ-

न जीवाणुले

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सृष्टिलाई श्रद्धा गर्ने

प्रकृतिलाई पुज्ने

मान्छे मात्र समर्थ छ

दिन दीर्घजीवनको उपहार

सौन्दर्यको पुरस्कार

वसुधालाई। ( करोडौं सूर्यहरूको अन्धकार- बाट)

यसप्रकार कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठका कविताहरू पर्याकविताका राम्रा उदाहरण हुँदा हुँदै पनि त्यसले नृकेन्द्री विचारधारालाई अझै अड्कमाल गरिरहेको तथ्य प्राप्त हुँदछ। उनका दोस्रो संस्करणमा छापिएका कविताहरू गहन पारिस्थितिकीका आधारमा पनि अध्ययन गर्न सकिने देखिन्छ।

### निष्कर्ष

समकालीन नेपाली कविताको पछिल्लो कालमा प्रचलित लेखन हो पर्याकविता। यसतर्फ उल्लेखनीय मात्रामा लेखन भइरहेको छ। यस्ता कविहरूमध्ये कवि मनप्रसाद सुब्बा र अविनाश श्रेष्ठ उल्लेखनीय कविहरू हुन्। यी दुवै कविका कविताहरू पर्याकविताका राम्रा नमुना छन्। यी दुई कवि मध्ये पर्यावरण विषयको कविता प्रकाशित गर्ने पहिलो कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठलाई मान्न सकिन्छ भने कवितासंग्रहकै रूपमा पुस्तक प्रकाशित गर्ने पहिलो कवि भने कवि मनप्रसाद सुब्बालाई मान्न सकिन्छ। अविनाश श्रेष्ठका यस्ता कविताहरूले उपभोक्तावादी संस्कृतिको आलोचना गरेका छन्। । यद्यपि ती कविताहरूको अध्ययन गर्दा त्यसमा पर्यावरण विमर्शको ठूलो र महत्वपूर्ण शाखा मानिने गहन पारिस्थितिकीलाई आधार गरेर स्पष्ट र ठूलो संख्यामा भने कविता सिर्जना गरिएको पाइन्छ। यद्यपि नेपाली कविता साहित्यमा पर्याकविता लेखनको इतिहासमा कवि अविनाश श्रेष्ठको योगदान उल्लेखनीय रहेको छ।

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## **CRIME AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA: UNCOVERING TRENDS & EMPOWERMENT GAPS ACROSS FIVE STATES (2018-2022)**

(Paper published on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2025.)

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the trends and determinants of crimes against women in India from 2018 to 2022, focusing on five states: Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, West Bengal, and Maharashtra. Using data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), the research explores the prevalence, reporting gaps, and socio-economic factors influencing crimes against women. It highlights seven major crime categories, including domestic violence, sexual assault, dowry deaths, and trafficking, revealing significant regional disparities and persistent vulnerabilities. The study also delves into unreported crimes, particularly domestic violence, which remains a critical yet often invisible issue. NFHS data shows that empowerment factors such as literacy, employment, financial autonomy, and decision-making power play a crucial role in reducing vulnerability and increasing reporting of violence. The findings emphasize the need for integrated policy interventions that combine crime prevention with empowerment initiatives, focusing on education, economic participation, legal aid, and mental health services. The study concludes that addressing gender-based violence requires a multidimensional approach that prioritizes structural reforms and empowers women to resist and report violence, ultimately fostering societal change.*

*Key words: Crimes, Women, Gender, Empowerment, Literacy, Family, Autonomy etc.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

India, a nation known for its cultural diversity and rich traditions, has always emphasized the importance of women in society, portraying them as symbols of strength, wisdom and resilience. From the Vedic period to modern times, Indian civilization has upheld the principles of respect, dignity and empowerment of women. However, despite this cultural ethos, the harsh reality remains that women in India continue to face various forms of violence and discrimination. Regardless of determined efforts to promote gender equality and empower women, the country continues to witness alarming rates of violence, harassment and exploitation against women, which extends the cycle of fear, silence and domination.

The inter sectionality of factors such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, urbanization and societal patriarchy creates a complex web of vulnerabilities that increases the risk of crime against women. Furthermore, the lack of effective implementation of laws and policies, inadequate support services for victims also influence the prevalence and reporting of crimes against women.



According to the Women's Commission of India, about 26% of women in India have experienced domestic violence once in their lifetime. A woman is either pushed towards suicide or is harassed for dowry every 2 hours and a woman is being sexually assaulted every 40 minutes.

This paradox of a culturally rich and respectful society coexisting with pervasive violence against women necessitates a critical examination of the underlying factors that contribute to the reality.

## BACKGROUND

Crimes against women in India have long been rooted in patriarchal traditions and socio-cultural inequalities. Before independence, practices like child marriage, sati and dowry were widespread, with limited legal protections for women. Reform efforts existed but were slow and largely limited in reach. While reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and movements like the Brahma Samaj attempted to address some of these issues, progress was slow and largely limited to elite urban areas.

Post-independence constitutional guarantees and legal reforms sought to promote gender equality, and protection under the law. Despite these, crimes against women have continued to rise in various forms – including domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and cyber-crimes. The post-1990 liberation era, while boosting economic growth and education, also exposed structural vulnerabilities, such as lack of security in public places and workplace discrimination.

Alongside this, the empowerment has grown through education, legal awareness and increased political participation. Still, the gap between legal rights and societal practice highlights the need for continued focus on both crime prevention and empowerment initiatives.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of gender-based violence in India has become a significant area of academic inquiry, particularly in understanding how socio-economic and demographic factors shape patterns of crimes against women. Several studies have sought to map and interpret these patterns using both spatial and statistical lenses. For example, *'Mapping the Dynamics of Crime against Women in India: A Spatio-Temporal Analysis'* (Kumari et al 2025) highlights that violence against women is normalized by society and culture. It emphasizes that the deep-rooted societal norms that normalize gender-based violence across various region in India.

Similarly, *'Crime Against Women in India: A Geographical Appraisal'* (Murmu, 2023) notes that the crime rate against women is highest within the northern region and lowest within the western part of India. It indicates significant regional disparities that necessitate localized policy interventions.

Further, studies like *'Female Literacy and Crime Against Women in India: Complex Trajectories'* (Kosir and Lakshminarayanan, 2024), the authors discuss the multifaceted relationship between education and crime, stating that 'improvements in literacy can create positive,



long-lasting change in all aspects of women's development', suggesting that enhancing female literacy is pivotal in reducing gender-based violence. Lastly, the study '*Determinants of Crime against Women: Insight from India*' (Maity and Roy, 2021) reveals that "states like West Bengal and Assam have the largest growth rate of crime against women, while Tamil Nadu shows negative growth", highlighting the effectiveness of certain state-level measures and the need for other to adopt similar strategies.

## OBJECTIVES

In recent years, crimes against women have emerged as a critical issue in India. This paper explores crime trends from 2018 to 2022 in Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, West Bengal and Maharashtra, with a focus on socio-economic and demographic influences by comparing NCRB and NFHS data. The study aims to highlight reporting gaps and examine how women's empowerment relates to these trends. In line with these areas of focus, the specific objectives of the study are as follows:

To examine and compare the numbers and trends of crimes against women from 2018 to 2022 across five Indian states – Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, West Bengal and Maharashtra – using NCRB data.

To analyse the trends of seven specific types of reported crimes against women across each of the selected states over a five-year period

To explore the contrast of underreporting of domestic violence and spousal abuse through the lens of NFHS-5 data, highlighting the violence beyond what is captured in official crime statistics.

To examine the relationship between women's empowerment – measured through literacy, employment, decision-making and access to resources – identifying how empowerment influence vulnerability of crimes.

## METHODOLOGY & DATA SOURCE

This study adopts an analytical approach to examine the patterns and determinants of crimes against women across five Indian states – Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, West Bengal and Maharashtra – from 2018 to 2022. The methodology of this study involves a comparative and co relational analysis using secondary data from reputable national sources. The study utilizes secondary data to identify crime rates and trends, along with the socio-economic and demographic factors that influence them. Also, it analyses the gaps between official crime (NCRB) and survey-based experience (NFHS).

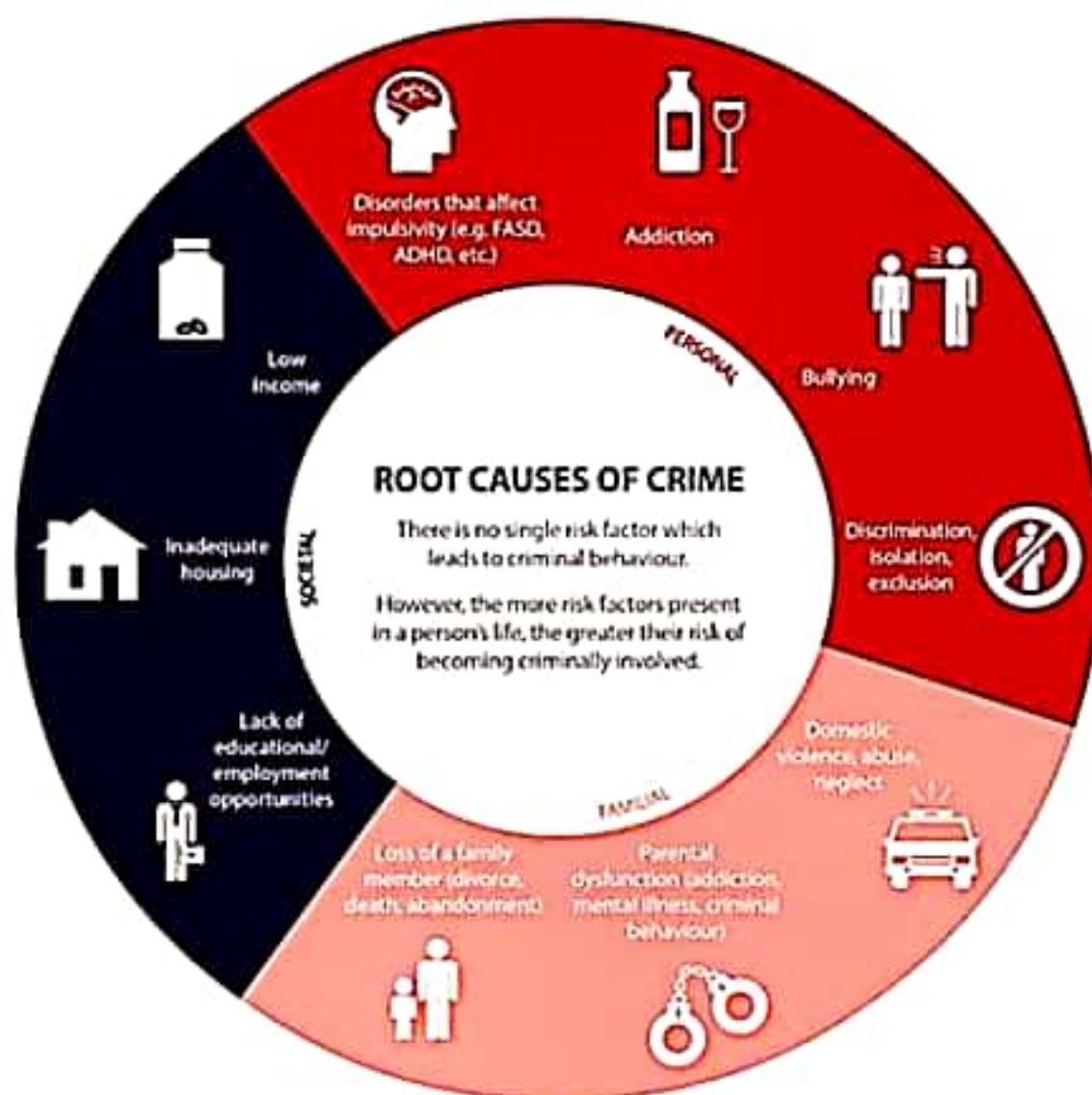
### NEED OF THE STUDY

In the context of increasing national concern regarding the safety and status of women in India, this study aims to analyse the evolving trends and regional patterns of crimes against women, while exploring the socio-economic and demographic factors that influence these developments over the past five years. Despite numerous legal and policy measures introduced by the Govt. of India to protect and empower women such as Criminal Law(Amendment) Act,2013, *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*, *One Stop Centres*, *Women Helpline Scheme*, *Nirbhaya Fund* etc. – the frequency and intensity of such crimes continue to grow. The increase in both reported and unreported cases need further research to indicate a gap in effective implementation of such legal policies.

The study focuses on five states – Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, West Bengal, Maharashtra reflecting a diverse representation in terms of geography, urbanization, literacy levels, economic development and crime rates. These states collectively account for a significant

proportion of India’s population and crime statistics, making them a representative sample for this study. Furthermore, it integrates recently published data from NCRB and NFHS for a more in-depth study.

Therefore, the study is crucial for identifying not only the trends in crimes against women, but also the broader social and economic factors that shape them across diverse Indian states.



### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to NCRB, India has recorded over 2 million cases of crimes against women between 2018 and 2022. Behind

every reported or unreported crime against women in India lies a story shaped by education, economy and inequality – highlighting the pressing need for national efforts to address systematic barriers, while government initiatives seek to uncover the patterns beneath the numbers and implement targeted solutions.

