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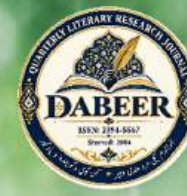
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JULY – SEPTEMBER 2026

جولائی - ستمبر ۲۰۲۶م

مدیر اعلیٰ

احمد نوید یاسر ازلان حیدر



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Chief Editor

Ahmad Naved Yasir Azlan Hyder

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CONTENT

S. NO.	TITLE	AUTHOR	PG. NO.
1	Reflecting on the status of Iranian Women	Professor Abdul Halim	4
2	Land tenure and Ecological Structures early	Dr. Indu Bala	14
3	Sufism and its impact on socio-cultural life of North East	Dr. Atiqur Rahman	19
4	From protest to violence: revolutionary terrorism.....	Dr. S. Nagaraj	29
5	An analytical study of <i>Ma'arij al-Nubuwwa</i> written in Eastern Turkish	Dr. Md Meraj Alam	38
6	Secularism, inclusivity, and education: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's	Mohd Akram / Owais Ismaeil	47
7	The making of military loyalties under Akbar and Jahangir	Dr Azmat Ali	53
8	Woman empowerment through the prism of religion	Dr. Mohammad Ashyam / Dr. Zafar Iftekhhar	66
9	Choosing your truth over memory: autofiction and the female	Dr. Fatima Masuma Nasiri	71
10	Adaptive dynamic ppp model for smart infrastructure governance in india: case studies of yamuna expressway, delhi	Mohammad Javed Khan / Dr Mohammad Aslam	83
11	Theme of love in Shakespeare's sonnet 18 and Rumi's poem looking for your face: an analysis	Dr. Mahreen / Dr. Shadab Arshad / Dr. Lateef Ahmad Salmani	92
12	Epidemics in Kashmir: a historical study	Hilal Ahmad Tantray	98
13	Socio-Economic impact of trade routes during Post-Gupta inscriptions-critical study	Lalita Singh / Dr. Pawan Kumar Singh	110
14	Ladakh and the Mughals: a historical perspective	Manzoor Ahmad	115
15	Exploring identity construction in Heer-Ranjha and Sundri:	Naincy Rana	124
16	The role of Persian-Arabic language in the development of Islamic Education in india:	Mofidul Islam / Dr. Abu Bakkar Siddique	151
17	Mahatma Gandhi and Sufism: ethical parallels in the pursuit of	Daksh	163
18	Rethinking virtue: Panchakanya and the feminist struggle within mythology	Vedita Kumari / Zeenat Mahzabin	178
19	A comparative analysis of Malik Muhammad Jaysi's 'Padmavati' and Farid Uddin Attar's 'Manteq ut-Tair'	Robina Ahmed / Pinki Choudhury / Dr. Tafiqur Rahman	189
20	Reforms of Banda Singh Bahadur: political, economic, and religious transformations	Srishti Thakur	195
21	Nature, culture, and identity: an ecocritical study of patricia grace's <i>Dogside Story</i>	R. Showmya / Dr. A. Ramasubbiah	203
22	Imagined homes beyond ideology: cultural memory and national belonging in anuja chauhan's	Varshini Priya B. / Dr. Kalaiselvi R. H.	212

PROFESSOR ABDUL HALIM*

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REFLECTING ON THE STATUS OF IRANIAN WOMEN

Throughout the history of the entire civilization of human society, the status of women has been one of the most controversial and talked about subjects. She, since time immemorial, despite being a crucial part of the society had to go through many litmus tests and constantly work towards gaining a respectful recognition in the patriarchal set-up. So has been the case in Muslim countries of the so-called Islamic world wherein Iran is no exception. Iran is one among such countries which encountered many ups and downs throughout the ages, especially when it comes to its women, pre-Islamic or post-Islamic conquest of Iran.

Before diving further into the details, I would like to put across a few indispensable facts about the position of women that Islam has given its women while simultaneously with reference to the space provided by Iran to its women in the past and present Islamic Republic of Iran.

As we all know that Islam is more than 1400 old religion and one of the most followed religion worldwide. It has been declared a state religion in many countries of the world in different epochs of time. Iran, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, to name a few are major examples of the same.

Islam by its essence follows the concept of social justice providing entire humanity with a rallying point wherein they could live in perfect peace and harmony. It has established and reinstated the much-needed respite to all those mistreated and run down forsaken souls on the grounds of race, religion, color, sex and socio-economic background. As a matter of fact, Islam has set independent norms for the deprived sections of society which not only paints an image of hope but also delivers the message of peace and that of fraternity, liberty and equality. As far as women and their status in the society are concerned, Islam does not favor men over women or vice-versa. Sureh Al-Baqra and Sureh Nisa respectively of the Holy Qur'an (Ayahs) says:

i) "Han libasullakum wa antum libasullahun"(Al-Baqurah-2.23)

(سورة البقرة 2.23) "هن لباس لكم وانتم لباس لهن"

(Women are the cloaks for you and you are cloaks for them')

ii) lirrejalo nasibun mimma aktasibu wa linnisae mimmaaktasibna (Al-Nisa- 23)

(سورة النساء-23) "للرجال نصيب مما اكتسبوا وللنساء مما اكتسبن"

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(What the men have done will receive accordingly and what women have done will receive accordingly'

iii)." Talabul Ilm Farizatun Ala kulle Muslem wa Muslemah"(saying of Prophet PBUH)

"طالب العلم فريضة على كل مسم ومسلمة"

(To acquire knowledge is compulsory for all Muslim men and women)

Islam has considered women as indispensable component of human creation of God, the Almighty, and judiciously recognized their place and status in the entire human civilization, providing them with clear features be it biological, physical strength or their structure. And by recognizing these obvious difference between men and women, it designated them with clear-cut roles accordingly while paying no less attention to the homogeneity of the essential nature as human beings and their right to equality for opportunity to find their due share in the world and more importantly in the eyes of God and the life hereafter. In other words, according to Sharia (Islamic law) men and women are equal as human beings and have an equal number of mutual obligations and rights. In order to fully understand this dichotomy of rights and obligations, it is pertinent to go through some rights that Islam has bestowed on women. Firstly, a family unit consists of man and a woman where man acts as its head, for no institution can survive without a head; but this in no way makes him superior. The concept of head is mostly related in terms of man as the principle provider of the family. She is not obligated to take financial burden if she does not want to. Secondly, she is in no way obligated to take her husband's name after marriage and lose her individuality. Thirdly, her share in inheritance is half of the male share. Fourthly, a man is obligated and required to provide for her financially but if she decides to earn, she is in no way obligated to give it to anyone in the family including her husband.

According to Sharia, both women and men have gender specific roles in terms of their conduct, behavior and education, dress code, marriage, divorce laws and work outside the home. However, what is equally important to bear in mind is that a lot of the commonly seen practices in the Muslim societies of today that have come into vogue are a result of centuries of decadence, stagnation and non-Islamic influence which cannot be the perimeter to understand and judge Islam as a religion of Prophet (pbuh) and the practices that are being observed in the Muslim countries and among the so called followers of Islam throughout the world termed as Islamic. As a matter of fact with the passage of time, the Holy Quran and Islamic Sharia were rather misused and misinterpreted whatsoever may be the case, according to their culture, tradition, society and politics manipulating the true essence of Islam. So has been the case with "Iran Zamin ايران زمین" especially after the Arab conquest of Iran.

Back in the old days, both men and women of Iran relished equal status even in terms of semblance. For instance, both used make-up, colored their body parts, wore colorful garments and jewelry. The only distinction between them was of class for the color and style of garments of the rich that differed from the poor. However, things have changed dramatically in the present day Iran as one does not get to witness men cloaking

themselves as women. In modern Iran, the segregation is quite clear when it comes to both the genders both in fashion and social norms. More often than not 'Persian women' of higher class or of grandeur bore a nailed down appearance set by the social line of dominance or social system setting a standard for all women in the society. Jennifer. M. Scarce, an orientalist of late Qajar era in her book, Women's Costume of the near and Middle East writes:

"The Persian ladies' hair is very luxuriant, and never cut; it is nearly always dyed red with henna, or black with indigo to a blue-black tinge; it is naturally a glossy black."

To put this in perspective, one can say that the position of women in ancient Iran was in no way inferior to that of India in Vedic times in terms of status however different in terms of classification. For example, in the early Achaemeneid era, Persepolis fortification and treasury tablets refers to women in three different terms; firstly, "Mutu " which refers to ordinary (non-royal) women. Secondly "Irti" which refers to unmarried members of the royal family, and the last "Dukris", refers to married women of royalty. Archeological excavations at the 'Burnt City' (شهر سوخته), a pre-historic settlement in the Sistan-Baluchistan province of south-eastern Iran, has revealed that the women of 4th-3rd millennium B.C used to maintained a high level of socio-economic status. Almost 90% of the seals discovered from the graves were in the possession of women [1] who in turn made up over 60% of the population [2]. These seals were not only powerful instruments of trade but were also a parameter to judge the status and prestige of an individual in the possession of influential women. Their control over the economy and the government clearly indicate that women were the more powerful group in prehistoric society and were rejoicing equal status in the society. They were not considered inferior to men in any respect. However, the same cannot be said about the common women of that time, that is the 'Matu' women.

Just like the Vedic age in India, the position of a Matu woman was inferior in ancient Persia as well. Although among other oriental nations, there was a total submission to the husband who they considered their lord and in turn were taken for granted while those women who conform and remain compliant to their husbands come under the highest praiseworthy category of Avesta and elsewhere.

The tablets also reveal that women of the royal household traveled extensively and often personally administered their own estates [3]. The queen and her ladies-in-waiting are known to have played polo against the emperor and his courtiers [4]. The only limits on the extent of the authority exercised by the king's mother were set by the monarch.

In the tablets, non-royals and ordinary workers were mentioned by their rank in the particular work group or workshops they were employed. Whatever the provisions they received were based on skill and the level of responsibility they assumed in the workplace. The professions are divided by gender and listed according to the amount of ration. If we go by records, it indicates that some professions were undertaken by both sexes while others were restricted to either male or female workers. There were male and female supervisors at the mixed workshops which is evident by the higher rations they

received with little difference in the amount of rations between the two sexes. There were occasions when women listed in the same category as men received less rations and vice versa. Female managers have different titles presumably reflecting their level of skill and rank. The highest-ranking female workers in the texts are called Arashshara (great chief). They appear repeatedly in the texts, were employed at different locations and managed large groups of women, children and sometimes men working in their units. They used to receive high rations of wine and grains, exceeding all the other workers in the unit including the males. In addition, pregnant women also received higher ration than others. Women with new-born children also received extra rations for a period of one month.

According to the claim of few experts, it was Cyrus, the Great, and twelve centuries before Islam who established the custom of covering women to protect their chastity. According to their theory, the veil passed from the Achaemenids to the Hellenistic Seleucids. They, in turn, handed it to the Byzantines, from whom the Arab conquerors inherited it, transmitting it over the vast reaches of the Arab world [5]. Sticking to wearing the veil, covering the entire body for not making it vulnerable and enticing the attention of the strangers passing by invited so much criticism throughout the world have not been a part of Islamic culture alone.

The Sassanid princess Purandokht (پوران دوخت), daughter of Khosrau II, ruled the Persian Empire for almost two years before resigning. Also, during the Sassanid reign many of the Iranian soldiers who were captured by Romans were women who fought along with men. [6]

Persian women have also been depicted in many masterpieces of Persian paintings and miniatures [7] which helps us to "trace through the sequence of women's fashion from earlier periods [8]. Moreover, the state religion practiced by Persian people preached by Zorostra emphasized on the equality of women in almost every field of activity which proved to be one of the major contributing factors in shaping positive thinking towards women which in turn provided ingredients and flavor for enhancing the status of women in the existing society in the country. Just like Islam, in Zoroastrian religion, women were treated as the most respectable lot of the society where showing disrespect to them was considered a sin. This also provides ample scope for women to develop their personalities and gives equal rights and opportunities to acquire knowledge and skill for the same. A 20th century scholar Herbed Sheriarjee writes:

زن و فرزند خود را از تحصیل دانش و کسب هنر باز مدار تا غم و اندوه بر تو راه نیابد و در آینده پشیمان نگردی

Translation- Women and children, son or daughter should not keep themselves away from acquiring knowledge and skill so that they may not face grief and distress in life [9]. The names of men and women come side by side in its religious book, the Gathas and they are considered equally important while discharging their duties in socio-economic and political obligations. It appears from the text that the same trend was followed during the Achaemenian period where women were allowed to move from one place to another freely and fully contributed their share in education, fulfilling the social

obligation and even in the battle fields for that matter. The queens also sat beside the kings and ruled while equally taking part in the affairs of the country as well. In short, they were shouldering with men in every walk of life.

The Sassanid period is of no exception. The women of this period were given equal rights and opportunities by the State too and held prestigious positions of power. The example of the two queens who sat on the throne at the fagend of the period are the testimony of the fact put before. Likewise, Shireen the wife of Khusrau Perwaiz, the Sassanid king was extremely famous as far as the power and prestige were concerned [10]. Women of this period were also not helpless in finding their groom of their own choice in the society. The will of their parents were not imposed on them and they married who they wished to. Even the children in the family were also treated with respect and honor. Women were chosen and appointed as judges to solve the disputes of the society. Bahram Gaur's beloved is also one such example in the history of Iran. The Shahnameh of Firdausi (شاهنامه فردوسی), an encyclopedia of ancient Iran as was called by Shibli Naomai presents many such examples which again testify the prestigious positions of women in the society and rightly so.

After Arab conquest of Iran in the battle of Nehavand in 641 A.D, the circumstances changed and took a new shape. In order to understand the new changes in Iran, one has to keep in mind that Iranian had to accept the new ruler as their master and learn their language and accept their religion of Islam which was more humane in nature in the beginning. With the passage of time they certainly found the new ruler better and less tyrant than the earlier one, the Sassanids. But amongst all the states and powerful nations conquered by the Arabs, Iran was the only Nation of Aryan origin which never surrendered before them culturally. They did not give up the originality of their culture and language which shows the unbending spirit of not losing their Aryan virtues and traits at the hands of Arab unlike Egypt and Syria. Iranian accepted their religion not because of the need but because they found it better and more illuminating. They learnt Arabic as it was the language of Quran and the Hadith, however, they refused to accept it as their mother tongue to keep their culture alive. Not only this but they also tried to refine their language, Persian from time to time, whenever they felt overwhelmed by the usage of Arabic words in Persian language. They were of the opinion that things can be conversed and written in an equally powerful way without using Arabic words. The two famous poets of Iran, Daqiqi Tusi and Firdausi Tusi are the best examples who tried to refine Persian thoroughly and maintained its essence. However, Egypt and Syria lost their ethnic and cultural identity and accepted Arabic as their mother tongue. It is also important to note that Iran was never ruled by the Caliph himself but was ruled by their governors instead who in turn, sometimes, showed ignorance to the true nature, teachings and characteristics of Islam and behaved more like feudal lords and with a passage of time, because of the feudal system and its feudalistic dominant cultural approach towards life, women lost their power and control over things they earlier had in the society. Moreover, there were many more incidents which happened in the political arena of the country which added fervor and acted as a catalyst to the situation and contributed to women's segregation making them invisible and limiting them to their homes. What also contributed to this invisibility was the Mongol invasion, the indiscriminate mass killings and brutality of local gentry provided enough convincing

pretext to fuel male chauvinism. They seized the property of people, captured their women and used their bodies for sexual gratification and kept them as war booty. People of the elite and the middle class strata of society out of fear of disrespect and unchastely had to restrict their women and daughters behind four walls. They were asked to cover their bodies along with their face and hide themselves under the veil whenever they by chance make a public appearance which gradually resulted in a regular custom for women as social reality. Often misunderstood, covering the body under veil is not backwardness if it doesn't prevent them from active life and leads to their seclusion, subordination and powerlessness (11).

Veil is a kind of extra covering on a woman's body which she wears on top of her clothes when they go out in public or in front of a forbidden person (نا محرم), who according to sharia, they are allowed to marry. There are different kinds of veils which vary from covering the entire body including face or covering just the hair with a scarf those who hailed from rural and tribal belt (12). Veiling in the land (ایران زمین) was not a new thing to them. It has been deeply rooted as an integral part of their culture. It was considered normal and indispensable of men's and women's appearances in public as far as people of higher strata of the state were concerned. It would not be out of place if examples be quoted and repeated from history that the kings who have been considered God's shadow on earth (ظل البی، ظل الله فی الارض، سایه خدا) were also practicing veiling. Therefore, Kusrow Anushirwan (r.531-79) came in the audience hall to receive Zuyazan of Yaman covered, and only when he was seated on the throne under the hanging crown did he remove his veil. Khusrow Parviz's head was veiled when he was brought to the house where he was to be confined during his last days (13). Similarly, Queens or women of the court and high aristocracy also observed veiling. "At least as early as Achaemenian times Persian queens were hidden from the people. Plutarch, discussing the reign of Artaxerxes (r.404-359), writes that queen Stateira was loved by the common folks because the curtains of her carriage were always up, and thus women were permitted to see and greet her (14)."

However, veil which was never a symbol of women's seclusion or subordination, historically became the means of subordinating them and making them dependent on the men in Iran or elsewhere, especially by the privileged elite class and clergies, and in the process loosening their grip in politics as well as other arenas of Iranian society making it easier for them to control them by systematically barring them from the arena of formal political and economic power. Resentment from the tender folk was thus inevitable. Therefore, considering the veil system the root cause of women's plight and powerlessness, it was challenged by many hailing from the community itself. For the first time in mid- nineteenth century, a poetess named Tahereh Qurratolein, (طاهره) (1817-52 A.D) challenged the veiling system and came out unveiling herself publicly in 1848(15). She lived during the Qachar king, Nasiruddin Shah Qachar and was a staunch torch bearer of Baabi Movement in Iran. Her name was Abu Salma Fatima entitled 'Golden Crown' (زرین تاج) and Tahereh Nom de guerre. Syed Ali MOhammad Bab gave her the title of Qurratol Ain. She spent some of her time in Karbala and Najaf Sharif, observed veiling and delivered lectures. After returning home, she discarded the veil and made public appearances without one while openly speaking about women's liberation (16).

از خود بنشان غبار، برخیز ای خفته رسید یار برخیز
ای خسته و نزار، برخیز آمد بر تو طبیب غم خوار
آمده ات غمگسار، برخیز ای آنکه خمار یار داری

(O the disgraced and insignificant of one's existence rise,

O' the tired and weary rise for sure that the doctor who look after with tender care has come!

O' the one who has intoxication of a friend, rise as the afflicted who partake the other has come for you.)

Similarly, voices of women's emancipation gained heights in some parts of the middle-East. Huda Shaarawi and Saiza Nabarawi, two feminists while returning from an international feminist meeting in Rome appeared unveiled at Cairo Station in 1923 which one way or the other, had an indirect effect on the mindset of the Iranian intelligentsia.

Then came the Pahlavi dynasty and more concrete steps were seen to be taken in the direction of women's liberation and their emancipation when Reza Shah Pahlavi came into power in Iran between 1925 and 1979. He introduced many reforms concerning women's rights. An example of an early step in the name of reform was taken and introduced by Raza Shah was regarding "forced unveiling of women by a special degree" in 1936. It was for the first time that an effort on state level was taken by Shah and backed by intellectuals there. Although, earlier, in order to make them aware of their status and rights in the society, many Girl's Schools and Madrasas were opened in cities and towns in which missionaries from America, England and France took the lead and started their activities in Tabriz, Hamedan, Kerman Shah, Tehran, Mashhad, Esfahan, Yezd and so on. Dr. Marry Smith was among those who really toiled hard for girl's education in Iran. This also proved to be a contributory factor to some extent. Moreover, Reza Shah wanted to bring back the golden culture of his forefathers to his country perhaps and so was the lost position of women in the land. He laid down the foundation of the University of Tehran and opened the gate for women to acquire knowledge in the field of Education, Art and Sciences who were previously considered like second grade citizens. He enacted laws for participation of women in socio-political affairs of the society. He was supported by learned scholars and writers of his period through their writings. Among the propagators of women's cause were Sadiq Hedayet, Ali Dashti, Mohammad Hejazi, Buzurg Alavi, Sadiq Chubak, Saed Nafisi etc. They invariably started highlighting women's problems, making people aware of their backwardness while simultaneously trying their best to bring into light of their grievances in the Iranian society. Sadiq Hedayet, for instance, wrote about inequality, unequal distribution of power between men and women, women's helplessness and the number of wives a man can have at a time under one roof and many more problems related to lawful religious law (شرع) as trend of temporary marriage (شیوه حلاله) that was prevalent in the society. He criticized the system just to save and uplift the dignity and status of women and wrote (محلل) a very fine piece of short story. 'Mohallil'(محلل) is one of the stories which

talks about a man who marries a "thrice- divorced woman" and dismisses her after consummation of marriage, so she may lawfully marry her former husband. He tried to highlight the general mindset of the people and their perception of women that they should behave like a doll and dance on the tunes of men without uttering a word and raising voices. Yet another well-read short story by him is Arushak e Pusht-e-Pardeh (عروشک پشت پرده) that is 'A Doll behind the Curtain' which mirrors the mentality of people in the existing society.

As a result of the constant effort of state and intelligentsia, women started taking part in the fields which were earlier limited to men only and gained their foothold. They started participating in the fields of economy, the education sector and in the workforce while acquiring highly reputed positions in offices such as ministers, artists, judges (Shirin Ebadi, was the first female judge), scientists, athletes, etc. This upliftment in the position of women became so deep-rooted that even the conservative Islamic revolution could not completely undo it.

When in 1979, Islamic revolution took place and declared Iran as the Islamic Republic, the Islamic government helped in many ways:

Firstly, by creating a suitable environment to enhance the personality of women and restoring her material rights,

Secondly, they initiated the reforms to protect the rights of mothers, particularly during pregnancy and custody of children; and protection of children without guardian.

Thirdly, by introducing competent courts to preserve the continuity and survival of the family and many more [17].

Iranian women were given the right to vote in 1963 and they shared the power and decision-making authority at all levels both at mass and elite levels. Farrokhroo Parsa was the first woman to be appointed as the minister of education in 1968 and "Mahnaz Afkhami" was appointed as the minister for women's affairs in 1976. According to the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, enacted in 1980, all men and women should have equal rights in the election process. As a matter of fact, presently women as representatives of the assembly take part in a number of important parliamentary committees. Not only this, the women's Affairs Advisory Post, established at the president's office in 1992, is the highest ranking official position held by an Iranian woman. There has been a steady progress in women's representation at high levels of jurisdiction and now women serve as advisors in the courts of law.

There are Iranian women who have proved themselves in different fields and have been awarded Nobel prizes. For example, Shirin Ebadi was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize or achieved Young Ivy League in various areas like education, politics and social mobilization.

In general, Iranian women prefer cultural activities in their social employment. Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, women have been increasingly writing and

translating books, in fact their progress in this sphere has been so note-worthy that many have been awarded 'Book of the Year'. For the past two centuries, women played a very important role in Persian literature. In contemporary Iran there are many Iranian poets which include "Simim Behbahani" who wrote love poems as well as narrative poetry enriched with motherly affection for all humans. Behbahani, president of the Iranian Writers Association, was nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature. Women's managerial endeavors in publishing centers are also quite noticeable. According to a recent survey, 13 percent of Iranian journalists are women which shows a significant improvement over the years and the average age of the women is 23.

In today's Iranian society, women have demonstrated that they have abilities and talents which under proper conditions can greatly contribute to national wealth and economic development and they, in turn, are getting equal opportunity too.

The Women's Social and Cultural Council (WSCC) was formed as one of the satellite councils of the Cultural Revolution (SCCR). This council is responsible for formulating policy guidelines on women's social and cultural requirements. It also coordinates activities to ensure achievements that is by drawing up necessary guidelines for the creation of suitable circumstances to enhance women's profile, reclaim their moral values and secure their rights and privileges based on the genuine principles of Islam.

The official women's day in Iran is celebrated on the birthday of the prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) daughter "Fatimah" R.A. Iranian women also shined in the field of music. For instance, Lily Afshar experimented with music by combining Persian and western classical music. Then, there comes one more name in the list of music and that is of Googoosh, one of the most heard and famous Iranian singers.

Not only had this women also proved themselves in the field of art where they gained international recognition not only in the modern art but also in the Iranian cinema. The rise of "new wave" of Persian cinema has led them break the records by producing number of films. One such example of the same is "Rakshan bani-Etmad".

It is true that opportunity comes to those who work really hard for it and in this case it stands true as well, one cannot forget that the journey to women's emancipation is a long one. Despite living in a society which is patriarchal and not at all Islamic, women glorified and came up as a shining star.

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DR. INDU BALA*

{D/33-2}

**LAND TENURE AND ECOLOGICAL STRUCTURES
EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY PUNJAB**

Abstract

This study investigates the dynamic relationship between systems of land tenure and ecological conditions in early nineteenth-century Punjab, particularly during the late eighteenth century and the period preceding annexation by the British East India Company in 1849. Rather than treating agrarian institutions solely as fiscal arrangements, the paper situates them within an environmental framework. It argues that tenurial patterns—such as ‘*Jagirdari*’ grants, ‘*Zamindari*’ rights, and village-based proprietary systems—shaped access to water, forests, grazing grounds, and wastelands, thereby influencing ecological sustainability.

Drawing upon settlement reports, administrative accounts, and revenue records, the study demonstrates that landholding structures functioned as regulatory mechanisms governing environmental usage. Customary rights over riverine belts, commons, and forest tracts structured patterns of cultivation, pastoral movement, and irrigation management. The paper further evaluates the ecological consequences of increasing revenue centralization and commercialization in the transitional phase before British annexation. It contends that tenure systems in Punjab were deeply embedded in environmental realities and significantly affected regional ecological resilience during a period of political transformation.

Keywords: *Land Tenure; Agrarian Ecology; Early Nineteenth-Century Punjab; ‘Jagirdari’; ‘Zamindari’; Political Ecology; Environmental History; Colonial Transition.*

Introduction

Ecology, as a field of inquiry, examines the interaction between living organisms and their physical surroundings. When applied historically, it allows us to explore how communities adapted to their natural environment and how these adaptations shaped social, economic, and political structures. In agrarian societies such as Punjab, the organization of land rights was fundamentally intertwined with environmental conditions. Soil composition, rainfall patterns, river systems, and vegetation influenced not only agricultural productivity but also patterns of settlement and authority.

Land rights in Punjab were socially recognized claims to ownership, use, and transfer of land. These rights were neither uniform nor static. They evolved from diverse historical experiences, tribal traditions, conquests, and state policies. This paper examines the

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correlation between ecological zones and land tenure arrangements during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Kingdom of Lahore. It emphasizes that agrarian structures must be understood in relation to the physical geography of the region.

In early nineteenth-century Punjab, the right to possess, cultivate, mortgage, and sell land was highly valued. Documentary evidence from regions such as the Upper Bari Doab demonstrates the existence of hereditary and transferable land rights. Legal instruments such as sale deeds and mortgage agreements indicate that agricultural property was both inheritable and alienable. Proprietary rights were exercised by both cultivating and non-cultivating owners, though peasant proprietors—who cultivated their own holdings with family labor—formed the most significant agrarian group.

British administrators later categorized Punjab's land tenures under three broad types: 'Zamindari', 'Pattidari', and 'Bhaichara'. 'Zamindari' estates could be individually owned or communally managed. 'Pattidari' arrangements distributed land according to ancestral shares, while 'Bhaichara' tenures emphasized equality among co-sharers, with holdings determining obligations. These categories, however, were fluid rather than fixed, and estates frequently shifted from one form to another.

Proprietary rights also varied in degree. A broad classification distinguished superior proprietors ('*Ta'alluqdars*'), peasant proprietors, and tenants. This hierarchy reflected both political authority and ecological control over productive resources.

Superior Proprietors and Agrarian Hierarchies

The '*Ta'alluqdars*'—literally those connected to territorial authority—were often descendants of earlier ruling families who had exercised political sovereignty. Though some lost direct control under Sikh rule, they retained certain proprietary dues, such as customary grain payments at harvest. Others emerged from revenue farming or '*Jagirdari*' assignments, gradually consolidating managerial authority into proprietary claims. Among them were Sayyids, the Gakkhar, and the Rajput, while cultivating groups such as Jat and Kambohs frequently functioned as actual tillers of the soil.

Tenants constituted another major agrarian category. They cultivated land belonging to proprietors and paid revenue and customary dues. Different types of tenants were identified according to residence and continuity of cultivation—hereditary residents, seasonal cultivators, and migrants from neighboring villages. Their status varied regionally, often reflecting ecological conditions and labor requirements.

Ecological Zones and Land Tenure Patterns

The dominions of Lahore extended across varied ecological landscapes—from fertile plains to arid uplands and frontier hills. The region was divided into distinct ecological belts shaped by rainfall, river systems, and soil types. These environmental differences profoundly influenced patterns of landholding and resource management. In this way

regions or ecological zones which were fairly homogenous in natural resources like soil, climate, water and vegetation, they were:

1. The North Western Frontier tract.
2. The South Western River Valleys.
3. The dry uplands of the Doabs or Western plains.
4. The ample rainfall zone of the upper Doabs or the Eastern plains of the Punjab.

An attempt has been made to go through the details of the physical features, ecological perspective of the above zones and their relations with the landed rights prevalent in different zones.

1. The North-Western Frontier Tract

This region included Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Derajat, and Rawalpindi. The Indus River and its tributaries, especially the Kabul River, defined the hydrological landscape. Rainfall was limited, generally below twenty inches annually, and irrigation depended on embankments constructed along seasonal torrents.

Tribal organization structured land rights. Chiefs—known variously as ‘*Tumandars*’, ‘*Maliks*’, or ‘*Khans*’—held leadership roles but were not absolute landlords over tribal members. Land was periodically redistributed through the system of *Vaish*, ensuring rotational access. Conquest formed the basis of proprietary claims, described by the term *Virasat* (inheritance). Over time, some chiefs consolidated large estates through state grants or ‘*Jagirdari*’ assignments, becoming recognized as superior proprietors (‘*Ala-Maliks*’).

Under Sikh administration, some tribal chiefs were converted into Jagirdars and granted a share of revenue in exchange for military service, while others received fractional entitlements.

2. The South-Western River Valleys

This tract encompassed Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, Multan, Montgomery, and Jhang. Characterized by extremely low rainfall—often under ten inches annually—cultivation depended almost entirely on river inundation and wells. Here, irrigation infrastructure itself became the foundation of property rights. Wells, embankments, and canals were treated as units of ownership distinct from the surrounding land.

In Dera Ghazi Khan, cultivators who constructed embankments gained privileged status. Payments to superior proprietors included grain shares and customary contributions. Revenue was commonly termed ‘*Mahsul*’.

In Multan and Muzaffargarh, riverine agriculture dominated. Settlers who developed land by sinking wells acquired hereditary claims and were known as ‘*Chakdars*’ or ‘*Sildars*’. Although recognized as proprietors, they often paid a quit-rent to earlier landholders. Various tenure forms—such as ‘*Adhalpi*’ and ‘*Kasur-Sil-Chah*’—reflected

negotiated arrangements between settlers and established proprietors, illustrating the adaptive nature of agrarian institutions in response to ecological necessity.

In Jhang, the '*Hathrakhai*' system allowed protectors to assume revenue responsibility in exchange for a share in produce. Such arrangements demonstrate how ecological risk and revenue obligations combined to shape hybrid tenures.

3. The Dry Uplands of the Western Plains

The semi-arid Bars and Thal regions lay beyond the effective reach of the monsoon. Sparse rainfall and deepwater tables limited permanent agriculture. Pastoralism dominated, with cattle-grazing tribes maintaining seasonal mobility. In these areas, rights were attached to livestock and grazing rather than fixed plots of land. Revenue was derived primarily from grazing taxes.

Where rainfall permitted occasional cultivation, rights extended only to the crop produced rather than to permanent ownership of soil. This demonstrates the strong linkage between ecological viability and property claims.

4. The Upper Doabs or Eastern Plains

The eastern plains of Punjab, including Gujranwala, Sialkot, Lahore, Amritsar, and Gurdaspur, benefited from higher rainfall (20–40 inches annually) and fertile alluvial soils. The relatively shallow water table facilitated widespread well irrigation, often using the Persian wheel. This ecological abundance supported dense populations and thriving market networks.

Here, '*Bhaichara*' and '*Pattidari*' tenures were prevalent. Proprietary rights were widely distributed among peasant cultivators. Though superior proprietors ('*Ta'alluqdars*') retained certain claims, the number of peasant proprietors expanded during Sikh rule. The administration under Maharaja Ranjit Singh often treated cultivators favorably, ensuring revenue stability by securing their rights.

In some areas, individuals admitted into proprietary bodies acquired rights over specific plots as '*Malik Qabza*'. The policy of encouraging cultivation strengthened the position of active cultivators and reduced the dominance of non-cultivating elites.

State Policy and Environmental Adaptation

Sikh governance did not eliminate large estates but sought to ensure productive cultivation. Proprietors who failed to maintain cultivation risked losing influence. This emphasis on agrarian productivity fostered a relatively secure environment for cultivators and encouraged settlement expansion.

Environmental adaptation shaped the broader social structure. Labor arrangements, artisan support systems, and settlement density were closely tied to ecological conditions. Variations in soil, rainfall, and water access produced significant regional diversity in tenure forms.

Conclusion

An examination of land tenure in early nineteenth-century Punjab reveals that agrarian institutions were inseparable from ecological realities. Systems such as 'Jagirdari', 'Zamindari', and village proprietorship operated not merely as revenue mechanisms but as frameworks governing environmental access and management. Customary rights over forests, water sources, and grazing lands maintained ecological equilibrium through localized accountability.

However, the gradual expansion of centralized revenue policies and the monetization of agriculture during the period preceding annexation by the British East India Company introduced more rigid and extractive arrangements. These changes reduced communal autonomy and intensified pressure on land and water resources.

Thus, environmental change in Punjab cannot be understood without analyzing tenure structures. Agrarian systems determined cropping patterns, irrigation practices, pastoral mobility, and forest utilization. By integrating ecological and agrarian perspectives, this study demonstrates that land tenure functioned as a dynamic mediator between society and nature. It further suggests that later colonial land settlements must be examined in light of these earlier ecological foundations to understand their enduring impact on Punjab's agrarian landscape.

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{D/33-3}

SUFISM AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE OF NORTH EAST INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

Abstract: The culture of Assam is traditionally a hybrid one, developed due to cultural assimilation of different ethno-cultural groups under various politico-economic systems in different periods of pre-history and history. With a strong base of tradition and history, the modern Assamese culture is greatly influenced by various events those took place in the British Assam and in the Post-British Era. The language was standardised by the American Missionaries with the form available in the Sibsagar District (the nerve centre of the Ahom politico-economic system). A renewed Sanskritisation was increasingly adopted for developing Assamese language and grammar. A new wave of Western and northern Indian influence was apparent in the performing arts and literature. Assamese culture in its true sense today is a 'cultural system' composed of different sub-systems. It is more interesting to note that even many of the source-cultures of Assamese culture are still surviving either as sub-systems or as sister entities. In broader sense, therefore, the Assamese cultural system incorporates its source-cultures such as Bodo (Boro) or Khasi or Mishing (Micing) but individual development of these sub-systems are today becoming important.

India is known as a birth as well as meeting place of various religions, creeds and faiths. The Sufi movement was a socio-religious movement of fourteenth to sixteenth century. The exponents of the movement were unorthodox Muslim saints who had a deep study of Vedantic philosophy and Bhuddhism of India. They had gone through various religious text of India and had come in contact with great sages and seers of India. They could see the Indian religious from very near and realized its inner values. Accordingly they developed Islamic Philosophy which at last gave birth to the Sufi Movement.

Keywords: *Sufism in Assam, Sufi Orders in Assam, Contribution of Sufism, Impact of Sufism on Socio-Cultural life, Foreign Languages*

Introduction: Cultural and economic entity and the North East has always been an integral part of India. There is also a school of thought which maintains that the population of North Eastern India has greater affinity with the people of South East Asia than with those from the rest of India.

The political and cultural isolation of the Seven Sisters has spawned these observations. Perhaps, it is because of such divergent views and the prevailing situation that it is not very uncommon to hear the Indian leaders emphasising the importance of early integration of the people of the North East into the national mainstream.

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These Sufi literatures is considered one of major pillar in the cultural and literary element of Assam in Persian chronicles, which emerged as a indigenous from Sufi activities in Assam connecting Sufi structure and native folk culture of Assam. From medieval period they are rooting for communal brotherhood and humanity among people of Assam.

Sufism in Assam: Before speaking the advent of Sufis in Assam, we should pay our attention to express a brief - political description of Assam at the advent of Muslim invasion. According to a British philosopher, Mill, Assam is situated in on the great migration roots of mankind. The rise of Islam is one of marbles of the history after hardly within one century of the demise of prophet Muhammad (S: A). The Muslim inroads into western Indian began at the beginning and swept in other parts of India except eastern part, because of the fact that the inhabitants of various Hindu Kingdoms were never animated by a common national feeling or by a common religious theosophy like the followers of Islam. In action to that the gradual loss of power of creative, ideology, socio- religious order, negligence to common people by the ruling classes and higher-ups etc, Played accuracy conquering India as well as Assam by the Muslim¹.

1. The Uwavai Order: This Order is ascribed to Uwayau'l –Qarani, Who derived his title from Qaran, a village in Yaman. He was a contemporary of Muhammad but was prevented from seeing him chiefly because of his high sense of duty to his own mother and also owing to the fact that he was subject to states of ecstasy which periodically overmastered him. He is said to have received instruction in a mysterious way from the spirit of Muhammad. Thus it is that when a Sufi is known to have no pir he is said to², be an Uwaysi, The custom to which reference has already been made³ of connecting two saints or mystics in a spiritual genealogy who could never have met because separated by a long space of time or distance, is really derived from this Uwaysi Order.

2. The Madari Order: This Order is ascribed to Badi'ud -Din shah Madar. Unfortunately there is much confusion in the various details given concerning him by different hagiographers; The following account is based on the Mirat-i-Madari⁴. Maddri, a manuscript copy of which is to be found in the Buhar Library, a section of the imperial Library, Calcutta, The Mirat-i- Madari is said to have had for its saucers the Iman -i- Mahmudi a work believed to have been written by Mahmud Kanturi, one of the vicegerents of Shah Madar⁵.

Shah Madar was a jews, and his father, Abu Ishaq Shami was a direct descendant of Aaron the brother of Moses. The birth of shah Madar is said to have been announced to his father in a dream by Moses himself, who named the child Badi'u'd - Din (the maker of religions) and said that he would be like unto him in the dignity of sainthood. According to Moses prediction signs of the Mosaic saint ship showed themselves in

¹. Ph. D. Thesis, "Influence of Sufism on Assamese Culture and Society" by Shahin Ahmad Barbhuiya, 2010, p. 101

². Satyar Path or Tarikul Haque fi Bayan-e-Nurul Haque, Abdul Jalal Julkad Ali Sufi Saheb. ed & Tr. By Saleh kazim Gauhati, 1967 A.D. P - 113

³. Ibid, p-191

⁴. Sangamisranat Asamiya Sanskriti, Abdus Sattar, Calcutta, 1972 A.D. P- 182.

⁵. Hazrat Azan Peer. Muhibul Hussain , Sibsagar ,1972 AD., P-45 -134.

Madar in his youth. He received his early education from a Jewish teacher, Hadiqa shami, a man who knew all the scriptures by heart and truly followed their teachings. This Hadiqa is said to have performed many miracles in his life. When Shah Madar was still young his parents die, and he broken hearted over his loss, went to his master Hadiqa and said "I have acquired mastery over all the Scriptures and have learnt much from you about the mysteries of religion, but far I have not entered at all into the experience of union with God. You have taught me of one Ahmad, foretold in the Torah and Injil. Who was to come after, Moses and Jesus, and through whom alone one could find God, where is he to be found? His master replied, Ahmad has passed away from this world, but his followers are to be found in Mecca and Medina, Where upon Shah Madar renounced all his worldly possessions and went to Mecca. There he spent some in the study of the Quran and Traditions and then mastered the Fiqh of all the four Sunni Schools of Jurisprudence. Even so his soul was not satisfied. At last, disappointed, he thought of returning to his home in Syria, but when he went to make the circuit of the Ka'ba for the last time, he heard a voice saying to him, 'if thou art a seeker after God, hasten to the tomb of Muhammad in Medina" In obedience to the voice he went to the Prophet's tomb and as he kissed it he heard a voice saying to him, "Peace be on. Thee, O Badi'ud - Din Shah Madar! God willing, thou wilt soon attain thy goal Shortly after wards the spirit of Muhammad appeared and, in the presence of Ali's spirit, Instructed him in the mystery of the religion of Islam Afterwards Muhammad commended him to the care of 'Ali and ordered him to instruct him as one of his own sons in esoteric Knowledge. Shah Madar next went to Najaf Ashraf, the sacred place of the followers of Ali. There he was introduced by Ali to Imam Mahdi, the twelfth invisible Imam who further instructed him in the twelve heavenly books. We learn of these books thus incidentally in this connection. They are enumerated as follows. The four books which were revealed for the children of Adam viz . Torah, Zabur, Injil and Furqan.

3. **The Shattari Order:** This order is an offshoot of the Tayfuri Khanwada, and is attributed to Shaykh Abdullah shattari, a descendant of Shaykh shihab'ud - Din Suhrawardi. The name Shattar literally means 'speed, and is a term applied by the Sufis to certain mystical practices whereby they are enabled in the shortest possible time to arrive at the state of annihilation' (fana) and 'subsistence' (baqa) 'Abdu'llah was the first to receive the title of shattari on the completion of such practices. It was given to him by his pir, Shaykh Muhammad 'Arif, who afterwards sent him to India. Wherever he went 'Abdullah sought out the Sufis and said to them "If you possess any spiritual gift, I request you to share it with me, otherwise I invite you to share mine. He also made this proclamation in every place through which he passed; Let everyone who is a seeker after God come to me and I will lead him to God"

When in India he first took up his residence at Jaunpur, the capital of the then reigning sultan Ibrahim Sharqi, But soon his relations with the court became strained and he was obliged to leave for Maiwa, which then was a small independent Muslim state . There in its capital - Mandu - he lived till he died in A.D. 1428-29¹.

¹. Assam Buranji Ed. fay S.K Bhuyan, Recovered from the family of Sukumar Mahanta of North Gauhati, Gauhati, 1945. A D., P- 56

5. Qalandari Order: The meaning of word qalandar has not yet been satisfactorily defined. In an article written on the subject a few years ago, an Indian Sufi claimed that it is derived from one of the names of God in Syriac. Others have sought to find its derivation in the Persian Kalanatar, a chief man or Kalantar a rough, uncouth man, but both of these are rejected by Rose as highly improbable. Further, the idea has been put forward that the term is derived from the Turkish Qarinda or Qalandari, both meaning musical instruments or again, that it is connected with the Turkish word qal, Meaning pure; but all such attempts to trace it to known word in various languages are best with difficulties. The term, whatever its meaning, is applied to an order of faqirs, of which we have varying, descriptions. According to some writers these faqirs form a class of begging monks, but others speak of them as a tribe of nomads who make their living by conjuring and the exhibition of performing bears etc. Others again, give a more honourable account of its members, depicting them as a pious people who travel about, mostly without shoes, and practice the severest acts of austerity, and at times live in a state of ecstasy. But in the hagiology of Indian Islam the Qalandariyya is an order of faqirs who are so absorbed in religious reveries or overcome to such an extent an extent by ecstatic experiences that they are unable to distinguish between things lawful and unlawful. Members of this order are distinguished by the fact that they shave their heads, eyebrows, moustaches and beards¹.

6. The Malamati Order: The designation Malamati is derived from malamah blame and signifies one who is 'blame worthy'. The term has been generally applied to the saints of this Order, as indicating that they stood in a special relation to God, and in consequence, were not subject to the Divine ordinances². This however does not appear to have been the meaning which the early exponents of Sufism attached to the word. Rather it was used by them for a mode of life sometimes adopted by the Sufis whereby they cloaked their sanctity by affecting the manners of the libertine. The first saint to follow the path of malamatiyya was Dhun Nunu'l Misti who has been mentioned in the earlier chapter of this book. He was regarded by the Ulama of Egypt as a Zindiq or freethinker. It was his disciple, Hamdu'ul-Qassar, who founded the Malamati Order. Aliul-hujwiri speaking about him writes as follows. He has many fine sayings on the subject. It is recorded that he said Ali-malamat tarku'l-salamat, Blame is the abandonment of welfare. If anyone purposely abandons his own welfare and girds himself to endure misfortune, and renounces his pleasures and familiar ties, in hope that the glory of God will be revealed to him the more he is separated from mankind the more he is united to God. "The order was introduced into Constantinople by Shaykh Hamza, a Mulla of Brusa in the 16th century. There the malamutes came to be known as Hamzawis. After the name of Hamza, they formed a secret Order, with an organization strikingly like that of the free masons. Shaykh Hamza was executed soon after the accession of Sultan Murad (III) apparently in A.D. 1575. The ground of his condemnation was said to be his excessive reverence for the Lord Jesus, and he was sentenced to be stoned at the Hippodrome, but out of fear of a popular outbreak as soon as he was brought out of his prison his throat

¹. Asamiya Zikir aru Zari, Syed Abdul Malik Collection Of verses composed by Azan peer Gauhati University, 1958. A.D., P-82

². Asamiya Zikir aru Zari, Syed Abdul Malik Collection Of verses composed by Azan peer Gauhati University, 1958. A.D., P-10 of 142

was cut. One, wonders if he was influence by Qabiz, founder of the khumbas this a sect which held Jesus to be morally superior to Muhammad. He too, had been executed with exemplary promptitude in 1527”¹.

Sufis in Assam and their contributions:

Azan Faqir: The most celebrated and well-known Sufistice poet of Assam, whose name is found on the tongue of not only every Assamese Muslim but also Assamese Hindus and who is paid much honour, was Hazrat Azan Faqir, He flourished in the middle of the seventeenth century and also entered Assam with brother Hazrat Nabi pir from certain place in the west Asia.

Certain information regarding his life history and other activities is very meager. Mohibul Hussain has collected some materials regarding the life of Azan Faqir and published it by the little of Hazrat Azan pir sibsagar, 1972 in Assamese language. Syed Abdul Malik has also collected Azan Pir and edited his Zikir and Zari and published it by Gauhati University we know this very much that his original name was Shah Miran. Azan was his nick name. It is also mentioned in the history that as he used to call the people to offer prayer by calling Azan (Prayer call) the people of Assam started to call him by the name of Azan Faqir or Azan Pir. But we came to know his name in his verses as beggar. Some of the opinions that his original name was Mohiuddin. It is very difficult to say about his native land. According to some he migrated from Bagdad. We come to Known just a little about him from his Zikirs which are, even today, on the tongue of the people. He came to Assam in 1045 A.H. /1635 A.D. during the reign of Raja Pratab sigh, whose real name was Susengpha.

The Government of Assam has recently instituted a national level annual award under the name and style of ‘Ajan Pir Award’ to commemorate the sacred name of Hazarat Ajan Pir , a great poet lyncist and saint of medieval Assam, who contributed immensely towards Strengthening peace and harmony in the country, The real name of Ajan pir, also known as Ajan Faquir or Shah Milan (Miran), is said to be Hazarat Shah Syed Mainuddin who is supposed to have lived in the middle of the seventeenth century A.D. As Propagator of Islam he was given the epithet ‘Pir” (saint) He was called ‘Ajan’ as he invoked people for ‘namaj’ Ajan Pir was the most prominent composer of the Assamese Zikirs. The Zikirs are Islamic devotional songs forming an important part of the oral literature in Assamese The term ‘Zikir’ { Ziqr} which is of Arabic origin, means ‘singing or remembering the name of Allah or God’. The Zikirs contain the teachings of Islam and are expressed in the language and style of Assamese Vaishnavite poetry. The songs are meant for the glorification of God and for the inculcation of those human qualities and ideals which bring peace to the soul and establish harmony between man and man. On account of their thematic appeal simple language and sweet melody, the Zikirs are very popular among all sections of the Assamese people. Until the middle of the last

¹. Assam-er Ithihas, Debabrata Dutta, Calcutta, 1956. P- 96

century the Zikirs were not written down, but were handed down from generation to generation orally among the Assamese Muslims¹.

Syed Abdul Malik named Chand Khan and Majnudid Faquir as predecessor of Ajan Pir in the composition of Zikirs. This chand Khan might be chand Sai, the famous Muslim disciple of Sankardeva. Besides Ajan Pir there were other composers of Zikirs. Although much is not known about the life and personality of Ajan Faquir, we have references to him in two old Assamese chronicles and in some of the Zikirs. In one of the Zikirs, Ajan Faquir describes himself to be foreigner (Pardeshi) which in dictates that he came to Assam from outside. It is said that he hailed from Baghdad and was a disciple of Khawaja Nizamuddin Auliya.

Hazrat Shah Badar (alive in 1346 A.D), the first prominent Sufi of Assam to have received some attention from modern scholars is Hazrat Shah Badar. He came to Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) with Shah Jalal Mujarrad (d. 1346 A.D.) who entered the territory of Assam from Arab land. Badarpur was border area of Sylhet district (at present in the district of Karimganj, Assam). The statement of Suhail Yemen is said to be correct that shah Jalal had come to Bundasil village, near the present madrasah Alia of Badarpur. Among the 360 khalifas of Shah Jalal who accompanied him to Badarpur to propagate Islam and its teachings. We have no detail information regarding the life and activities of Shah Badar who is regarded as the first Sufi of this area. His shrine is situated in the old fort of Badarpur Ghat near the present dak- bungalow. Shah Adam Khaki Among the contemporaries of Shah Badar and Khalifa of Shah Jalal Mujarrad, whose names were available mention may be made of shah Adam Khaki .whose Dargah is situated at the western part of Badarpur, adjacent to the P.W.D. Road. Badarpur, Karimganj, on every Thursday night hundreds of people flock to this darhgah from far off areas and offer Prayers there. Both the Hindus and Muslims visit and offer nazr-o-niyaz. It seems that he was a living symbol and embodiment of Hindu-Muslim unity².

Shah Divaud: - Din Shah Diyaud -Dim, another companion of Shah Badar, whom Shah Jalal Mujarrad had especially sent to this place to impart education and training among the people, was a Sufi of high Rank and position, He acted upon the order of his Shaikh and propagated Islam among the people till his last days. A madrasah and a mosque founded by him near the khadiman village of Badarpur were swept away along with his tomb by the waters of the Barak River.

Shah Abdul Malik: Shah Abdul Malik was another comrade of Shah Badar sent by Shah Jalal Mujarrad to this land to assist shah Diyaud - Din in his mission of teaching the doctrine of Islam. His tomb is situated towards the north- east of the Badarpur bazar. The saint was of a high rank and was respected by all.

Impact of Sufism on Assamese Socio-Cultural life: The terms Sufi, Wali, Darvesh and Faqir are used for Muslim saints who attempted to achieve development of their intuitive faculties through ascetic exercises, contemplation, renunciation and self-denial. By the 12th century A.D., Sufism had become a universal aspect of Islamic social life as its

¹. Asamiya Zikir aru Zari, Syed Abdul Malik Collection Of verses composed by Azan peer Gauhati University, 1958. A .D. P -82.

². Tamizi, Mohammed Yahyia: Sufi movements in Eastern India, New Delhi, 1992 AD, PP- 85-86

influence extended over almost the entire Muslim community¹. Sufism represents the inward of esoteric side of Islam or the mystical dimension of Muslim religion. However, the Sufi saints transcending all religious and communal distinctions, worked for promoting the interest of humanity at large. The Sufis were a class of philosophers remarkable for their religious catholicity. Sufis regarded God as the supreme beauty and believed that one must admire it, take delight in His thought and concentrate his attention on Him only. They believed that God is 'Mashuq' and Sufis are the 'Ashiqs'. Sufism crystallized itself into various 'Silsilahs' or orders. The 4 most popular among these were Chistis, Suhrawardis, Qadiriya and Naqshbandis.

Sufism took roots in both rural and urban areas and exercised a deep social, political and cultural influence on the masses. It rebelled against all forms of religious formalism, orthodoxy, falsehood and hypocrisy and endeavoured to create a new world order in which spiritual bliss was the only and the ultimate goal. At a time when struggle for political power was the prevailing madness, the Sufi saints reminded men of their moral obligations. To a world torn by strife and conflict they tried to bring peace and harmony. The most important contribution of Sufism is that it helped to blunt the edge of Hindu-Muslim prejudices by forging the feelings of solidarity and brotherhood between these two religious communities.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries continued to witness the rise of many religious reformers. The exponent of the Rama cult and the Krishna cult among the Vaishnavas branched off into a number of sects and creeds. The leading light of the Rama cult was saint-poet Tulsidas. He was a very great scholar and had made a profound study of Indian philosophy and literature. His great poem, 'Ramacharitamanasa', popularly called Tulsikrita Ramayana is very popular among the Hindu devotees. He set before the people the image of Sri Rama as all virtuous, all powerful, the Lord of the World, and the very embodiment of the Supreme Reality (Parabrahma). The followers of the Krishna cult founded the Radha Ballabhi sect under Hari Vamsa in 1585 A.D. Sur Das wrote 'Sursagar' in Brajbhasha, which is full of verses of the charm of Lord Krishna and his beloved Radha. With the Unity of God (Tawhid) as the central doctrine and daily prayers as the important ritual, the religion was based on fast, alms giving, pilgrimage to Mecca and belief in Muhammad as the last of the prophets of God. Equality and brotherhood of all Muslims before God and among themselves were the important characteristics of the religion in the social side! In spite of these appealing features, the religion could not attract many followers in Assam, as it could in other parts of India. It was the philosophy of Islam with the sociological features of equality and brotherhood, rather than its religious aspects, that perhaps was responsible for the spread of the Islamic religion in India, as Hindu philosophy which in the medieval period " had been responsible for the social chaos from which Islam showed a way out for the masses of the Indian people. In Assam, the very composition of its society was distinctly different. The absence of the rigid caste system in ancient Assam was its unique character. It could only be divided as Aryan and non – Aryan².

¹. Arberry, Arthur John: The doctrine of Sufis, New Delhi 1994, P-12

². <http://banglepadica.www.com.in>

In the middle of seventeenth century, Hazarat shah Miran alias Azan Fakir, The most renowned Muslim saint poet of Assam is said to have entered the Ahom Kingdom with his brother Hazarat Nabi pir from some place in the western country Azan Pir had composed a number of Zikirs in Assamese and some of these Zikirs were composed during A. H. 1045 to A.H. 1052 (1635 A.D. to 1642 A.D.) The reference of these dates and the uses of literary expressions from Assamese folk - songs and other Vaishnavite literary works in some of his Zikirs of high literary merit suggests that time he had not only established himself in Assam but also acquired perfect knowledge of Assamese folk literature and other religious literature besides a perfect command over the language.

The Assamese Zikirs and Zaris or (Marshiyas), the most outstanding and sustaining contribution of the Assamese Muslims to the popular literature of Assam is the Zikirs and Zaris. A Zikirs is a religious or philosophical poem centring on a point of faith or of philosophy. In several of the songs of this variety a story cantering around the life of Azan pir or shah Miran (Milan) to whom these sons are sometimes ascribed is told. A Zari is elegiac in character and content and may be called a form of marshiya and generally relates itself to the tragic tale of Karbala. some of the Assamese Zaris may be called independent ballads giving the stories of Haider Ghazi These compositions particularly the Zikirs in their subject matter resemble the Bargits or devotional songs of Sankara deva and Madhavadeva But unlike the Bargits in the literary Brajabali idiom. They are couched in colloquial homely Assamese, and in their form and expression they are in line with Deh-vicharar. Get, a variety of philosophical songs of the Assamese village minstrels and some other folk songs. The chief objective of the Zikirs appears to be the reorganisation of the society of Assamese Muslims, by regenerating their faith and love for Islam in such a way that there will be no discord in their age old harmonious relation with Hindu society, in which the great movement of social reform initiated by Sankardeva seems to have attained its logical culmination already¹.

Foreign Language: The gradual rise of Arabic and Persian words in the Assamese language is, in fact another note worthy and tangible effect of the age old contact of Assam with the Muhammadans. The main factors which appear to have played a dominant role in promoting the growth of such elements in the language are; (1) the rise of Muslim population in Assam (2) the travels of pilgrims from Assam in Northern India (3) wars and diplomatic relations between the Assamese kings and the Muhammadans powers (4) religious songs like Zikirs and Zaris of Assamese Muslims (5) cultural exchanges in the later period of Ahom rule in the country. Though the solitary use of the word 'naphar' personify by Hema saraswati a court poet of Kamata king Durabha narayana (who flourished sometime from the middle of the last quarter of the thirteenth century to the close of the first decade of the next century appears to have been the starting point of the flow of such words to Assamese, it is held that such words entered in larger number and a more continuous stream only from the beginning of the seventeenth century when Ahom- Mughal political contact set in. It is interesting to note here that in the Bargaon inscription of the Kamarupa king Ratnapala who flourished in the ninth century there is a reference to Tayikas. The capital of the king durjaya is described as inspiring terror in the hearts of the Bahikas and Tayikas where tayika has been

¹. Gagoi Professor Lila: Asamia Luka Sahita Rupreka Edition 1968, P -72

considered as the same as Tarjika as in Hemchandras Abhidhan chintamani or Dajik by Dr. Hoemle and other scholars we are inclined to think that this was perhaps an indirect reference to Gushtashib shah of Azam, who is said to have entered Kamarupa where he concealed some treasure on his way to India from China¹.

Conclusion: The liberal and unorthodox elements of Sufism had a profound impact on medieval Bhakti saints. In the later period, the Sufi doctrines influenced the religious perspective of the rulers along with reminding them of their moral obligations. For example, the Mughal Emperor, Akbar's religious outlook and religious policies were shaped a lot under Sufism.

Sufism influenced both rural and urban regions and had a deep political, cultural and social influence on the masses. Spiritual bliss became the ultimate aim and the people could raise their voice against all forms of orthodoxy, falsehood, religious formalism and hypocrisy. In a world torn by strife and conflict, the Sufis tried to bring peace and harmony.

The most important contribution of Sufism is that it helped to develop a bond of solidarity and brotherhood between Hindu and Muslim communities. The Sufi saints are revered not only by Muslims but also by a huge number of Hindus and their tombs have become a common place of pilgrimage for both communities.

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FROM PROTEST TO VIOLENCE: REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM IN COLONIAL INDIA

Abstract: The rise of revolutionary terrorism in the Indian National Movement marked a significant and dynamic phase in the country's struggle for independence. This article explores the emergence, development, and impact of terrorism as a form of resistance against British colonial rule in the early 20th century. The roots of revolutionary terrorism can be traced back to earlier violent uprisings such as the South Indian Rebellion (1800–1801) and the Great Revolt of 1857, which laid the foundation for armed resistance in India. Growing discontent with the moderate constitutional methods of the Indian National Congress and the perceived ineffectiveness of extremist politics created fertile ground for the emergence of militant nationalism. Revolutionary terrorism was driven by the goal of liberating India through direct action. Revolutionary groups like Anushilan Samiti, Jugantar Party, Abhinav Bharat Society, and Ghadar Party sought to instill fear among colonial authorities, awaken patriotic fervor among the masses, and establish a society based on freedom, equality, and justice. Their methods included political assassinations, bombings, and acts of sabotage, all aimed at destabilizing British administration and demonstrating Indian resistance. The paper also highlights significant incidents, including the assassinations of British officials like Curzon Wyllie, Jackson of Nasik, and Robert Ashe, which symbolized a new era of political violence. These revolutionary activities, although limited in direct political success, played a crucial role in shaping the nationalist discourse and inspiring generations of Indians. Underground organizations operated both within India and abroad, forming networks in London, Paris, Germany, Canada, and the United States to promote the cause of Indian independence. Despite facing brutal repression, lack of coordination, and limited public support, revolutionary terrorism left a lasting impact on India's freedom movement. This article reassesses its role and significance in contributing to the growth of Indian nationalism and political consciousness.

Key Words: *Philosophy of the pistol, Path of bloodshed, Revolutionary groups, Assassinations of British officials, growth of Indian nationalism, political consciousness.*

Introduction

The roots of the terrorist movement may be traced to the South Indian Rebellion of 1800-1801¹ and the Great Revolt of 1857.² The former was a “*violent movement of major proportions*”,³ as the latter was “*a violent reaction against the aggressive policy pursued by the British against the ruling houses and the ruling classes of the country*”.⁴ The ruthless suppression of insurrections, mutinies, revolts and rebellions by British

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authorities inflamed the minds of the impatient youth of India. The bubonic plague in Maharashtra and the Partition of Bengal gave rise to Extremism. Similarly, the suppression of the Swadeshi Movement and Passive Resistance of the Extremists gave birth to the Terrorist Movement. Disenchanted with both the non-violent but adamantly militant constitutional methods of the Moderates and the Extremists, the Terrorists turned to military confrontation.

Objective of the Terrorists

The objective of the Terrorists was to free India from the clutches of the British yoke. They considered the British Government in India as an alien imposition based on force, fraud and deception. Their aim, therefore, was to remove the thorn of the British rule from the flesh of India. By removing the foreign rule, the Terrorists hoped to remove the political, economic and social disparities from India. They wanted to infuse patriotic sentiments among the people. They aimed to reconstruct society based on freedom, equality and justice. Their goal was indeed noble.

Method of Terrorists

The Terrorists believed in the philosophy of the pistol. They adopted the method of violence and followed the path of bloodshed. They were for organized rebellion tampering with the army and for carrying on guerilla war. They took recourse to underground activities. They never hesitated to smuggle arms and ammunition from neighboring countries. They risked their lives to liberate India from British rule to drive the British from India. The Terrorists assassinated the unscrupulous and inhuman British officers, destroyed government property and looted treasuries. At the same time, they raised patriotism to the pitch of religion as they elevated decoity to the level of patriotism. In short, instigation, insurrection, assassination, guerrilla warfare, destruction of public property and subversion were the methods adopted by the Terrorists to achieve their objective.