Crimes against women encompass a range of gender-based offences such as domestic violence, sexual assault, dowry harassment and trafficking, which are rooted in systematic gender inequality. Women empowerment in this context refers to the enhancement of women’s autonomy, access to education, economic participation, decision-making power and legal rights. The framework considers how factors such as literacy rate, female work participation, urban-rural population distribution, poverty levels and social development indicators influence both the prevalence and nature of these crimes. By mapping these variables against crime data from NCRB, the study seeks to uncover region-specific trends and explore how



socio-economic and demographic factors contribute to the patterns of crimes against women, providing insights into underlying causes and informing research on gender-based violence. The selection of Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, West Bengal and Maharashtra for the period 2018 to 2022 allows for a diverse comparative analysis across distinct economic, social and cultural contexts, offering a deeper understanding of how regional disparities in socio-economic and demographic factors influence crime trends against women.

## NATIONAL SECENARIO

With growing awareness of gender equality and stronger government initiatives, the issue of crimes against women in India has gained national and international attention, making a critical subject for academic and policy-oriented research. On the global front, India's position remains concerning – ranking 140 out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report, 2021 and labled as the most dangerous country for women in the Thomson Reuters Foundation survey (2018), due to widespread sexual violence and discriminatory cultural practices. As per the Women Peace and Security Index, 2023 released by Grogetown Institue for Women, Peace & Security, India ranks 128 out of 177 countries in terms of women's inclusion, justice and security. According to NCRB, the reported crime rate against women in India was 66.4 per 1,00,000 female population in 2022.

These crimes are primarily registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (erstwhile Indian Penal Code, IPC) and Special & Local Laws (SLL). Several laws have been enacted to specifically address violence against women, including the *Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005*; the *Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961*; the *Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013* (commonly known as POSH Act); and the relevant sections of the BNS such as Section 376 for rape, Section 498A for cruelty by husband or relatives, Section 363 – 373 for kidnapping and abduction, forming a comprehensive legal framework aimed at safeguarding women's rights and ensuring justice. Despite of these harsh realities of crime, women's economic empowerment is slowly progressing, with female labour force participation at around 25%, and approximately 20% of India's entrepreneurs being women, many engaged through startups, MSMEs and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under initiatives like NRLM (National Rural Livelihoods Mission).

Although women's economic empowerment is steadily advancing through increased participation entrepreneurship, education and self-help initiatives, the concurrent rise in crime rates against women raises serious concerns. This contrast emphasizes the importance of understanding the socio-economic and demographic factors that contribute to the continuation of violence against women, despite the progress in their empowerment.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### INTER-STATE ANNUAL CRIME TRENDS AGAINST WOMEN (2018-2022)

An in-depth analysis of the annual crime trends against women across five selected states – Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, West Bengal, Maharashtra – over the period from 2018 to 2022 is presented in Table 1. The data, sourced from the National Crime Records



Bureau (NCRB), offers a comparative overview of the reported crimes, highlighting key fluctuations and patterns across the years. The following table represents the annual total number of crimes reported in each state, providing a clear numerical comparison of trends over the five-year period.

**TABLE 1: REPORTED CRIME DATA OVERVIEW (2018-2022)**

STATES	YEAR-WISE REPORTED CRIMES (IN NUMBERS)					TOTAL CRIMES (2018-2022)
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Himachal Pradesh	1633	1636	1614	1599	1551	8033
Tamil Nadu	5822	5934	6630	8501	9207	36094
Delhi	13640	13395	10093	14277	14247	65652
West Bengal	30394	30394	36439	35884	34738	167849
Maharashtra	35497	37144	31954	39526	45331	189452

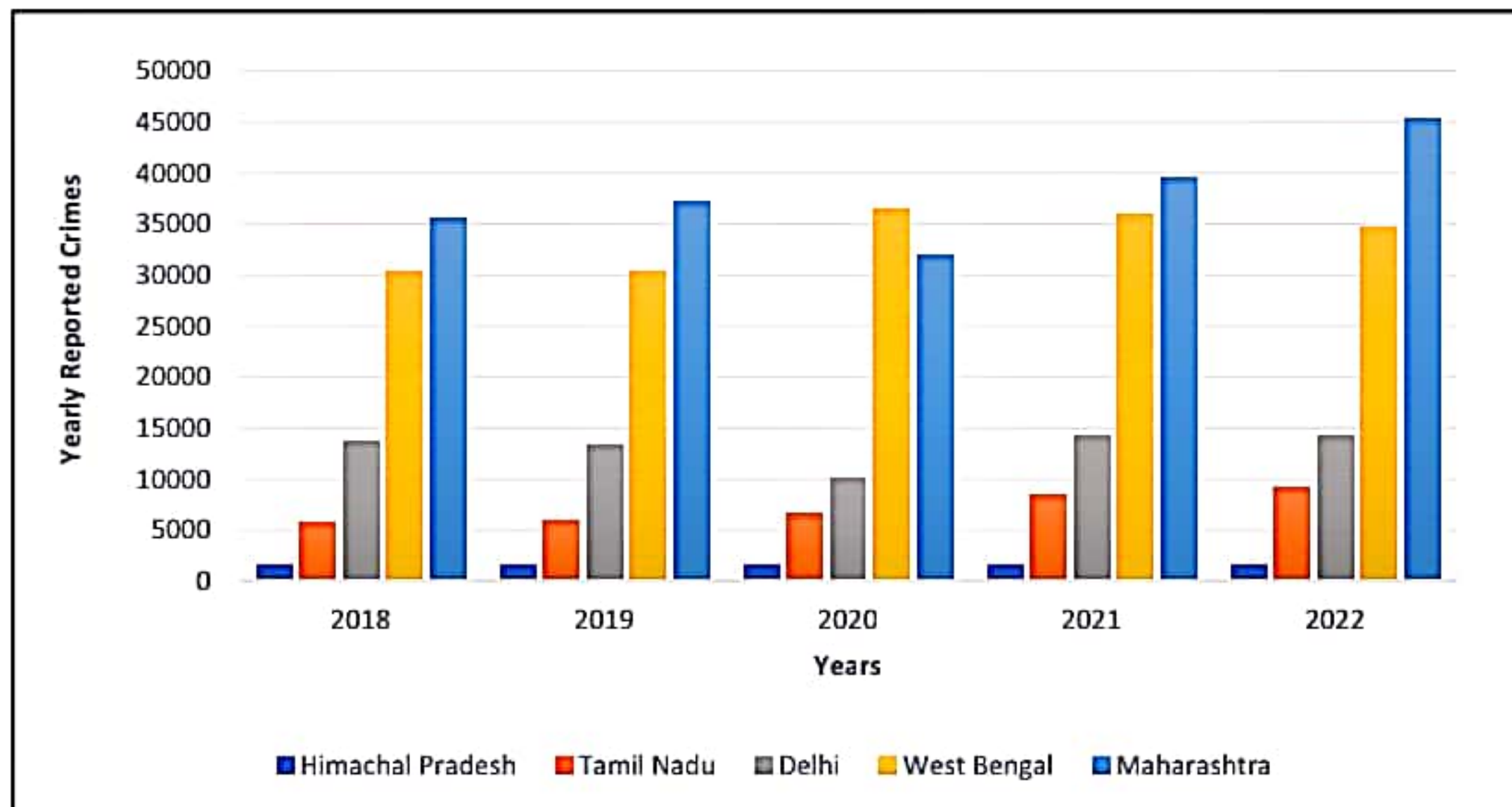
**Source:** National Crime Records Bureau's Annual Report 2018-2022 (Note 1)<sup>1</sup>

The table above represents the total number of crimes against women reported annually across five states from 2018 to 2022, highlighting distinct regional patterns. Maharashtra and West Bengal emerge as the most affected states, contributing significantly to the overall burden, while Himachal Pradesh remains at the lower end. Delhi's figures stand out as disproportionately high in relation to its size. Tamil Nadu shows consistent growth in reported cases over the years. The following graph visually illustrates these yearly trends and patterns in a comparative format.

<sup>1</sup>"Due to non-receipt of data from West Bengal for 2019, data furnished for 2018 has been used" - NCRB.



**DIAGRAM NO. 1:REPORTED CRIME DATA OVERVIEW (2018-2022)**



**Source:** Table 1

The comparative bar chart serves as a visual composition of crime trends against women across the selected five diverse Indian states spanning the years 2018-2022. It consolidates data from all 21 crime categories defined by the NCRB, including major offences such as acid attacks, indecent representation of women, dowry deaths, human trafficking and cyber crimes(women victims only) and crimes under special act also like the POCSO Act, Dowry Prohibition Act, Domestic Violence Act. Maharashtra stands out with the highest total of 189452 cases, reflecting both large population scale and stronger reporting systems, while Himachal Pradesh registers with the lowest cases. Delhi and West Bengal shows moderately high totals, with slight fluctuations over the years. Tamil Nadu comparatively maintained lower figures reflecting a relatively stable trend.

Overall, the trends reflect both persistent and emerging the challenges in ensuring women,s safety across states. This broad overview sets the stage for deeper exploration of specific types of crimes and state-wise patterns in the following sections.

**STATE-WISE ANALYSIS OF CRIME CATEGORIES**

To facilitate a comprehensive analysis of crimes against women, seven specific crime categories have been selected from the 21categories of crimes defined by the NCRB. These are – Cruelty by husband or his relatives, immoral trafficking, assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty, abetment to suicide of women, kidnapping and abduction of women, rape and dowry deaths. This mix includes crimes with a high incidence and significant impact, as well as those with comparatively lower reporting rates. This balanced selection provides a comprehensive view of the varying nature and intensity of crimes committed



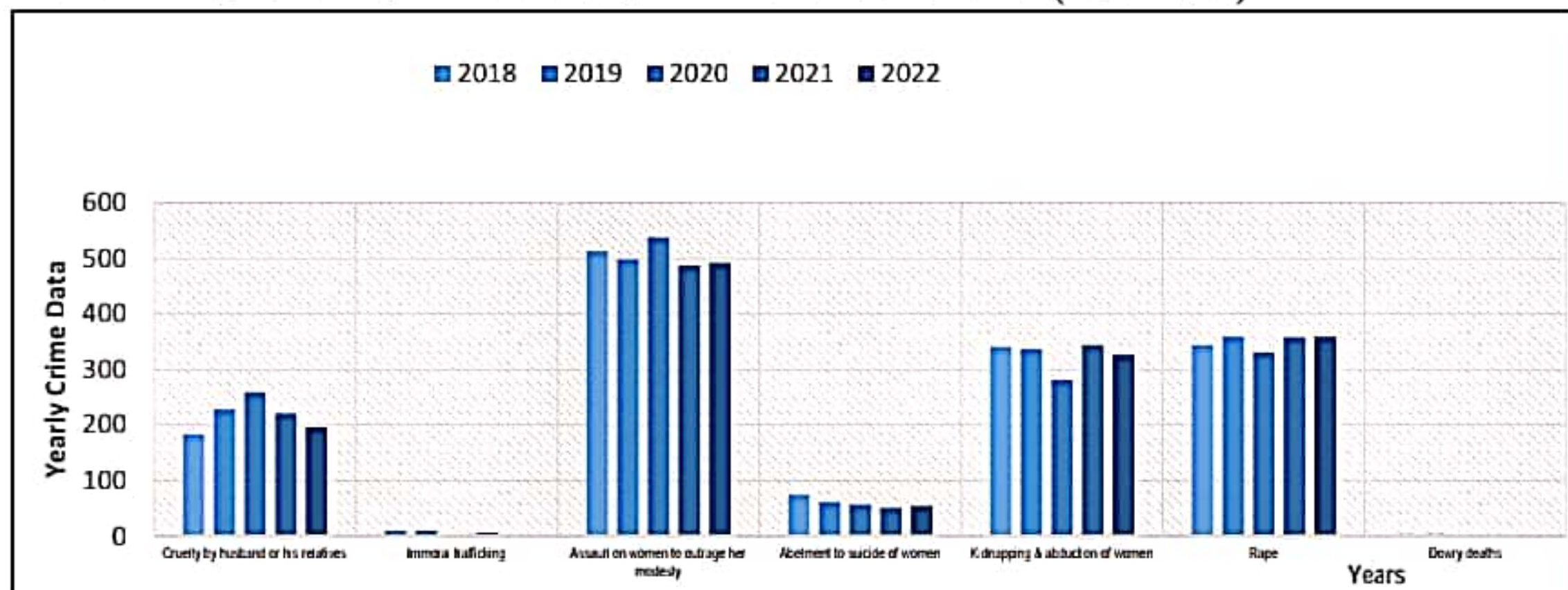
against women. The following section presents a detailed state-wise analysis of the selected crimes across the five states over the period 2018-2022.

TABLE 2: CRIME STATISTICS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH (2018-2022)

TYPE OF CRIME	YEARLY CRIME DATA					TOTAL CRIMES (2018-2022)
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Cruelty by husband or his relatives	183	228	259	221	196	1087
Immoral trafficking	10	10	0	6	3	29
Assault on women to outrage her modesty	513	498	538	487	492	2528
Abetment to suicide of women	74	61	57	51	54	297
Kidnapping & abduction of women	341	337	281	344	326	1629
Rape	344	359	331	358	359	1751
Dowry deaths	4	4	1	2	1	12

Source: National Crime Records Bureau's annual report (2018-2022)

DIAGRAM 2: CRIME STATISTICS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH (2018-2022)



Source: Table 2

The data and comparative column chart for Himachal Pradesh (2018-2022) reveal that crimes such as assault to outrage modesty, rape, and kidnapping& abduction are most frequently reported, while instances of immoral trafficking and dowry deaths are negligible. The lower overall crime levels may reflect the state’s smaller population, though persistent sexual offences highlight the ongoing vulnerabilities that need continuous attention.