Political Murders by the Terrorists

The terrorists resorted to political murders to frighten the British rulers. On 6 December 1907, an attempt was made to blow up the train in which **Sir Andrew Henderson Leith Fraser** (1848-1919), the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (from 1903 to 1908), was traveling. It is said that the idea of partitioning Bengal into two provinces to improve administrative efficiency came actually from Andrew Fraser. Scholars also believe that the partition of Bengal (1905) was not Curzon's idea.⁵ On 23 December 1907 **P.C.Allen**, the District Magistrate of Dacca was seriously wounded by a revolver shot. On 30 April 1908, an attempt was made on the life of **Douglas H. Kingsford**, Presidency Magistrate, who inflicted corporal punishment on respectable youngmen and vindictiveness towards the freedom fighters.⁶ By mistake the bomb meant for him killed **Mrs and Miss Kennedy**, wife and daughter of **Pringle Kennedy**, a European advocate. In November a student named **Jitendra Nath Rai Chowdary** was arrested after his cold - blooded attempt to assassinate Sir Andrew Fraser.⁷

On 1 July 1909 Lieutenant Colonel **Sir W.Curzon Wyllie** (1848-1909) was murdered at the Imperial Institute, London by an Indian named Madan Lal Dhingra, who was a member of India House in London. He was sentenced to death in July 1909 and

hanged at Pentonville Prison on 17 August 1909.⁸ On 13 November 1909, two coconut bombs were thrown on the carriage in which **Lord and Lady Minto** were driving through the city of Ahmadabad. The bombs, however, did not explode and the life of the Viceroy and Lady Minto was saved.⁹ On 21 December 1909, **Jackson**, the Collector of Nasik, was shot dead by **Anant Laxman Kanhere** at Vijayanand theatre. He was sentenced to death by the British government.¹⁰ In the same month, a bomb was sent in a parcel addressed to the Deputy Commissioner at Ambala. Khan Bhagadur Shams-ul-Alam, the Deputy Superintendent of Police in the Bengal Criminal Investigation Department, was shot dead in the Calcutta High Court in January 1910. **Vanchinatha Iyer** (1886-1911), popularly known as Vanchinathan or Vanchi, was an Indian independence activist¹¹ shot **Robert Ashe**, the Collector of Tirunelveli dead in broad daylight on 17 June 1911.¹² On 23 December 1912, when the new Viceroy **Lord Hardings** was triumphantly entering the new capital Delhi on an elephant, a bomb was thrown on him. The Viceroy escaped with injury though his ADC was killed by the explosion.¹³ The British Administration was panicked by the Terrorists.

Underground Organizations

Secret Societies

As the Swadeshi Movement declined the underground secret societies prang up in Bengal and Maharashtra. They were semi-legal revolutionary organizations. They concentrated mainly on the student population, urban workers and intelligentsia. Their aims were to 1) foster in Indian youth a sense of national identity; 2) wage a struggle against the British rule with whatever means available to achieve India's independence and 3) mount armed attacks and carry out acts of terrorism. The underground organizations followed terror tactics. The tasks of the societies were outlined in pamphlets, "War is inevitable if oppression can not be ended by any other means if the leprosy of slavery poisons the blood in the body of our nation and robs it of its life force". Acts of terror were perpetrated against those British or Indians who posed an immediate threat to the underground movement. The intention was not to liberate the country by killing a few foreigners, but rather to demonstrate to the people how they should face danger and death.¹⁴

Abhinav Bharat Society

The Abhinav Bharat Mandir (Young India Society) was founded by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and his brother Ganesh Damodar Savarkar in the year 1904, as a secret organization during the Indian War of Independence. When Vinayak Savarkar was a student of Fergusson College in Pune, it was initially established in Nashik under the name 'Mitra Mela'. This led to some assassinations of British officials, after which the Savarkar brothers were convicted and imprisoned. It was one of the many (revolutionary organizations) involved in Maharashtra that believed in overthrowing the armed British rule. In 1904, at a meeting attended by 200 members from various cities in Maharashtra, freedom fighter Vinayak Savarkar named Giuseppe Mazzini's Young Italy and named it Abhinav Bharat.¹⁵

In 1906, Vinayak Savarkar left for London to study law. In the same year, he compiled a volume entitled Magnini Character, a translation of the writings of the Italian revolutionary Magnini, with a 25-page preface. The book was published in Maharashtra

in June 1907 and the first edition with 2,000 copies is said to have sold out within a month. Savarkar had fully mastered Mazzini's secret society and guerrilla warfare techniques. He wrote regular letters to his compatriots in India as well as propagated revolutionaries in London.¹⁶

Inspired by Savarkar's revolutionary views, Madanlal Dhingra assassinated Lieutenant Colonel William Curzon-Wyllie, a political assistant to the Indian Foreign Secretary, at a meeting of Indian students on the evening of 1 July 1909 at the Imperial Institute in London. Dhingra was arrested and later tried. A.M.T. Jackson was appointed as the District Magistrate of Nashik. At the same time in 1909, Anant Laxman Kanhere was 17 years old. He shot and killed Jackson during the airing of Sangeet Sharda at Vijayanand Theater. Anant Kanhere, Krishnaji Karve, and Vinayak Deshpande were present at that time.¹⁷

The investigation into Jackson's murder revealed the existence of the Abhinav Bharat Society and the role of the Savarkar brothers. Vinayak Savarkar was found to have sent twenty Browning pistols to India, one of which was used in Jackson's murder. He was charged with Jackson's murder and sentenced to life in prison. Savarkar was imprisoned in the Andaman Islands Cellular Jail.¹⁸ The society was formally dissolved in 1952.

Nav Bharat Society

Nav Bharat Society was active in Gwalior. It was working towards the future armed uprising in India. 22 Brahmins who were members of the Society were put on trial and many of them were convicted. The Nav Bharat Society had links with the Abhinav Bharat Society.¹⁹

Anusilan Samiti

The main underground organizations in Bengal were the Anusilan Samiti in Dacca and the Yugantar Party in Calcutta. They had many branches in other towns and villages. The Anusilan Samiti was founded by **P.Mitra**. Its objective was to promote culture and impart training to the youth. It was modeled on the same lines as the secret societies of Italy and Russia. On 6 December 1907, the Samiti attempted to blow up the train on which the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Andrew Fraser, was traveling.²⁰

Yugantar Party

Barindra Kumar Ghosh, the younger brother of Aurobindo Ghosh started the paper Yugantar and through its columns carried on the work of educating the masses. The party preached rebellion against the Government.²¹ In 1907 one of the leaders Yugantar Party, **Hem Chandra Das**, was sent to Western Europe where he made contact with Russian revolutionaries in exile and received instructions on making explosives. After his return to India at the beginning of 1908 bomb cult spread through the underground organizations. Other secret societies linked with the central organizations in Bengal and Maharashtra were active in the Punjab, the United Provinces, the Central provinces and South India.

Cruelly Crushed

When the national movement had been gathering momentum in 1905-1906 the underground organizations incited the Anglo-Indian army. In 1909 an unsuccessful attempt was made to arouse the soldiers of the Punjab Regiment stationed in Calcutta to rebellion. More careful preparations were made for a revolt in February 1915 simultaneously in five different garrisons in North India. Betrayed by an agent provocateur, the plot was detected and the organizers led by **Rash Behari Bose** were routed. Alarmed by the terrorist activities the colonial authorities cruelly crushed the underground organizations. They were practically wiped out in 1908-1909. The leaders of the secret societies including B.Ghosh, U.Datt, Hem Chandra Das, U.N.Banerjee, J.Banerjee, P.B.Das, B.Ch.Nag and the Savarkar brothers were thrown into prison. And yet new underground organizations sprang up in the place of those that had been wiped out. Terrorist acts against the British and the unpatriotic Indians continued unabated. However, lack of popular support, absence of well- conceived programme, inadequate resources, and lack of coordination coupled with Government repression were responsible for the failure of the terrorist movement as such.

Indian Freedom Struggle in Abroad

Contact with Foreign Countries

At the beginning of the 20th century the Extremists, the Revolutionaries and the Terrorists carried on their struggle against the British Government abroad. They were interested in establishing contacts with foreign countries to espouse the cause of the Indian struggle for freedom and to seek their support for that noble cause. They visited England, France, Germany, America, Japan and Russia and started secret societies, delivered speeches, published articles and mobilized public opinion. The revolutionary organizations abroad were led by Indian Émigrés. The secret societies were first set up in Europe and later in the United States and in Eastern Countries. Thus, the Indian Émigrés kept the torch of the Indian struggle for freedom in foreign countries alive.²²

Society of Indian Home Rule, England

The first centre of Indian émigrés was established in London in 1905 by **Shamji Krishna Varma**,²³ who was implicated with the murder of W.C.Rand the Plague Commissioner of Poona, managed to escape to London and there he founded the Society of Indian Home Rule. Former Dewan of Udaipur and a sound Sanskrit scholar, Varma was able to easily impress the intellectuals at Oxford with his erudition. He published *The Indian Sociologist*, a nationalist journal. It spread the message of the Indian freedom struggle in England and rallied its readers to the cause of freedom fighters. Indian students were encouraged to go to England for higher studies. The Indian émigrés and students in London used to meet at Varma's India House. Though the India House served as a hostel for Indian students at British Universities, it functioned as the centre of revolutionary activities.

V.D.Savarkar joined the India House as a student from India and soon he became a close confidant of Varma. By 1906 he completed his two outstanding books *Joseph Mazzini* and his magnum opus *Indian war of Independence*. Special lectures had been arranged at India House to inspire the audience with revolutionary fervor. On 10

May 1908 the Revolution of 1857 was commemorated.²⁴ The leaders of the Society of Indian Home Rule included apart from Krishna Varma, V.D.Savarkar, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya S.Ramabhai Rana, V.V.S.Iyer, Madanlal Dingra and others. Harassed and founded by the British police, the majority of the members of the society left London and emigrated to Paris by 1909-1910.²⁵

The Paris Group, France

The most outstanding personalities who migrated to Paris were S.Krishna Varma, S.R.Rana, V.Chattopadhyaya, Madam R.Gama, Har Dayal and V.V.S.Iyer. They formed what was known as the Paris Group founded in 1905 at Paris under the patronage of Madam Bhikaji Rustom Cama, Munchersah Burjorji Godrej.²⁶ They established contacts with French sociologists. They came into contact with revolutionaries from other European countries. In particular, they had strengthened their ties with Russian Social Democrats who were the émigrés from Russia and also with Socialist International. The Paris Group had contact with the Secret Societies in India. A number of journals, newspapers, leaflets, circulars and books were sent to India. Indian Sociologist edited by Krishna Varma and '*Bande Mataram*' edited by R.Gama and S.R.Rana were surreptitiously despatched to India. Such revolutionary and seditious literature had been smuggled through the French colonies of Pondicherry and Chandranagur, which served as independent postal links with Europe.²⁷ However, the Paris Group of Indian revolutionaries was disbanded after the outbreak of the First World War.

International Socialist Congress, Germany

Indian revolutionaries were active in Germany. They worked in close collaboration with German sociologists. An International Socialist Congress was organized by them in 1907.²⁸ Madam Gama and Sardar Singh Rana attended the Conference. It was at this Conference Madam Gama unfurled the National Flag of India. In a resolution, they urged all freedom-loving nations of the world to support the freedom struggle in India. She devoted four decades of her life to the cause of Indian freedom. In 1914 she was arrested and deported. She returned to India in 1934 and died a couple of years later. With the outbreak of the First World War the Indian revolutionaries in Germany pinned their hopes on German aid. All Indian Independence Committees had been formed in Berlin to coordinate their efforts with the German authorities for the subversion of British rule in India.²⁹

Komagata Maru Episode, Canada

Taraknath Das, who arrived in Canada in 1906, played an important role in the propagation of opposition to British rule in India. Soon he moved to the United States. The Indian immigrants in Canada, mostly Sikhs, were subjected to discrimination and indignities. They were campaigning for equal rights on par with their Canadian counterparts. With a view to restricting Indian immigration, the Canadian Government passed an Immigration law permitting only direct passengers from Calcutta to Canada. As there were no direct sea services from Calcutta, Baba Gurdit Singh floated **Guru Nanak Navigation Company**. He hired a Japanese ship called **Komagata Maru**. The Japanese ship reached Calcutta and was able to accommodate 500 Indian passengers. But it was not allowed to enter the Canadian harbor (22 May 1914).³⁰ The Canadian

authorities in collusion with their British counterparts harassed and subjected the passengers of Komagata Maru to untold suffering Bai Bhag Singh and Bhai Vatan Singh led an agitation against the Canadian authorities for the repeal of the new immigration law. Hopkinson, the Chief Immigration Officer of Canada, was killed by Mewa Singh, who was sentenced to death and hanged on 11 January 1915.³¹ The Komagata Maru episode and aftermath created a lot of bitterness among Indians in general and the Sikhs in particular against the British and Canadian Governments.³²

The Ghadar Party, the United States

Taraknath Das who came from Canada to the United States in 1906 started a journal *Free Hindustan* (April 1908) which became very popular among the Indian émigrés. His propaganda work prepared the ground for a bigger organization for Indian revolutionaries in exile.³³ Har Dayal, who arrived at San Francisco in 1911, was the main source of inspiration to them. His newspaper *Ghadar* (uprising) was started in memory of the Great Revolt of 1857. Har Dayal formed the *Ghadar Party* at San Francisco in November 1913.³⁴ *Yugantar Ashram* was its headquarters. The Ghadar Party decided to wage a war against the British in India. With this end in view, it established a network of branches in America and also in various countries of the Pacific, including Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya and China. Indian soldiers in the Far East, South East Asia and India were contacted and instigated to revolt.³⁵ Its attempt to provoke an all-India revolt on 21 February 1915 failed and the revolutionaries were either sentenced to death or transported for life. Though the Ghadar movement was suppressed, it continued to influence the Sikhs and gave the Akali movement its radical colour.³⁶

Conclusion

The origin of early terrorism in India may be traced to the formation of four militant groups in Bengal in 1902. The progress of these groups was modest till the beginning of the Swadeshi Movement in 1905. The movement witnessed an upsurge of Secret Societies. Decoity, robbery, bomb throwing assassination of oppressive officials, became the prominent features of terrorist activities. Khudiram Bose attempt on the life of the Bengal Presidency Magistrate Kingsford on 30 April 1908 at Muzaffarpur and the arrest of terrorist group including Aurobindo Ghose dealt a death blow to terrorist activities. Aurobindo's ambition of an open armed rebellion was aborted. "In terms of direct gains, the terrorist activities achieved precious little".

Though the terrorist attempts failed, the heroism of individual terrorists inspired the imagination of the people and immortalized in folk lores. The Terrorist Movement went underground and refused to die down. Revolutionary terrorism was considered to be an alternative to the mendicant policies of the Moderates and the dissipated attempts of the Extremists. It was even claimed that the Minto- Morley Reforms were an outcome of the Terrorist Movement. Despite their eventual failure, the patriotic terrorists made "*a valuable contribution to the growth of nationalism in India*".

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**AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF MA'ĀRIJ AL-NUBUWWA WRITTEN IN
EASTERN TURKISH**

Abstract

Eastern Turkish occupies an important position in the linguistic and cultural history of the Turkic world. The Indian subcontinent constitutes a particularly significant repository of Eastern Turkish manuscripts, many of which remain insufficiently studied. This study examines the Eastern Turkish translation of *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa fī Madārij al-Futuwwa*, a major Persian work of prophetic biography that was translated into Eastern Turkish by an unidentified individual, with the date of translation remaining unknown. Originally composed in Herat by Mu'īn al-Dīn al-Miskīn, the work narrates the life, miracles, and spiritual lineage of the Prophet Muḥammad. The Eastern Turkish translation is preserved in the National Library of India in Kolkata under Accession No. 920. There exists another copy of the translation, undertaken in the eighteenth century by Muḥammad Raḥīm-i Miskīn.

The present study provides an analytical examination of the manuscript's *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa's Muqaddime* (Introduction), which consists of 104 folios. This manuscript was identified during research conducted in a library in Kolkata. Unfortunately, no information regarding the translator or copyist, as well as the dates of translation or transcription, could be located. Particular attention is given to its structural organization, linguistic characteristics, cosmological narratives, and the interaction of Turkic, Persian, and Indian linguistic and cultural elements. However, certain evidence suggests that the translation occurred during the post-classical period of the Chagatai (XVII). The study demonstrates that the manuscript constitutes an important source for understanding the linguistic characteristics of post-classical period of the Chagatai Turkish and the adaptation of Islamic prophetic literature within the Persianate and Mughal-influenced cultural environment of seventeen-century India.

Keywords: Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa, Analytical study, Eastern Turkish, India, Kolkata

Introduction and Historical Context

Eastern Turkish is a historical literary language that occupies an important position in the history of Turkic languages and literatures. The Indian subcontinent represents one of the significant geographical areas in which Eastern Turkish literary production continued to develop. Libraries in India preserve numerous manuscripts written in or translated into Eastern Turkish, covering various genres and fields of knowledge. Nevertheless, many of these manuscripts remain insufficiently examined, particularly from linguistic and literary perspectives.

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Translated works are especially valuable for historical linguistic research because they provide evidence of how literary languages interacted with other linguistic traditions and how texts were adapted for different cultural and intellectual environments. In this respect, the Eastern Turkish translation of *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa* provides important material for examining the linguistic and cultural development of Eastern Turkish in eighteenth-century India.

The original *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa fī Madārij al-Futuwwa* was composed in Persian in 891 AH/1486 CE by Mu'īn al-Dīn al-Miskīn Muḥammad Amīn b. Sharaf al-Dīn Ḥājj Muḥammad al-Farāhī al-Harawī (d. 907 AH/1501–1502 CE), who was associated with Herat.¹ The work subsequently circulated widely in the Persianate Islamic world² and was translated into Eastern Turkish by an unidentified individual. This manuscript was identified during research conducted at a library in Kolkata. Unfortunately, no information has been discovered pertaining to the translator or copyist, nor has any indication of the dates of translation or transcription been found. However, some evidence indicates that the translator claimed the work was translated at the behest of Hazrat-e Khawajem Padishah, who resided in Yarkand State (1514-1705). This suggests that the translation likely took place in the seventeenth century. I am providing the original he penned on page 1b of the manuscript, which includes a statement regarding the author, the copyist, and the date of composition: از تصنیفات ملا معین بامداد خواجه پادشاه راقم: کتاب اسحاق معارج النوت سنه 891 (From the works of Molla Muin, with the assistance of Khawaja Padishah, the copyright of the original book is Ishaq, *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, composed in the year 891).

There are two additional copies of this manuscript, each containing different portions of the translation. One is housed in the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library in Istanbul, Türkiye, and the other is located in the Lund University Library in Scania, Sweden. The manuscript from the Süleymaniye Library has been the subject of a Ph.D. thesis by Yalcin Tunc, while the manuscript from Lund University has not yet been examined in depth. The manuscript from the Süleymaniye Library translated in the eighteenth century by Muḥammad Raḥīm-i Miskīn. Although information about the translator remains limited, some sources associate him with the family or scholarly lineage of Molla Muin.³

As it is known, the original work is divided into four parts. The Lund University manuscript contains only the first and second parts, with Part one beginning on folio 40b and Part two commencing on folio 236b. Furthermore, the principles of the translation are elucidated on folio 12b. In contrast, the Süleymaniye manuscript comprises only the third and fourth parts of the work.

¹ Abdülkadir Şenel, “Mu'īn al-Miskīn”, *Türkiye Diyanet Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam (DIA)*, XXXI, (2020), p. 88.

² Molla Muin al-Miskīn, *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, trans. Pirzada Iqbal Ahmed Faruqī, Maktaba-e-Nabawiyye, Lahore-Pakistan 2002, Vol. 1, p. 30.

³ Yalçın Tunc, *Muhammed Rahim's Translation of Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa (Linguistic Analysis–Transliterated Text–Index)*, p. 5; A. A. Semenov, *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisey Akademii nauk Uzbekskoy*, Vol. 4, Tashkent, 1957, p. 21.

Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa's Eastern Turkish translation examined in this study is preserved in the National Library of India in Kolkata under Accession No. 920. The manuscript provides valuable evidence concerning the later development of written Eastern Turkish and its use in the Indian subcontinent.

The manuscript is approximately 900 folios in total, while the present study concentrates specifically on its *Muqaddime*, comprising 104 folios. The manuscript is generally well preserved and legible, although some pages exhibit signs of aging. Each page generally contains seventeen lines.

The work follows a distinctive structural organization consisting of a *Muqaddime* (Introduction), four *rukn* (pillars or major sections), and a *Khātima* (Conclusion). The *Muqaddime* itself is organized into thematic *meclis* (assemblies), including *Tahmīdāt* (praises of God), *Munājāt* (supplications), and *Na'ī* (praises of the Prophet).¹ The structure combines theological and mystical prose with poetic forms, including *ghazal*, *mathnawī*, and *rubā'ī* compositions.

The manuscript *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, written in Nasta'liq script, is generally clear and well-presented, with some exceptions in specific folios. This work consists of 104 folios, structured in a single column format. Predominantly, each page contains 17 lines; however, variations are evident, such as folio 1b, which comprises only 10 lines, folio 16b with 18 lines, and folio 104a featuring an exceptional 26 lines.

In addition to the main text, the manuscript is notable for its extensive marginal annotations, located particularly at lines 85b/8, 85b/10, 85b/14, and 86a/17. These marginalia include essential corrections for omissions or inaccuracies in the text, as well as supplementary terms that do not appear within the primary text body. Notably, there are instances where the final word of a line or a page is repeated, a phenomenon observed in certain lines and at the conclusion of several pages.

The careful structure and the presence of annotations underscore the manuscript's textual integrity and the scholarly engagement with the content, highlighting its importance in the wider context of Islamic literary traditions. The manuscript not only serves as a significant artifact of religious and historical scholarship but also exemplifies the intricate practices of manuscript production and text preservation in the era of its creation.

The work, composed in prose, features a diverse array of poetic sections, including a total of 71 nazms, 60 rubais, 35 poems, 9 masnavis, 6 gazals, 3 bayts, 1 mukhammas, and 1 musaddas. Notably, several of the nazms, gazals, masnavis, and poems are of considerable length. These poetic segments are particularly noteworthy, as they reveal the translator's profound command of the Turkish poetic lexicon and conventions.

The integration of verse within prose not only enriches the manuscript's linguistic texture but also serves as a continuation of the Central Asian Sufi literary tradition, tracing its roots to the foundational contributions of figures such as Ahmad Yesevi. This stylistic blending underscores the manuscript's role in preserving and

¹ *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, The National Library of India, Kolkata, folios. 20a.

advancing the Sufi literary heritage, illustrating the interplay between prose and poetry in disseminating spiritual and philosophical ideas.

Thus, the manuscript stands as a testament to the stylistic and thematic continuities within Turkish literature, embodying both the cultural nuances of its time and the broader influences of Sufi thought. The skilled execution of these poetic forms only highlights the translator's artistry but also affirms the enduring of Central Asian Sufi literature in shaping the literary landscape of region.

Description of the Kolkata Manuscript (Acc. No. 920)

The primary source examined in this study is the manuscript preserved in the National Library of India in Kolkata. Its principal physical and bibliographic characteristics can be summarized as follows:

Accession Number: 920

Date: The date of the translation remains uncertain.

Script: Nasta'liq

Extent: Approximately 900 folios for the complete work

Focus of the present study: *Muqaddime*, comprising 104 folios

Layout: Generally, seventeen lines per page

Condition: Generally, well preserved and legible, although some pages show signs of aging

Structural Composition: The *Rukn* and *Khātima*

The Eastern Turkish version of *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa* follows the traditional structural organization of the work, consisting of an introduction (*Muqaddime*), four major sections (*rukṇ*), and a conclusion (*Khātima*).

First *Rukn*

The first *rukṇ* concerns the creation and transmission of the *Nūr-i Muḥammadī* (Light of Muḥammad). According to the cosmological narrative presented in the work, this light was transmitted through a succession of prophets beginning with Adam and continuing through figures such as Seth, Idrīs, Noah, Hūd, Abraham, and Ishmael before reaching the lineage of the Prophet Muḥammad.

Second *Rukn*

The second *rukṇ* covers the period from the birth of the Prophet Muḥammad to the age of forty, when his prophetic mission began. It focuses on events from his childhood and youth and presents various signs and evidences interpreted within the text as indications of his future prophethood.

Third *Rukn*

The third *rukṇ* concerns the beginning of revelation and the subsequent Meccan period. It includes major events associated with the Prophet's mission, including the *Me'raj* (Ascension) and the events preceding the Hijra (Migration).

Fourth Rukn

The fourth *rukṇ* covers the Medinan period, beginning with the Hijra and continuing until the death of the Prophet Muḥammad. It discusses political, military, and social developments, including the Prophet's *ghazawāt* (battles) and *sarāyā* (military expeditions).¹

Khātima

The work concludes with a *Khātima* devoted to the miracles of the Prophet Muḥammad. These miracles are presented in different categories and function within the theological framework of the work as evidence of his prophethood.²

Thematic and Structural Composition of the Muqaddime

The *Muqaddime* is particularly significant because of its theological, mystical, and literary character. It is divided into three principal chapters (*fasl*), each consisting of twelve thematic *meclis*.

First Chapter: Tahmīdāt

The first chapter, *Tahmīdāt* (folios 20a–38b), consists of twelve assemblies devoted primarily to the praise of God, divine attributes, and the creation of the universe. These passages demonstrate the theological and cosmological dimensions of the work.³

Second Chapter: Mūnājāt

The second chapter, *Mūnājāt* (folios 39a–69b), consists of twelve assemblies of supplication. The language is highly lyrical and mystical and expresses the speaker's dependence upon and yearning for the Divine. At the end of this section, two additional supplications appear under the titles *Munājāt-ı Ākhirī* and *Munājāt-ı 'Abdu'z-Za'fī'l-Fakru'l-Ḥaq*.⁴

Third Chapter: Na'ī

The third chapter, *Na'ī* (folios 70a–104a), contains twelve assemblies devoted to praise of the Prophet Muḥammad. The Prophet is presented as the "Best of All Creatures," and the section combines devotional, theological, and literary elements.⁵

A central concept underlying these sections is the *Nūr-i Muḥammadī*, or Light of Muḥammad. Within the cosmological framework of the text, this light is presented as having a primordial role in creation and as being transmitted through a succession of prophets until reaching Muḥammad. The narrative therefore connects prophetic genealogy with a broader theological conception of sacred history.⁶

Linguistic Features of Eastern Turkish

¹ *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, The National Library of India, Kolkata, folios. 13a-13b.

² *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, The National Library of India, Kolkata, folios. 14a.

³ *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, The National Library of India, Kolkata, folios. 20a-38b.

⁴ *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, The National Library of India, Kolkata, folios. 39a-69b.

⁵ *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, The National Library of India, Kolkata, folios. 70a-104.

⁶ *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, The National Library of India, Kolkata, folios. 76b-92a.

The manuscript provides significant philological material for examining the linguistic characteristics of Eastern Turkish. The language of translation reflects both the continuation of established Eastern Turkish literary conventions and certain developments associated with the later period.

Phonetic Features

Several phonetic features characteristic of Eastern Turkish can be observed in the manuscript. One notable feature is the *b-* > *m-* shift, as illustrated by forms such as *mén* (21a/8), corresponding to *ben* ("I"), *miñ* (21b/9), corresponding to *bin* ("thousand"), and *mañga*, reflecting the development of the dative form corresponding to *ben+ge* ("to me").

The manuscript also contains examples illustrating *d-* > *t-* devoicing, including *teñgiz* (46b/2) alongside *deñgiz* (43b/14) ("sea"), *murād* (17a/5) alongside *murāt* (37a/1) "wish, desire" and *khuld* (26a/16) alongside *khult* (63b/13) "permanency".

Another phonetic development is represented by forms such as *tofraḳ* (23a/5) and *topraḡ* (24a/9), corresponding to "soil," "earth," or "land."

These examples demonstrate the phonological variation present in the manuscript and contribute to the broader study of Eastern Turkish phonology.

Orthographic Variation

The manuscript also demonstrates considerable orthographic variation. The same lexical items may occur in different written forms. For example, the word for "name" appears as *ad* (29a/3), *at* (14a/6), and *aş* (13a/12), while "ear" appears as *kulaḡ* (18a/14), *kulaḳ* (54a/12), and *kulag* (25b/2).

Such variation is important for understanding the orthographic conventions Eastern Turkish manuscripts and should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence of distinct lexical items without further contextual analysis.

Morphological Features

The manuscript generally employs characteristic Eastern morphological structures, including the plural suffix *+lar* and case markers such as the dative *+ga/+ge* and *+ka/+ke*. Examples include forms such as *yolḡa* and *tamuḡka*.

The use of these forms demonstrates the continuity of characteristic Eastern Turkish morphological patterns in an eighteenth-century Indian manuscript.

Lexical Composition

As a work of Islamic religious literature, the text contains a substantial number of Arabic and Persian lexical items. Nevertheless, the translator also uses Turkic vocabulary and, in some contexts, provides explanations or Turkish equivalents for religious and theological terminology.

This lexical layering reflects the multilingual intellectual environment in which the translation was produced and demonstrates the importance of Persian, Arabic, and Turkic as interconnected literary languages in the region.

Linguistic Interaction between Urdu and Eastern Turkish

The Turks arrived in India during the reigns of Sabuktigin (977–997)¹ and subsequently Mahmud of Ghazni (998–1030). During that period and the time that followed, a common language emerged from a blend of Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Hindi, and local languages as a result of the interaction between Turkish soldiers and the local population. The historical development of languages in the Indian subcontinent must be understood within a multilingual environment involving Persian, Arabic, Turkic languages, and various Indian languages. The interaction between Turkic-speaking communities and local populations contributed to the development of several varieties that were historically known by different names, including Hindavi, Dehlavi, Rekhta, Gujri, and Deccani.²

The emergence and development of Urdu occurred within this complex multilingual environment. Turkic influence can be observed particularly in military, administrative, political, and social vocabulary. The term "Urdu" itself is generally associated with the Turkic word *ordu*, meaning "army," "camp," or military encampment.

Turkic lexical influence in Urdu extends beyond military terminology and includes words associated with everyday life, administration, titles, and social organization. Examples include *bāji*, *elchi*, *beg*, *begum*, *kḥān*, *kḥātūn*, *āgā*, *pāshā*, *chāqu*, *aybak*, *top* and *tabur*.³

The presence of such vocabulary provides evidence of prolonged linguistic and cultural contact between Turkic and South Asian linguistic communities. However, the influence should be understood as part of a broader multilingual process rather than as a simple one-directional transfer from Turkish to Urdu.

Socio-Linguistic Interaction in India

One of the important aspects of the manuscript is the linguistic environment in which the Eastern Turkish translation was produced and circulated. The Indian context exposed Eastern Turkish to sustained interaction with Persian, Urdu, and various local languages.

The manuscript's vocabulary and certain syntactic patterns should therefore be examined in relation to this multilingual environment. Elements associated with Persian and Urdu are particularly important because Persian functioned as a major literary and administrative language in the region, while Urdu and related varieties developed as important means of communication across different linguistic communities.

The presence of such linguistic interaction suggests that post-classical Chagatai literary production in India should not be viewed solely as a continuation of Central

¹ Abu Mansur Nasir ad-Din wa'd-Dawla Sabuktigin (942-997).

² Asgher Hamid, *Turkî Aur Urdu ke Mushtarak Alfâz*, Shahid Publishers, New Delhi-India 2006, p. viii.

³ Purdil Khatak, *Urdu Aur Turkî ke Mushtarak Alfâz*, Muktaḍera Kavmî Zabân Publishers, Islamabad-Pakistan, 1987, p. 12-18, 48-119

Asian literary traditions. Rather, it should also be understood as part of a dynamic Indian Persianate and Turkic literary environment.

Conclusion

The analytical examination of the Eastern Turkish translation of *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*—specifically its 104-folio Muqaddime part, preserved under Accession No. 920 at the National Library of India in Kolkata—provides essential insights into the post-classical development of Eastern Turkish literature in South Asia. This manuscript serves as a primary testament to the enduring significance of Eastern Turkish as a medium for complex theological and prophetic scholarship within the 17th-century Mughal cultural sphere. When compared with codices preserved in Istanbul's Süleymaniye Library and Lund University Library in Sweden, this text fills an important gap in the historiography of Turkic literary traditions beyond Central Asia.

Beyond its physical preservation, the manuscript shows considerable artistic and structural sophistication. The Eastern Turkish version of *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa* includes an introduction (Muqaddime), four sections (Rukn), and a conclusion (Khātima). The Muqaddime is organized into *Tahmīdāt*, *Munājāt*, and *Na't*, reflecting a devotional structure in which praise of God, supplication, and praise of the Prophet are closely interconnected. The central role of the *Nūr-i Muḥammadī* further illustrates the cosmological and mystical dimensions of the text. Translation is composed primarily of prose, with interspersed sections that include 71 nazms, 60 rubais, 35 poems, 9 masnavis, and 6 gazals. This variety illustrates the translator's strong command of Eastern Turkic poetic language and its literary conventions.

Linguistically, the Kolkata manuscript preserves significant phonetic, orthographic, morphological, and lexical features. Forms displaying phonetic variation, flexible orthography, characteristic Eastern Turkish suffixes, and extensive Arabic-Persian lexical influence demonstrate the richness of the linguistic material available for the study of post-classical Chagatai Turkish. The manuscript provides invaluable evidence regarding the stability and evolution of the morphological and lexical features. The retention of post-classical Chagatai case markers—such as the dative forms +ğa/+ge and +қа/+ke—alongside standard nominal plurals confirm a continuity in morphology during this era. At the same time, the text showcases a rich multilingual layering, blending core Arabic and Persian Islamic terminology with Turkic equivalents. This linguistic synthesis highlights the dynamic sociolinguistic environment of the Indian subcontinent, where centuries of interaction among Turkic-speaking communities, Persianate administration, and local populations led to vernacular variants like Hindavi and Rekhta, ultimately contributing to the development of Urdu.

At the same time, the Indian context of the translation highlights the importance of examining Eastern Turkish not as an isolated literary language but as part of a wider multilingual environment involving Persian, Arabic, Urdu, and Indian languages. The translation of *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa* can therefore be understood not merely as a linguistic transfer from Persian into Turkish, but also as part of a broader process of literary and cultural adaptation.

In summary, this translation of *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa* represents much more than a simple linguistic transfer from Persian to Eastern Turkish; it exemplifies a thoughtful process of cultural, religious, and literary adaptation within the Persianate context of South Asia. By highlighting the active role of Eastern Turkish in Mughal India's intellectual landscape, the manuscript emphasizes the need to analyze Eastern Turkish within a dynamic, multilingual regional context. Future research focused on complete textual transcription, comparative syntactic analysis, and comprehensive lexicography will further illuminate the rich legacy of the post-classical period of the Chagatai traditions within South Asian Islamic culture.

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**SECULARISM, INCLUSIVITY, AND EDUCATION: MAULANA ABUL KALAM
AZAD'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA AND MODERN
INDIAN EDUCATION**

Abstract

This research paper explores the multifaceted contributions of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad to the foundation and development of Jamia Millia Islamia, emphasizing his vision for an inclusive and progressive educational framework. Established in 1920, Jamia Millia Islamia emerged as a response to colonial educational policies, advocating for an Indian-centric curriculum that fostered critical thinking and social awareness. Azad's tenure as the first Vice-Chancellor was marked by his commitment to secularism and communal harmony, which were integral to the university's ethos. The paper will examine Azad's belief in the fusion of Eastern and Western educational philosophies, which aimed to cultivate a well-rounded individual capable of contributing to nation-building. Furthermore, it will highlight his broader impact on India's educational landscape as the first Education Minister post-independence, where he laid the groundwork for institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the University Grants Commission (UGC). Through a critical analysis of primary and secondary sources, this study seeks to underscore Azad's indelible legacy in shaping modern Indian education and fostering a spirit of unity among diverse communities. By delving into Azad's educational initiatives and policies, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how his vision continues to influence contemporary educational practices in India.

Key Words: Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Jamia Millia Islamia, Educational Philosophy, Secularism, Nation-Building

Introduction

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a towering intellectual and one of the foremost leaders in India's freedom struggle, played a pivotal role in shaping the country's educational landscape. Known for his contributions to secularism, communal harmony, and nation-building, Azad was a proponent of educational reforms that transcended religious and social boundaries. His vision laid the foundation for modern Indian education, emphasizing inclusivity, critical thinking, and the fusion of Eastern and Western pedagogical philosophies (Azad, 1959).

This paper examines Azad's multifaceted contributions to Indian education, focusing particularly on his role in the development of Jamia Millia Islamia and his broader influence as India's first Education Minister. Through an exploration of primary and secondary sources, the study investigates how Azad's advocacy for secularism and inclusivity became cornerstones of his educational policies, impacting the development

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of modern Indian institutions. By analyzing his philosophy in the context of both colonial and post-independence India, this paper aims to underscore Azad's lasting legacy in shaping contemporary educational practices in the country.

Objectives

1. To analyze Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's role in the foundation and development of Jamia Millia Islamia, focusing on his vision for an inclusive, secular educational system.
2. To explore Azad's broader contributions to India's educational policies, particularly as the first Education Minister of independent India.
3. To examine the fusion of Eastern and Western educational philosophies in Azad's work and how this shaped modern Indian education.
4. To assess Azad's legacy in promoting secularism and inclusivity through education in the context of both colonial and post-colonial India.
5. To contribute to the broader understanding of the role of education in nation-building and communal harmony in modern India.

Methodology

This research paper employs a qualitative approach to explore Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's contributions to the development of Jamia Millia Islamia and Indian education at large. The primary methodology involves a thorough analysis of historical documents, speeches, and Azad's own writings, such as *India Wins Freedom*, to understand his vision of education, secularism, and inclusivity. Additionally, secondary sources, including books, journal articles, and archival materials, will be utilized to examine the broader socio-political context of Azad's educational philosophy. The study also draws on educational theory to critique and evaluate Azad's contributions to Indian education, focusing on key events during his tenure as India's first Education Minister.

Jamia Millia Islamia: A Nationalist Response to Colonial Education

The establishment of Jamia Millia Islamia in 1920 was a direct response to British colonial educational policies that sought to create a class of educated Indians who would serve colonial interests. This colonial model, spearheaded by figures like Lord Macaulay, aimed to inculcate Western values and promote English as the medium of instruction, sidelining indigenous knowledge systems (Lelyveld, 1978). In contrast, Jamia Millia Islamia was founded by a group of nationalist leaders, including Maulana Azad, who envisioned an Indian-centric educational institution that would promote self-reliance, intellectual freedom, and social awareness. The early 20th century was a period of intense political and intellectual ferment in India. The Non-Cooperation Movement and the Khilafat Movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi, were gaining momentum as part of the broader struggle against British rule. These movements highlighted the need for Indian educational institutions that could serve as alternatives to colonial universities. Leaders of these movements believed that education should not only prepare individuals for employment but also instill a sense of national identity and social responsibility (Qasmi & Robb, 2017).

Jamia Millia Islamia, with its commitment to inclusivity and secularism, emerged as a key player in this educational and political landscape. Maulana Azad, as one of the founding members and later the first Vice-Chancellor, played a crucial role in shaping the university's vision and mission. Azad believed that education was essential to the process of nation-building and that an institution like Jamia could serve as a model for

the type of inclusive, progressive education that India needed as it moved toward independence (Azad, 1959).

Educational Philosophy: The Fusion of Eastern and Western Traditions

Maulana Azad's educational philosophy was characterized by his belief in the fusion of Eastern and Western traditions. He argued that while India had a rich intellectual heritage, particularly in fields like philosophy, ethics, and spirituality, it also stood to benefit from the advancements in science and critical inquiry that were central to Western education (Zaman, 2021). For Azad, the integration of these two traditions was not only possible but necessary for the development of a well-rounded and modern educational system. Azad's approach to education was deeply influenced by his Islamic background. He believed that the pursuit of knowledge was a fundamental religious obligation, and he drew inspiration from the rich tradition of Islamic scholarship, which emphasized the importance of both spiritual and intellectual growth. At the same time, Azad was a strong advocate for the inclusion of scientific and technological education, which he saw as essential for India's modernization and economic development (Qasmi & Robb, 2017).

This belief in the integration of Eastern and Western educational philosophies was evident in the curriculum that Azad helped to develop at Jamia Millia Islamia. The university's curriculum was designed to offer students a broad and diverse education that included subjects ranging from literature and philosophy to mathematics and the natural sciences. Azad believed that students should be encouraged to think critically and engage with both Indian and global perspectives, thus preparing them to contribute to the intellectual and social development of the nation (Noorani, 2003). In many ways, Azad's educational philosophy was ahead of its time. He recognized the limitations of the colonial education system, which was largely based on rote learning and memorization, and sought to create an environment where students could engage in critical thinking and creative problem-solving. This emphasis on intellectual freedom and the fusion of different educational traditions continues to influence modern Indian education.

Secularism and Inclusivity in Education

One of the defining features of Maulana Azad's educational philosophy was his commitment to secularism and inclusivity. Azad firmly believed that education should be accessible to all, regardless of religion, caste, or social background. He saw education as a tool for fostering social cohesion and promoting mutual understanding among India's diverse communities (Noorani, 2003). This commitment to secularism was particularly important in the context of the communal tensions that were prevalent in India during the early 20th century. Azad was deeply concerned about the growing rift between India's Hindu and Muslim communities, and he believed that education could play a key role in bridging this divide. He argued that by creating educational institutions that were open to individuals of all religious backgrounds, India could promote a sense of national unity and prevent the kind of communal violence that would later accompany Partition (Azad, 1959). At Jamia Millia Islamia, Azad implemented policies that were designed to create an inclusive and harmonious educational environment. The university's admission policies were based on merit, and students from all religious and social backgrounds were encouraged to apply. The faculty was also diverse, with scholars from different religious and cultural backgrounds contributing to the intellectual life of the university (Qasmi & Robb, 2017).

Azad's secular approach to education was not limited to Jamia Millia Islamia. As India's first Education Minister, he played a key role in shaping the country's post-independence educational policies. One of his most significant achievements was the creation of the University Grants Commission (UGC), which was designed to standardize and regulate higher education in India. Azad believed that the state had a responsibility to ensure that education was accessible to all citizens, regardless of their religious or social background, and the UGC was a key instrument for achieving this goal (Zaman, 2021). Azad's commitment to inclusivity also extended to his broader vision for Indian society. He believed that education could serve as a powerful tool for social change, particularly in addressing the deep-rooted inequalities that existed in Indian society. He argued that by providing individuals with access to education, India could create a more just and equitable society where people from all walks of life could participate in the nation-building process (Noorani, 2003).

Nation-Building and the Role of Education in Post-Independence India

Maulana Azad's contributions to Indian education did not end with his tenure at Jamia Millia Islamia. As the first Education Minister of independent India, Azad was responsible for laying the groundwork for many of the country's key educational institutions. His policies and initiatives had a profound impact on the development of modern Indian education and continue to shape the country's educational system today (Zaman, 2021). One of Azad's most significant contributions was the establishment of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), which have since become some of the most prestigious educational institutions in the world. Azad recognized the importance of scientific and technical education for India's economic development, and he believed that the IITs could play a key role in training the next generation of Indian engineers and scientists. Today, the IITs are globally recognized centers of excellence in science and technology, and they continue to produce some of the world's top talent in these fields (Noorani, 2003). Azad was also instrumental in the creation of the University Grants Commission (UGC), which was established to standardize and regulate higher education in India. The UGC was designed to ensure that educational institutions across the country maintained high academic standards and that education was accessible to all citizens, regardless of their background. The creation of the UGC was a key step in Azad's broader vision for a more inclusive and equitable education system (Qasmi & Robb, 2017).

In addition to these institutional reforms, Azad also played a key role in promoting the idea of education as a tool for nation-building. He believed that education was essential to the development of a strong, independent India, and he argued that the state had a responsibility to ensure that all citizens had access to quality education. This vision continues to influence India's educational policies today, particularly in the areas of primary and secondary education (Azad, 1959).

Intellectual Debates on Colonial and Post-Colonial Education

The transition from colonial to post-colonial education in India was marked by intense intellectual debates. The colonial education system, as structured by figures like Macaulay, was designed to create a class of intermediaries—Indians who would serve the British Empire by adopting Western values and knowledge while distancing themselves from traditional Indian educational systems (Lelyveld, 1978). This system was heavily critiqued by nationalist leaders, including Maulana Azad, who saw it as a tool of intellectual subjugation. Azad's rejection of the colonial education system was not

only political but also intellectual. He viewed the colonial curriculum as narrow, disconnected from Indian realities, and devoid of moral and spiritual dimensions (Zaman, 2021). At the same time, he acknowledged the advances made in Western science and critical thinking, recognizing that these could be integrated with Indian knowledge systems to create a truly modern education. His emphasis on a balanced, well-rounded curriculum was in stark contrast to the rigid, hierarchical structures of colonial education, which often excluded large sections of Indian society.

Azad's intellectual stance also reflected broader debates on the role of education in post-colonial societies. Many nationalist thinkers of his time were engaged in rethinking how education could contribute to the process of decolonization, not just politically but also culturally and intellectually. Azad's work at Jamia Millia Islamia and later as Education Minister reflects this larger project of reclaiming education as a tool for self-determination and national rejuvenation (Qasmi & Robb, 2017).

Azad's Legacy and Contemporary Educational Practices

Maulana Azad's influence on Indian education extends beyond his lifetime, continuing to shape contemporary educational practices in India. His advocacy for secularism, inclusivity, and the integration of diverse educational traditions remains relevant today, particularly as India grapples with issues of communalism, social inequality, and access to education (Zaman, 2021).

Azad's vision for education as a tool for nation-building and social transformation has also found resonance in contemporary educational policies, particularly in the areas of higher education and vocational training. His emphasis on the importance of scientific and technical education, as well as his commitment to making education accessible to all citizens, regardless of their background, continues to inspire educational reforms in India today. Moreover, the institutions that Azad helped to establish, such as the IITs and the UGC, continue to play a central role in shaping India's educational landscape. The IITs have become global centers of excellence in science and technology, while the UGC continues to regulate and standardize higher education in India, ensuring that educational institutions across the country maintain high academic standards (Noorani, 2003). Azad's contributions to Indian education have also had a profound impact on the country's approach to secularism and inclusivity in education. His belief that education should be a tool for fostering social cohesion and mutual understanding among India's diverse communities remains relevant today, particularly in the context of the challenges posed by communalism and social inequality. As India continues to evolve as a diverse, pluralistic society, Azad's vision for education as a force for unity and social justice remains as important as ever (Qasmi & Robb, 2017).

Conclusion

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's contributions to Indian education, particularly through his work at Jamia Millia Islamia and as the first Education Minister of independent India, have left an indelible mark on the country's educational landscape. His commitment to secularism, inclusivity, and the fusion of Eastern and Western educational traditions laid the foundation for a modern, progressive education system that continues to shape contemporary India.

Through his advocacy for a balanced and inclusive curriculum, Azad sought to create a system of education that would not only impart knowledge but also foster critical thinking, social responsibility, and national unity. His vision for education as a tool for nation-building and social transformation has had a lasting impact on Indian educational

institutions and policies. In an increasingly globalized world, where education is seen as a key driver of social and economic development, Azad's ideas on the importance of inclusivity, intellectual freedom, and the integration of diverse knowledge systems continue to resonate. His legacy serves as a reminder of the transformative power of education and its potential to shape the future of nations.

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THE MAKING OF MILITARY LOYALTIES UNDER AKBAR AND JAHANGIR

Abstract:

Loyalty was central to the value system of the Mughal army. The military officers required an honest effort to perform best on the battlefield. It enhanced the commitment level and made officers sacrifice their lives in extreme devotion to the services of the state. Confidentiality of battle strategy and fidelity of action were required for military operations to be successful. The Mughal state tried to select and raise the most honest officers in the army, placing a high reward and honor for excellent service. It may be fair to say that the state could not survive without the services of its loyal officers. Hence, it deliberately raised and pampered a group of officers known as 'khanazad', or 'born in house'. Though it never meant that loyalty could not exist outside this group, the expectation of service from a 'khanazad' was higher than the others. They were expected to imbibe all good and manly traits. Therefore, they received in-house training to make them intellectually sound and more skilled than others. During the reign of Akbar, contingents of divergent groups were inducted into the Mughal Military system. The empire became more stable, and services more lucrative. During this time, the military officers had an incessant zeal to show honesty in their military enterprises and perform reckless deeds of valor. The trend continued during the reign of Jahangir, who continued to pamper the most loyal officers by raising their ranks. However, military loyalties and adherence were not permanent, causing frequent desertions and rebellions during the reign of Akbar and Jahangir.

Keywords: loyalty, sacrifice, Khanazad, fidelity, devotion, rebellion

1. Military Loyalty in the Early Phases

Loyalty remained highly uncertain during the early phases of the Mughal military establishment. When Babur was seated on the throne of Samarkand, he gave tremendous favors to the *begs*, the leading among them being Sultan Ahmad Tambal. But he failed to win the latter's loyalty permanently. ¹Even the people of his Mughal tribe, who numbered more than two thousand in his mother's service, created disturbances at the very first opportunity. They rebelled against him five times.² Instances of highly inconsistent loyalties in the early stages may have been due to unsettled politics and the

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¹Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama*, Originally Published 1921, English Trans.. A.S Beveridge, Vol. 1, (New Delhi: Low Price Publication, 2010), p.86

² Ibid., p.105

lack of a well-organized military system, which were required to create more durable bonds with the soldiers. They fought for the war booty, and even the most loyal officers could switch sides on petty allurements. The two most loyal officers of Babur, Muhammad Hussain Mirza and Sanjay Barlas, organized a coup against him. They declared Mirza Khan the *Padshah* and spread the news that Babur had been imprisoned in the fort of Ikhtiyaruddin.¹

There also remained a trust deficit among the members of the royal family. When Babur was besieged in Samarkand and was in deep trouble, none of his uncles, who were rulers of different territories, came to his rescue.² Babur was left with no option but to surrender his sister in marriage to Saibani Khan.³ This unpredictability continued even during the reign of Humayun. His important generals, Caraja Khan and Tardi Beg, deserted him and fled from the camp. They were overpowered and brought to the camp by force.⁴ Humayun eventually lost his kingdom due to a recalcitrant attitude and lack of support from his brothers.⁵ The defiance of imperial authority, during his time, reached to an extent that an officer could openly refuse his orders. When Humayun captured Bengal and appointed his kin, Zahid Beg, to be the governor of the province, the latter refused and said, "What, could you not find any other place to kill me than Bengal?"⁶ He considered the place dangerous for his life. The emperor was furious and wanted to kill him for this disobedience. He said to his men, "I must put this scoundrel to death."⁷ Eventually, Zahid Beg fled to the camp of prince Hindal.⁸

After his defeat by Sher Shah, Humayun had to buy the military services of his brother Askari, who was by far the best military general of the king. He offered him anything he could choose in exchange for his support. Askari and his soldiers asked for an increase in their rank, and a huge money to offer their military services.⁹ When Sher Shah besieged the fortress of Chunar, took the city of Banaras, and imprisoned many important military officers of Humayun, his brothers took full advantage of this situation.¹⁰ They were entrusted with important military commands to take vengeance against the Afghans, but continued to be unreliable during the whole journey. Kamran was suspected of having a secret treaty with Sher Shah.¹¹ Prince Hindal too quit the army and moved to Gujarat.¹²

¹ Ibid., p.313

² Ibid., p.146

³ Ibid., p.147

⁴ Jouhar Aftabchi, *Tezkereh- Al- Vakiat*, English Trans.. Major Charles Stewart, Originally Published, 1832, Reprint, (Lukhnow: Pushtak Kendra, 1971), p.35

⁵ Khawajah Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, English trans; Brajendranath De, Vol. 2, Originally Published 1936, Reprint, (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1992), p.99

⁶ *Tezkereh-Al-Vakiat*, p.12

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p.13

⁹ Ibid., p.14

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p.25.

¹² Ibid., p.26

The disloyalty of Kamran reached the extent that he attacked Humayun. In the contest, Humayun was struck in the head by the sword. The onslaught was so severe that the emperor was taken off the battlefield by an Abyssinian servant. He was weakened by the loss of blood.¹ When Kamran was captured, he was ordered by the emperor to be blinded, unable to bear his misdeeds any further.² Later, when Askari marched against Humayun, the Emperor was hugely disappointed and said to his men, "The people of Hindustan have an extraordinary mode of evincing their fidelity".³ This speaks a lot about the fragile state in which military loyalty existed during the reign of Humayun.

The disloyalty of his military officers put his life in danger on many occasions. He was left alone to fight when Khawas Khan, the military general of Sher Shah, made a surprise attack on his camp. His officers refused to obey his commands and fled, leaving the sovereign tottering for support.⁴ A servant pulled the emperor out of danger, who made a life-saving flight.⁵ High-ranked officers like Tardi Beg had no fear of Humayun. He refused to give him his boat and abused the servant who asked for it. He had reserved the boat for his family members. Eventually, the army had to cross the river on a raft, and the vessel was prepared from the skin of cows and buffalo.⁶ The acts of disloyalty were contagious. Mirza Yadgar, an officer of Humayun, who nursed the idea of rebellion, induced others to do the same. It was he who provoked Munim Khan and Tardi Beg to flee from the imperial camp.⁷

In the initial phases, the instances of military loyalty were few but robust. When Humayun received injuries to the head, one of his officers, Sultan Muhammad, walked around him and offered his life in exchange for the life of the emperor.⁸ Bairam Khan realized his mistake of fleeing from the Battle of Kannauj (17 May 1540) and returned to assist Humayun in the fight against Shah Hussain, the ruler of Thatta. The emperor desperately needed military assistance, and the timely arrival of a seasoned military general gave him much-needed confidence.⁹ Bairam Khan immediately jumped to attack the enemy, but Humayun recalled him and sent Rushen Beg, who did excellently in the duel that took place and defeated the enemy.¹⁰

Bairam Khan advised the best course to the emperor when prince Askari marched to take him captive.¹¹ He singled himself out as the most trusted officer of Humayun during his visit to the Shah of Iran. He refused the order of the Shah to cut his hair and wear a Persian cap on the ground that he was a servant of Humayun and obliged to follow only

¹Ibid., p.102

²Ibid.,p.113

³ Ibid., p.53

⁴ Ibid., p.17

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p.33

⁷ Ibid., p.35

⁸ Ibid., p.103

⁹ Ibid., p.49

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Tezkereh-Al-Vakiat*, p.53

his orders. This infuriated the Shah, but Bairam Khan maintained his stand.¹ Caraja Khan, too, showed tremendous attachment to the king. When soldiers started deserting to the side of Kamran, he convinced them to stay by making them hopeful of the good days ahead.² He was compelled by Kamran to give up his loyalty. The latter threatened to kill his son, but the general refused and said to the king, "I consider each hair of your Majesty's head worth the life of a son."³ Even the loyal servant Jauhar Aftabchi influenced some of the aggrieved soldiers and brought them under the imperial fold.⁴ In one of the rarest instances of loyalty to the throne, prince Hindal sacrificed his life. He was attacked by Afghans while he was guarding the camp of Humayun. He fought bravely with bows and arrows but could not save his life.⁵

In the retreat journey to Hindustan, his loyal servant Shah Abu Ma'ali showed courage and fought bravely against the Omer Khan Afghan.⁶ Similarly, Bairam Khan performed heroics against Afghan generals Tatar Khan and Hybet Khan in the Battle of Machiwara.⁷ Though both Bairam and Shah Abu Ma'ali were the most loyal servants of Humayun, the former rose to the highest position, while Shah Abu Ma'ali became a rebel. The latter was sent to Jalandhar to check the movements of the fugitives, but he assumed an independent charge.⁸

2. The Making of the Military Loyalty under Akbar

The military loyalties started gaining strength during the last phase of Humayun's reign. The military officers now coordinated better in the campaigns than before. When Shah Abu Ma'ali came into serious trouble against Shahbaz Khan Afghan in Dipalpur, Ali Quli Khan marched immediately, fought on his side, and rescued him.⁹ Humayun's position improved after his return from Persia. He could now assert more strongly, and the officers now obeyed his command willingly. He reconciled the differences between Bairam Khan and Tardi Beg when both disagreed on the matters of Nasib Khan Afghan. Tardi Beg wanted to pursue him after the defeat, but the former disagreed. The matter reached an acrimonious state, and the servant of Tardi Beg was attacked by Khawaja Mu'azzam, a servant of Bairam Khan. However, the matter was successfully mediated by the emperor.¹⁰

The army stood united against Sikandar Sur and wanted to recover its lost honor against the Afghans. The emperor raised the morale of his soldiers.¹¹ The combined effort

¹ Ibid., p.63

² Ibid., p.89

³ Ibid., p.91

⁴ Ibid., p.89

⁵ Ibid., p.109

⁶ Ibid., p.122

⁷ Ibid., p.123

⁸ Ibid., 126

⁹ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, English trans., H. Beveridge, Vol.1, Originally Published 1902, Reprint, (Delhi: Low Price Publication, 2013), p.624

¹⁰ Ibid., p.625

¹¹ Ibid., p.627

produced results, and the Mughal forces attained a great victory.¹The victory against Sikandar Sur was a watershed moment. It was, in fact, a reversal of the Mughal fortune and a resurgence of the imperial authority of Humayun. In its first visible sign, the claims of Bairam Khan and Shah Abu Ma'ali for the victory against Sikandar were refuted, and the credit was given to the young Akbar. The politics was apparent, the battle in which royal blood was present, credit could not be given to the servants.² Once Humayun was well seated on the throne, he realized that permanent loyalties could only be gained by attaining power and prestige. Hence, he desired to create different seats of authority at Delhi, Agra, Jaunpur, Mandu, Lahore, and Qanauj, with a suitable army to govern these cities.³The sudden death of Humayun made his son carry forward the work initiated by him. Akbar perfectly knew how to win and control loyalties. He rewarded Bairam Khan for his good services and assigned him Sirhind and various other *parganas*. Tardi Beg Khan was assigned Mewat, and Sikandar Khan was sent to Agra. Ali Quli Khan was assigned Sambhal and Haider Muhammad Atka was given Biana.⁴

At the death of Humayun, those who were loyal performed their function well at the court. Khutba was read in the name of Akbar. ⁵All the leading military generals sent messages to the court, conveyed their full obedience, and expressed their loyalties. Tardi Beg, who was in Delhi, sent his servant Ghulam Ali Shashangasht, along with other servants, declaring his devotion to the throne.⁶Akbar, on the other hand, looked firm in dealing with his officers. He refused to dine with Shah Abu Ma 'ali when the latter came to meet him. He spread a separate tablecloth for himself to dine. The general was annoyed and complained about this. He had been a close companion of Humayun, who had allowed him to dine with him on several occasions in the past. Akbar refuted his claim and conveyed to him the message that the rules of the state are different than those of love and affection. And he no longer had the same position that he had during Humayun.⁷ Later, in one of his first official acts, Akbar ordered the imprisonment of Abu Ma'ali for his recalcitrant activities.⁸

The expectations of Akbar from his military officers were more clearly reflected in the observation made by his spokesman Abul Fazl. He expressed it very clearly that loyalty was a test of character. It needed a lot of humility to absorb the imperial favors, be honest, and rise in the services.⁹ He also observed that people pretended to be loyal, but conceived ill designs in their minds. He stressed that this approach never produces the desired result for the state.¹⁰ Hence, he argued in support of those officers who were honest in their services.¹¹

¹ Ibid., p.633

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p.642

⁴Ibid., p.635

⁵ Ibid., p.658

⁶ Ibid., p.660

⁷ Ibid., p. 662

⁸Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, English trans., H. Beveridge, Originally Published 1902, Reprint, (Delhi: Low Price Publication, 2013), Vol. 2, p.30

⁹ Ibid., p.37

¹⁰ Ibid., p.38

¹¹ Ibid., p.38

Akbar looked cautious in hiring new military officers and focused on their hidden intentions.¹ The expectation was clear, he looked for the loyal officers who could stand firm in the adversity. The efforts of leading military officers in the Battle of Panipat (1556) catapulted this process.² Akbar preferred the loyalty of a few to the half-heartedness of many. He raised a bunch of a hundred loyal and brave servants who formed the reserve of his army.³ Apart from his highly trained military generals, he took the services of his loyal *chelas*, who gave him additional cushions in the military campaigns.⁴ When one of the soldiers of Muhammad Hussain Mirza attacked Akbar with his lance in the Gujarat campaign, he was protected by one of his *chelas* Gujar, who attacked the aggressor with his spear.⁵

Akbar even reciprocated the services of his loyal servants. To avenge the killing of Bhupat, the brother of Bhagwant Das, in the Battle of Sarnal, he pierced his spear into the chest of Shah Madad (a companion of Muhammad Hussain Mirza) and killed him.⁶ He acknowledged the loyal services of his officers. He paid all the debts of Saif Khan Kokaltash and Shaikh Ahmad Bokhari, who were killed performing their military duties in the first Battle of Gujarat (1572).⁷ Under Akbar, loyalty became a two-way process. The rulers and the military officers reinforced each other's cause. Raja Baghwant Das, returning from Idar, brought along with him Umra, the son and heir to the throne of Rana Pratap, to do the submission.⁸

Akbar always wished to win the permanent loyalty of his officers and the feudatories. But instead of using force all the time, he gave them leeway and even accepted their outward submissions. Sulaiman Karrani of Bengal and Bihar continued to survive and flourish on the mere outward declaration of their submission.⁹ The freedom that Akbar gave to his opponents was probably based on the realization that there was a dearth of loyal servants in the Empire. The attitude and arrogance of Muzaffar Khan Turbati, after being given the post of Vakil, strengthened his belief. Akbar now inquired about the service loyalties at different levels. He observed, there was no harmony between the master and the servants.¹⁰ The mercenary practices of hiring and raising soldiers did no good to the army. The officers practiced injustice and discrimination.¹¹ The master only thought of accumulating wealth; the soldiers threw off the yoke of allegiance anytime and chose a new master. Akbar felt the need for a structure to regulate the military

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p.63

³ Ibid., p.66

⁴ Ibid., p.80

⁵ Ibid., p.81

⁶ Ibid., p.84

⁷ Ibid., p.101

⁸ Ibid., When Bhagwant Das took the fort of Badhnagar and proceeded to Idar, the *zamindar* Narain Das Rathod welcomed the imperial forces. When the army reached Goganda, the residence of Rana Pratap, he expressed shame and repentance for his past acts. He made signs of submission, visited Raja Bhagwant Das, and sent his son to the court as a mark of obedience, p.92

⁹ Ibid., p.96

¹⁰ Ibid., p.94

¹¹ Ibid., p.95

services better. Hence, he envisaged the *mansabadari* system.¹ Officers like Todar Mal supported the idea saying, “Assuredly most of the soldiers would be loyal and their zeal would be increased by this decision.”²

Akbar succeeded in his effort of churning out the most committed military officers through this framework. The fraudulent practices were stopped, and meritocratic individuals got tremendous opportunities to rise in the service. While his idea found a general acceptance, those who disagreed, like Shujaat Khan, M. Abdullah, Mir Muizzul Mulk, Qasim Khan Khobar, Dost Muhammad Baba, and Muhammad Amin, were sent to Bengal under Munim Khan to get their jagirs.³ The transfer was intended to punish them for their defiance.⁴

3. Inter-generational Loyalty under Jahangir

Loyalty under the Mughals was not restricted to one generation. The sons and the grandsons of the most loyal officers were expected to exhibit the same traits. When Bairam Khan was killed, his son Abdur Rahim rose to the position of Khan Khanan, showing excellent capabilities.⁵ Masum Khan entered the imperial services under Akbar. His paternal uncle Mir Aziz had been in the service of Humayun and occupied the post of *wazir*. He was renowned for his bravery and courage.⁶ Jahangir tried to strengthen the existing ties by promoting loyal officers. Miran Sadr Jahan was promoted to the rank of four thousand from two thousand. It was he who supported him with single-minded loyalty when the leading officers of the court conspired against him to deprive him of the Mughal throne during Akbar's illness.⁷ Shaikh Ruknuddin, who had lost his arm fighting Uzbeks, was promoted to the rank of three thousand five hundred from five hundred, in recognition of his loyal services. Abdur Rahman, the son of Abul Fazl, Maha Singh, the grandson of Raja Man Singh, and Zahid Khan, son of Sadiq Khan, were promoted to the ranks of two thousand, keeping in mind the services of their fathers.⁸

The hereditary servants were given special attention by Jahangir. Lal Beg was promoted because his father had been the librarian of Humayun.⁹ Shaikh Alauddin, the grandson of Shaikh Salim was given the title of Islam Khan and promoted to the rank of two thousand. Asghar Ali Barha, son of Syed Mahmud Barha was given a rank of three thousand. He was a brave general and accompanied Jahangir on the hunts.¹⁰ Pir Khan, the son of Daulat Khan Lodi was given the honor of *farzanadagi* (sonship), and the title of Salabat Khan. He was also promoted to the rank of three thousand.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p.209

⁴ Ibid., p.210

⁵ Ibid., p.204

⁶ Ibid., p.223

⁷ Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, English trans., Alexander Rogers, Originally Published, 1909, Reprint,

(Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Oriental Publishers, 1968), p. 22

⁸ Ibid., p.17

⁹ Ibid., p.21

¹⁰ Ibid., p.32

His ancestors had been the most trustworthy tribe among the Lodis. Daulat Khan Lodi supported Babur in the acquisition of Hindustan.¹ He fought along with Babur in the Battle of Panipat (1526), and proved an asset to Humayun when he returned from Bengal. Daulat Khan fought bravely against Sher Shah and was made a prisoner in the field of the battle. The latter repeatedly urged him to take service with him, but in his extreme loyalty to the Mughal throne, he refused and said to him, "Your ancestors were always the servants of mine; how then could I do this?"² Daulat Khan, later, chose the company of Abdur Rahim, the son of Bairam Khan. He performed excellent service with him, and most of his victories were gained by Daulat Khan's valor and manliness.³ Raja Bir Singh Deo Bundela received special favors. He served Jahangir with sincerity and loyalty since the time Abul Fazl was recalled from the Deccan on the orders of King Akbar.⁴

4. Loyalty as a Cultural Trait among the Rajputs

In addition to their feats of bravery on the battlefield, it was the loyalty of the Rajput class that allured Mughals more than anything else. The devotion of service to the master was built into their culture. It was bound to be valuable for the Mughals, who required support to counterbalance the central Asian elements and strengthen their base on the Indian soil. On a visit to Ajmer, Akbar was impressed with the loyalty of Raja Bharmal to the Mughal family. He immediately rescued him from the trouble against Mirza Sarfuddin, who had taken Jagannath Raj Singh and Kangar as hostages.⁵ Gradually, he raised this class to a level where he could trust them more than others. Before marching against Daud, Akbar set aside Tayib Khan for Rai Bhagwant Das, who was made Mustaufi of the whole imperial dominions, and Rai Purukhottam was given the post of Bakhshi.⁶

¹ Ibid., p.87

² Ibid., p.88

³ Ibid.