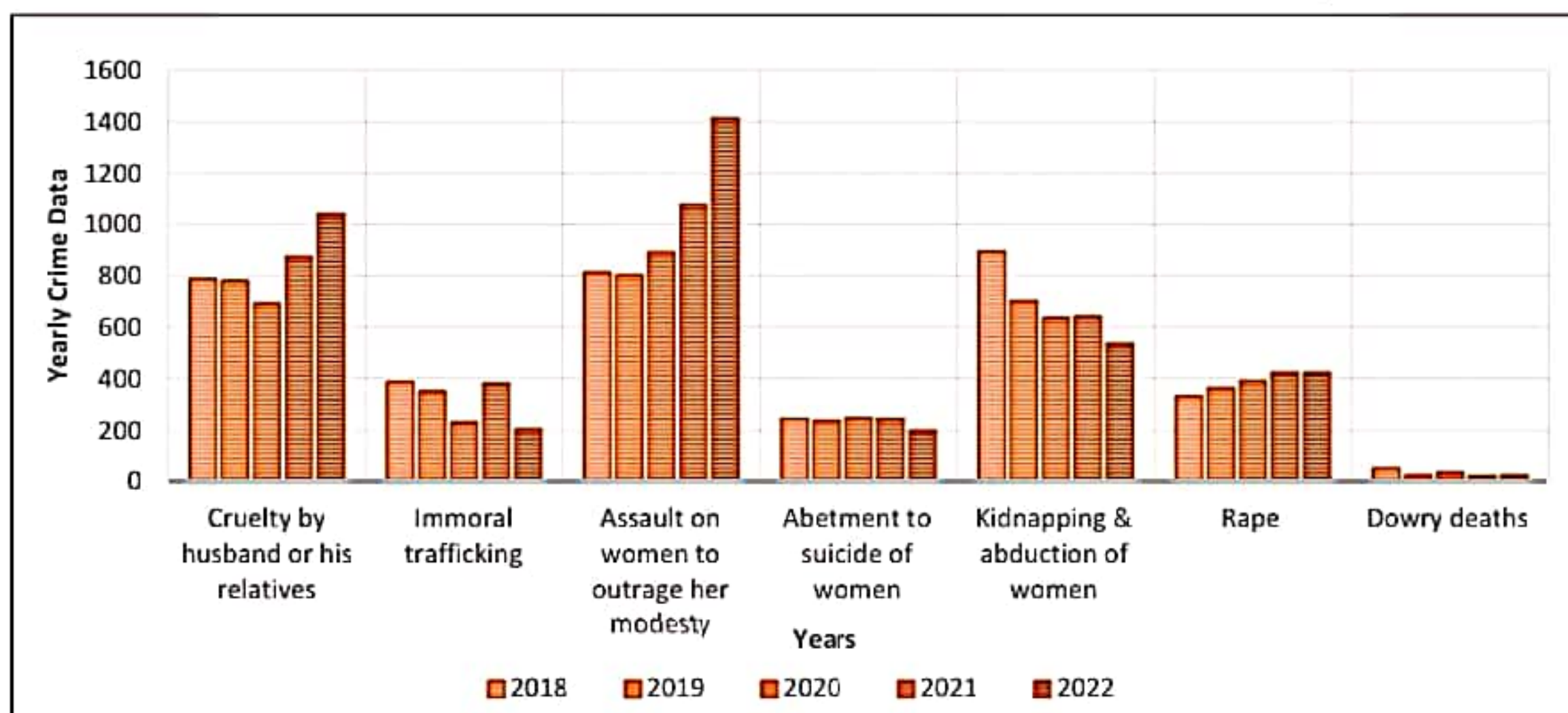


TABLE 3: CRIME STATISTICS IN TAMIL NADU (2018-2022)

TYPE OF CRIME	YEARLY CRIME DATA					TOTAL CRIMES (2018-2022)
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Cruelty by husband or his relatives	789	781	689	875	1043	4177
Immoral trafficking	386	349	231	381	206	1553
Assault on women to outrage her modesty	814	803	892	1077	1414	5000
Abetment to suicide of women	244	236	247	244	203	1174
Kidnapping & abduction of women	896	699	633	638	536	3402
Rape	331	362	389	422	421	1925
Dowry deaths	55	28	40	27	29	179

Source: National Crime Records Bureau's annual report (2018-2022)

DIAGRAM 3: CRIME STATISTICS IN TAMIL NADU (2018-2022)



Source: Table 3

The crime analysis for Tamil Nadu (2018-2022) indicates that offences such as assault on women, cruelty by husband or his relatives, and kidnapping & abduction dominate the reported cases, although the overall crime volume remains moderate relative to its large and highly urbanized population. A relatively better reporting system and public awareness may contribute to the consistency in numbers. Notably, Tamil Nadu records comparatively higher instances of immoral trafficking than other studied states, which can be linked to its extensive coastline facilitating transit activities, high rates of internal migration, urban-rural economic



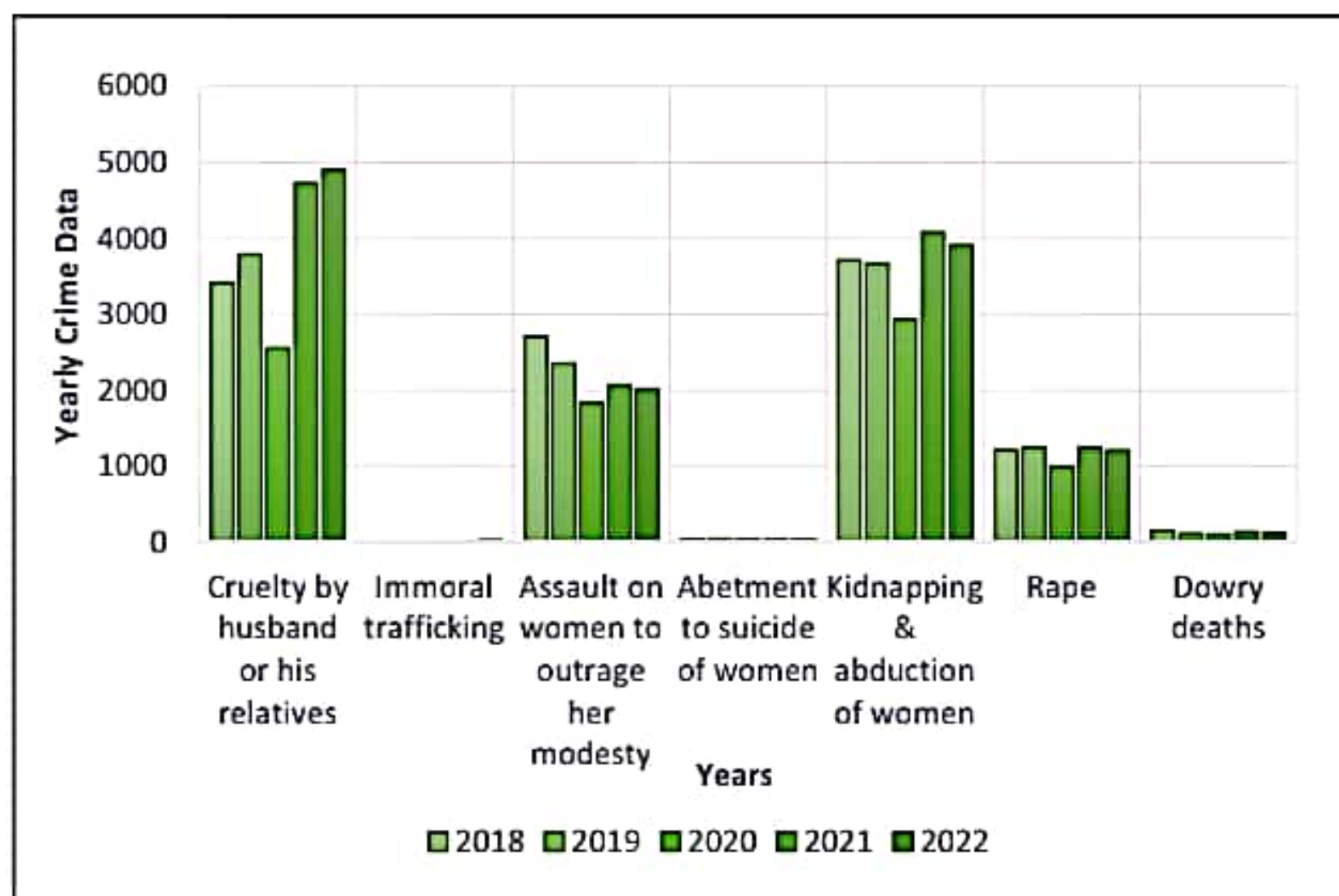
disparities and informal labour sectors. These factors collectively create conditions that traffickers exploit, reflecting broader structural challenges.

**TABLE 4: CRIME STATISTICS IN DELHI (2018-2022)**

TYPE OF CRIME	YEARLY CRIME DATA					TOTAL CRIMES (2018-2022)
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Cruelty by husband or his relatives	3416	3792	2557	4731	4901	19397
Immoral trafficking	1	4	3	4	26	38
Assault on women to outrage her modesty	2705	2355	1840	2068	2017	10985
Abetment to suicide of women	44	48	44	40	43	219
Kidnapping & abduction of women	3715	3672	2938	4083	3917	18325
Rape	1215	1253	997	1250	1212	5927
Dowry deaths	153	116	110	141	131	651

Source: National Crime Records Bureau's annual report (2018-2022)

**DIAGRAM 4: CRIME STATISTICS IN DELHI (2018-2022)**



Source: Table 4

As the national capital, Delhi records some of highest crime figures against women between 2018-2022, with cruelty by husband and kidnapping and abduction emerging as the most widespread offences. The pressures of dense population, migration, social diversity and economic disparities intensify vulnerabilities, despite better infrastructure and law enforcement. Meanwhile, immoral trafficking appears minimal, likely masked by underreporting rather than true absence. Delhi’s profile reflects a complex tension between progressive visibility of women’s issues and persistent systemic gaps in protection.

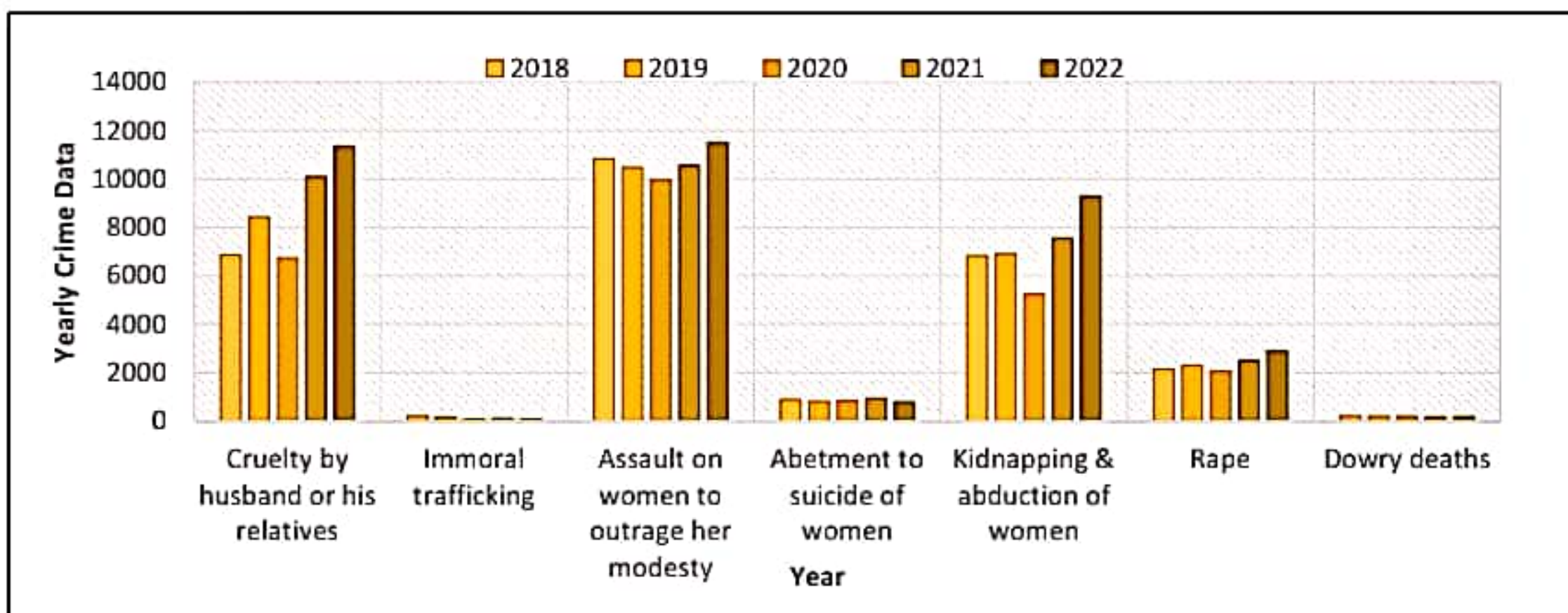


**TABLE 5: CRIME STATISTICS IN MAHARASHTRA (2018-2022)**

TYPE OF CRIME	YEARLY CRIME DATA					TOTAL CRIMES (2018-2022)
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Cruelty by husband or his relatives	6862	8430	6729	10095	11367	43483
Immoral trafficking	200	152	85	95	65	597
Assault on women to outrage her modesty	10835	10472	9965	10568	11512	53352
Abetment to suicide of women	881	802	832	927	786	4228
Kidnapping & abduction of women	6825	6906	5254	7559	9297	35841
Rape	2142	2299	2061	2496	2904	11902
Dowry deaths	200	196	197	172	180	945

Source: National Crime Records Bureau's annual report (2018-2022)