⁴ Bhimsen Saxena, *Tarikh-i- Dilkasha*, V. G. Khobrekar ed., (Bombay: Department of Archives: 1978), p.3

⁵ *Akbarnama*, Vol. 2, p.243

⁶ Ibid., p.122



Fig 1. Akbar receiving a Rajput ruler at the court

It seems the Emperor felt more secure with the Rajput class than the Muslim nobility of the court. His trust in this class reached such a level that Raja Man Singh was given the command of the Mughal forces in the Battle of Haldighati (1576).¹

During the reign of Jahangir, many Rajputs showed eagerness and petitioned the emperor to participate in the campaign against the Rana. ²The Emperor, too, relied on them heavily for support. His trust in them can be gauged from the fact that when Abdullah Bahadur Jafar Jang proposed to him to enter the province of the Deccan by way of Nasik, he appointed Ram Das Kachwaha, to keep track of the movement and activities of Abdullah and prevent him from doing anything untoward. ³He reciprocated their services by giving them royal favors. Madho Singh, Raja Man Singh's nephew, and Rawal Sal Darbari were honored with flags. They belonged to Shekhawat clans and were the trusted servants of Akbar. ⁴A huge sum was restored to the loyal Rajput officers and the choicest Jagirs were given to them. A sum of 8,104,700 dams from the *pargana* of Nagor was conferred on Rao Surat Singh after Raja Amar Singh was dismissed.⁵ Jahangir's self-interest also led to the promotion of Raja Bir Singh Deo Bundela. He was a Bundela Rajput, who, along with his sons, was known for his notorious deeds. He murdered Shaikh Abul Fazl on the orders of the prince Jahangir and became his favorite. Jahangir considered him an honest and brave officer. He was promoted to the rank of three thousand.⁶

The relationship of Raja Man Singh with Jahangir never seems to have been cordial. The latter accused him of not reciprocating the favors given to him. He, along with Khan

¹Shah Nawaz Khan, *Maathir-Ul-Umara*, English trans., H. Beveridge, Vol. 2, Part 1, Reprint, (Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1979), Vol.2, Part 1, p.49

²*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, p.18

³*Ibid.*, p.202

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.17

⁵ See, 'A Descriptive list of Famans , Manshurs and Nishans ' , p.8

⁶*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, p.25

Azam were termed the 'old wolves of the state'. Still, the Emperor claimed to have promoted Man Singh, ignoring all his offenses.¹ The loyalty of the Rajputs was so esteemed that some of the nobles of Jahangir, like Mahabat Khan, kept more than one hundred Rajput soldiers in his fold, in addition to Mughals, Sikhs, and Afghans. His father, too, kept six thousand Rajputs under him. They also reciprocated and served the family of Mahabat Khan with sincerity and faithfulness.²

Rajputs manifested tremendous loyalty to the service when Shahjahan was a prince. Many of them sacrificed their lives in various encounters. Raja Bhim died suffering wounds in the battle. Raja Gopal Das Gaur and his son Balram sacrificed their lives during the assault on the fort of Thatta. Their services were recognized when Shah Jahan was seated on the throne. Rai Singh, the son of Amar Singh was conferred the title of Maharajah as he had repeatedly put his life in danger during several military expeditions.³

In the campaign against Khan Jahan Lodi, Satrsal, Raja Man Singh's nephew, Bhim Singh, Anand Singh, Karamsi Rathod, Balbhadar Shekhawat, Kesav Das, fought for the imperial cause and sacrificed their lives.⁴ In the contest with Afghans, Raja Bithaldas, Prithviraj Rathod, and Girdhar Das got down on foot, killed many, and suffered numerous wounds. More than a hundred Rajputs were killed in the contest.⁵

Jai Singh showed tremendous loyalty to service when the royal princes rose in rebellion against Shahjahan. He duped Prince Shuja, pretending to be on his side and in the guise of friendship, attacked him with a large force to route him completely.⁶



Fig 2. Nobles and guards at the court of Shahjahan

¹Ibid., p.138

²*Tarikh-i- Dilkasha*, p.96

³Abdul Hameed Lahori, *Padshahnama*, English trans., Hamid Afaq Siddiqui, Vol.1, (Delhi: Idrah-i- Adabiyat-i-Delhi, 2010), p.43

⁴ Ibid., p.78

⁵ Ibid., p.68

⁶Ishwar Das Nagar, *Futuh-i- Alamgiri*. English trans., M.F. Lokhandwala. Originally Published, 1995, Reprint, Vadodara: Oriental Institute, 1995, p.13

Jaswant Singh too stood for the cause of the emperor when all the nobles refused to march against the royal princes, Aurangzeb and Murad. Shahjahan turned to him and said, "All the state officials have put forth excuses for undertaking such a responsibility. I so wish that this affair should be made possible by you."¹ Jaswant Singh replied in extreme loyalty, "I am subject to your order. I have no excuse against your order."² The Emperor applauded the boldness and prowess of the Maharaja. He rewarded him with a horse, an elephant, and eighty thousand rupees in cash. He was permitted to march with fifty thousand horses along with Qasim Khan, Raja Debi Singh Bundela, Mukund Singh Hada, and Kunwar Arjan Singh Gaud, who were appointed to support him. Raja Jaswant followed the order strictly and arrived at Dharmat ten days before the arrival of Aurangzeb and Murad.³

Aurangzeb too, fully acknowledged the loyalty of service of the Rajputs, he said "On many occasions, these men can do the necessary service when no race can."⁴ During the reign of Aurangzeb, when Shivaji attacked the fort of Mahuli (February 1670), the Rajput *qiladar* Manohar Das performed heroic deeds. He stationed his army on all four sides of the fort and stood firm irrespective of the shortage of food and arms. He conveyed a message to Shivaji, "We are Rajputs and are sincere servants of the Emperor. This fort will not come into your possession and there will be unnecessary bloodshed. We are prepared to die."⁵ Shivaji did not listen and attacked the fort in the night. Manohar Das and his men killed many Marathas with the sword, and so ably resisted the offensive that Shivaji had to withdraw his forces.⁶ The incidence of this kind probably induced Shiva to join the imperial service. He was already being pressed by another loyal Rajput Jai Singh to do so.

Once Shivaji came to the imperial side, he did a great service to Aurangzeb. The latter fully acknowledged his efforts and wrote to him that he was glad that his military services had led to the conquest of the forts of Phaltan and Thadvada belonging to the Adil Shahi Kingdom.⁷ Not only this, the emperor was delighted to hear the wish of the Shivaji to visit the court, he further wrote to him, 'he was happy to receive the letter in which he has expressed the desire to salute his court'. The emperor invited him to come with full confidence and receive the Imperial favors.⁸

Indeed, the Rajputs were honest in the performance of their duties, and this habit was pervasive in all the classes of Rajput officers. Kumar Ram Singh, the son of Jai Singh, under whose custody Shivaji was kept when he came to visit the court at Agra, expressed his sincerity in the following words, "The Emperor has put Shiva under my control. If he

¹ Ibid., p.18

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴Hamid-ud-din Khan Bahadur, *Ahkami-i- Alamgiri*. English trans. Jadunath Sarkar. Originally Published, 1912. Reprinted, Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & Sons, 1963, p.48

⁵*Tarikh-i- Dilkasha*, p.54

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jaipur State Archives letters, Dated 25th December 1665, p.22

⁸ Ibid., Letter dated 5th April, 1666

escapes or kills himself, I shall have to answer for it.”¹He kept a personal watch on him along with other Rajput officers like Tej Singh, Arunji, and Sukh Singh Natahawar. ²His father, Jai Singh too always worked in the interest of the Mughal state. Even though there was pressure on Aurangzeb to send Shivaji back to the Deccan, Jai Singh advised him to take a different course. He wrote to his son Kumar Ram Singh, “The situation has now changed, and there was no need to send Shiva back to the Deccan.”³ He advised Ram Singh to tell the emperor that ‘he may detain him respectfully so that the military officers of Shivaji might not be induced to join Adil Shah, further this would prevent the necessity of sending fresh troops to control Deccani forces’.⁴

However, the highly acclaimed Rajput loyalty looked fragile on many occasions. Jaswant Singh, who came to the side of Aurangzeb, leaving Dara Shukoh after the latter’s defeat, ditched Aurangzeb too and inclined himself to Shah Shuja. Interestingly, after the repeated request of Shah Shuja to honor his pledge to fight for him against Aurangzeb,⁵ the Raja, once again, played the trick and did not come to the aid of Shuja. Instead, he looted the camp of Aurangzeb and fled to his own country.⁶ Not only this, he once again initiated contact with Dara Shukoh.⁷ Aurangzeb immediately sent Amin Khan to punish Raja Jaswant for this act of disloyalty. He was ordered to expel him from Jodhpur, and instead honor Rao Rai with the royal favors and the rulership of Jodhpur. The emperor also ordered the capture of the wives and children of Jaswant, in case he decided to put up a resistance.⁸

The imperial favors were temporary too; they were withdrawn as soon as the loyalty came into question. When Shivaji fled from the court, his custodian, Kumar Ram Singh (son of Jai Singh), was punished. His *mansab* was reduced, and all the *parganas* of KotPutli were taken from him. The *pargana* of Mandawar was transferred to the Jagir of Daud Khan. He was held guilty of Shivaji’s flight.⁹ When Kumar Ram Singh marched to chase Shiva, Aurangzeb called him back to Agra. The former pleaded his innocence and said that he would not return as he was still held guilty. He requested the emperor to issue a personal order (*hasb-ul-hukm*) to give him a pardon.¹⁰

5. Conclusion

Military loyalties during the Mughal times witnessed perpetual growth. In the early phases, given the small size of the empire and lack of resources, loyalty was unstable, and there was a tendency among the important military officers to desert and look for

¹ Ibid., Letter dated 9th June, 1666, p. 34

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., Letter dated July, 1666, p. 36

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Futuh-i-Alamgiri*, p. 41

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 42

⁸ Ibid., p. 43

⁹ Jaipur State Archives letters, Dated 2nd Sept, 1666, p. 51

¹⁰ Ibid., Letter dated 3rd Sept, 1666.

more lucrative options. The mobile band of Babur was still successful, as Babur could hold them as a unit, intermingling with contingents freely, still maintaining his ascendant position. However, Humayun's officers disobeyed him intermittently. During the reign of Akbar, the empire grew in size and strength. The military loyalties started getting stabilised with officers showing excessive zeal to enter the battlefield. They were interwoven into a well-defined Mansabadari apparatus. Once income and position were stable in the military system, the military duties also became well-defined. The induction of the Rajput class during the reign of Akbar accentuated the process of strengthening of military loyalties. Emperor Jahangir capitalized on the goodwill created by his father. He seemed reluctant to favour some of the old nobles who were favorites of Akbar, but in general, raised those whose forefathers had provided loyal services to the empire.

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{D/33-8}

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WOMAN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE PRISM OF RELIGION

According to the Christian tradition, the longing for knowledge had compelled even Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden apple in the 'prelapsarian state' against the will of God. For this sinful act, they were thrown into 'postlapsarian state'. In the former state, there was bliss, innocence, and prosperity. In the 'postlapsarian state', they experienced guilt, shame, struggle, and damnation. The innocence of a man was corrupted long ago. According to the viewpoint of the famous psychologist, Alfred Adler, a man nurtures the feelings of belonging and striving for superiority. He has the urge to dominate. So one can infer from the postlapsarian state of the Christian tradition and the theory of Adler that a man's innocence is corrupted and he has a strong desire to dominate. One can opine from an Islamic literature that a person is a 'moral agent' and also has a 'free will'. It is up to him/her whether he/she does good deeds or bad deeds. Since ancient times, a girl or a woman is subjugated to various atrocities and ill practices because a boy or a man wants to control the lives of her as a man's innocence was polluted and corrupted long ago. God has given a man a 'free will' so he does things according to his whims and fancies. He thinks that he is not accountable for his cruel and evil practices.

The Roman Empire is considered as one of the greatest and most powerful empires in human history but there also the life of a woman was defined and thereby controlled by a man. She was not at par with a man in the Roman's law, she has little freedom and she was not taught how to write. She can only be a wife and a mother in the Roman's society. 'Sati', 'Jauhar', female feticide, child marriage, molestation, rape, dowry, and domestic violence are the evil, mean, inhumane and cruel practices and acts created by a human which is created by a drop of semen. Sati is when a woman's husband dies then the woman had to sit on the burning fire with her husband and burn herself to death. It is said it was her solemn duty toward her husband. In old Hindu scripts, it was believed that when a woman dies as a sati, the doors of heaven open up for her straight. Jauhar is, we get to know that is just a mass suicide, but in the medieval period, this was a Rajput custom, where the Rajput women sacrificed their lives for their husbands when they were about to lose a battle. Medieval India is well remembered because of many factors but one of them is child marriage. At that time, birth of a girl child was a matter of shame for the parents, they were considered a burden for the family, so parents used to marry them off as soon as possible. Another reason for child marriage is, it was a belief that grown-up girls were more tend to do scandals, which is why their parents tie the knot at a very tender age and the girls stay at their parent's home and move out when they hit puberty. At that time men used to think that a woman is nothing more than a marriage material, they were treated like material. This is the reason why there was an increasing birth rate, women suffered from very poor health which is also a reason for

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the increase in high mortality rate in women and babies too. To add insult to injury, there was no access to widow re-marriage. Treating women as the material was common in the medieval period. In the medieval period, widows were considered cursed, it was believed that when a woman becomes a widow she inflicts depredation and brings ill luck, after being a widow, that woman have to pronounce every comfort of home which was promised by her husband at the marriage, there is no place for widows in any holy or sacred rituals or place. They were not allowed to remarry. There will be no choice given to her so that can live a peaceful life, she always wears faded white clothes and had to eat very specific food which was only eaten by widows.

Before the advent of Islam at Arabian Peninsula, a girl or a woman was just considered as a commodity, a non-entity and a sex slave. She has no say in the tribal and family matters. A man was the head and master of tribe and family. A girl infant was buried alive.

Due to the dominant patriarchal mind set discussed above, a woman is just considered as non-entity, an inferior, and a commodity. Because of this, even in English literature, talented and influential female writers hid behind male pen names like the Bronte Sisters, Mary Ann Evans, Amantine Lucile Dupin, Alice Sheldon, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Katharine Burdekin.

The roles of women in literature may be seen as if they are caged in the dominant male patriarchy. As birds in cages, if one flaps her wings too long and hard against the steel bars, the wings will break. Few women characters are given the strength or courage to resist these limits.

Even today in traditional households, a girl child is considered and treated like an inferior, a fable, subordinate and less intelligent in contrast to a male child. A male child will be given more attention in comparison to a girl child. He will be given good food, education and all the comfort as compare to a girl child. Many times, this develops a negative psychology in the girl child and thereby affects her personality. In traditional households, the birth of a male child is celebrated and many girls are divorced because they cannot produce the male child. In old Hindi films, one can often hear this dialogue: "Jawaan larki ek bodhe baap par bojh ki tarah hoti hai". One more oft-repeated dialogue related to a girl from old Hindi films is: "Parh-Likh kar tujhe kya karna hai aakhir mein tujhe choolha hi jhookna hai". Another repeated dialogue from old Bollywood films related to a girl is: "Ghar ka kaam seekhe gi toh sasural jakar maeke ka naam roshan karegi". Films like literature reflect the happenings of the society and they shape our imagination and thereby create the popular culture. The male dominated mind set and considering a woman as a material and a commodity create a popular and accepted thinking in the traditional households that a girl should just look after the children and house so she is taught since very early in her life all the household chores. She is denied the good and proper education, health care and all the basic amenities as compare to a boy. There are instances where a girl is often ignored in terms of health care by her parents. Even today in the 21st century, the female literacy's rate is low and the facilities for her health care are pathetic. Many girls especially in the rural areas are not taught about the mensuration cycle and they do not have the facilities for that. So many girls even in the advanced age of pregnancy are forced to do the household chores. So many girls are ill-treated and face the sarcasm of their in laws and husbands even in

pregnancy. They are denied the nutritious food in the period of pregnancy. If these inhumane and non-sensitive practices continue so how can one guarantee that a girl should give birth to a healthy and psychology fit child.

Many boast off education and scientific boom of the 21st century, but a girl is still considered as a seductress and sex symbol. One can see girls in provocative dresses in advertisements and at bill boards so as to sexually attract men. One can see seductive pictures of girls in leading newspapers and magazines. The work of receiving and assisting the guests at the hotel, to tend the patients and to serve food and drinks at the airplanes can be done by men. But one can ponder over the fact that why so many girls are there in the jobs of hotel receptionists, nurses and flight attendants? Why unnecessary item songs are there in Bollywood's films? In many talk shows and talent hunt shows, the lens of the camera is deliberately focused on the cleavages and hips of the girls. Marketing of products and other things can be done by other means but girls are still considered as the safest tools to attract money. A girl is forced and used to malign the image of the rich and famous personalities. Nowadays, stories of sex tapes emerge in the news. Scandalous and adulterous stories and news are popular. A lot of people take inclinations in reading and knowing these types of stories. The celebrated psychologist, Sigmund Freud, had said that 'sex' is the most potent motive in the humans. Many films and numerous works of literature have deliberately focussed and popularised the animal instincts of the humans. Most of the modern human beings opine that they are like the animals and they have no moral agency and ennobled objectives of their respective lives. So to satisfy the sexual urges of the body, they make no distinctions between mother, sister and wife like the animals. A dog or a pig does not make distinction as mother, sister and wife when satisfying the physical needs of the body. Many husbands do not care about the wishes of their wives or the menstruation period when satisfying the sexual needs of their respective bodies.

Karl Marx, the famous theorist and thinker, lays great stress on the fact that hunger is the most potent motive in the lives of the humans. One can witness the instances of stealing, burglary or any other crime by the humans for the sake of stomach. Charles Darwin in the 'theory of evolution' had concluded that a human being has evolved from an ape. He is a 'homosapian'. He was of the opinion that the difference which is there between a horse and a donkey so that is that the difference between an ape and a human being. In the view of him, a human being is slightly refined as compare to an ape. Many centuries ago, Aristotle had said that 'a man is a social animal'. It is not wrong that the human beings are interdependent on each other but some better terminology could have been used by him in place of an 'animal.'

From the theories and observations discussed above, one can opine that a human being has stoop at the level of animals. He/she thinks that only animal instincts are there in him/her and he/she has to satisfy only that at any cost. But Allah in the holy Quran has said that a human being is His best of creations. He is His 'khalifah' (assistance or commander) on earth. He has been given an ennobled and a lofty aim at earth. Allah has created a human being at the best level. Every major religion of the world instructs the human beings to do the ennobled and good deeds and warns them that they would be accountable for their deeds on the great accountable day.

Of course, 'sex' and 'hunger' are the potent motives in the human beings but they have also the grandeur aims on earth. They have the abilities to do the good deeds. They can make this world a better place. If human beings think that apart from animal instincts in them they also have the 'soul', or the 'conscience' or the 'divine spark'. If they firmly believe that they have to face God one day and they would be asked what they had done on earth then the feelings of compassion, tenderness, love and care would be more potent in them. They would start loving the Almighty's creations on earth. A man would care and respect a woman and a woman would also do the same. Then, a woman would not be considered merely a commodity, a material and an epitome of sex. Definitely, atrocities against her would be low. She would not be burned or killed for the demand of dowry. A boy or a man would not throw acid on a girl or a woman's face.

A woman is the cornerstone of civilization. Because she gives birth to a child and nurtures him/her. She is more responsible for giving good manners to her child as the education of the child begins from the mother's lap. She sacrifices selflessly for the upbringing of her child. So in Islam it is decreed that the paradise lies under the mother's feet. A mother is commanded by Allah for the treatment of good behaviour by her children thrice as compare to the father. If mother is angry with her children on the day of judgement then they would rot in hell although they may have done a lot of worship of Allah. Islam guarantees a right to inheritance for a woman and a girl's acceptance for marriage is obligatory in Islam. It gives the reward of a 'jihad' to a woman if she looks after well her husband and children and does the household chores. It is not compulsory for a wife to do the household chores in Islam. If she does willingly then Allah would reward her. There is no taboo in Islam for the widow's re-marriage.

If children are taught lessons of religion and moral education at the early age then they would develop into good human beings. They would love and respect others. They would learn to respect the girls and women. If the girl child is respected and love by others in the family especially in the traditional ones than the male child would also learn and see to respect the girl child. Of course, Islam is a modern and scientific religion as it strictly stops the practice of burying the female infant, it strictly dislikes the practice of considering a girl as a commodity and a sex slave. It does not compel the girls to do the household chores. It has given her right to inheritance and her will is also necessary for her marriage. These things are not accepted in many cultures even in the twenty first century when many powerful democratic countries boast on the campaigns of the advocacy of education and girl's rights.

In the eyes of God, every creature is equal. The discriminations on the basis of caste, creed and sex are created by the immortal men and not by the genuine religion. God has commanded the human beings to love and respect His creations. God in the holy Quran has commanded the husbands and wives to love each other and not to disclose their respective faults to other people. Those who do not disclose the faults of the people then Allah would not disclose their faults on the day of judgement. A woman should look after well her home. She should create a healthy and a happier atmosphere at home. She has a great responsibility on her shoulders as she has to look after her family and children and the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow. She should respect her in laws and her husband's relatives. If she does all these things happily then there is a great reward for her from Allah.

We should follow what is decreed by God and what is natural. In the commands of God, there is a comfort, solace, happiness and rationality. So men and women should adhere to the commands of God and what is natural. When human beings follow their whims and fancies and unnatural things then there are chaos, disturbance and mayhem in the respective societies. Some thinkers may label homosexuality and lesbianism as the mental diseases but these things are created by the thinking of some human beings. So we should surrender our ego, haughtiness and perturbed thinking and sick mentality when there is an order of God. Because the commands of Him are scientific, logical and full of comfort.

Reference:

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**CHOOSING YOUR TRUTH OVER MEMORY: AUTOFICTION AND THE
FEMALE IRANIAN DIASPORIC EXPERIENCE**

The rise of autofiction has significantly transformed modern perceptions of autobiographical literature by questioning the strict boundaries between reality and imagination. In contrast to traditional autobiography or memoir, this genre does not strive to create a consistent and objectively verifiable narrative of an author's existence. It intentionally inhabits the interstice between actual experience and creative reinterpretation, enabling authors to examine identity as a dynamic and frequently conflicting phenomenon rather than a fixed historical account.

This feature renders autofiction especially significant for populations whose identities have been influenced by displacement, political turmoil, censorship, and cultural evolution. Within these communities, women writers of the Iranian diaspora hold a distinctive role. Their prose is generally anticipated to serve concurrently as political witness, cultural depiction, and personal revelation, imposing demands that traditional memoirs frequently struggle to fulfill. Autofiction is a distinct literary genre that can defy the aforementioned anticipations while enabling writers to express fragmented, dynamic, and contextually grounded forms of identity.

Iranian women's writing experiences in exile are marked by numerous layers of dislocation. Geographic migration entails cultural alienation, language alteration and the constant negotiation of contradictory expectations from Iran and from the host country. Previous studies have revealed that these authors often operate under the strain of representation to speak not only of themselves but as symbols of a whole nation, religion, or sex. Therefore, their literary creation is often evaluated based on standards of authenticity, rather than of aesthetic novelty. These expectations have been mostly articulated in the literary genre of memoirs, because this genre privileges the factual lived experience as the main proof of truth. Such emphasis, however, severely limits writers whose identities are not effectively portrayed by linear accounts of experience. Autofiction provides an alternative by moving the focus away from factual verification to an investigation of subjectivity itself (Effe and Lawlor 162).

Defining autofiction has traditionally been challenging because the genre resists definite categorization on purpose. Since Serge Doubrovsky introduced the word in 1977, researchers have discussed its defining properties. Autofiction has no generally accepted definition, but it is often understood as a mix of autobiographical content and fictional techniques that purposely blur the line between the two. Contemporary study finds a number of common traits of the genre, such as the intermingling of real-life and fictional material, a clear connection between the writer and the main character, and considerable artistic experimentation. No single one of these features characterizes autofiction on its own, but taken collectively they separate it from standard autobiography and memoir (Effe and Lawlor 3).

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Autofiction redefines fiction as a beneficial way of understanding subjective reality instead of seeing it as a distortion of truth. Memory is selective, interpretive and recreated by later experience. The attempt to build a purely objective autobiographical story is thus doomed to failure. Autofiction reveals this limitation rather than obscuring it. By making fictionalization an explicit part of autobiographical writing, it draws attention to the fact that human identity is not a static historical object awaiting documentation but a continuous act of negotiation among memory, imagination, emotion and lived experience.

Before considering why autofiction may be especially relevant for female authors of the Iranian diaspora, it is necessary to understand this conceptual base. Benefits beyond artistic innovation are available in the genre. Autofiction gives writers useful creative tools for exploring fragmented identities, dealing with trauma and resisting external pressures that need ideological assurance. These possibilities are of course particularly interesting in the light of psychological study on fictitious autobiographies.

Fictionalization as Exploratory Self-Writing

Creative writing expert Celia Hunt provides a useful glimpse into the liberating potential of fictionalised self-writing. Hunt had spent years researching fictitious autobiography in creative writing programs and discovered that participants often experienced profound shifts in their self-perception after working on fictional writing exercises. Rather than reifying settled self-concepts, fictional autobiography tended to expose students to the discovery of hidden feelings, repressed experiences, and alternate perspectives on their own identities. Participants said that they became less mentally rigid and more able to see themselves as dynamic persons whose identities might grow and change, rather than being stuck in stories previously told to them (Hunt 233).

According to Hunt, these changes occur because fiction writing temporarily disconnects the author from previous self-definitions. Rather than replicating typical autobiographical accounts, writers begin to explore alternatives that regular autobiography generally inhibits. This twist lowers reliance on prevailing ideas of identity, and encourages increased understanding of emotional and somatic experience. Thus, fictional autobiography encourages reflexivity, enabling writers to reflect on their preconceptions about their own selves without the obligation of factual reality.

Drawing on Julia Kristeva's notion of the semiotic, she suggests that these exercises bring people back into contact with expressions that predate fixed linguistic categories. By focusing on bodily feeling and subjective experience, semiotic writing undermines master narratives of human identity (Hunt 235).

The concepts underpinning these creative activities are comparable to many of the literary methods that are the hallmark of autofiction. Autofiction involves shifting narrative perspectives, broken chronology, blended characters, metaphorical reconstructions, and inventive re-interpretations of lived experience. These formal devices are not simple aesthetic experiments but systems that allow authors to explore numerous dimensions of subjectivity concurrently.

Third person narrative, for example, sometimes enables authors to see themselves at more emotional remove, yet still to be intimately tied to autobiographical experience. In the same way, writers can investigate emotional realities through composite characters, which amalgamate numerous people into a single fictitious person, removing the limits of documentary accuracy. Such strategies demonstrate that fictionalization can add to, not detract from, interaction with lived experience.

Novels such as Rachel Cusk's *Saving Agnes* and Nora Ephron's *Heartburn* show that the fictionalized autobiographical approach can offer a deeper analysis of identity than is often possible inside the typical memoir. These texts do not provide coherent narratives with a strong sense of self-understanding; instead they embrace contradiction, ambiguity and constant rewriting as fundamental qualities of human subjectivity. Fiction is therefore not an escape from the real world, but a means of addressing situations that conventional realism frequently cannot effectively depict.

Serialized Autofiction and the Unfinished Self

Among the many formal advances open to autofiction, serialized autofiction is particularly noteworthy for its exceptional capacity to express fragile identities. Serial formats challenge the notion that an individual's life can be fully captured in a single, coherent narrative. Rather, identity emerges through a series of related works, each offering a particular viewpoint on the author's changing connection to memory, life, and selfhood.

Serialized autofiction takes on different specific forms. Writers may create collections of loosely related pieces that share repeating themes and personal concerns, or they may create tightly interwoven series that purposefully revisit earlier narratives from fresh viewpoints. There are diverse ways of serializing, as represented by Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, Rachel Cusk's *Outline* trilogy, and some of Doris Lessing's work. They are structurally different, but both refuse to allow identity to be narrated as a whole story. Instead, seriality offers selfhood as transitory, fractured and vulnerable to ongoing reinterpretation.

This kind of formal flexibility is especially important to members of diasporic societies. Diasporic identity is seldom the result of linear stories of departure, adaption and assimilation. Instead, displacement generates an ongoing conflict between past and present, motherland and host nation, memory and actual life. Iranian women writers tend to see identity as being in a state of flux rather than fixed resolution. Serialized autofiction thus provides a literary style that may articulate exactly this situation of continuous alteration.

There is more to serialized autofiction than literary innovation. By rejecting narrative closure, seriality understands that displacement is not an occurrence that ends with movement but a condition that continues to shape identity over time. Any new text returns to past understandings of self, but does not necessarily replace them. It allows contradictory interpretations of identity to coexist, rather than forcing them to be resolved. This openness is very much in keeping with contemporary views of diasporic subjectivity that increasingly reject essentialist understandings of identity in favour of fluid, relational forms of selfhood.