**DIAGRAM 5: CRIME STATISTICS IN MAHARASHTRA (2018-2022)**



Source: Table 5

Maharashtra, as one of the India’s largest and most industrialized states, shows notably high numbers in like assault on women’s modesty and cruelty by husband or relatives, consistently leading across the years with rising numbers. Kidnapping and abduction also surged notably by 2022, hinting at rising vulnerabilities and reflects challenges in maintaining security as urban areas expand. Maharashtra exhibits the highest incidence of abetment to suicide of women among the five states, potential due to a combination of factors such as societal pressure and economic stress. In contrast, immoral trafficking shows a gradual decline, possibly due to enhanced policing and awareness initiatives. However, dowry deaths, while fewer,



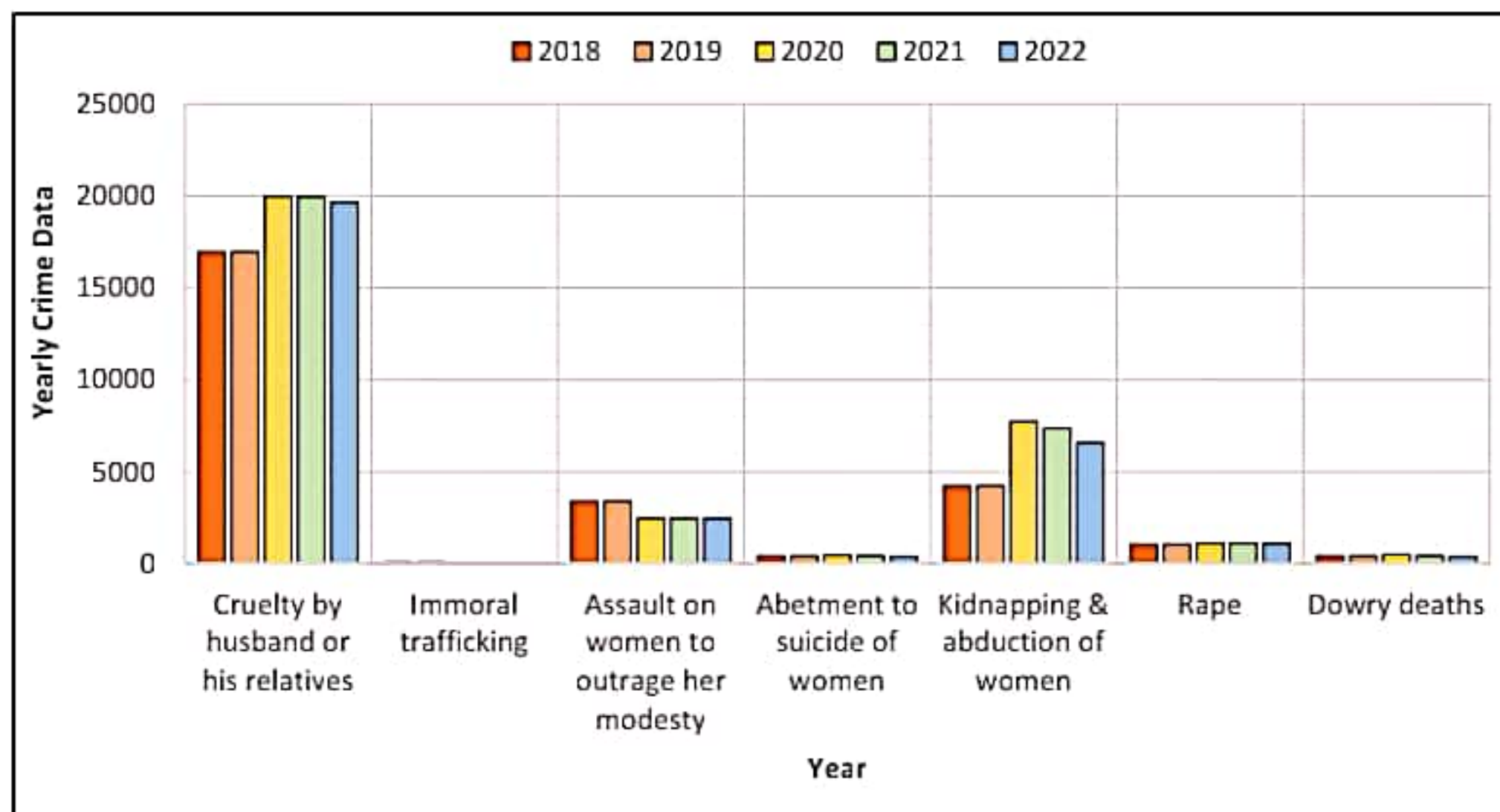
remain a stubborn societal issue. Despite progress, safeguarding women remains a pressing concern in Maharashtra’s growth story.

**TABLE 6: CRIME STATISTICS IN WEST BENGAL (2018-2022)**

TYPE OF CRIME	YEARLY CRIME DATA					TOTAL CRIMES (2018-2022)
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Cruelty by husband or his relatives	16951	16951	19962	19952	19650	93466
Immoral trafficking	97	97	52	50	40	336
Assault on women to outrage her modesty	3399	3399	2488	2485	2477	14248
Abetment to suicide of women	445	445	485	456	410	2241
Kidnapping & abduction of women	4249	4249	7740	7376	6596	30210
Rape	1069	1069	1128	1123	1111	5500
Dowry deaths	444	444	522	454	406	2270

Source: National Crime Records Bureau's annual report (2018-2022)<sup>2</sup>

**DIAGRAM 6: CRIME STATISTICS IN WEST BENGAL (2018-2022)**



Source: Table 6

In West Bengal, crimes related to cruelty by husband or his relatives and dowry deaths dominate the state recording the highest numbers among all five states.

With 93466 cases of domestic cruelty and 2270 dowry deaths, the data reflects deep-rooted domestic violence issues and traditional practices and socio-economic pressure linked to marriage customs. On the other side crimes like immoral trafficking and assault on women’s modesty showed slight declines, indicating partial success of targeted interventions. Howev-

<sup>2</sup> “Due to non-receipt of data from West Bengal for 2019, data furnished for 2018 has been used” - NCRB. Crimes like Immoral trafficking, assault on women to outrage her modesty, kidnapping & abduction of women and rape includes girl children (below age 18) as per NCRB’s classification under crimes against women.



er, the overall burden of domestic violence points toward an urgent need for stronger social reforms.

The crime statistics across the five states shows a complex picture, with significant disparities in the prevalence of various crimes against women. This snapshot is limited to cases reported to NCRB, but many incidents go unreported; the following section will explore these unspoken realities through the

### BEYOND REPORTED CRIMES – NFHS INSIGHTS

A large proportion of crimes against women in India go unreported, hidden behind layers of fear, social stigma, and lack of institutional support. Among these, Domestic violence and spousal violence stands out as a particularly critical yet often invisible issue, taking place within the private sphere of home – where safety should be guaranteed. In the analysis of crimes against women by categories, cruelty by husband or relatives ranks among top reported offences in most states, making domestic violence a key focus of this chapter. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) offers a crucial insight into the lifetime experiences of women subjected to domestic violence, providing detailed data on its prevalence and impact. It records women's experiences regardless whether a formal complaint has been lodged. Many women do not report abuse due to fear of social backlash, or the normalization of violence. For this reason, this analysis focuses not only the reported cases but also on the unreported dimensions of domestic violence, aims to uncover patterns of systemic neglect and the urgent need for policy interventions that prioritize prevention, protection and empowerment of women. In the following section tables and charts illustrate the recent NFHS survey findings on domestic violence.

**TABLE 7: STATE-WISE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: NFHS FINDINGS**

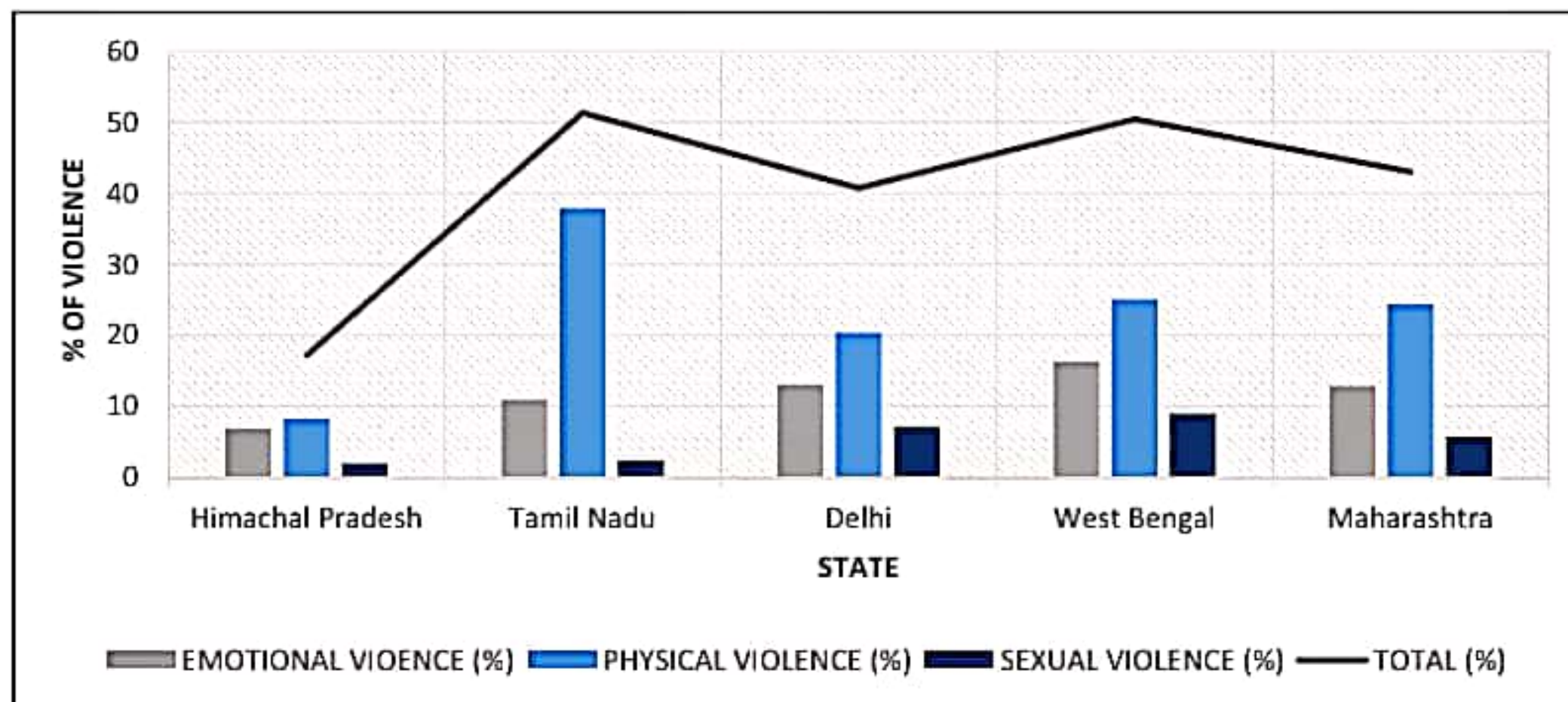
STATE	TYPE OF VIOLENCE (%)			TOTAL(%)
	EMOTIONAL	PHYSICAL	SEXUAL	
Himachal Pradesh	6.9	8.3	2	17.2
Tamil Nadu	11	37.9	2.4	51.3
Delhi	13.1	20.4	7.2	40.7
West Bengal	16.3	25.1	9	50.4
Maharashtra	12.9	24.4	5.7	43

**Source:** National Family Health Survey Report - 5 (2019-21) [NFHS-5]

The table presents state-wise percentages of ever married women aged 18-49 who have ever experienced violence in any form or spousal violence, as reported in NFHS-5 (2019-21). It categorizes violence into emotional, physical and sexual forms, with Tamil Nadu (51.3%) and West Bengal (50.4%) reporting the highest total prevalence. These figures highlight the significant burden of domestic violence across states.



**DIAGRAM 7: STATE-WISE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: NFHS FINDINGS**



Source: Table 7

This chart, drawn from NFHS 5 data reveals the hidden side of domestic violence that often goes unreported in official crime records. It shows the percentage of ever married women aged 18-49 who have ever experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence from their spouses. Tamil Nadu, which shows comparatively moderate crime rates in official NCRB records, reports one of the highest levels of physical violence in this survey. This contrast highlights the gap between reported and actual experiences of violence. While states like Himachal Pradesh show lower levels across all categories, others like West Bengal and Maharashtra also reflect significant levels of abuse. Women in rural areas are more likely (34%) than women in urban areas (27%) to experience one or more forms of spousal violence. Although all forms of spousal violence decline sharply with schooling and wealth, 1 in 5 women with 12 or more years of schooling and women who are in the highest wealth quintile report ever having experienced physical, sexual, or emotional spousal violence. This comparison shows how important it is to look beyond crime statistics and include survey-based data to understand the true extent of violence against women.

According to NFHS-5, 25.1% of ever married women (age 18-49 years) in India have experienced physical violence, 1% have faced sexual violence alone, while 5.5% have suffered both. Despite these, alarming figures, only a limited proportion of women have sought help or reported abuse. The following table and chart explores the extent of help-seeking behaviour among affected women.

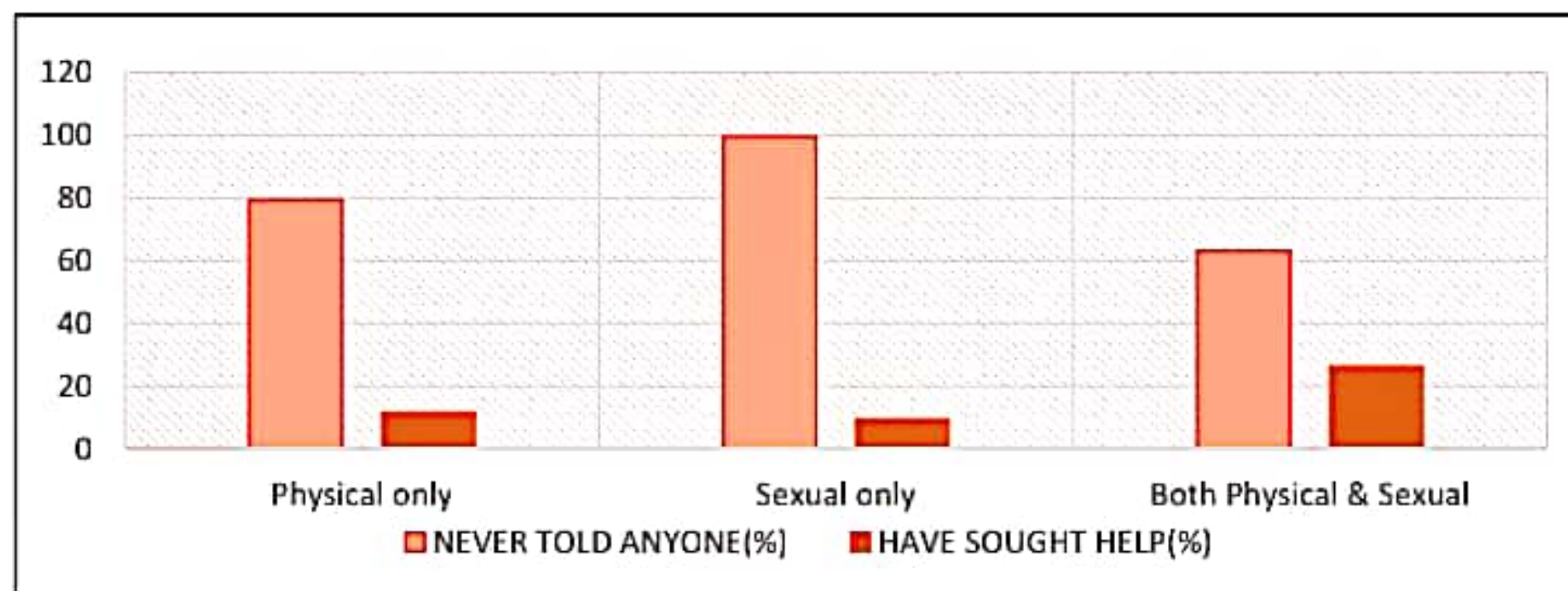


**Table 8: RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE: WOMEN SEEKING HELP**

FORM OF VIOLENCE	HELP SEEKING (%)	
	NEVER TOLD ANYONE	HAVE SOUGHT HELP
Physical only	79.4	11.7
Sexual only	99.5	9.5
Both Physical & Sexual	63.2	26.3

**Source:** National Family Health Survey Report - 5 (2019-21) [NFHS-5]

**DIAGRAM 8: RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE: WOMEN SEEKING HELP**



**Source:** Table 8

This data and chart reveal that despite a huge number of women experiencing violence overall India –25.1% physical and 5.5% both physical & sexual, the help seeking behaviour is alarmingly low. As shown, nearly 80% of women subjected to physical violence and 99.5% of those experiencing sexual violence never told anyone. This disparity underscores the hidden burden of domestic violence and calls for urgent attention unreported crimes. Thus, this analysis emphasizes the critical need for stronger support systems and awareness initiatives that empower women to speak out and seek justice.

Concluding this chapter, the contrast between reported and unreported crimes becomes evident that effective interventions must address not only the crimes that reach law enforcement but also the silent majority that remains unheard.

### EMPOWERMENT & CRIME: NFHS FINDINGS

This chapter explores the intersection of women’s empowerment and crime trends through an analysis of key socio-economic and decision-making indicators derived from NFHS data. Drawing from NFHS-5 report, it analyses literacy, workforce participation, financial autonomy and contribution in household decision-making power among aged 15-49 in five Indian states. These empowerment indicators not only reflect women’s access to rights and opportunities but also serve as critical determinants of their social exposure too and protection from violence. By analysing the percentage distribution of these indicators, this chapter seeks to



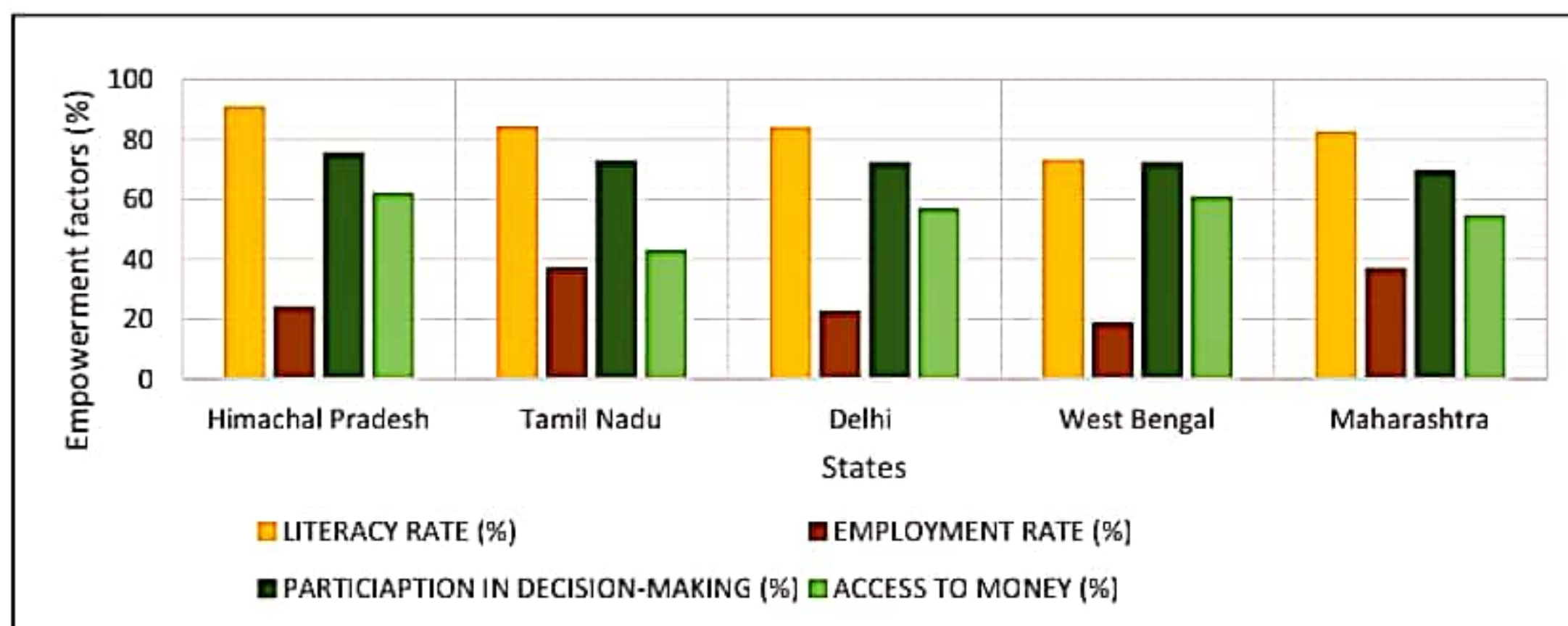
highlight how structural empowerment – or its absence can influence both the occurrence and reporting of crimes against women over the time.

**TABLE 9: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROFILE BY STATE (NFHS-5)**

STATE	EMPOWERMENT FACTORS (%)			
	Literacy Rate	Employment Rate	Participation in Decision-making	Access to Money
Himachal Pradesh	90.7	23.9	75.3	61.8
Tamil Nadu	84	36.8	72.7	42.6
Delhi	83.7	22.5	72.1	56.6
West Bengal	72.9	18.5	72.1	60.6
Maharashtra	82.3	36.7	69.5	54.4

Source: National Family Health Survey Report – 5 (2019-21) [NFHS-5]

**DIAGRAM 9: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROFILE BY STATE (NFHS-5)**



Source: Table 9

The comparative state-wise data underscores that woman empowerment<sup>3</sup>is a critical factor influencing both the occurrence and reporting of crimes. Higher literacy and employment do

<sup>3</sup>Literacy rate refers to women who can read a whole sentence or part of a sentence and women who completed standard 9 or higher (who are assumed to be literate).

Employment rate refers to "Currently employed" is defined as having done work in the past seven days. Includes persons who did not work in the past seven days but who are regularly employed and were absent from work for leave, illness, vacation, or any other such reasons.

Participation in decision-making includes all of the three types of specific decisions usually made by currently married women age 15-49 either by themselves or jointly with husband. These decisions are – own health care, making major household purchase and visits to her family or relatives.

Access to money particularly includes women (15-49) who have access to money and they can decide how to use that money.



not automatically reduce violence but may influence how it is recognized and addressed. However, states like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, which show stronger scores in employment and decision-making, also reflect higher reported cases. This does not necessarily reflect increase in violence; rather, empowered women may be more likely to recognize abuse and seek support. In contrast, states with weaker empowerment profiles like West Bengal may show lower reported crimes due to underreporting, fear or weaker access to justice. This indicates that improvements in empowerment factors not only aim to reduce the actual occurrence of the violence but also strengthen women's ability to confront it. Therefore, crime trends must be read in parallel with empowerment trends for an accurate interpretation.

The comprehensive exploration across five diverse Indian states over five-year span reveals that crimes against women are closely linked to deeper social and structural inequalities. Patterns from both NCRB and NFHS statistics show that where women lack access to education, employment, financial control the risk of violence increases. However, disparities in reporting, lack of awareness and limited institutional access continue to contribute in this vulnerability. Thus understanding the patterns and factors behind crimes against women is not just a statistical exercise – it is a step towards targeted policies, societal reforms and meaningful change that are not only reactive to crimes but also preventive.

### CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Crimes against women are not just numbers in reports – they are indicators of deeper societal disruptions. This comprehensive study is set out to explore the complex and layered nature of crimes against women through a multidimensional lens – spanning five Indian states, seven major crime categories, five years of reported data and supporting insights from NFHS-5. This finding reveals that while legal reports offer a glimpse into the issue, a deeper concern lies beneath in the form of unreported crimes, particularly domestic violence and spousal abuse. From West Bengal's persistently high rates of cruelty by husbands to Tamil Nadu's contrasting trends between reported and experienced violence, and from Delhi's vulnerabilities to Maharashtra's complex urban risks – the findings show that structural inequalities, gendered biased social structure and lack of autonomy shape the contrast of women's safety. Further by comparing crime rates with indicators such as literacy, employment, access to money and decision-making, a clear pattern appears; where women are more empowered, their ability to resist or report violence improves. On the other hand, areas with low empowerment often reflect higher levels of vulnerability. This suggests that improving women's access to education, economic resources, and autonomy can be effective strategy to reduce violence in the long term. The contrast between official crime data (NCRB) and NFHS findings makes one truth clear – much of violence remains visible, unspoken and unreported.

To close this gap, solutions must go beyond law enforcement. Empowering women through education, economic participation, autonomy must be the central approach to any crime prevention strategy. Only when women are given equal space in public and private life, we can begin to shift these long-lasting patterns. Challenge is not just only about lowering crimes – but also about raising voices.



To move from insight to impact, the evidence uncovered in this study must translate into actionable policy. While this study has focused on five representative Indian states, its findings reflect patterns and challenges that resonate at the national level. The use of four core empowerment factors – literacy, workforce participation, decision-making autonomy and access to financial resources – offers meaningful insights, but future analyses could benefit from incorporating additional variables such as legal awareness, digital access and political participation. Furthermore, the NFHS data is only focused on unreported crimes of domestic violence, yet other forms of violence remain difficult to quantify. A broader national framework that bridges both quantitative and qualitative empowerment indicators is crucial to understanding and addressing gender-based violence. Policymakers must prioritize integrated interventions that connect empowerment initiatives with crime prevention frameworks, integrating women's safety modules into education, expanding access to legal aid and mental health services, and ensuring that every state has strong, data-driven women's commission. Empowerment must not remain symbolic – it must be institutional, measurable and accessible to all women regardless of region, class or caste.

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## MEDICAL ETHICS: SOME BASIC TENETS

(Paper published on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2025.)

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### Abstract

*Medical ethics is known as a branch of applied ethics which deals with moral principles in order to guide the medical practitioner and healthcare. Medical ethics makes sure that healthcare is practiced, keeping in mind human dignity and compassion. The history of medical ethics is as primitive as the ancient civilization. The Hippocratic Oath is the first and most important ethical code, accredited to Hippocrates, who is often called the "Father of Medicine." The oath upholds the principles like beneficence, non-maleficence etc. However, in the 20th century, due to certain unethical medical practices, experiments and violations of human rights, medical ethics regained attention. Thus, the Nuremberg Code, Belmont Report and Declaration of Helsinki, came up to ascertain ethical and moral principles for medical practice and research. The four core principles form the foundation of medical ethics. These values are commonly accepted and form the root of ethical issues in medical field. Autonomy, Beneficence, Non-Maleficence and Justice. Medical ethics is the moral basis of healthcare platform. Its core principles ie. autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, form the basic guiding pillars in healthcare as well as medical research.*

**Keywords: Medical Ethics, Autonomy, Beneficence, Non-Maleficence, Justice**

### Introduction

Medical ethics is known as a branch of applied ethics which deals with moral principles in order to guide the medical practitioner and healthcare. It deals with issues about what healthcare professionals ought to do in circumstances relating to medical institutions, society, patients, and



families. Ethical considerations become all the more important, with the rapid progress in medical science and technology. Issues relating to life and death, autonomy, confidentiality, etc. need a strong ethical basis.