Autofiction, then, is not to be interpreted as merely a combination of fiction and autobiography. It is more a separate literary genre, whose formal qualities are strongly in tune with the psychological, philosophical and sociological realities faced by women authors of the Iranian diaspora. Autofiction replaces autobiographical truthfulness with subjective investigation, hence providing literary resources accessible in the typical memoir. As the following argument will show, these benefits become even more evident when we consider the restrictions that are built into memoir itself and the special abilities of autofiction to transcend them.

Memoir and the Demand for Narrative Coherence

Memoir has been the dominating genre for life writing, but its formal qualities do not lend itself well to representing the complicated nature of diasporic subjectivity. Memoir depends so much on the premise that experience can be authentically reconstructed and expressed as an organized narrative. Memoir readers anticipate the author's lived experiences to provide dependable testimony regarding personal identity and historical truth. This assumption is particularly acute for authors from politically contentious places such as Iran whose narratives are often seen less as literary works than as factual evidence of their society. Thus, memoir typically reproduces the same representational restrictions that restrict female Iranian diasporic writers.

The trouble with memoir is that it relies on "experience" as the main way to know whether it's real. But the notion of experience itself is still very unclear. Experience could mean remembered happenings, emotional reactions, bodily sensations, retroactive interpretation, or acquired knowledge. Memoir tends to approach these different dimensions as if they are organically fused into a cohesive life story. For peoples whose identity has been molded by displacement, exile, censorship and cultural fragmentation, such an assumption poses a dilemma. Memory, in these conditions, is itself discontinuous, conflicting and often resistant to chronological ordering. Thus memoir's need for coherence of story can reduce what is, at bottom, uncertain experience.

Narrative focus also prioritizes causation and retroactive explanation. Memoirs tend to invite readers to comprehend a life through familiar beginnings, turning points and resolutions. Such narrative structures foster the conviction that identity evolves along patterns that may eventually be explained. But diasporic subjectivity regularly defies these very norms. Exile is generally characterized by many simultaneous attachments to places, clashing cultural loyalties, fragmented memories and unfulfilled emotional tensions. Any attempt to impose traditional narrative order on such experiences risks producing fabricated coherence rather than real insight.

Autofiction is a radically different approach. Autofiction doesn't question whether an account faithfully reproduces objective occurrences, but how consciousness interacts with and perceives reality. The emphasis is on impression rather than fact-checking. It is not an escape or renunciation of reality, but a confrontation with it from the necessarily limited perspective of a particular consciousness. Therefore readers are invited to engage in the construction of meaning, rather than in the judgment of factual authenticity of each narrated occurrence. This transformation alters the moral bond between author, writing, and audience, substituting the expectations of the document with those of interpretation (Frye 49).

Thus the difference between memoir and autofiction is not only a question of factual veracity. Memoir frequently thinks that experience is only meaningful when it is placed in narrative order. Autofiction questions this notion, positing that narrative can alter lived experience. Autofiction emphasizes uncertainty, incompleteness, conflict rather than reality as a finished story. Subjectivity is a continuing process, not a completed result.

This philosophical turn can be exemplified by writers such as Rachel Cusk and Karl Ove Knausgaard. Both authors use a lot of autobiographical information but neither of them considers narrative consistency as the main goal of literary expression. Instead, their work always asks if traditional storytelling is sufficient for the portrayal of reality. In Cusk's Outline trilogy and Knausgaard's My Struggle series, regular occurrences are often rendered without significant narrative arc, emphasizing repetition, ambiguity and incomplete emotions rather than climactic events.

They contend that narrative explanation typically provides an illusion of comprehension rather than real knowledge. David Shields also contends that contemporary nonfiction should do away with standard storytelling techniques, as lived experience rarely adheres to these models. He also says he has become more and more unsatisfied with traditional fiction, as it seemed to him to be pulling readers away from reality rather than drawing them closer. He doesn't see the self as an entity that can be fully described, but rather presents the consciousness as a place where impressions, emotions and perceptions are constantly flowing through. The focus moves from what objectively happens to how existence is felt.

This critique of storytelling has profound philosophical consequences. There is the hope in traditional storytelling that human lives can finally be comprehended through causal reasoning and retrospective interpretation. But philosophers such as Toril Moi and Cora Diamond claim that such assurance itself is philosophically suspect, because narrative so often converts doubt into a spurious certainty. Human ties, death and ethical duty are often ineffable. Far from hiding them under the guise of narrative completion, autofiction recognizes these boundaries.

Cusk has observed herself that many writers who try to express their real selves end up reproducing socially conditioned conceptions of identity. The famous discourses turn into a series of repetitions, not into individual investigations of subjectivity. Autofiction seeks to break this loop by refusing preset narratives. Instead of demanding complete self-disclosure, it calls for sensitivity to conflict, confusion and partial comprehension. This alertness allows authors to tackle experiences that don't readily fall into standard autobiographical tales.

This technique is very important for Iranian women writers residing outside Iran. Their literary works are sometimes anticipated to explain Iran, Islam, exile or female injustice to overseas audiences. Therefore, their works are often approached for their documentary worth rather than for their literary novelty. Autofiction refuses to turn real experience into easily digestible cultural explanation, therefore resisting these expectations. Subjectivity remains located, partial, and unresponsive to appropriation.

Cusk has said that autofiction is sometimes read as narcissistic since it takes autobiographical material. Indeed, the self is not so much the target of attention, but the means through which society is observed. The personal "I" becomes a kind of window, not a mirror. This view is quite similar to Simone de Beauvoir's claim that truth is generated from the position of situated experience, as opposed to detached objectivity.

Thus, the authenticity of autofiction is not based on factual transparency, but on the faithful representation of the conditions and limits of subjective perception.

Autofiction has not just philosophical advantages but also significant literary tactics for writers working in conditions of political persecution and censorship. Autobiographical fiction has repeatedly emerged in civilizations, throughout history, where direct political witness bears significant personal risk. In such cases fictionalization is not simply an artistic option but an essential technique of protecting intellectual freedom.

A case in point is the background of Greek literature throughout the military dictatorship of 1967-1974. Ioannidou's work on Melpo Axioti and Vassilis Vassilikos shows the use of autofictional techniques by both authors throughout the time of their exile. Ioannidou contends that authoritarian political settings tend to foster formal experimentation as opposed to stifling literary invention altogether, building on Dimitris Papanikolaou's reading of authoritarian regimes and literary modernity. As the open presentation of political views becomes risky, writers frequently resort to fragmentation, ambiguity and fictionalization, as techniques of resistance.

These changes reflect Serge Doubrovsky's broader rejection of the claim of autobiography to produce coherent and full descriptions of individual lives. Autofiction, according to Doubrovsky, is a deliberate fracturing of narrative authority, a presentation of identity as internally fragmented and provisional, not united and whole. Such formal instability is especially helpful under authoritarian situations because it resists the ideological demand for uniformity and assurance.

A good example of this is in the works of Axioti and Vassilikos. Both authors devised fictional writer-heroes, the experience of whose exile enabled them to deal with censorship, dislocation and political suppression without offering easy autobiographical testimony. Axioti often depended on vagueness and symbolic ambiguity, whereas Vassilikos exploited parody and more clear political references. Despite such stylistic distinctions, both writers employed autofiction to present political reality without having to contend with the evidentiary demands of direct witness (Ioannidou 283).

These instances are relevant far beyond their historical setting. Many Iranian women authors in exile have similar structural conditions in their experiences. Relocating geographically may free a person from direct government censorship, but it does not usually prevent the subsequent surveillance, political harassment, and moral examination that traverse national borders. Moreover, audiences within the host nation tend to demand that exiled writers offer straightforward political narratives that reaffirm pre-existing beliefs about Iran. Autofiction allows writers to defy these expectations by depicting political experience through indirect representation, remaining ambiguous but emotionally authentic.

Autofiction thus constitutes a counter-archive, as one would say. It does not record history according to the usual criteria of proof, but instead maintains subjective facts that defy official narrative. Thus, political repression affects both the formal features and the substance of literary expression. Fragmentation, fiction, and plot instability become strategies by which writers negotiate constraints that preclude clear witness.

Political restrictions are but one facet of the pressures that shape diasporic writing. Social class is another key problem. McAuliffe's research suggests that Iranian diasporic populations living abroad are not a homogeneous community, but replicate many of the social disparities that exist within Iran itself. Economic status, religion, age, migration history and geographical background differences continue to influence the interactions

between people of the diaspora. Hence, no single writer has a legitimate claim to represent the Iranian diaspora experience in its entirety.

Memoir stresses individual experience over wider social links and hence does not usually portray these structural disparities. Classroom discussions sometimes devolve into personal stories of privilege or deprivation, rather than the institutions that create those conditions. And for writers already under the gun to portray their communities authentically, there is a reluctance to tackle class freely, for fear of perpetuating stereotypes or being unrepresentative.

A more flexible substitute is Autofiction. It does not require sociological explanation, but it permits class to appear indirectly in everyday exchanges, in patterns of perception, language variation, spatial mobility, and ordinary social contacts. Class becomes something lived, not said. Indirect representation allows writers to address structural injustice without making literary works into confessional accounts or sociological examples.

This flexibility coincides closely with McAuliffe's view of the Iranian diaspora as a mixed set of overlapping social sectors, rather than a single community. Autofiction permits this multiplicity, offering multiple perspectives but not demanding final conclusions. Writers can write from their own personal experiences, but at the same time, they recognize that those experiences are incomplete and not representative.

The autofictional answers to political oppression and social inequity, taken collectively, show one of the genre's greatest qualities. Autofiction does not seek to resolve ambiguity, but to retain it as an essential part of lived experience. The genre offers literary tools to express structural complexity without the imposition of artificial coherence, whether in the face of censorship, exile, social divisions, or cultural relocation. This openness is especially essential for female Iranian diasporic authors whose identities are constantly changed by the constraints of overlapping politics, cultures and societies.

The capacity to live with conflict without resolving it is what finally sets apart autofiction from what is typical of life writing. The genre does not offer conclusive descriptions of identity, but instead develops settings in which doubt itself becomes meaningful. This capacity is even more crucial when we consider how diasporic writers navigate the relationship between personal experience and shared memory, a topic that further underlines why autofiction offers distinct creative possibilities not present inside memoir.

Autofiction and Collective Memory

Autofiction is well suited to challenges of narrative coherence, censorship and class representation but its greatest contribution is to negotiate the link between personal subjectivity and common experience. Diasporic sense of self is rarely produced wholly out of private memory. Instead it is produced in the interplay of personal background, acquired trauma, collective memory and larger political conditions. The experiences of Iranian female writers, in contrast, are not easily understood as isolated occurrences, because exile, revolt, censorship, and displacement are realities that impact entire communities. Literary genres that concentrate primarily on the private autobiographical self, then, are generally inadequate. Autofiction offers a repertoire of formal strategies enabling authors to shift between private subjective perception and shared experience without forfeiting the radicality of either.

Ghost-Writing the Self and Distributed Subjectivity

One way is what Zach Pearl calls 'ghost-writing the self.' Pearl claims trauma hardly ever belongs to one person alone. The experience of political conflict and displacement is passed down via families and communities, affecting those who have not seen the initial events themselves. Autobiographical writing must therefore not merely document isolated memories, but rather must take into account the presence of inherited memories and absences that continue to shape modern identity (Pearl 169). Autofiction is a particularly suited structure for this endeavour as it enables the autobiographical 'I' to be permeable, permitting personal memory to co-exist with imagined voices, shared experiences and intergenerational memories.

Ghost-writing contests the confessional logic normally ascribed to memoir. Conventional memoir rests on the assumption that traumatic experience may be properly communicated through direct narration of personal witness. But Pearl's notion is rather that some sorts of trauma are beyond individual language. The self becomes thus a vehicle for other voices, not an autonomous narrator with total control over meaning. This method recognizes that exile, persecution, and political violence can produce experiences that are too disorganized to be represented by a single autobiographical authority.

For Iranian women writers, this transfer of narrative authority has enormous ethical and political benefits. Their writing is frequently subjected to scrutiny for ideological uniformity, moral clarity and political commitment. To present trauma only as human experience risks simplifying complicated historical events to political rhetoric or to personalized psychological pain. Ghost-writing spreads narrative authority across various voices and views, and so resists the appropriation of individual evidence for ideological ends. The writer does not know all, she alternates between remembered experience, hypothetical possibilities, inherited thoughts, and persisting absences.

Third-Person Narration as Ethical Distance

The widespread usage of third-person narrative in contemporary autofiction is closely tied to ghost-writing. Commentators have often noted that writers under conditions of political oppression or cultural dislocation would often employ the third person narrative not just for stylistic variety but as a way of establishing a critical distance between themselves and their autobiographical material. As Manijeh Nasrabadi points out, third-person narrative allows Iranian diasporic writers to be in "resistant melancholia," a state in which connection to the homeland is not resolved but is in a state of unreconciled attachment, as opposed to being changed into nostalgic reunion (Nasrabadi 497). The use of third person narrative sustains the ambiguity, enabling writers to perceive themselves without asserting control over their experiences, instead of portraying exile as a closed emotional process.

This narrative separation is especially useful when dealing with politically sensitive memories. Iranian public discourse continues to be marked by intense contestation on issues such as religious authority, revolutionary political discourse, gender discrimination and governmental violence. The first person narration tends to make readers treat the autobiographical assertions as political pronouncements which do not add to the literary richness. By contrast, third-person autofiction permits writers to address these topics without putting themselves in the position of becoming categorical

champions or opponents. The narrator is fictionalised but still recognisably tied to the author, whilst at the same time being far enough away to foster interpretive openness. This tactic also aligns with some versions of *écriture féminine*, which contradict the standard notion that narrative authority is united. Feminist writing tends to reject privileged, solitary, authoritative voices in favor of plurality, indirection, and fragmentation. Jeanette van Toonder argues that the third person narrative voice allows women authors to escape the kinds of self-surveillance required of them by male-dominated and nationalist conversations throughout history. Instead, identity is something noticed, questioned and revised, not something firmly established. Autofiction supports this by refusing to settle uncertainties about the author-narrator relationship, focusing the reader's attention on the production of female subjectivity itself instead of concerns of real identification (den Toonder 15).

Similarly, Hanna Meretoja stresses the productivity of third-person autofiction as a kind of self-estrangement. Writers, through their partially invented narrators, find possibilities for ethical reflection unattainable to them in the immediacy of first-person confession. Meretoja (2016) describes identity as a fluid process rather than a static knowledge, continuously created through interpretation, memory and social interaction. Such flexibility is especially vital to authors whose circumstances have been altered by displacement, as migration often upsets previously fixed concepts of selfhood.

The merits of third-person narration are particularly obvious in Randa Hasbun's study of personal writing across generations. Reflecting on her own work, Hasbun states that she often found first person narrative to be emotionally and ethically constraining as it presumes a certain authority she did not intend to claim. Instead, she developed a persona called Anna, in whom there is a bit of herself and her mother. Anna is neither completely autobiographical nor entirely fictitious. Rather, she is an archive that allows various generations, memories and viewpoints to meet (Hasbun 371). This composite characterization permits autobiographical writing to contain conflicts without requiring them to be resolved within a single story.

Hasbun also shows how embodied cultural activities like cuisine, multilingual speaking, and quotidian rituals are ways of maintaining collective memory that do not depend on explicit autobiographical explanation. These performative features are forms of what Diana Taylor calls embodied memory, transferring cultural identity via repeated behavior rather than documentary-style record. Autofiction, which prioritizes lived experience over sequential historical narration, readily allows for these forms of remembering. The genre thus permits writers to maintain cultural continuity while also recognizing the discontinuities that migration brings.

Another key approach in the autofiction arsenal is the deployment of what Clinton Caward calls the "absent narrator." Absent narration differs from traditional first-person narration in that the narrator's feelings and judgments are not foregrounded; rather, the narrator consciously shifts the emotional emphasis to the persons, conversations, and situations around them. The narrator's subjectivity is still there, but it is transmitted implicitly through perception rather than a declaration (Caward 142). A good example is the later autofiction of Rachel Cusk, in which the emotional life of the narrator is often revealed not through direct psychological confession but through the narrator's dealings with other people.

This indirect image recalls Shirley Jordan's reading of women's autofiction and trauma. Traumatic experience is frequently unable to be moved forward in regular narrative

progression, as Jordan notes, since trauma is a recurrence, not a progression to closure. Autofiction thus relinquishes the promise of linear resolution, permitting fragmented images, recurring memories and unfinished conversations to convey emotional realities with better certainty than sequential narration could do (Jordan 83). Such proper fragmentation is perhaps not narrative failure, but an ethically justifiable response to unresolved experiences.

For women authors, these strategies also serve as a defense against such types of public attention that sometimes follow the publication of the autobiographical. As Cusk herself found out after her memoirs were published, female authors are typically judged on the moral assessments of their own lives, rather than the literary merits of their work. Autofiction makes it hard to make easy moral judgments, displacing the autobiographical identity through a variety of storytelling tactics. The autobiographical self is not suppressed or fully disclosed, but deliberately filtered through fictionalization.

Return, Memory, and Multilingual Subjectivity

These strategies are useful not only for issues about trauma but also for the broader context of return and recollection in diaspora. A lot of Iranian women who return to Iran after long absences find return less about reconciliation than a renewed sense of dislocation, notes Jasmin Darznik. The Iran that is met when returning is completely different from the Iran that is remembered, and the person who returns has been changed by exile just as much. Thus, the home is equally familiar and new, evoking emotional tensions that resist simple narrative resolution (Darznik 14).

Autofiction offers very powerful formal resources to depict this kind of emotional complexity. Disjointed temporality, unstable narrative viewpoints, and mixed generic forms enable writers to hold onto opposing emotions without recourse to tales of successful homecoming or irrevocable isolation. So return is a continuing emotional negotiation, not the end of an autobiographical trip.

Similarly, Jennifer Langer shows that despite their physical distance from Iran, numerous Iranian Jewish women producing literature in exile remain mentally connected to Iran. They continue to tell their stories in terms of memories of the homeland, not because they have rejected life in exile, but because dislocation remains psychologically incomplete. Time itself is non-linear, as recollections, present experiences and anticipated futures are in constant interaction (Langer 305). Autofiction allows exactly this kind of temporal instability, enabling writers to revisit, re-interpret and recreate prior events not as fixed historical truths.

Finally, one of the most important contributions of autofiction to diasporic writing is multilingual experimentation. Helle Egendal asserts that the emergence of multilingual autofiction as an important literary technique among migrant writers is a reaction to the monolingual assumptions that inform the heritage of national literature. Instead of considering language hybridity as a hindrance to true self-expression, autofiction treats multilingualism as an integral component of migrant subjectivity (Egendal 142). Iranian women writers often travel between Persian and the other languages of their adopted countries in their daily lives. Autofiction makes room for this reality by allowing

different languages to communicate diverse emotional registers, experiences and cultural affinities without the need for total translation or linguistic homogeneity.

Autofiction Beyond Narrative Resolution

Ultimately, autofiction, with its refusal of narrative closure, its acceptance of fragmented identity, and its call for multilingual experimentation, offers Iranian diaspora women writers literary tools to articulate subjectivities formed through constant movement across political realities and histories. The genre accepts the lack of coherence where it exists and recognizes ambiguity as a real part of diasporic existence. In this mix of formal creativity and ethical concern, autofiction becomes more than an alternative to memoir; it is the literary genre most capable of explaining the complicated nature of modern Iranian diasporic women.

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**ADAPTIVE DYNAMIC PPP MODEL FOR SMART INFRASTRUCTURE
GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: CASE STUDIES OF YAMUNA EXPRESSWAY,
DELHI GURGAON EXPRESSWAY, AND MUMBAI METRO**

Abstract

India's rapid urbanisation has intensified the demand for governance frameworks that balance efficiency, sustainability, and inclusivity. Traditional Public–Private Partnership (PPP) models, though effective in mobilising private capital, often face rigidity, conflicts, and limited adaptability. By 2025, India sanctioned over 1,800 PPP projects worth ₹11 lakh crore, with transport accounting for 55% of investments. This study proposes the Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM) as a next-generation framework for innovative infrastructure governance. ADPM emphasises contractual flexibility, participatory decision-making, digital integration, and sustainability-linked metrics. Through case studies of the Yamuna Expressway, Delhi–Gurgaon Expressway, and Mumbai Metro Line 1, governance indicators such as efficiency, transparency, adaptability, and stakeholder satisfaction are assessed. Findings reveal that ADPM enables adaptive renegotiations, fosters citizen-centric governance, and aligns infrastructure delivery with long-term developmental goals. Positioned within India's Smart Cities Mission and the SDGs, ADPM advances PPP scholarship and offers actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.

Keywords: Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM), Smart Infrastructure Governance, Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs), Yamuna Expressway, Delhi–Gurgaon Expressway, Mumbai Metro

1. Introduction

India's infrastructure sector has become a key driver of economic growth, urbanisation, and social change. The rapid expansion of highways, metros, and urban corridors has intensified the need for sustainable governance frameworks. However, projects frequently encounter cost overruns, delays, disputes, and weak stakeholder participation, exposing the limits of conventional Public–Private Partnership (PPP) models. While PPPs have mobilised private capital, they remain rigid and struggle to adapt to evolving socio-economic and technological contexts (Bhat, 2019; Taktawala & Kotwal, 2022).

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Over the past two decades, India's PPPs have shifted from concession-based structures to risk-sharing, viability gap funding, and hybrid annuity mechanisms. Globally, frameworks such as the UK's Private Finance Initiative and Australia's PPP guidelines emphasise accountability and efficiency (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004). However, the complexity of modern projects, particularly those related to smart cities and sustainable development, requires governance that is adaptive and dynamic (Nam & Pardo, 2011; Kumar et al., 2025). This paper addresses the inadequacy of traditional PPP frameworks in ensuring resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability. Its objectives are:

- To conceptualise the Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM) as a tool for innovative infrastructure governance;
- To evaluate its applicability through case studies of major Indian projects, and
- To derive lessons and policy recommendations for future PPP initiatives.

The selected case studies highlight diverse governance challenges: land acquisition in the Yamuna Expressway, contractual renegotiations in the Delhi–Gurgaon Expressway, and urban transport complexities in the Mumbai Metro. Together, they provide a lens to assess ADPM's potential in reshaping governance.

As of April 2024, 43% of 1,873 Union government projects (valued above ₹150 crore) were delayed, with cumulative cost overruns of ₹5.01 lakh crore and further escalations of ₹2.89 lakh crore by mid-2025 (MoSPI, 2024; 2025). Railways, urban transport, and pipeline infrastructure were most affected, with delays exceeding national averages (NITI Aayog, 2024). Persistent obstacles include outdated concession agreements, contractual disputes, land acquisition and clearance hurdles, weak stakeholder participation, and inadequate monitoring frameworks (World Bank, 2023; ADB, 2023; NITI Aayog, 2024).

2. Literature review:

Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) have shaped global infrastructure since the 1980s, with initiatives like the UK's Private Finance Initiative and Australia's guidelines ensuring accountability (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004). By 2020, PPPs exceeded \$1 trillion worldwide (World Bank, 2020). In India, over 1,800 projects worth ₹11 lakh crore emerged in the 2000s, with nearly 55% of these projects being in the transport sector (Kelkar Committee, 2015). Scholars have noted sectoral evolution (Bhat, 2019) and called for legal clarity (Taktawala & Kotwal, 2022).

Globally, innovative city governance emphasises the integration of ICT, participation, and sustainability (Nam & Pardo, 2011). India's Smart Cities Mission (2015) sought to transform 100 cities with \$40 billion in PPP-led investments. However, outcomes remain mixed—fragmented institutions, weak citizen engagement (Lende & Ambadkar, 2024), and risks of exclusion (Scroll.in, 2025). NITI Aayog (2015) advocates for adaptive frameworks that promote inclusivity.

Conventional PPPs face systemic challenges, including rigid contracts (as seen in the Delhi–Gurgaon Expressway), risk imbalances, transparency gaps, and equity concerns. Reform calls include risk-sharing and dispute resolution (Kelkar Committee, 2015), while critiques highlight short-termism over sustainability (Chintan Research Foundation, 2025).

Adaptive governance, rooted in resilience (Folke et al., 2005), complexity (Teisman & Klijn, 2008), and participatory theory (Ansell & Gash, 2008), offers a shift. Recent scholarship emphasises sustainability and adaptability (Kumar et al., 2025), institutional weaknesses (Patibandla & Sethi, 2018), and hybrid feedback models for resilience (Liu et al., 2025).

3. Conceptual Framework: Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM)

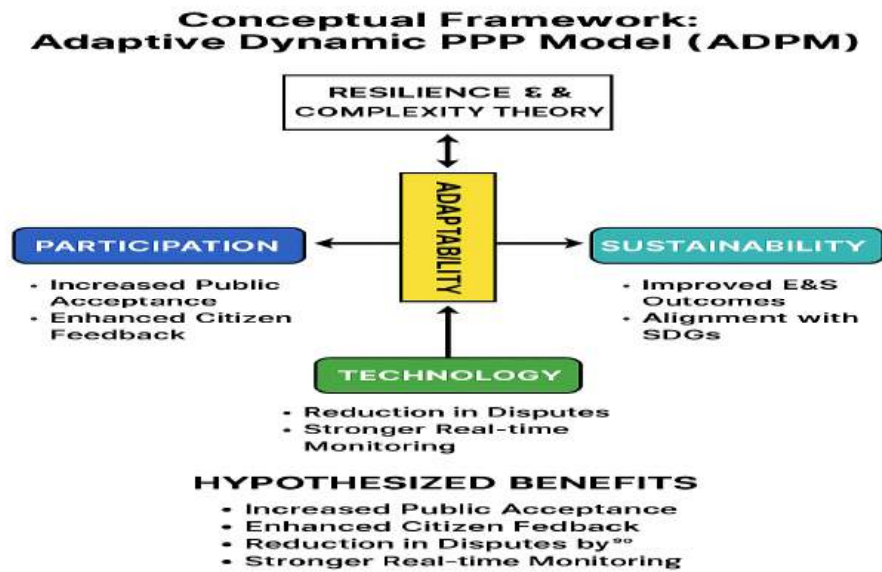


Figure: four interconnected pillars of the Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM):

Definition and Principles of ADPM

Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM) offers a flexible governance framework for smart infrastructure in India, moving beyond rigid contracts and static risk allocation. Rooted in resilience theory (Folke et al., 2005), complexity theory (Teisman & Klijn, 2008), and participatory governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008), it emphasises adaptability, citizen engagement, sustainability, and technology integration. These four pillars—contract flexibility, public participation, environmental/social KPIs, and digital monitoring—create a dynamic ecosystem that reduces disputes, boosts efficiency, and aligns infrastructure with Smart Cities Mission and SDG goals.

Comparison with Conventional PPP Models

TABLE :1

Attributes	Conventional PPPs	ADPM (Proposed)
Contract Flexibility	Rigid, long-term	Adaptive clauses with transparent triggers
Risk Allocation	Static, skewed	Dynamic, shared based on

		evolving context
Stakeholder Voice	Minimal	Institutionalised citizen and regulator feedback
Sustainability Focus	Weak integration	Core principle with measurable KPIs
Technology Use	Fragmented	Digital-first, real-time monitoring

SOURCE: NITI Aayog (2024)

Hypothesised Benefits for India's Infrastructure Governance

- Reduced disputes and faster resolution through adaptive renegotiation mechanisms (Kelkar Committee, 2015).
- Improved service quality and resilience via continuous KPI tracking and technology-enabled oversight (Martínez-Peléaz et al., 2023).
- Enhanced legitimacy and inclusivity by embedding citizen participation into governance (Patibandla & Sethi, 2018).
- Alignment with sustainability goals through integration of environmental and social performance metrics (Kumar et al., 2025).
- Scalable governance models leveraging India's experience with digital dashboards in national programs (Press Information Bureau, 2025).

4. Methodology:

This study employs a comparative case study approach to evaluate the Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM) in India's infrastructure governance. Case studies allow detailed exploration of institutional dynamics, stakeholder interactions, and contextual challenges (Yin, 2018). Three PPP projects were selected—Yamuna Expressway, Delhi–Gurgaon Expressway, and Mumbai Metro—based on sectoral diversity, governance challenges, and policy relevance (Kelkar Committee, 2015; Bhat, 2019; Taktawala & Kotwal, 2022).

Data triangulation was achieved through government reports, policy documents, peer-reviewed literature, media analyses, and project databases, with planned stakeholder interviews to strengthen validity. The analytical framework applies comparative policy analysis across contract design, risk allocation, participation, sustainability, and technology use. Governance indicators include efficiency, transparency, adaptability, inclusivity, and sustainability.

India's PPP landscape, with over 1,800 projects worth ₹11 lakh crore by 2025, faces persistent challenges: rigid contracts, risk imbalance, weak participation, poor sustainability enforcement, and technology gaps. While PPPs mobilise capital, they remain ill-suited for complex projects like smart cities and SDGs. ADPM addresses these issues by embedding flexibility, participation, sustainability-linked KPIs, and digital oversight.

Research Gaps

- ADPM remains conceptual and retrospective, requiring empirical validation in live projects.
- Reliance on secondary sources limits depth; primary interviews are pending.

- Quantitative, standardised indicators for adaptability, inclusivity, and sustainability are needed.
- The case study scope is limited to three projects, which restricts generalizability.

Together, these gaps underscore the need for future research to expand case coverage, incorporate primary stakeholder perspectives, and empirically assess the effectiveness and feasibility of ADPM.

5. Case Studies (Shortened)

- **Yamuna Expressway (165 km, BOT, ₹13,000 crore)**

Opened in 2012 after delays, with traffic 30–40% below projections. Faced land disputes, toll controversies, and insolvency in 2017. ADPM's adaptive clauses, citizen feedback, sustainability KPIs, and intelligent monitoring could have helped reduce financial stress and improve resilience.

Delhi–Gurgaon Expressway (28 km, BOT, ₹1,200 crore)

- Operational in 2008, but traffic far exceeded projections, causing congestion, protests, and over 50 litigation cases. NHAI took over toll collection in 2014. ADPM's dynamic tolling, participatory oversight, sustainability KPIs, and digital dashboards could have helped prevent disputes and strengthen trust.

Mumbai Metro Line 1 (11.4 km, PPP, ₹4,300 crore)

- Opened in 2014 after delays and cost overruns. Ridership stabilised below projections, with fare disputes and weak sustainability integration. ADPM's adaptive fare policies, citizen feedback, sustainability metrics, and digital dashboards could have improved viability, service quality, and inclusivity.

Lessons

Across all three projects, recurring issues—contract rigidity, risk imbalance, weak participation, poor sustainability integration, and limited technology use—underscore systemic weaknesses in PPP governance. Retrospective application of ADPM demonstrates how adaptive clauses, participatory mechanisms, sustainability KPIs, and digital monitoring could have mitigated these challenges and aligned outcomes with long-term developmental goals.

6. Comparative Analysis

The Yamuna Expressway, Delhi–Gurgaon Expressway, and Mumbai Metro Line 1 reveal recurring governance challenges in India's PPPs: rigid contracts, imbalanced risk allocation, weak citizen participation, poor sustainability integration, and fragmented technology use. BOT concessions lacked adaptive clauses, leading to disputes and insolvency; concessionaires bore excessive risks; citizen exclusion fuelled dissatisfaction; and monitoring systems remained outdated.

The Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM) offers solutions through scheduled reviews, transparent renegotiation triggers, citizen feedback loops, sustainability KPIs, and digital dashboards. Retrospective application suggests ADPM could have reduced insolvency risks on the Yamuna Expressway, prevented toll controversies in Delhi–Gurgaon, and improved fare viability and sustainability in the Mumbai Metro.