Medical ethics makes sure that healthcare is practiced keeping in mind human dignity and compassion. It offers an outline to resolve conflicts and take decisions in case of clash in values. Even though there are laws and professional procedures to regulate medical practice, ethical principles go beyond these and concentrate on what is morally right.

In this paper, I will discuss some of the **basic tenets of medical ethics**, their historical background, and importance in modern healthcare.

### **Historical Background of Medical Ethics**

The history of medical ethics is as primitive as the ancient civilization. The **Hippocratic Oath** is the first and most important ethical code, accredited to Hippocrates, who is often called the “Father of Medicine.” The oath upholds the principles like beneficence, non-maleficence etc.

Both in ancient India, and during the medieval period much emphasis was given to justice compassion, dedication to patients, honesty, respect for human life, and responsibility.

However, in the 20th century, due to certain unethical medical practices, experiments and violations of human rights, medical ethics regained attention. Thus, the Nuremberg Code, Belmont Report and Declaration of Helsinki, came up to ascertain ethical and moral principles for medical practice and research.

Thus, nowadays, medical ethics is a deep-rooted discipline that is taught in medical colleges as well as practiced globally.

### **Scope of Medical Ethics**

Medical ethics is related to all the individuals concerned with patient care, including doctors, researchers, nurses, pharmacists etc.



The scope of medical ethics consists of:

- Doctor–patient relationship
- Medical research that involves human as subjects
- Rights and responsibilities of Patients
- Preventive medicine and public health
- Professional conduct and accountability
- Allocation of limited healthcare resources

Most notably, medical ethics is not at all stagnant; it advances with the values of the society, culture, and scientific development.

### **Some basic Tenets of Medical Ethics**

The four core principles form the foundation of medical ethics. These values are commonly accepted and form the root of ethical issues in medical field.

#### **Autonomy**

**Autonomy** emphasizes on the right of the person for informed decision making about their healthcare. It acknowledges the patients as independent persons, having the capacity to make decisions and act as per their beliefs and values.

#### **Major aspects of Autonomy**

- To acquire informed consent from the patient
- To respect patients' decisions and choices
- To give sufficient and true information
- To give the liberty to patients for any refusal for treatment

Healthcare practitioners should make sure that patients are given proper information about their diagnosis, treatment alternatives, possible threats, if any, and also the advantages, prior to decision making. Autonomy will be violated in case of application of any sort of force, withdrawal of information, or manipulation.



Though, in certain situations, autonomy may be restricted. In cases where the patient does not have decision-making capability or when any sort of interference is needed in public health concerns.

### **Beneficence**

**Beneficence** stands for upholding the best interest of the patient. It necessitates healthcare professionals to encourage good health, check illness, and alleviate suffering.

#### **Modes of Beneficence**

- By ensuring efficient treatment
- By giving emotional support and comfort
- By avoiding harm through effective and early diagnosis
- By treating with care and compassion

Beneficence is something beyond technological proficiency; it engages a real concern and care for the patients' well-being. Healthcare professionals ought to balance possible benefits alongside hazards and opt for the most positive outcome.

### **Non-Maleficence**

**Non-maleficence** stands for the obligation to keep away from doing any harm. It is reflected by the phrase "**First, do no harm.**"

#### **Ways of Non-Maleficence**

- By keeping away from redundant or detrimental treatments
- By diminishing any side effects and hazards
- By making sure professional competency
- By avoiding medical negligence

In view of the fact that much medical involvement does carry some risk, non-maleficence does not stand for avoiding all risk but rather for preventing **unjustified or excessive harm.**



## Justice

**Justice** here in medical ethics means to equal opportunity and facility in healthcare. It means a fair allocation of medical resources, just treatments, and equal opportunities for all, without any bias

### Justice: Its Types

- **Distributive justice** – : which is concerned with just allotment of resources.
- **Procedural justice** – : ensures the justice in the procedures of decision-making.
- **Social justice** –: ascertains and addresses the inequalities in healthcare.

Justice ensures that patients are taken care of without any sort of discrimination and bias on the basis of, gender, race, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status. It deals with major issues concerning accessibility to healthcare and medical resources, especially when resources are limited.

### Conclusion

Medical ethics is the moral basis of healthcare platform. Its core principles ie. autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, form the basic guiding pillars in healthcare as well as medical research. Along with ideals such as confidentiality, truthfulness, and professional integrity, these morals ascertain that healthcare values human dignity and uphold patient well-being.

As medical science continues to evolve, ethical issues tend to grow more challenging. Thus a deep knowledge of medical ethics is necessary not only for healthcare professionals but as well as for the entire society. By upholding these ethical principles, healthcare can continue to remain a compassionate, reliable, and humane field.



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# MEDICINAL PLANTS AND STRATEGY PLAN ON RESEARCH, EXTENSION AND MANAGEMENT: A KEY GUIDELINE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

(Paper published on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2025.)

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## **Abstract:**

*Plants used to cure ailments are widely called medicinal plants. Almost all plants are medicinal. Some plants are more active than others on same therapy but the potency is different. Therefore, value-based components of plants used as medicine directly or indirectly and so-called the active part of medicinal plants. Components of medicinal plants are vital for the traditional medicine and even for modern healthcare. This study highlights the importance of medicinal plants and outlines a strategic plan for research, extension, and management to ensure their sustainable use and conservation. A comprehensive approach is proposed, encompassing conservation, cultivation, research, and community engagement. The plan aims to promote the safe and effective use of medicinal plants, improve livelihoods of communities involved in their cultivation and trade, and ensure the long-term sustainability of these valuable resources. Hope stakeholders would take benefits from these ideas to cultivate and use the medicinal plants for economic development.*

**Key-words: Medicinal plants, strategy plan, research, extension, implementation, monitoring and management.**

## **Introduction:**

Medicinal plants have been an integral part of traditional medicine and healthcare systems for centuries, providing a natural source of remedies for various ailments. The increasing demand for medicinal plants, driven by their perceived safety and efficacy, has led to concerns about their sustainable use and conservation. To address these concerns, a comprehensive strategy plan is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of medicinal plant resources. This document outlines a strategy plan for medicinal plants, encompassing research, extension, implementation, monitoring, and management. The plan aims to promote the safe and



effective use of medicinal plants, improve livelihoods of communities involved in their cultivation and trade, and ensure the conservation of these valuable resources for future generations. The key components are research, extension and implementation on any specific purpose. Research means conducting scientific studies to identify, characterize, and conserve medicinal plant species, as well as investigate their efficacy and safety. Extension providing training and capacity-building programs for farmers, healthcare professionals, and communities on medicinal plant cultivation, harvesting, and use. Implementation is the putting the strategy plan into action through collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including government agencies, research institutions, and local communities. By and large the last part is monitoring. This means that tracking the progress and impact of the strategy plan to ensure its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Overall, we need management that ensuring the sustainable use and conservation of medicinal plant resources through effective management practices, including regulatory frameworks and community engagement. So, utmost goal is to develop strategy plan for community engagement and economic growth through people's participation.

#### **Objectives:**

The objectives of the present study are therefore to:

1. Promote the sustainable use and conservation of medicinal plant resources.
2. Improve the livelihoods of communities involved in medicinal plant cultivation and trade.
3. Ensure the safe and effective use of medicinal plants.
4. Foster collaboration and coordination among stakeholders.
5. Develop a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track progress and impact.

By implementing this strategy plan, we can ensure the long-term sustainability of medicinal plant resources, promote their safe and effective use, and improve the livelihoods of communities involved in their cultivation and trade. The society and societal people may be benefitted from this strategy plan and can earn money to run smoothly the lively hood of the village or sub-urban area. Before going to study we need why, where, when? a multi-facial questions to solve the problems. The argument and the tenacity of the choice are based on the facts that is associated with resource and mapping of the resource for economic output and



flow of the knowledge from one site to another site. Therefore, people must know the definition and scope including utilization value of the resource over time and pace.

### **What are medicinal Plants?**

Medicinal plants are plants that have been identified and used for their therapeutic or medicinal properties. These plants contain bioactive compounds that can be used to prevent, treat, or cure various diseases or health conditions. Medicinal plants have been used for centuries in traditional medicine, and many modern medicines have been developed from these plants. They can be used in various forms, including: Herbal teas: Infusions or decoctions made from medicinal plants., Tinctures: Concentrated extracts of medicinal plants., Capsules or tablets: Dried and powdered forms of medicinal plants. Similarly, the Topical applications: Creams, ointments, or salves made from medicinal plants. More or less the raw or isolated parts of components are usable for the long-term purpose based on the demand of the medicinal plants.

### **Medicinal Plants and health benefits: Why? When?**

Medicinal plants are used to cure the ailments even can have diverse health benefits, such as:

Anti-inflammatory agent: Reducing inflammation and pain.

Antimicrobial agent: Fighting against infections and diseases.

Having antioxidant property: Protecting against cell damage and oxidative stress.

Curative agent as Cardiovascular healthstimulant: Supporting heart health and reducing cardiovascular risk factors.

### **Vivid Examples of usable medicinal plants:**

Medicinal plants used as long term active agents like-

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*-Fig. 1): Known for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*): Used for digestive issues and anti-inflammatory properties.

Aloe vera (*Aloe barbadensis*): Used for skin issues and digestive health.

Neem (*Azadirachta indica*): Known for its antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties.

Mango Ginger (*Curcuma amada*-Fig. 2): Known as spice and condiment and widely used for its anti-oxidant property.

It's essential to note that while medicinal plants can be beneficial, they should be used under the guidance of a healthcare professional, especially if you're considering using them to treat

a specific health condition. But usable way we follow the traditional knowledge that we got from our forefathers.



Fig. 1 Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) at Medicinal Plants Garden of Govt. Gen. Degree College Lalgarh, Jhargram, W.B.



Fig. 2 Mango Ginger(*Curcuma amada*) at Medicinal Plants Garden of Govt. Gen. Degree College Lalgarh, Jhargram, W.B.



Fig. 3 *Ocimum* sp. (Basil) at Botanical Garden of Govt. Gen. Degree College Lalgah, Jhargram, W.B.



Fig. 4 Sarpagandha plant (*Rauwolfia serpentina*) at GGDC Lalgah, Jhargram, W.B.

**Significance of Medicinal Plants and use of therapeutic values:**



Medicinal Significance of the plants is very interesting. Under the category many aspects are there namely-

**Therapeutic benefits:** Medicinal plants contain bioactive compounds that can prevent, treat, or cure various diseases and health conditions. Example- Ocimum leaf extract used to treat common cold.

**Natural remedies:** Medicinal plants offer a natural alternative to synthetic medicines, which can have adverse side effects. Example-seed extracts of *Holarrhena pubescens*(Kutaj) are used against amoeboid dysentery.

**In the traditional medicine:** Medicinal plants have been used for centuries in traditional medicine, providing a rich source of knowledge and experience. Roots of *Hemidesmus indicus*(Indian sarsaparilla) is used to treat belly pain.

**Economic Significance:** Economically many medicinal plants are used widely. It is for-

**Income generation:** Medicinal plants can provide a source of income for farmers, traders, and manufacturers.

2. **Job creation:** The medicinal plant industry creates employment opportunities in cultivation, processing, and marketing, nursery-based plantlets production and sale is under such type.

3. **Export potential:** Medicinal plants can be exported, generating foreign exchange earnings. *Cinchona*, *Cephaelis* etc. are widely used for trade and transport.

**Environmental Significance:** Medicinal plants have used environment and development purpose.

**Biodiversity conservation:** Medicinal plants can contribute to the conservation of biodiversity by promoting the cultivation and sustainable use of plant species.

**In sustainable agriculture:** Medicinal plant cultivation can promote sustainable agriculture practices, reducing the environmental impact of farming.

**Ecosystem services:** Medicinal plants can provide ecosystem services, such as soil conservation, pollination, and habitat creation.

It has its social values. The significance includes-

**Healthcare access:** Medicinal plants can provide access to healthcare for communities with limited access to modern healthcare facilities.

**Cultural significance:** Medicinal plants are often an integral part of traditional cultures, preserving traditional knowledge and practices.

**Community development:** Medicinal plant cultivation and trade can contribute to community development, improving livelihoods and economic stability.

Overall, medicinal plants have significant economic, environmental, and social benefits, making them an important resource for human well-being and sustainable development.

The scope of study on medicinal plants is vast and interdisciplinary, encompassing various fields<sup>(1-7)</sup>. It includes-



**Botanical Studies:**

**Taxonomy:** Identification, classification, and naming of medicinal plant species.

**Morphology:** Study of the structure and morphology of medicinal plants.

**Ecology:** Understanding the ecological role of medicinal plants and their interactions with the environment.

**Phytochemical Studies:**

**Phytochemistry:** Analysis of the bioactive compounds present in medicinal plants.

**Pharmacognosy:** Study of the physical and chemical properties of medicinal plant materials.

**Pharmacological Studies:** Study on the applications of drugs and drug components.

**Pharmacology:** Investigation of the therapeutic effects and potential uses of medicinal plants.

**Toxicology:** Assessment of the potential toxicity and adverse effects of medicinal plants.

**Clinical Studies:** It is used for clinical purpose. The details are -

**Clinical trials:** Evaluation of the efficacy and safety of medicinal plants in humans.

**Ethnopharmacology:** Study of the traditional use of medicinal plants and their potential applications.

Medicinal plants are used for sustainable way in various fields. These include conservation and sustainable use. Fields are in-

**Conservation biology:** Development of strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plant species.

**Cultivation and propagation:** Improvement of medicinal plant cultivation and propagation techniques.

Other Areas of Study of medicinal plants are-

**Anthropology:** Study of the cultural and traditional use of medicinal plants.

**Biotechnology:** Application of biotechnology techniques to improve medicinal plant breeding, cultivation, and production.