Comparative Table of Outcomes

Table: 4

Case study	Efficiency (cost /time)	Inclusivity (Stakeholder Voice)	Sustainability (E&S KPIs)	Adaptability (Renegotiation/Tech)
Yamuna expressway	Low–delays, insolvency	Low – citizen protests over tolls	Weak – limited environmental integration	Low – rigid BOT, no adaptive clauses
Delhi Gurgaon expressway	Moderate – operational but plagued by disputes	Low – minimal citizen engagement	Weak – congestion, poor resilience	Low – ad hoc renegotiations, no smart tolling
Mumbai Metro (line 1)	Moderate – delays, cost overruns	Moderate – fare disputes, limited feedback	Moderate – some energy efficiency, weak accessibility	Moderate – partial tech use, rigid fare policies
ADPM (Hypothetical Application)	High–adaptive clauses reduce disputes	High–structured citizen participation	High–sustainability KPIs embedded	High – digital-first monitoring, transparent renegotiation

Source: Kelkar Committee (2015), Bhat (2019), Taktawala & Kotwal (2022), Kumar et al. (2025), and Martínez-Peléaz et al. (2023).

Comparative Synthesis of PPP Case Studies

The Yamuna Expressway, Delhi–Gurgaon Expressway, and Mumbai Metro Line 1 reveal that governance challenges in India’s PPPs are structural, not project-specific. Common issues include rigid contracts, imbalanced risk allocation, weak citizen participation, poor enforcement of sustainability KPIs, and fragmented monitoring systems. These systemic weaknesses show that conventional PPP frameworks are ill-suited for complex infrastructure. Retrospective application of the Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM) through adaptive clauses, participatory mechanisms, sustainability-linked KPIs, and digital monitoring could have mitigated these problems. For example, adaptive toll policies might have reduced insolvency risks on the Yamuna Expressway, transparent renegotiation triggers could have prevented disputes on the Delhi–Gurgaon Expressway, and dynamic fare adjustments could have balanced affordability and viability in the Mumbai Metro (Kelkar Committee, 2015; Bhat, 2019; Taktawala & Kotwal, 2022; Kumar et al., 2025).

7. Discussion

The case studies show that India’s PPP models suffer from contract rigidity, weak participation, and limited sustainability, undermining efficiency and inclusivity. The Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM) addresses these gaps by embedding flexibility, citizen engagement, sustainability KPIs, and digital monitoring. Applied to highways,

metros, and smart cities, ADPM can enhance resilience, reduce disputes, and align outcomes with citizen needs (Kelkar Committee, 2015; Kumar et al., 2025).

Policy relevance is clear: adaptive clauses, participatory oversight, sustainability integration, and real-time dashboards can be institutionalised in PPP guidelines to improve transparency and accountability (Martínez-Peléaz et al., 2023). ADPM also complements India's Smart Cities Mission and aligns with SDGs 9, 11, and 16 by embedding resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability into infrastructure governance (United Nations, 2015).

Thus, ADPM offers a dynamic framework bridging India's smart city ambitions with global sustainable development commitments.

8. Policy Recommendations

Based on the comparative case studies and the Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM), several recommendations emerge for strengthening India's infrastructure governance:

- **Contractual Innovation:** Embed adaptive clauses and flexible risk-sharing in PPP contracts.
- **Stakeholder Participation:** Mandate citizen feedback and multi-stakeholder oversight committees.
- **Sustainability:** Integrate environmental and social KPIs; link incentives to sustainability outcomes.
- **Digital Governance:** Expand real-time dashboards, IoT monitoring, and smart tolling/ticketing systems.
- **Capacity Building:** Strengthen PPP cells with training and national knowledge repositories.
- **Dispute Resolution:** Establish fast-track tribunals and promote mediation over litigation.
- **National Alignment:** Integrate ADPM into Smart Cities Mission and SDG frameworks.

9. Conclusion:

While PPPs have mobilised private capital and accelerated infrastructure delivery in India, traditional frameworks remain constrained by rigid contracts, risk imbalances, weak participation, and limited sustainability integration. Case studies of the Yamuna Expressway, Delhi–Gurgaon Expressway, and Mumbai Metro Line 1 highlight recurring governance challenges, cost overruns, litigation, citizen dissatisfaction, and inadequate safeguards—underscoring systemic weaknesses.

The Adaptive Dynamic PPP Model (ADPM) addresses these limitations by embedding adaptability, participation, sustainability, and technology integration into PPP design. Grounded in resilience, complexity, and participatory governance theories, ADPM offers a dynamic framework capable of absorbing shocks and enhancing legitimacy. Retrospective application shows how adaptive clauses, citizen feedback, sustainability KPIs, and digital monitoring could have mitigated disputes and strengthened inclusivity.

Policy implications are clear: ADPM aligns with India's Smart Cities Mission and the SDGs, offering a scalable governance model to reduce litigation, improve service quality, and ensure equitable access. Future research should empirically test ADPM

through primary data and pilot projects to validate its transformative potential and guide integration into national PPP policy.

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**THEME OF LOVE IN SHAKESPEARE'S SONNET 18 AND RUMI'S POEM
LOOKING FOR YOUR FACE: AN ANALYSIS**

ABSTRACT:

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi is one of the greatest poets of Persia. Rumi is best known for the poetry of Sufism that widely talks about Divine love. His poems expressed the strong desire of human heart for its beloved, for the intimacy of transcendental world. His writings influenced Indian subcontinent. In 20th century he gained popularity globally, with his poetry in the entire western Europe and the United States. Whereas Shakespeare is an English playwright, poet as well as an actor. He is the world's greatest dramatist who is often called as National Poet of England and the "Bard of Avon". Shakespeare expressed the feeling of love in his sonnet. If we talk about their work of art that mainly expresses love which is being admired till now. Since they share the common theme but their context of love is different from each other as Shakespeare talks about worldly love while as Rumi talks about Divine love. The present paper discusses about the similarities and differences in their expressions of love. The objects are taken from the translation of Rumi's Poem, Looking for your Face and Shakespearian Sonnet 18. So both the poems give a tool to have a keen look at the poem not only for its meaning but how these two poems are related to other texts that precede them. While analyzing these poets both of them use metaphor as the figurative language. There is an evocative description of beauty and expression of love in both the poems.

Keywords : Rumi, love poetry, Shakespeare, Divine love, mundane love, Sonnet 18, Looking for your face.

INTRODUCTION

The definition of love in context with human knowledge grows more complex. So love is viewed no longer as only the desire or physical attraction. But love can be defined as trust, respect, importance, care, connection for the beloved. Love may be defined as a strong ecstatic feeling towards God in Persia in 13th century. In Islam love is defined as the oneness with God and direct relationship with God. The Persian Poets used to express their love by writing ghazals, love poetry and books. Quoted in *The Essentials of*

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Islamic Sipirituality “ Whoso protecteth God in his heart, him will God protect in the world, Verily God is beautiful , and he loves beauty” (86-87)

Another fascinating definition of love appears in the Elizabethan era, in England (16TH century), In this time period love as a kind of feeling that was expressed in literature was more a kind of physical attraction and sexual desire. They used to celebrate love by means of poems, writing plays according to the social norms. Pritchard rightly says

“The period was remarkable for its outpouring of love writing. It was not that the writers and readers were all in love, rather they were in love with the idea of being in love. The poems and songs , plays and romances, were all stories, expressions of feelings and exercises in wit and imagination, fictions with variable relationships with fact”.(p.2)

The definition of love is therefore interesting which means to give a special attention. Love has been expressed differently in the different works of literature as how they perceived love. Love can be defined as a beauty where lover is ready to sacrifice for his beloved, far beyond any pleasure, need for satisfaction. So this paper aims to present the expression of love from the two renowned great works and two universally famous poets of history.

Rumi was born in 1207 C.E in Persia and known as the greatest sufi and mystic poet in Persian. His works were originally written in *Mathnavi, Oudes* and Quatrains that have been translated into 23 languages. So the English translation of his poem entitled as *Looking for Your Face* where the expression of love is clearly expressed. The Rumi's poem *Looking for Your Face* defines love as sufistic love and in this poem he talks about divine love. Being a Sufist he calls himself the lover of God. He describes his feelings clearly in the poem and he also describes his painful journey to meet his lover. The poem is so unique as the poet has used ravishing words in the poem. The feeling of ecstasy can be captured in the words of his poem while a reader reads his poem in his first reading. Quoted in *The Love Poems of Rumi*

“ Your effulgence
Has lit a fire in my heart
And you have made radiant
For me the earth and sky” (47)

In the lines which are quoted above , Rumi says that every fiber of his being is in love with him (God), and his feelings can lit up the earth and the sky above. In another context, it can be said his lover is the only one who makes the earth and the sky to have their own lights.

William Shakespeare was a great English poet and playwright and the greatest English writer born in 26 April and died in 23 April. His works include the collection of 38 plays and 154 sonnets Shakespeare , best known for his Sonnets. His sonnets were published separately in books. Shakespeare's collections of Sonnet were printed in 1609 . So

sonnet 18 gained more attention than his another Sonnets. Quoted from *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Arden Shakespeare)

“If , once more, the non- sonnet 126 is left out of count, we can discover the figure of 108 sonnets contained also in *Sonnets* . Sonnet 1-17 all take form of persuasions to marriage and procreation; a new and wider perspective is opened up in 18, in which the speaker for the first time expresses his own devotion to the youth, and determination to immortalize his beauty in ‘eternal lines’”. (99)

Love is used as an important theme in his sonnets but at the same time he is frightened by the destruction of the time that the beauty of his beloved would gone and will come to an end. So he want to preserve the beauty of his beloved in sonnets that will never die. Quoted from *Shakespeare's Sonnets*(Arden Shakespeare)

“When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”(147)

Both the poems of Rumi and Shakespeare have used the kind of language which is easily recognizable, The poem of Rumi with the concept of divinity and the Shakespeare's poem with a question addressed to the beloved. But the expression of love used in both of the poems is a universal feeling after all. Both poets live in different era's of the world having different object of love, This paper presents a clear picture of both the poets have expressed their love in the poems. So the comparison between the poems of Rumi and Shakespeare is to find the similarity or differences in their meanings and expressions of love. In the romantic sonnets the beloved may be male, female that is a worldly existence, there may be a kind of distance between him/her and the poet, and his beloved can be reached , whereas in mystical sonnet there is a divine love that you can feel but that does not exist in this mundane world nor can be reached .

There are many similarities between the poems as we use the same wording to define the beauty of the beloved, the feelings of lover, and the quality of mystical levels that we do for worldly experiences. It is quite to be noted that in mysticism, worldly love is not disapproved but it can help us to enhance the familiarity with the concept of love , and in higher levels , the concept of love guides us to shun away from worldly attachments and reaching true love and the immortal beloved. Ritter articulates in *Daryae- ye Jan*

“To the rules of love, it makes no difference whether the beloved is visible or not paralleling love to visible creatures make the emotion spiritual, deeper and more delicate , even ethereal; it is elevated from the animal- physical level and finds such vigour that the tradition – obedient worshipper cannot even fathom” (76).

Mystical Poverty And Avoiding Worldly Pleasures In Order to Show Love For Godin Comparison with the Worldly Love of Shakespeare

The mystical poetry of Rumi does not determine the total disconnection from the world, but he praises those people in the world who are totally disconnected with the worldly pleasures. So in this context the real mystic lover is one who has abandoned himself from the world through self development and totally getting rid from it. This stage can be called as *faqr* (poverty) in the Sufi literature, which was favoured by Rumi immensely. But poverty doesn't mean to suffer, it is a kind of feeling in which human finds poor himself in front of God. So in the context of Rumi it means keeping your trust totally on God and sacrifice everything he has in favour of God whom he loves. Rumi believes love is a teacher that guides us towards perfection with eternal concepts. Love has such power that can rescue a human from materialistic world. Love is able to change people who had lost their ways and turned them into the noblest ones. Quoted in *Outline of Sufism – The Essentials of Islamic Spirituality*

“Everything outside of God is unreal, everything taken individually or collectively, when you truly know it.

Know: without Him the whole creation, including you, would disappear, and come to nothing. Whatever does not have its root in His Being, can in no wise be real.

The knowers of God are as if extinguished. What else can they look upon, but Him, the Transcendent, the Glorious?

Everything they see outside of Him, has truly been destined for destruction, in the past, in the future, and in the present moment (88)

However in the Shakespeare's sonnet he praises the beauty of the beloved. He also praises beloved who is so sober and temperate. He time and again praises his beauty but he is also conscious about the fact that the beauty of his beloved will not remain same all the time as it will fade away within time. So he wants that there should be something where he could preserve the beauty of his beloved. He is also well aware of the fact that his beloved will not remain alive. Even the children of his beloved cannot preserve the beauty as the life of the mortals come to an end ultimately. So he says that he will preserve his beauty that will last forever and that will not perish because it will be preserved in the poems, which will last forever, it will live “as long as men can breathe or eyes can see”. Cited from *Shakespeare's Sonnets*

“The juxtaposition of the first and last lines also have a powerful effect on the artistry of the collection as a progressive experience. For instance, *Sonnet 18* which ends with a confident affirmation of its own life – giving empowerment seems immediately to be overtaken by the threat of Time, ravaging the lover like a lion :”(58)

So love is used as common theme in the poems of Shakespeare and Rumi. But in poem of Rumi it is clear that he is addressing to his spiritual saint (Shams). In this poem Rumi praises the ultimate beauty because through his spiritual saint he could have the direct connection with the God. So in this poem he is praising the spiritual beauty that has unfathomable grace. Rumi says that he is bewildered with the beauty and he wishes to see this spiritual beauty time and again. So Rumi praises ultimate beauty that will remain forever and he don't need to preserve it in his writings as ultimate beauty is everlasting that will never fade away. Quoted in *The Love Poems of Rumi*

“ I am ashamed
to call this love human
and afraid of God
to call it divine”
“Your fragrant breath
“Like the morning breeze
You have breathed new life into me
I have become your sunshine
And also your shadow” (p.45)

While Shakespeare compares his beloved with summers day but the seasons also change within the time . So the quality of the summer diminish . So the worldly beauty of his beloved cannot remain forever . As time sweeps away the beauty of his beloved will also fade. Being immortals that beauty cannot be preserved so that is why he time and again wishes to preserve the beauty of his beloved in his writings. Quoted in *William Shakespeare Poems*

“And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance , or nature’s changing course, untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st
Nor shall death brag thou wand’ rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to Time thou grow’st (p.64)

So the present paper has analyzed the topic of love in Shakespeare and Rumi with a different point of view and theory. So this paper can be concluded by comparing the two poets of different eras of the world. There are few similarities of love in these two poems. The first thing is that both the poems define the beauty of love in a very distinctive manner. So the other thing that has been analyzed is that both poems use metaphor to express love for their lovers. So difference between the spiritual beauty and worldly beauty is that you need to preserve the beauty of the world but ultimate beauty lasts forever. The expression of love described by Rumi is his ecstatic feeling so the beauty of his lover is to be felt rather cannot be seen. Meanwhile in the *Sonnet 18* the lover’s beauty is to be enjoyed and can be seen by eyes. So Rumi’s poem can be taken in a religious context which in comparison with Shakespeare’s Sonnet is feeling of love between humans.

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EPIDEMICS IN KASHMIR: A HISTORICAL STUDY

Abstract

Kashmir valley, situated in the Himalayan Mountains, characterized by a sub-tropical climate with distinct seasonal variations. The region's geography, customs, and environmental conditions have profoundly influenced local health patterns. Historically, Kashmir has endured recurrent epidemics, exacerbated by poor hygiene and sanitation despite abundant water resources. Notable foreign observers criticized these conditions, highlighting their role in disease proliferation. Major epidemics, including cholera, plague, and smallpox, have ravaged Kashmir, often linked to natural disasters such as earthquakes, famines, and floods. This paper explores the historical epidemiology of valley. The earliest recorded outbreaks date back to the 11th century, with significant instances documented throughout subsequent centuries. The 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed severe cholera and smallpox epidemics, resulting in substantial mortality. Public health measures were periodically implemented, with varying degrees of success. The recurring nature of these epidemics underscored the region's vulnerability and highlighted the critical need for sustained public health efforts, including improved sanitation, clean water supply, and effective disease management practices. This historical overview provides a sobering reminder of the devastating impact of infectious diseases on Kashmir's population and the importance of ongoing public health initiatives.

Introduction

Jammu and Kashmir, the northernmost state of India, is nestled within the Himalayan Mountains. Geographically, it spans from 32.17 to 36.58 north latitude and 73.26 to 80.30 east longitude.¹ This location bestows the state with a sub-tropical climate that is relatively moderate, avoiding extremes of heat and humidity. The region's local geography, customs, climate, and beliefs significantly influence the health patterns observed in the population. The climate of the Kashmir region is particularly notable, being cold and chilly in winters and pleasantly mild in summers. Foreign observers such as Irene Petrie, Tyndale Biscoe, and William Elmslie have often criticized the region for its poor hygienic conditions, attributing them to the harsh climate. The cold weather discouraged regular washing and bathing despite the abundant water resources available. William Wakefield noted sarcastically that personal cleanliness was virtually unknown among the Kashmiri people, except for the practice of cleaning their teeth with sticks.²

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¹ Koul, Anand, *Geography of the Jammu and Kashmir State*, Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta, 1925, p. 1., see also

Imperial Gazetteer of India Provincial Series Kashmir and Jammu, Calcutta, 1909, p. 1.

² Wakefield, William, *The Happy Valley: Sketches of Kashmir and Kashmiris*, London, 1879, p. 93.

This lack of hygiene provided a fertile ground for human parasites and diseases, and visitors frequently commented on the unclean habits prevalent in the state.

Epidemic through Ages

Epidemics represent a significant biophysical hazard, which includes various environmental risks arising from the interactions between geophysical organisms and humans. Such hazards can be directly linked to physical environmental changes or may emerge from biological factors, with human disease being the most prevalent environmental hazard.¹ As the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir shared its borders mainly with Punjab Province of British India. Though landlocked, it was connected with the rest of Indian subcontinent through road and railway network via Punjab. The foreigners and people from British India, who wanted to visit state had to pass mainly through Punjab. There was always the concern that if an epidemic occurred in any part of the Northern India, it might potentially spread over the whole valley. There are the possibilities that such interaction of the outsiders in ancient and medieval period may have caused spread of epidemic disease in valley because we do not have authentic source pertaining to this period. Evidences has been put forward in the discussion ahead how 'outsiders' became source of the spread of many fatal diseases in Jammu and Kashmir in general and valley of Kashmir in particular.

In the distant past, the valley of Kashmir experienced catastrophic natural disasters, including earthquakes, famines, and floods, which led to severe epidemics among its inhabitants.² These calamities left the population vulnerable to widespread diseases, causing immense suffering and loss of life. The filthy and unhygienic circumstances that prevailed in the cities and towns led to an increase in the frequency of epidemics, which claimed a significant number of lives. People's vitality had been destroyed and worn out as a result of an inadequate diet and the suppression of human liberty, making them easy targets for cholera and other diseases.³

The most common epidemic that has occurred in Kashmir is cholera, plague, smallpox and many more. Not every epidemic in Kashmir was local, the geographical study of disease has made it clear that many of the epidemics would travel from other parts of India into Kashmir.⁴ Cholera emerged from epidemic in India in 1817, after an initial false start, arrived in Britain in 1831.⁵ As per David Arnold's view cholera as most destructive epidemic disease to have visited India in the nineteenth century.⁶ Cholera is an acute intestinal infection caused by the bacterium *vibrio cholera*. It has a short incubation period of 1-5 days with early symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting. In about ten percent of cases, there is severe dehydration that, without treatment, can lead to death.

¹ Smith Keith and Petley N David, *Environmental Hazards*, Routledge First Published 1991, Reprint 2009 p. 207.

² Mufti, Gulzar, *Kashmir in Sickness and in Health*, Penguin books India pvt. Ltd, 2013, p. 08.

³ Bazaz P N K., *Culture and Political History of Kashmir*, Modern Kashmir, M D Publications, New Delhi, vol. 3, 1994, pp, 710-711.

⁴ Akhtar Rais, Environment and Cholera in Kashmir During Nineteenth Century, *Indian Journal of History of Science*, 43.2 (2008) 211-230.

⁵ Sheldon Watts, *Epidemic and History: Disease Power and Imperialism*, New Haven and London, 1999, p. 167

⁶ Arnold David, *Colonizing the Body: State, Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India*, University of California Press, 1993, p.334.

Vibrio cholera is found mainly in aquatic environments. There may be multiple causes responsible for the outbreaks like poor hygiene, sanitation, contaminated water supply systems and inadequate antibacterial treatment.¹

The earliest references to these devastating epidemics can be found in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, an ancient chronicle of Kashmir's history. According to this source, the valley witnessed significant outbreaks of disease during specific periods. During the reign of Harsha, (1089-1101 AD) the principal ruler of the first Lohara dynasty, Kashmir experienced a devastating plague epidemic.² Although specific details about the impact and the death toll are scarce, this epidemic marked one of the earliest recorded instances of widespread disease in the region. Similarly, during the reign of Raja Uccala between 1101 and 1111 AD, the region was struck by cholera. Additionally, another plague occurred during the reign of Raja Sussala between 1112 and 1120 AD.

Dr. M.A. Stein's esteemed translation of Kalhana's *Chronicle* provides valuable insights into these historical events. However, it does not offer detailed accounts of the specific epidemic diseases that plagued Kashmir's ancient history. The lack of comprehensive descriptions leaves us with only a general understanding of the impact of these diseases on the population. Interestingly, the *Chronicle* mentions an unusual case of a plague caused by 'Luta'³ during the reign of Jayapida, who ruled from 779 to 810 AD. Despite the lack of detailed medical records, these ancient accounts highlight the recurring theme of epidemics in Kashmir's history, often triggered by natural disasters. The people of Kashmir endured immense hardships as they faced the devastating consequences of these outbreaks, which left a lasting impact on the region's history and collective memory.

The first thoroughly documented epidemic in Kashmir's history occurred in 1516 AD when Muhammad Shah reclaimed his rule over Kashmir. This epidemic caused extensive sickness and turmoil, leading to significant loss of life and societal disruption. Historian Sukha describes the epidemic's vast scope, noting that the number of diseases overwhelmed both rural areas and the capital. The social fabric frayed as individuals prioritized personal survival over communal support. This period saw such destitution that even finding a piece of cloth to cover oneself at death was a struggle, highlighting the epidemic's severe impact on daily life and social customs.

In 1615 AD, during the reign of Emperor Jahangir, Kashmir faced another lethal epidemic. Jahangir himself recorded this event, noting the plague's symptoms and progression. On the first day, victims experienced intense headaches and fever, followed by profuse nosebleeds. Death typically ensued by the second day. The plague's contagion was extraordinary: entire families succumbed quickly, if one member fell ill. The disease even spread through indirect contact, such as animals consuming contaminated grass, illustrating its pervasive and deadly nature. This period was marked by a pervasive fear and the breakdown of traditional familial and social roles, as

¹ Ibid. p. 219.

² Stein, M. A., *Kalhana's Rajatarangini: A Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir*, vol. I, Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1900 p. 114, see also Kapur M.L., *Kingdom of Kashmir*, p.153.

³Ibid., p. 170, In Sanskrit, 'Luta' translates to spider, and the *Chronicle* describes the Luta-disease as 'contagious and fatal.' This reference is particularly intriguing because, under modern medical science, the idea of a spider bite causing an epidemic disease like the plague seems quite strange and implausible.

evidenced by the legend of the circles appearing on houses and mosques, symbolizing the inescapable reach of the disease.¹

In 1783 AD, another severe epidemic struck Kashmir during Azad Khan's rule. This outbreak claimed thousands of lives, yet the surrounding rural areas remained inexplicably unaffected. This anomaly is noted by Pandit Koul, underscoring the epidemic's selective devastation and the unpredictable nature of disease spread during that era.²

During the administration of Dewan Moti Ram, Kashmir experienced yet another epidemic resulting in a significant death toll and records that thousands perished, though specific details of the outbreak and its management remain limited.³ In 1827 AD, under the governance of Dewan Kripa Ram, Kashmir faced a catastrophic combination of epidemic and famine. This deadly duo lasted for a month, killing thousands. Historical records from Hassan, Batea, and Wingate provide insights into the harsh conditions and the overwhelming mortality rate, reflecting the severe humanitarian crisis of that period. During Sheikh Ghulam Mohiuddin's period in 1845 AD., Kashmir was again ravaged by an epidemic that lasted for three months. The death toll was so high that traditional burial practices were abandoned, and bodies were laid in graves without shrouds. Historical accounts by Hassan and Wingate report that twenty thousand people died in Srinagar alone, indicating the epidemic's severe impact on the population.

In 1857 AD, during the reign of Ranbir Singh, Kashmir endured another deadly epidemic. The outbreak began, paused for three months, and then resumed, continuing the cycle of death for two months. This period is marked by the relentless nature of the epidemic, which disrupted life and caused continuous fear and suffering among the population. Historical accounts illustrate the recurrent and devastating impact of epidemics on Kashmir over the centuries, shaping the region's social, cultural, and historical landscape.⁴

In 1867 AD, Kashmir was struck by another severe epidemic, lasting three to four months and causing thousands of deaths.⁵ According to Elmslie, the disease was introduced by Maharaja's soldiers who had visited Haridwar to bathe in the Ganges. The epidemic broke out almost immediately upon their return. Despite extensive efforts to prevent its spread, the disease eventually overwhelmed the city. For the safety of European visitors, a 'cordon sanitaire' was established around the European quarters, and the missionary dispensary was temporarily closed,⁶ noted that the city's poor were sadly neglected, even by those expected to care for them.

¹ Rogers Alexander, *Tuzk-i- Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir*, (ed) by Henry Beveridge, London Royal Asiatic Society, 1909-1914, p. 442, Didamari, Khwaja Muhammad Azam (trans. From Persian into Urdu by Shamsuddin Ahmed). *Khwaja Muhammad Azam Dyadmari Kashmiri ki Mashur Farsi Tarikh Waqiat-I Kashmir ka Urdu Tarjamah*. Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Research Centre, 2001, p. 255

² Koul, *Geography of the Jammu and Kashmir State*, p.111

³ Ibid., pp. 111-112

⁴ Khuihami, Pir Ghulam Hassan Shah (trans. From Persian into Urdu by Shamsuddin Ahmed). *Shams-u Tawarikh: Farsi Tarikh-I Hassan Jild Awwal ka Urdu Tarjamah*. Srinagar: City Book Centre, 2003, p. 319

⁵ Ibid., 319.

⁶ Elmslie, M. and W. B. Thompson. *Seed Time in Kashmir: A Memoir of William Jackson Elmslie*. London: James Nisbet & Co. Benner's Street, 1875, pp. 195-196

Another epidemic struck Kashmir in June 1872 and continued until December, as recorded. The Maharaja instructed hakims to cease the common practice of bleeding patients,¹ which was believed to worsen the situation. Local records from June 25 to October 12 provide the following statistics:²

Locality	Total Seizures	Recovered	Died
Srinagar and its Environs	7448	4706	2742
Rural Districts	3077	1629	1448
Total	10525	6335	4190

These figures highlight the severe impact of the epidemic on both urban and rural populations.

In December 1874, another deadly epidemic began, lasting until January 1876. During this period, thousands of people perished.³ The epidemic further strained the already limited medical resources and exacerbated the public health crisis. In 1878 AD, an epidemic struck Kashmir during one of the deadliest famines in its history (1877-1880). This outbreak lasted 40 days and resulted in significant loss of life.⁴ The combined effects of famine and disease created a humanitarian catastrophe, leaving the population severely weakened and impoverished.

From 1888 onwards, Kashmir experienced a series of epidemics over two decades, each causing significant mortality. Neve, writing in 1888, described Srinagar as a 'powder magazine waiting for a spark' due to its unsanitary conditions. Increased connectivity with the rest of India and Kashmir facilitated the spread of cholera. In spring 1888, cholera broke out, reaching the eastern areas of Srinagar and nearby villages by September. Neve reported an average of 100 deaths per day, resulting in 10,000 deaths over two months.⁵ Villages with good water supplies largely escaped the epidemic. Cholera spread along main routes, with contaminated water supplies becoming focal points for the disease.⁶ Dr. Mitra observed that the epidemic's impact extended throughout the valley, making the summer of 1888 unforgettable for the survivors.⁷ This epidemic coincided with a planned visit by Viceroy Lord Dufferin, who had to leave Kashmir prematurely due to the health crisis.

Lawrence says before 1598 AD cholera was unknown or was known by a name different to that now used in Kashmir. It was/is called 'Wabah' in Kashmiri. But presently even, Kashmiris refer to every calamity, natural or manmade, as *Wabah*.⁸ Most probably, Kashmiri name of cholera or any other epidemic, "*Wabah*" is the same what Abul Fazl means by his words, "*a strong wind of destruction*". The dreadfulness of the *wabah* was so common among the Kashmiris that its memory survives even today in the

¹ Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh, 1974, p. 464

² Government of India, January 1875.

³ Hassan, *Shams-u Tawarikh: Farsi Tarikh-I Hassan Jild Awwal ka Urdu Tarjamah.*, p. 319

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Dev. Jarnial Singh, *Natural Calamities of Jammu and Kashmir*, Arian Publication house, New Delhi, 1983, p. 121.

⁶ Neve, Ernest F. *Beyond the Pir Panjal: Life Among the Mountains and Valleys of Kashmir*. London: Church Missionary Society, 1915. Reprint, Srinagar: Gulshan Publishers and Distributors, 2003, p. 272.

⁷ Mitra, Dr. A., *A report on Cholera epidemic in Kashmir*, 1892, p. 11.

⁸ Lawrence, Walter R. *The Valley of Kashmir*. London: H. Frowde, 1895, p.218.

shape of *wabah-marguzar* (graveyard of those who died of cholera) found in Srinagar and its outskirts. Till 1880, even among European nations, common belief was that the epidemic like Cholera was spread by obnoxious air which was called "*miasma*". The scientists since 1854 have discarded this theory as obsolete. In May 1892, another epidemic struck Kashmir, lasting until December and proving highly destructive. Lawrence, quoting the chief medical officer, noted 5,781 deaths in Srinagar and 5,931 in villages. However, the actual death toll might have been higher due to unrecorded fatalities.¹ The epidemic disrupted traditional burial practices, with many bodies being thrown into the Jhelum River due to the overwhelming number of deaths. This crisis prompted the state to implement public health measures, including constructing roads, latrines, drains, and ensuring a supply of clean water. Dr. Mitra regarded these measures as historic, hoping they would improve public health and hygiene.²

Outbreak of cholera in August 1900 to January 1902, spread from Jammu to Kashmir, causing death of 10,871 persons with 1,293 in Srinagar alone.³ The missionary hospital and Biscoe schoolboys played crucial roles in aiding the afflicted.⁴ This epidemic highlighted the recurring vulnerability of the region to infectious diseases and the importance of community efforts in managing public health crises. In November 1906, another epidemic struck Kashmir and spread to Jammu. Neve described it as a sharp outbreak, particularly devastating in the western valley, where entire families were wiped out, leaving survivors without support. From November 1906 to October 1907, Srinagar and its environs recorded 18,439 cases, with 10,999 fatalities.⁵ The epidemic's impact was so severe that panic spread, and even village headmen refused to leave their homes.

These recurring epidemics profoundly impacted Kashmir's population, prompting ongoing efforts to improve public health and sanitation. The historical records provide a sober reminder of the region's repeated struggles with disease and the critical importance of public health measures in mitigating such crises.