**Pharmaco-informatics:** Use of computational tools to analyze and predict the bioactivity of medicinal plant compounds.

Though the study of medicinal plants has a wide range of applications, including-

**New drug discovery:** Identification of new lead compounds for the development of new medicines.

**Development of herbal medicines:** Standardization and quality control of herbal medicines.

**Food and nutrition:** Use of medicinal plants as functional foods and nutraceuticals.



Cosmetics and personal care: Use of medicinal plants in cosmetics and personal care products.

Overall, the study of medicinal plants is a multidisciplinary field that requires a comprehensive approach to understand the complex interactions between plants, humans, and the environment.

The aims and objectives of studying medicinal plants can vary depending on the specific context and goals of the research. Here are some common aims and objectives.

**Characterization:** Primary aim is to identify and characterize medicinal plant species.

Others are-

**To discover new medicinal plant species:** Discovery and characterize their botanical, phytochemical, and pharmacological properties.

**To evaluate the efficacy and safety of medicinal plants:** To assess the therapeutic effects and potential toxicity of medicinal plants.

**To develop new medicines and products:** To develop new medicines, herbal products, and nutraceuticals from medicinal plants.

**To promote sustainable use and conservation:** To promote the sustainable use and conservation of medicinal plant species.

The objectives include-

**To conduct phytochemical analysis:** To identify and isolate bioactive compounds from medicinal plants.

**To investigate pharmacological activities:** To evaluate the therapeutic effects of medicinal plants and their bioactive compounds.

**To assess toxicity and safety:** To evaluate the potential toxicity and adverse effects of medicinal plants.

**To develop standardization protocols:** To develop standardization protocols for medicinal plant materials and products.

**To promote conservation and sustainable use:** To develop strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plant species.

**To investigate traditional knowledge:** To document and investigate traditional knowledge and use of medicinal plants.

**To develop new products and applications:** To develop new products and applications from medicinal plants, such as herbal medicines, nutraceuticals, and cosmetics.

**Special and Specific Objectives:**

**To identify potential lead compounds:** To identify potential lead compounds from medicinal plants for the development of new medicines.



To improve medicinal plant cultivation: To improve medicinal plant cultivation and propagation techniques.

To develop quality control protocols: To develop quality control protocols for medicinal plant materials and products.

To investigate pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic properties: To investigate the pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic properties of medicinal plants and their bioactive compounds.

By achieving these aims and objectives, researchers can contribute to the development of new medicines, promote sustainable use and conservation of medicinal plant species, and improve human health and well-being.

**Extension and Outcome of Startups on Medicinal Plants:**

**Cultivation Startups** focused on medicinal plant cultivation can have a significant impact on the industry and society. Here are some potential extension and outcome mentioned below:

**Extension: Increased crop yield:** Improved cultivation techniques and technology can lead to increased crop yields, reducing the pressure on wild populations.

**Quality control:** Startups can implement quality control measures to ensure the production of high-quality medicinal plant materials.

**Sustainable practices:** Adoption of sustainable cultivation practices can reduce the environmental impact of medicinal plant cultivation.

**New product development:** Startups can develop new products and formulations using medicinal plants, expanding their market reach.

**Outcome:**

**Economic benefits:** Successful startups can generate income for farmers, rural communities, and entrepreneurs.

**Job creation:** Medicinal plant cultivation can create employment opportunities in rural areas.

**Improved healthcare:** Increased access to high-quality medicinal plants can contribute to improved healthcare outcomes.

**Conservation of medicinal plant species:** Sustainable cultivation practices can help conserve medicinal plant species and reduce the risk of over-exploitation.

**Increased awareness:** Startups can raise awareness about the importance of medicinal plants and their potential benefits.

**Potential Impact:**

**Rural development:** Medicinal plant cultivation can contribute to rural development and poverty reduction.

**Pharmaceutical industry growth:** A thriving medicinal plant industry can support the growth of the pharmaceutical industry.



Herbal product development: Startups can develop new herbal products, expanding the market for natural health products.

Sustainable agriculture: Medicinal plant cultivation can promote sustainable agriculture practices and reduce environmental degradation.

Day by day the demand of cultivable medicinal plants is raising. By promoting sustainable medicinal plant cultivation, startups can contribute to the development of a thriving industry that benefits both people and the environment.

Research, Extension, and Innovation on Local and Vulnerable Medicinal Plants: Research, extension, and innovation are crucial for the conservation and sustainable use of local and vulnerable medicinal plants. Here are some potential areas of focus-

#### **Research:**

Ethnobotanical studies: Documenting traditional knowledge and use of local medicinal plants.

Phytochemical analysis: Identifying and characterizing bioactive compounds in local medicinal plants.

Pharmacological evaluation: Investigating the therapeutic effects and potential uses of local medicinal plants.

Conservation biology: Studying the ecology and conservation status of vulnerable medicinal plant species.

#### **Extension:**

Capacity building: Training local communities, farmers, and healthcare professionals on sustainable medicinal plant harvesting and use.

Awareness raising: Educating local communities and the general public about the importance of medicinal plants and their conservation.

Supporting sustainable livelihoods: Promoting sustainable livelihoods for local communities through medicinal plant cultivation and trade.

Developing extension services: Providing extension services to support farmers and local communities in medicinal plant cultivation and management.

#### **Innovation:**

Biotechnology: Applying biotechnology techniques to improve medicinal plant breeding, cultivation, and production.

Product development: Developing new products and formulations using local medicinal plants.

Sustainable harvesting: Developing sustainable harvesting practices and technologies to reduce the impact on wild medicinal plant populations.

Digital platforms: Creating digital platforms to promote medicinal plant conservation, sustainable use, and trade.



### **Potential Impact:**

**Conservation of medicinal plant species:** Research, extension, and innovation can contribute to the conservation of vulnerable medicinal plant species.

**Improved livelihoods:** Sustainable medicinal plant cultivation and trade can improve livelihoods for local communities.

**Increased access to healthcare:** Local medicinal plants can provide affordable and accessible healthcare options for local communities.

**Cultural preservation:** Documenting traditional knowledge and use of medicinal plants can help preserve cultural heritage.

By promoting research, extension, and innovation on local and vulnerable medicinal plants, we can contribute to their conservation and sustainable use, while also improving human health and well-being.

**Medicinal plants, Industry and Interface on economic growth:**

The interface between medicinal plants and industry is complex and multifaceted. Here are some key aspects:

### **Industry Demand:**

**Raw material supply:** Medicinal plants are a crucial source of raw materials for the pharmaceutical, herbal, and cosmetic industries.

**Standardization and quality control:** Industries require standardized and high-quality medicinal plant materials to ensure efficacy and safety.

**Opportunities for Industry:**

**New product development:** Medicinal plants offer a rich source of bioactive compounds for the development of new products.

**Herbal medicines and supplements:** Medicinal plants are used to produce herbal medicines, supplements, and nutraceuticals.

**Cosmetics and personal care:** Medicinal plants are used in cosmetics and personal care products due to their perceived health benefits.

### **Challenges:**

**Sustainability:** Over-harvesting and unsustainable practices can threaten the long-term availability of medicinal plant resources.

**Regulatory frameworks:** Industries must comply with regulatory frameworks governing the use of medicinal plants.

**Quality control:** Ensuring the quality and safety of medicinal plant materials is crucial.



**Collaboration Opportunities:** Research and development: Collaboration between industry, academia, and research institutions can lead to the development of new products and technologies.

**Sustainable sourcing:** Industries can work with farmers and local communities to promote sustainable medicinal plant sourcing practices.

**Capacity building:** Industries can support capacity building initiatives to improve medicinal plant cultivation, processing, and trade.

### **Benefits:**

**Economic benefits:** Medicinal plant industries can generate income and employment opportunities.

**Improved healthcare:** Medicinal plants can provide affordable and accessible healthcare options.

**Conservation:** Sustainable medicinal plant industries can contribute to the conservation of plant species and ecosystems.

By fostering a collaborative and sustainable relationship between medicinal plants and industry, we can promote economic development, improve healthcare, and conserve plant biodiversity.

**Negative impact on the cultivation and sale including management on medicinal plants and products:**

**Negative Impact on Medicinal Plant Cultivation, Processing, and Sale.** The cultivation, processing, and sale of medicinal plants can have several negative impacts, including:

### **Environmental Impacts:**

**Deforestation and habitat loss:** Large-scale cultivation of medicinal plants can lead to deforestation and habitat loss for other plant and animal species.

**Soil degradation:** Intensive farming practices can result in soil degradation, reducing fertility and affecting ecosystem health.

**Water pollution:** The use of pesticides, fertilizers, and other chemicals in medicinal plant cultivation can contaminate water sources.

### **Social Impacts:**

**Exploitation of local communities:** Local communities may be exploited by middlemen or corporations, receiving low prices for their medicinal plant products.

**Loss of traditional knowledge:** The commercialization of medicinal plants can lead to the loss of traditional knowledge and cultural practices.

**Inequitable benefit sharing:** The benefits of medicinal plant trade may not be equitably shared among stakeholders, with local communities receiving minimal benefits.

### **Health and Safety Impacts:**



**Contamination and adulteration:** Medicinal plant products can be contaminated or adulterated, posing health risks to consumers.

**Inconsistent quality:** Poor quality control and standardization can result in inconsistent product quality, affecting efficacy and safety.

**Over-harvesting:** Over-harvesting of medicinal plants can lead to depletion of wild populations, affecting the availability of high-quality plant materials.

**Economic Impacts:**

**Market fluctuations:** Fluctuations in market demand and prices can affect the livelihoods of farmers and traders.

**Dependence on external markets:** The medicinal plant industry can be vulnerable to external market trends, affecting local economies.

**Lack of value addition:** The lack of value addition and processing capabilities can limit the economic benefits for local communities.

#### **Addressing Negative Impacts:**

**Sustainable cultivation practices:** Promoting sustainable cultivation practices, such as organic farming and agroforestry, can reduce environmental impacts.

**Fair trade practices:** Ensuring fair trade practices and equitable benefit sharing can improve the livelihoods of local communities.

**Quality control and standardization:** Implementing quality control and standardization measures can ensure the safety and efficacy of medicinal plant products.

**Capacity building:** Building the capacity of local communities and farmers can help them to better manage medicinal plant resources and improve their livelihoods.

#### **Role of Govt. and NGOs on Medicinal Plants and their Conservation**

The Government of India and various NGOs are working together to promote the conservation, cultivation, and sustainable use of medicinal plants. Here are some key initiatives:

**Government Initiatives:**

**National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB):** Established under the Ministry of Ayush, NMPB coordinates with various ministries, departments, and organizations to promote the growth of the medicinal plant industry.

**Central Sector Scheme on Conservation, Development, and Sustainable Management of Medicinal Plants:** This scheme focuses on cultivation and protection of medicinal plants, and provides support to MSMEs for growing, preserving, and marketing medicinal plants.

**Ayush Ministry's Parliamentary Consultative Committee:** The committee discusses and reviews policies related to medicinal plants and their conservation.

**NGO Initiatives:**



Solidaridad: A global organization working to promote sustainable agriculture and improve livelihoods of farmers. They have supported farmer groups in India to achieve voluntary certification for medicinal plant produce.

Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT): An NGO working on conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants. They have established medicinal plant conservation areas and provide support to local communities.

Other NGOs: Several other NGOs, such as IshVed-Bioplants Venture, are working on medicinal plant conservation and cultivation, and have signed MoUs with NMPB to promote conservation efforts.

### **Collaborative Efforts:**

NMPB and AIIMS: Signed an MoU to establish a national-level medicinal plant garden at AIIMS, New Delhi, to promote awareness and conservation of medicinal plants.

NMPB and IshVed-Bioplants Venture: Signed an MoU to conserve and maintain germplasm of rare, endangered, and threatened medicinal plants through tissue culture methods. It is associated with RET plants. The main aim is to develop protocols for sustainable cultivation and supply to the Ayush Industry, strengthening India's medicinal plants sector for self-resilience.

The National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) plays a crucial role in promoting the development of the medicinal plant industry in a country. Some of the key roles and responsibilities of NMPB include:

#### **Policy and Regulation:**

Policy formulation: NMPB formulates policies and guidelines for the development of the medicinal plant industry.

Regulation: NMPB regulates the cultivation, collection, processing, and trade of medicinal plants to ensure quality, safety, and sustainability.

#### **Conservation and Sustainable Use:**

Conservation: NMPB promotes the conservation of medicinal plant species and their habitats.

Sustainable use: NMPB encourages sustainable harvesting and use of medicinal plants to ensure their long-term availability.

#### **Research and Development:**

Research promotion: NMPB promotes research on medicinal plants, including their cultivation, chemistry, pharmacology, and clinical applications.

Development of new products: NMPB supports the development of new products and technologies related to medicinal plants.

#### **Capacity Building:**

Training and capacity building: NMPB provides training and capacity-building programs for farmers, traders, and other stakeholders in the medicinal plant industry.



**Awareness and education:** NMPB raises awareness about the importance of medicinal plants and their conservation.

**Market Promotion:**

**Market development:** NMPB promotes the development of markets for medicinal plants and their products.

**Quality control:** NMPB ensures the quality of medicinal plant products through quality control measures.

**Collaboration and Partnerships:**

**Collaboration with stakeholders:** NMPB collaborates with stakeholders, including government agencies, industry associations, and civil society organizations.

**International cooperation:** NMPB engages in international cooperation to promote the development of the medicinal plant industry.

By performing these roles, NMPB can contribute to the development of a sustainable and thriving medicinal plant industry that benefits both the economy and public health.

#### **International Forum on Medicinal Plants:**

Here are some notable international forums on medicinal plants.

**Third International Frankincense and Medicinal Plants Forum:** Held in Salalah, Oman, from September 14 to 16, 2025, this forum brought together researchers, specialists, and experts from 17 countries to discuss the latest research and innovations in frankincense and medicinal plants.

**International Conference on Traditional Medicine, Ethnomedicine, and Natural Therapies:** Scheduled for June 22-24, 2026, in Barcelona, Spain, this conference will feature keynote lectures, research talks, and interactive workshops on traditional medicine and ethnomedicine.

**Global Congress on Plant Biology and Biotechnology:** Taking place on March 26-28, 2026, in Singapore, this congress will focus on the latest advancements in plant biology and biotechnology.

**International Journal of Medicinal Plants Research:**

A peer-reviewed journal that publishes research articles and reviews on medicinal plant research, including pharmacology, phytochemistry, and clinical applications.

**CITES Conference:** The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) conference discussed the protection and regulation of medicinal plant trade, including the listing of Guggar (*Commiphora Wightii*) in Appendix II.

These forums provide a platform for researchers, experts, and practitioners to share knowledge, collaborate, and advance the field of medicinal plant research and traditional medicine.



Medicinal plant research is a thriving field with numerous universities and institutes contributing significantly. Here's an overview of the current status:

### **Research Institutes:**

**Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS):** A leading research organization under the Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India, with various institutes working on medicinal plant research, including the Regional Ayurveda Research Institute (RARI) and Central Ayurveda Research Institute (CARI).

**Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM):** Conducts research on medicinal plants, focusing on plant biotechnology, phytochemistry, and pharmacology.

**Centre for Medicinal Plants Research:** A pioneer institute in research, education, conservation, and popularization of Ayurvedic medicinal plants, functioning under Arya Vaidya Sala Kottakkal.

**Aromatic and Medicinal Plants Research Station (AMPRS):** A research station under Kerala Agricultural University, focusing on aromatic and medicinal plants.

### **Universities:**

**Anand Agricultural University:** The Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Research Station at Anand Agricultural University is involved in research and development of medicinal plants, with a focus on agro-technology development and crop improvement.

**Other universities:** Various universities in India, such as those mentioned in the CCRAS report, have departments or research centers focused on medicinal plant research, including botany, pharmacognosy, and phytochemistry.

### **Research Areas:**

**Pharmacognosy and phytochemistry:** Studies on the chemical composition and biological activities of medicinal plants.

**Agro-techniques and cultivation:** Research on improving crop yields, disease management, and sustainable cultivation practices.

**Conservation and biodiversity:** Efforts to conserve and protect endangered medicinal plant species.

**Pharmacology and clinical trials:** Investigation of the therapeutic potential of medicinal plants and their extracts.

### **Notable Achievements:**

**Herbariums and museums:** Many institutes have established herbariums and museums to preserve and showcase medicinal plant specimens.

**Research publications:** Scientists from these institutes have published research papers in reputed journals, contributing to the advancement of medicinal plant research.



Capacity building: Training programs and workshops are conducted to build capacity in medicinal plant research and development.

The National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) provides funding for various projects related to medicinal plants research and development. Here are some areas that receive funding<sup>1 2</sup>:

**Conservation and Cultivation:** NMPB offers grants for setting up herbal gardens, medicinal plant nurseries, and post-harvest management facilities. Funding ranges from ₹25,000 to ₹15 lakh per project, depending on the type of grant and project scale.

**Research and Development:** NMPB supports research projects on medicinal plants, including pharmacognosy, phytochemistry, and clinical trials. Funding is available for projects that aim to develop new products, improve cultivation practices, and conserve medicinal plant species.

**Value Addition and Marketing:** Funding is available for projects that focus on value addition, processing, and marketing of medicinal plant products. This includes grants for equipment, infrastructure development, and training.

**Capacity Building:** NMPB provides funding for training and capacity-building programs for farmers, traders, and other stakeholders in the medicinal plant industry.

#### **Eligible Beneficiaries:**

Some of the beneficiaries are-

Farmers, entrepreneurs, research institutions, Government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Self-help groups (SHGs). These may be a group of local, national or international kind.

#### **Funding Patterns:**

100% central assistance: For projects like In-Situ Conservation/MPCDS and Research & Development projects in public sector

50-80% assistance: For projects like post-harvest management, value addition, and marketing

Up to ₹15 lakh: For projects like drying, grading, and warehousing

#### **How to Apply:**

To apply for funding, you can visit the NMPB website or contact them directly. It's recommended to work with a professional consultant to ensure that your project proposal meets the eligibility criteria and follows the application process.

Future plan and scientific research on medicinal plants' research:

Future plans for medicinal plant research seem to be focused on several key areas-

#### **Conservation and Sustainable Development-**

**In-situ and Ex-situ Conservation:** Efforts to conserve medicinal plants in their natural habitats and through cultivation in controlled environments, like medicinal plant gardens.

**Sustainable Harvesting:** Promoting sustainable harvesting practices to prevent over-exploitation and ensure long-term availability of medicinal plant resources<sup>1</sup>.



### **Research and Development:**

Many research fields are associated with medicinal plants, these are-

**Pharmacognosy and Phytochemistry:** Investigating the chemical composition and biological activities of medicinal plants to identify new lead compounds for drug development.

**Standardization and Quality Control:** Developing standards for medicinal plant materials and products to ensure quality, safety, and efficacy.

**Integration with Modern Medicine:** Exploring ways to integrate traditional medicine with modern healthcare systems, while ensuring evidence-based practices.

### **Capacity Building and Collaborations:**

Many aspects are there on capacity building on medicinal plants and their conservation.

**Training and Capacity Building:** Providing training and capacity-building programs for farmers, researchers, and practitioners to enhance skills and knowledge in medicinal plant cultivation, harvesting, and processing.

**International Collaboration:** Fostering collaboration among researchers, institutions, and countries to share knowledge, resources, and best practices in medicinal plant research and development.

**Community Engagement:** Engaging with local communities to promote medicinal plant cultivation and conservation, while ensuring fair benefit sharing and sustainable livelihoods.

### **Policy and Regulatory Frameworks:**

Regulatory framework on some policies is important to make the habitat protected from any kind of degradation. The main themes are -

**Policy Development:** Developing policies and regulatory frameworks to support the sustainable development of medicinal plant resources, while ensuring quality, safety, and efficacy of medicinal plant products.

**Regulatory Harmonization:** Harmonizing regulatory standards and practices across countries and regions to facilitate trade and access to medicinal plant products.

### **Tribal Medicine and Biodiversity Conservation:**

Tribal communities have traditional knowledge and strategies for using and conserving medicinal plants. Here are some approaches. These include-

**Traditional Medicine:** Tribal communities have been using medicinal plants for centuries to treat various ailments. Their traditional knowledge and practices are valuable for modern medicine.

**Sustainable Harvesting:** Many tribal communities have traditional practices that ensure sustainable harvesting of medicinal plants, such as only harvesting certain parts of the plant or rotating harvesting areas.



**Conservation:** Tribal communities often have a deep understanding of the ecosystem and conservation of medicinal plants is often linked to their cultural and spiritual practices. They worship the hills, rivers, forests and sacred groves.

**Community-led Conservation:** Tribal communities are taking initiatives to conserve medicinal plants through community-led conservation efforts, such as establishing community-managed protected areas and promoting sustainable use of medicinal plants.

**Biodiversity Conservation:** Tribal community knowingly and unknowingly protect the nature and natural resources for their purpose even for the society.

**Some specific examples of tribal strategies on medicinal plant conservation include:**

**Sacred Groves:** Many tribal communities consider certain areas as sacred and protect them from exploitation, which can help conserve medicinal plant species. The sacred place, sacred tree, sacred grove and sacred forest are different though the target group is for species conservation.

**Traditional Knowledge Documentation:** Documenting traditional knowledge of medicinal plants can help preserve cultural heritage and promote conservation.

**Community-based Cultivation:** Community-based cultivation of medicinal plants can provide a sustainable source of income for tribal communities while promoting conservation.

Overall, tribal strategies on medicinal plant conservation emphasize the importance of community-led initiatives, sustainable use, and cultural preservation.

Medicinal plants are a vital component of traditional medicine and modern healthcare. Their cultivation and conservation are crucial for ensuring their long-term availability and sustainability.

**Key Strategies:**

**Sustainable Cultivation:** Promoting sustainable cultivation practices, such as organic farming and Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), can help ensure the quality and quantity of medicinal plant materials.

**Conservation:** Conserving medicinal plants in their natural habitats and through ex-situ conservation methods, such as seed banks and botanical gardens, can help protect these valuable resources.

**Community Engagement:** Engaging with local communities and traditional practitioners in medicinal plant conservation and management can help promote sustainable use and conservation.

**Research and Development:** Conducting research on medicinal plants can help improve their cultivation, processing, and use, while also identifying new potential uses and applications.

**Management:**

**Regulatory Frameworks:** Establishing regulatory frameworks can help ensure the quality, safety, and efficacy of medicinal plant products.



**Certification and Labeling:** Certification and labeling schemes can help promote sustainable and responsible sourcing of medicinal plant materials.

**Supply Chain Management:** Improving supply chain management can help ensure the quality and authenticity of medicinal plant materials and products.

### **Future Directions:**

**Integration with Modern Healthcare:** Integrating traditional medicine with modern healthcare systems can help promote the safe and effective use of medicinal plants.

**Sustainable Livelihoods:** Promoting sustainable livelihoods for farmers and communities involved in medicinal plant cultivation and trade can help ensure the long-term sustainability of these resources.

**Global Cooperation:** International cooperation and knowledge sharing can help promote the conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants globally.

By adopting these strategies and management approaches, we can help ensure the long-term sustainability of medicinal plant resources and promote their safe and effective use.

### **Conclusion:**

Medicinal plants are important in our life as they give importance on many ways. The fields on medicinal plants study are basically for research, and extension. Other aspect is conservation in a broad way. Following is the discussion on research and conservation strategies on medicinal plants.

### **Research and Conservation:**

The European Red List of Medicinal Plants by Allen et al. highlights the status of medicinal plants in Europe and the need for conservation efforts.

- The study "Conservation and Sustainable Use of Medicinal Plants: Problems, Progress, and Prospects" by Chen et al. emphasizes the importance of integrating conservation strategies, resource management, and biotechnological advances for sustainable use of medicinal plant resources.

The IPBES report on land degradation and restoration underscores the close link between knowledge loss and biodiversity loss, emphasizing the need for proactive measures to conserve traditional knowledge and promote sustainable practices in medicinal plant use.

### **Conservation Strategies:**

*In-situ* conservation: protecting medicinal plants in their natural habitats through establishment of protected areas, such as medicinal plant reserves or biosphere reserves.

*Ex-situ* conservation: preserving medicinal plants outside their natural habitats through methods like seed banks, botanical gardens, and tissue culture.



Sustainable harvesting practices: regulating collection, promoting rotational harvesting, and reducing waste to minimize the impact on wild populations.

Cultivation: encouraging farmers to cultivate medicinal plants, providing economic benefits and reducing reliance on wild harvesting.

#### **Extension and Development:**

Capacity building: training farmers, researchers, and practitioners in medicinal plant cultivation, harvesting, and processing.

Market development: promoting sustainable trade and market opportunities for medicinal plant products.

Research and development: conducting studies on medicinal plant conservation, cultivation, and pharmacology to improve their sustainable use and management.

#### **Key Organizations and Initiatives:**

National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB): an apex body in India that coordinates medicinal plant conservation, cultivation, and trade.

World Health Organization (WHO): provides guidelines on good agricultural and collection practices for medicinal plants.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN): works on conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants globally.

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7. Medicinal Plants of Economic Importance in West Bengal, India (*A Pictorial Handbook for the Beginners' Study and Research*), Sahityagram Prakashan, ISBN:9789374 195055 by Das,D, 2025.

**Journals**

1. Journal of Ethnopharmacology
2. Phytotherapy Research
3. Journal of Medicinal Plants Research
4. Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology
5. Phytomedicine

**Online Databases:**

1. PubMed
2. ScienceDirect
3. Google Scholar
4. ResearchGate
5. National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI)

**Source on Research Institutions:**

1. National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), India
2. National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), India
3. Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), India
4. World Health Organization (WHO)
5. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

**Other Resources:**

1. Medicinal Plant Database by NMPB
2. USDA Database for the Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity (ORAC) of Selected Foods
3. Dr. Duke's Phytochemical and Ethnobotanical Databases

## GUIDELINE TO THE AUTHORS FOR SUBMISSION OF PAPERS

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Full length article/paper may be typically of about 3000 words (minimum) or six to eight pages. The Authors are requested to send their paper with an abstract in 100 to 150 words. The paper should be written in single line-spaced, fully justified format in 12 point Times New Roman font. One line space is to be kept between paragraphs and no indent is to be provided at the first line of a new paragraph. First level heading is required to be consequently numbered like 1., 2., etc. left justified and bold. Second level heading should be numbered consequently like 1.1., 1.2., etc. left justified and bold. Other than English language authors are requested to send their paper in both PDF and Word format. Font size should be eye soothing or 12/14 font size. Title should appear at the top centre of the paper in bold font. The name of the author is to appear next in a separate line along with name of the organization/institution, place of affiliation(s) with full address of the organization/institution and E-Mail ID or Phone No. All figures and tables are to be numbered sequentially and should be placed above the table. Tables and figures should be distinct and readable even after some amount of reduction.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Bibliography should be arranged/maintained as per the International norms. List of References will be as per the examples given below corresponding to a book [1], Journal/Magazine/Paper [2], Conference proceedings [3] and the website and other media [4].

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