In 1910, a devastating cholera epidemic struck the Kashmir Valley, starting in the first week of June and lasting until the third week of November.⁶ The epidemic affected Anantnag as well, and the Chief Medical Officer of Kashmir implemented several measures to control the spread:

- o People were advised not to enter any cholera affected house or associate with anyone from such houses.
- o Families affected by cholera were instructed to boil their milk, and unaffected families were advised not to buy milk from affected families.
- o It was recommended that only one person should attend to a cholera patient to minimize the risk of spreading the disease.
- o People were encouraged to use spring water as much as possible to avoid contaminated water sources.

¹ Ibid, pp. 218-219.

² Annual Administration Report of Jammu and Kashmir, 1892-93, pp. 45-47.

³ Biscoe, Tyndale, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, London: Seeley, Service and Co. Limited, 1922. pp. 279-289.

⁴ Neve, *Beyond the Pir Panjal*, p. 280.

⁵ Ibid., p. 273.

⁶ Ibid.

- o The sale of unripe fruits, mulberries, and cucumbers within Srinagar's municipal limits was prohibited.
- o Cholera affected houses were to be disinfected to curb the spread.
- o Village *lambardars* (headmen) and *chowkidars* (watchmen) were required to report cholera cases to the Tehsildar (revenue officer) or the nearest police station.

Despite these efforts, the epidemic resulted in 18,448 cholera cases, with 9,218 proving fatal.¹ Another cholera outbreak occurred between 1914 and 1915, causing hundreds of deaths.² To combat this epidemic, the authorities took several preventive measures: Food articles and drinking water supplies were closely supervised to prevent contamination. Srinagar city was divided into four divisions to better manage the epidemic. The Maharaja ordered a Shanti Puja (*peace prayer*) performed by the state government and spent Rs 4000 on it in an effort to seek divine intervention.³ However, these measures did not achieve significant success in controlling the epidemic.

In the year of 1917-18, cholera was not severe type and the total number of cases in Kashmir was 648, in which 344 died.⁴ In 1919, cholera returned, starting in the Kulgam was apparently '*the severest ever experience in Kashmir*.'⁵ This outbreak resulted in 11,516 deaths.⁶ Several precautionary measures were taken: People were advised to keep foodstuffs covered to prevent contamination; Instructions were disseminated through leaflets and drum beating, advising against the use of river water, Efforts were made to disinfect the city and houses.⁷

In Srinagar city epidemic of cholera was again observed on 7th Sept. 1941.⁸ To control this epidemic the city was divided into two divisions one above Fateh Kadal and another below this. Each division was placed under the supervision of Assistant Surgeon. Various steps were taken by the administration to check further spread of disease like disinfection of houses and city, inoculating people and appointment of temporary sanitary inspecting staff.⁹

Another fatal disease small pox is a contagious viral disease caused by the orthopox virus. Human sickness is caused by virus, which is of two types: *Variola minor* and *Variola major*.¹⁰ The first epidemic style outbreak of smallpox (*Sheetel*) was documented in the years 1892–1893 CE. Smallpox killed a lot of people in both provinces of the state.¹¹ Serious fatalities were caused by smallpox; in Kashmir Valley,

¹ Census 1911, p. 13.

² Annual Administrative Report 1914-1915, pp. 84-88.

³ JK Pol No. 100/M-322 OF 1914.

⁴ Report on the Administration of the Jammu and Kashmir State for the Sambat year 1974 (1917-18), p. 47.

⁵ Chohan A.S., *Health system in Jammu and Kashmir, (1858-1947)*, Atlantic Publication, 1994, p. 31.

⁶ Census 1921, p. 13.

⁷ Dev, *Natural Calamities of Jammu and Kashmir*, p. 124.

⁸ File No. M-93/NM, 1941, State Archives Repository Jammu, p. 45.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Kumar, Deepak (ed), *Disease and Medicine in India: A Historical Overview*, Tulika Publishers, New Delhi, 2001, p. 85.

¹¹ Annual Administrative Report, 1892-1893 C E, p. 45.

8,754 people died from the disease in the years 1915, 1916, 1919, and 1920.¹ A significant proportion of the population were pitted and many became blind. An abuse uttered by Kashmiris now used rather infrequently is: *pěyá táwan* (let you be inflicted by plague, *táwan* meaning plague).² This must indicate that they were aware of the sickness and its dangers. However, there is no official record of any plague epidemics before to 1903. While the south Jammu and Punjab bore the brunt of plague at the turn of the century, Kashmir was free of the disease until a fatality was reported on November 19, 1903 on November 13, the dead, Ghulam Mohammed,³ entered the Valley from Uri aboard a *tonga* (horse-drawn carriage). His remains was buried in a ten-foot-deep hole surrounded by two feet of carbonate of lime. Despite this, 1,498 people perished from the sickness in the valley.⁴

In Kashmir, approximately 8457 people died during the years 1915, 1916, 1919, and 1920 C.E.⁵ However, out of 1013 deaths in Srinagar between 1915, 1916, and 1918CE, 229 were children under the age of five. Children aged 5 to 10 years contributed 107 deaths. In 1923 C.E., this outbreak claimed 1972 lives.⁶

The valley was once again attacked by smallpox in the Samvat year 1989 (1933 C E). It began in Srinagar and spread to the towns of Baramulla and Anantnag, but quick action was taken to stem the spread of the disease, which ultimately disappeared in two months, taking a toll in lives.⁷ It is clear that this epidemic disease was controlled to some level after a number of measures which were adopted by the state to reduce this scourge.⁸ The sickness was also detected in Skardu and its surrounding areas. It debuted in Anantnag in 1936.⁹

Influenza had a significant impact throughout the medieval period and up until the Dogra rule. During the decade of 1911-21 CE, the fall influenza epidemic claimed the most lives in the state. Kashmir was impacted especially hard by the 1918 global influenza pandemic. It started in Jammu in May and spread to Kashmir in August, killing 15,000 people.¹⁰ Only 176 influenza related deaths in Srinagar Municipality were reported by the police, compared to the president's prediction of at least 1000 deaths.¹¹ The public health crisis was exacerbated by the influenza pandemic, which caused such widespread illness that many individuals were unable to leave their homes. Regardless of climate, location, occupation, sex, or age, influenza wreaked havoc on the population throughout the 1910-21 decade, claiming the greatest human casualties.¹²

¹ Gulzar, *Kashmir in Sickness and in Health*, p. 11.

² Mitra Dr., *A Report on the Outbreak of Plague in the Kashmir*, 1904, p.01.

³ Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 232.

⁴ Gulzar, *Kashmir in Sickness and in Health*, p.11.

⁵ Annual Administrative Report, 1914-15 C E, p. 89.

⁶ Census 1931 C E, p. 18.

⁷ Annual Administrative Report of the civil Medical and Public Health Departments for the Samvat year 1989-90, 1933 C E, Medical Department, p. 120.

⁸ Chouhan, *Health system in Jammu and Kashmir*, p. 42.

⁹ File No. PR-M-93/J, Publicity Department, 1934, State Archives Repository Jammu, p. 72.

¹⁰ Census 1921, p. 14.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Dev, *Natural Calamities of Jammu and Kashmir*, p. 132.

Measles outbreaks were be as severe as smallpox. It claimed up to 517 lives between 1915 and 1916.¹ The first outbreak occurred in Srinagar in August 1915 and continued until the end of the winter. This condition was mostly limited to newborns and children under the age of ten. The next measles pandemic occurred in 1920-21.² Another serious outbreak was typhoid, which caused a number of deaths in the year 1908.³ A few sporadic cases of typhus occurred in 1922-23,⁴ in Srinagar in certain families. Around 34 deaths took place during this visitation. Fortunately for the population, it did not spread far and wide.

The decade from 1911 to 1921 was marked by several devastating epidemics in Kashmir, with the following death tolls:⁵

Disease	Death Toll
Plague	1
Cholera	17,358
Influenza	15,000
Smallpox	11,300
Total	43,659

These epidemics underscored the severe vulnerability of Kashmir to infectious diseases. The public health measures implemented during these times, although varied in success, highlighted the urgent need for improved sanitation, clean water supply, and effective disease management practices. The historical records provide a sobering reminder of the impact of epidemics on the region and the critical importance of sustained public health efforts.

The *Unani* (Greek) system of medicine entered Kashmir due to the region's cultural transactions with Central Asia. Practitioners of this system, known as *hakims* (physician), were highly regarded by the people of Kashmir, who believed in their ability to cure any disease. This belief extended to the notion that *hakims* could diagnose serious illnesses merely by observing a patient. While it was generally perceived that Muslims preferred Unani medicine and Hindus leaned towards Ayurveda, the effectiveness and skill of *hakims* earned them widespread trust in Kashmir. The *hakims* also contributed to the Unani system by authoring medical texts and incorporating various local herbs into the *Unani materia medica*.

During cholera outbreaks, there was a distinct difference in treatment approaches between indigenous *hakims* and Western medical doctors. *Hakims* adhered to the eliminative theory, believing that allowing the body to expel waste was crucial, while Western doctors focused on stopping these dejections to prevent the spread of the disease. For cholera treatment, *hakims* often used a foot-wash made from willow leaves (*Salix alba*) and sometimes prescribed the herb *koth* (*Ancklandia costus*).⁶

Sometimes religious spaces became the source for the spread of some diseases. One of the Colonial missionary in this context has mentioned that the renowned Muslim

¹ Report on the Municipal Administration , 1915-16, p.22.

² Report on the Municipal Administration ,1920-21, p. 03.

³ Census, 1911, p. 55.

⁴Report on the Municipal Administration ,1922-23, p. 17.

⁵ Census 1921, p. 13.

⁶ Lawrence, *Valley of Kashmir*, p. 219

fairs in Kashmir frequently served as a catalyst for the outbreak of cholera. Notably, in 1889, just a week after the fair concluded, cholera erupted in the region. The people of Kashmir widely believed that the cholera epidemic could be prevented if the tank of Sheikh Hamza Makhdom Sahib whose shrine is located on the hillock of Koh-i-Maran in Srinagar remained filled with water. Consequently, during outbreaks, large numbers of people would gather to fill the tank, sometimes bringing water from infected villages, believing it would act as a safeguard against the disease.¹ There is another evidence how a foreigner carried the diseases into valley and how it spread among the populace from the sacred shrine of Amarnath. Along the Banihal route, a tourist who had contracted a “mysterious” illness passed away on July 18, 1900. Many of the approximately four thousand workers on a neighboring road caught the sickness without giving any thought to where it came from. The death toll rose to 176 three days later. The terrified survivors made their way back to their homes, spreading the disease far into the Kashmir Valley. At the same time, a mobile constituency was there to spread the illness, since tens of thousands of Hindu pilgrims visiting the Amarnath cave passed through both infected routes of villages. The death toll reached 4,200 by October, with a mortality rate of 56 percent. The whole Valley was wrecked by the actions of one uncontrolled, maybe naive, victim. From Punjab, where cholera had been sporadically raging since 1897, he had brought the bacterium with him.²

These religious gatherings, which attracted pilgrims from distant areas, inadvertently facilitated the spread of germs and infections. Pilgrims would come to pay homage, bringing with them and dispersing pathogens, thereby exacerbating the epidemic. Thus, the intertwining of religious beliefs and superstitions played a significant role in the propagation of cholera and other infectious diseases during such events.

During the late 19th century, the initial phase of Western medicine in Kashmir emphasized eradicating epidemics, improving public health and sanitation, establishing municipalities, and vaccinating against diseases like plague, cholera, smallpox, and malaria, similar to British India. However, under Maharaja Ranbir Singh, other medical systems like Unani and Ayurveda were also promoted, which slowed the progress of Western medicine.³ It wasn't until the appointment of a Resident in 1889 that Western medicine received preferential support from the state, overshadowing indigenous systems and becoming the dominant medical practice in some areas.

During epidemics, temporary doctors were appointed to support the medical department. When doctors were unavailable, native *hakims* were enlisted and provided with instructions and medicines. In the 1892 cholera epidemic, Dr. Mitra personally trained *hakims* to handle cases. Larger cities were divided into smaller

¹ Neve, *Beyond the Pir Panjal*, p. 82. Hamza Makhdom (1494-1576) Kashmiri popularly known as Makhdom Sahib^{RA} was a sufi mystic scholar and spiritual teacher living in Kashmir. He is sometimes referred to as Mehboob- ul- Alam and Suttan ul Arifeen.

² The Wire, Suhail R. Lone, <https://thewire.in/history/colonial-era-epidemics-india>

³ Dar Abdul Kabir, AYUSH in J&K: A Historical Perspective to Unani System of Medicine, *JK-Practitioner*, Sept, 2012,17, p. 91.

sections, each managed by medical officials, and native doctors and hakims visited patients at home. A medical assistant was always present at each police station.¹

Dr. Mitra, Dr. Neves, Dr. Ernest Neve, and others confirmed that drinking unclean water was a major cause of cholera's rapid spread and high fatalities. During cholera outbreaks, the state government enforced quarantine laws to prevent the disease from entering the state. Inspection posts were set up at entry points like, Baramulla, and Uri, where officials conducted strict check-ups on passengers. Walter Lawrence noted that authorities believed improving sanitary conditions in Kashmir was crucial to prevent cholera from becoming endemic in Srinagar.² However, the link between sanitation and cholera was unclear, as the disease's occurrence did not always correlate with changes in sanitation.

Before the advent of Western medicine, smallpox was not considered a disease in Kashmir, and vaccination against the virus was not practiced in the late 19th century.³ Dr. Elmslie was the first to introduce vaccination in the state. On May 31, 1865, he vaccinated two children of a prominent Brahmin family, marking a significant moment in Kashmir's medical history, because a religious leader accepted vaccination which gave inspiration to rest of the public.⁴ The state government officially introduced vaccination in 1894, though missionary doctors had started earlier. Unlike in Travancore, vaccination was not made compulsory in Jammu and Kashmir. In order to prevent the populace of the city from smallpox, Dr. Mitra, the Chief Medical Officer of Kashmir, vaccinated 350 children and 150 adults in 1889-90.⁵ This step of the Dr. Mitra was not unopposed, as religious prejudices led many to reject Western medicine, and smallpox cases were often concealed from authorities to avoid vaccination.

The government initiated an awareness program about disease symptoms and infections using pamphlets and magic lanterns. Plague observing officers were appointed to regularly inspect their areas. Check points were set up at the borders with Punjab and at Tawi Railway station, along with routes entering the valley. Dr. Mitra recommended quarantines at major entry points, as he believed plague spread via humans, not rats. Tents were purchased to house the infected, and police cordons surrounded infected areas to prevent communication. Infected houses were burned, with owners compensated by the government. A public awareness campaign circulated pamphlets in Dogri and Urdu, informing people about the disease and advising them to report symptoms promptly. Infected villages were identified publicly to prevent visits from outsiders.⁶

¹ Annual Administration Report for J & K State for 1882-83, State Archives Repository Jammu, p. 63.

² Lawrence, *Valley of Kashmir*, p. 219.

³ J & K State Annual Administration Report for the year 1892-93, State Archives Repository Jammu, p. 46.

⁴ Elmslie, *Seed Time in Kashmir*, p. 102.

⁵ Vigne, G.T., *Travel in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardo*, vol. I, London: Henry Colburn, Publisher, 1844, p. 257.

⁶ Annual Administration Report of J & K State for 1925-26, State Archives Repository Jammu, p. 84.

Conclusion

The history of epidemics in Kashmir highlights the significant impact of geographical and environmental factors on public health. The recurrent cholera outbreaks and other epidemics reveal the challenges faced by the region in maintaining hygiene and preventing disease spread. Despite considerable efforts to improve sanitation and public health, the persistent threat of epidemics underscores the importance of continuous vigilance and proactive measures. Efforts to combat these health crises have evolved over the centuries, reflecting a growing understanding of disease prevention and control. While historical accounts often emphasize the devastating effects of these epidemics, they also illustrate the resilience and adaptability of the Kashmiri people and authorities in the face of recurring public health challenges. The lessons learned from these historical epidemics continue to inform current public health strategies, emphasizing the need for robust infrastructure, effective public health education, and timely intervention to mitigate the impact of future outbreaks. Unfortunately, we have very little evidence about damage caused in other parts of valley except Srinagar, but epidemics have caused massive damage in the form of causalities, these would also hinder the movement of people especially after 1890 A.D when they consistently broke out. The sanitation issues and health care measures taken from 1890 onwards slowly helped in containing the widespread nature of disease and from 1925 A.D the disastrous nature of epidemics was contained to a large extent.

LALITA SINGH*

{D/33-13}

DR. PAWAN KUMAR SINGH**

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TRADE ROUTES DURING POST-GUPTA INSCRIPTIONS-CRITICAL STUDY

Abstract: This research proposal focuses on trade routes, transportation and socio-economic role of “Mandsaur” inscription of Gupta period in ancient India. The research will analyze the development of inland and foreign structures of trade, their economic-cultural impact and role of trade unions since the emergence of Indian civilization. The main research question is how trade routes and guild system advanced Indian society towards economic unity, cultural exchange and urbanization. The primary objective is to study the historicity of trade routes, the diversity of the regions they connected and the nature of socio-economic life of the Gupta period from sources such as the Mandsaur inscription. The research will use historical-critical methodology and analysis of epigraphic sources, including epics, texts, archaeological evidence and records. It is expected that the research will reveal the multi-faceted character of ancient Indian trade, routes and associations, which will add new dimensions to a deeper understanding of Indian economic history. Thus, this study will provide meaningful research innovations and policy perspectives to understand the historical significance of trade and Gupta associations of ancient India.

Keywords: Trade, Gupta, post-Gupta, inscriptions, transport etc.

Introduction

Trade was one of the great builders of the country's economic well-being and trade with distant countries was a feature of Indian economic life right from the days of the Indus Valley Civilization. All types of inland and foreign trade took place in ancient India. Traders had a respected position and important place in the national economy of the country. Trade is a natural consequence of industry as industrial products have to find markets for their disposal. With industrial progress there developed intensive inland and foreign trade and foreign trade also increased. The maritime trading activities of India are as big as the Indus Valley trade and then there are the maritime activities of the Vedic Panis, who were a trading people. Indian inland and land routes as well as foreign ones must have been a very powerful factor in connecting race to race, nation to nation, country to country and culture to culture. The exchange of goods bound the country into close economic unity. The epics contain ample descriptions of traders and the merchandise brought by them. The volume of internal trade was more than that of

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foreign trade. Commodities kept moving between different parts of the country and the diversity and dimensions of production also remained rich. There were trade relations between different states and there were various trade routes within the countries of the east and west for the purpose of trade. 'Kautilya' and 'Manu' have discussed the nature and importance of inland and foreign trade. Trade was an integral factor of national prosperity. Manu has given instructions for ethics in trade and has emphasized the main principles of trade.

Trade routes

Transport is the life line of trade and industry. Means of transport and communication are the nerves of the national organism. In a verse of 'Rig Veda', the need for various means of transport and maintenance and preservation of public highways has been mentioned as one of the duties of the king. Chariots, carts, beasts of burden (yak, goat, horse, camel and elephant) were used as per convenience in different areas and highways and national highways were maintained and roads were divided according to use and destination. Rivers also served as a medium of transport. The improved conditions for trade are seen not only in the greater attention paid to roads and markets but also in the intelligent appreciation of the relative prices of different trade routes.

"Kautilya" controlled the internal trade routes, bringing together a considerable list of agricultural, manufacturing and other products from different regions of the country, but also most of the overland and sea routes leading east and west out of the country. Friendships with the Hellenistic kingdoms also contributed to the expansion of India's trade with the western world. Buddhist texts contain stories of a variety of sources who may have travelled broadly the same routes and the accounts of their travels give an idea of the routes of communication and trade. Archaeological evidence also helps in identifying trade routes and interactions.

There were two major known inter-regional routes of ancient India:

1. Uttarapatha
2. Dakshinapatha

These routes have a long and enduring history spanning several centuries.

1. Uttarapatha

Uttarapatha (Great Northern Trade Route) was the main inter-regional trade route of North India. It extended from the north-west through the Indo-Gangetic plains to the port of Tamralipti in the Bay of Bengal. Ashtadhyayi mentions the various kingdoms situated along its banks. Description of the route can be prepared on the basis of references in Vinayapitaka and Jatakas. Uttarapatha had northern and southern regions.

Northern Region

The northern region passed through Lahore, Jalandhar, Saharanpur along the plains of Ganga to Bijnor and then through Gorakhpur to Bihar and Bengal.

Southern Region

The southern region included Lahore, Raipind, Bhatinda, Delhi, Hastinapur, Kanpur, Lucknow, Varanasi and Allahabad and then proceeded towards Pataliputra and Rajgir. Several feeder routes were connected to the main artery of Uttarapath, for example, one was connected to Rajasthan (which was an important source of metals and minerals), another to Sindh and another to the Orissa coast.

Uttarapath was a land cum river route. In Buddhist texts, there is mention of the movement of traders and goods through the river route along the Ganga. The distribution of many ancient cities on the banks of this river and its tributaries like Yamuna, Ghaghra and Saryu shows that rivers were the main communication routes.

2. Dakshinapatha

The Dakshinapatha (Great Southern Trade Route) is mentioned in the Arthashastra but it was in existence since ancient history. It extended from Pataliputra in Magadha to Pratishthana (Paithan) and was also connected with the ports of the western coast. However, the Buddhist texts, especially the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, mention the regions across the Vindhyas many times. The Buddhist texts mention traders travelling from Pataliputra and Kaushambi to Pratishthana. The Sutta Nipata tells the story of a Guru Baburi of Kosala who built an ashram on the banks of the Godavari in Assaka and sent his disciples to meet the Buddha. They went via Pratishthana, Ujjaini, Vidisha and Sravasti. The physician Jeevaka proceeded along the Dakshinapatha towards Avanti. The Vindhya mountains provided iron, copper and various kinds of stones to the settlements of the Gangetic valley, and those raw materials must have passed through the northern region of the Dakshinapatha. In the later centuries, trade and contact grew through this route. In the "Buddhist scriptures" there is mention of caravans with 1000 carts which used to go from one district to another and used to pass through the mentioned areas. There is also mention of the caravans paying customs and taxes to the king's men. Customs officers (Kammik) used to levy taxes on goods. There are popular stories of traders and saints being robbed by robbers on the roads connecting big cities. It was the job of royal officers called Rajbhatta to protect the lives and property of such travelers. During the Maurya rule, there were boards indicating the turns and distances on the roads.

River Trade Routes

The river routes were very peaceful. Ganga, Yamuna, Saryu, Gandaki, Koshi, Krishna, Tungabhadra, Mahanadi, Godavari, Kaveri were often important for trade and commerce. There were no important ports in the country. Transportation of goods was mainly done through rivers. In the Mauryan period, the sandstone pillars of Chunar were transported through rivers. Panini has mentioned different types of boats and ships. Shipping was in a very advanced stage in the Mauryan and Gupta period. Ganga was the most important inland water route.

External Trade Routes

Internal trade routes were connected to external routes which connected the subcontinent to other regions. The land routes connecting Takshila to northern Afghanistan and Iran were important for obtaining raw materials like silver, gold, lapis lazuli. Long distance trade of precious wood must have been going on between India and Mesopotamia. The

Central Asia route has been important since the Neolithic period. The route through Volan Pass and northern Afghanistan was also important. Cities like Takshila were international trade centers and established commercial relations between India and the western world. The routes from the northwest to India were followed not only by traders but also by Persian and Macedonian armies as well as by Central Asian tribes. The route from Bengal to Myanmar was also probably important and jade was probably imported from Myanmar. Sea travel and trade are mentioned in the Pali texts. The Anguttara Nikaya refers to sea merchants who set out on land in their ships. The Jatakas contain many accounts of sea travel. Sea trade with South-East Asia also began in the early historic period. The expansion of trade led to the emergence of merchants as an important urban group. Undoubtedly, due to their economic prosperity, commerce was described as one of the highest professions in Buddhist texts.

The Mandsaur inscription is the main source of understanding the society, trade and culture of the Gupta period. Through this, it is clear that trade unions, temple construction and social activities were prevalent in the Gupta period cities. The inscription starts with Om and praises Shiva, and then temple construction, description of the city and discussion of the union of silk weavers, the role of local administrator Vatsabhatt and trade unions are mentioned. It provides information about social, economic and administrative activities, such as the description of the union (guild) of silk weavers, their religious activities and mention of the construction of the Sun Temple. The Mandsaur inscription was found in Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh, which was famous as Dashpur in ancient times. This inscription is written in Sanskrit language and Brahmi or Gupta script.

Conclusion

Trade and trade routes in ancient India have played an incomparable role in the economic, social and cultural prosperity of the country. Trade not only provided markets to industries but also established economic unity by connecting different regions, cultures and countries. Major land routes like Uttarapath and Dakshinapath made the uninterrupted movement of goods possible and through these routes, metals, minerals, agricultural and industrial products were exchanged in a variety of ways. Rivers, waterways and ports were the main transport mediums that strengthened foreign and internal trade. The Mandsaur inscription makes it clear that the role of trade unions (guilds) and local administration was very important in the Gupta period society, which were active not only in economic but also in social and religious activities. This inscription gives a subtle glimpse of the organization of trade unions, temple construction and city life, which is a proof of the economic and cultural prosperity of that period. Therefore, the trade routes and unions of ancient India were the main pillars in national economic development. They not only facilitated the exchange of goods but also strengthened socio-cultural relations. This system proves to be the foundation of global contacts and economic strength of Indian civilization, which made India one of the important economic centers of the world at different periods of history. Thus, the study of trade routes of ancient India and the Mandsaur inscription gives us a deep understanding of the economic, social and cultural life of that era, which is inspiring and informative even for modern times.

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MANZOOR AHMAD*

{D/33-14}

LADAKH AND THE MUGHALS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

This paper mainly examines the historical relationship of Ladakh with both the Mughals and early Central Asian powers. Often regarded as a remote kingdom, Ladakh in fact maintained complex ties of diplomacy and cultural exchange with Tibet, Central Asia, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. The study highlights Mughal involvement in Ladakh through military expeditions, tributary arrangements and also traces Ladakh's interactions with Central Asian Amirs that shaped its trade networks and political strategies. Based on Persian chronicles, Tibetan and modern sources the paper argues that the Namgyal(rNam-rgyal) rulers engaged in a delicate balancing act between the Mughals, Tibetans, and Central Asia, seeking to preserve autonomy amid competing pressures. This historical perspective contributes to a deeper understanding of frontier politics, imperial peripheries, and trans-Himalayan connections.

Keywords: Ladakh, Mughals, Central Asia, Diplomacy, Kashmir, Tributes, Namgyal Dynasty.

Introduction

Union Territory of Ladakh is surrounded by lofty mountains and it is situated in the northernmost part of India. Geographically, the region lies roughly between 32 to 36 degrees north latitude and 75 to 80 degrees east longitude, covering an area of approximately 59,146 square kilometers.¹ It consists of four main mountain ranges: the Karakoram Range, with altitudes between 6,100 and 7,200 meters and home to glaciers such as the Siachen, forming its northern limit; the Ladakh Range, averaging less than 6,000 meters and separating the Nubra Valley from the Indus; the Zaskar Range, which divides the Indus from the Himalayas; and the Himalayan Range, marking its southern boundary.²

Strategically Ladakh is one of the most important regions of India as it shares borders with countries like China and Pakistan. Often called the 'cold desert' the region receives very less rainfall and the annual precipitation is roughly between 40 to 80 mm. It also has very limited cultivated land. Agriculture is possible only in irrigated valleys fed by glacial streams, with the *Senge Tsangpo* (Indus River) forming the lifeline of its main settlements. Despite its remote setting and harsh weather, its lofty mountain passes connected it to different countries like China, Tibet, Central Asia, and neighboring states like Gilgit- Baltistan, Kashmir and Himachal. Because of these connections, Ladakh became a very important nodal point for trade and cultural exchange across the

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¹ Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, *District Census Handbook: Leh, Part A- Village and Town, 2011 Census* (New Delhi: Directorate of Census Operations, Jammu & Kashmir, 2011), 10; and Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, *District Census Handbook: Kargil, Part XII A- Village and Town, 2011 Census* (New Delhi: Directorate of Census Operations, Jammu & Kashmir, 2011), 10.

² District Census Handbook: Kargil, Part A (2011), 10-11; and District Census Handbook: Leh, Part A (2011), 11-12.

Himalayas. In the 17th century, its growing trade and political position brought it into direct contact with the Mughal Kingdom through Kashmir. The Mughals recognized Ladakh as a doorway to Central Asia and aimed to establish political influence and economic benefits through, tributes, and military campaigns.

Nomenclature of Ladakh

Western scholars and travelers have referred to Ladakh by various terms and nicknames, such as 'Moonland', 'The Last Shangri-La' 'Roof of the World', and 'The Land of Passes' or 'The Land of High Passes'. Moonland is specifically used for an area called *Lamayuru*, which is about 134 km from Leh, Ladakh. Due to its unique barren landscape with eroded formations and craggy hills that resemble the surface of the moon, travelers began to use moonland for *Lamayuru* and gradually extended it to describe Ladakh as a whole. The region is called "The Last Shangri-La," as its remote, peaceful, and stunning landscapes resemble Shangri-La. Land of Passes or Land of High Passes is perhaps the most accurate name for Ladakh, as the term *Ladakh/Ladags* itself derives from the word *La*, meaning 'pass', and *Dags*, meaning 'Land'.²

According to Cunningham, the Chinese monk Faxian, during his journey to India in the 5th century, traveled through Ladakh. He suggested that the name *Kie-cha*, mentioned in Faxian's account, referred to Ladakh.³ However, modern scholars such as Bettina Zeisler have rejected this view, arguing that Faxian never passed via Ladakh and that Cunningham simply followed Klaproth's (1836) idea without consulting the primary sources or making a critical study of the place names mentioned by Faxian.⁴ Cunningham further suggested that the Chinese monk Hiuen Tsang used the term *Mo-lo-po*, which he also identified with *Maryul*, or Ladakh. A. H. Francke, on the other hand, believed it was right to identify *Mo-lo-so*, rather than *Mo-lo-po*, with Ladakh and thought it unnecessary to change the last syllable from *so* to *po*, because *Mo-lo-so* already matches the Tibetan form.⁵ He explained it as *Mar-sa*, meaning 'low-land,' which, according to him, is the same as *Maryul*, a well-known Tibetan name for Ladakh. The Persian sources describe the region using terms such as *Tibet-i Kalān* (Greater Tibet) and *Tibet-e Buzurg*. Abu'l-Fazl uses the term *Tibet-i Kalān* (Greater Tibet) for Ladakh while describing several regions of Kashmir, such as *Dachchhinparah* and the cave of Amarnath, which are situated close to Ladakh.⁶ Qazi Nurullah Shustari has used

¹ *Shangrila* is a fictional paradise first mentioned by James Hilton in his novel *Lost Horizon* (1933).

² Jacqueline H. Fewkes, *Trade and Contemporary Society along the Silk Road: An ethno-History of Ladakh* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008).

³ Alexander Cunningham, *Ladāk: Physical, Statistical, and Historical, with Notices of the Surrounding Countries* (1854; repr., New Delhi: Sagar Publications, 1977), 1.

⁴ Bettina Zeisler, *Faxian's 'Journey through Ladakh' or how (not) to do history or science*, IALS 19, (Choglamsar, 2019), 2.

⁵ For a detailed discussion of the names of Ladakh, see Göza Uray, "The Old Name of Ladakh," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 44, no. 1/2 (1990): 217, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23658121>.

⁶ See Abul Fazl-i-Allami, *the A'in-i-Akbarī*, trans. H.S. Jarett, 2nd ed., annotated by Jadunath Sarkar (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1949), 359-360.

the term *Tibet-e Kabir*, while Mirza Haider Dughlat in *Tarikh e-Rashidi* has simply used the word *Tibet*.¹ Later scholars, like Hashmatullah Khan have also used *Tibet-e Buzurg*.²

Early Central Asian Attacks on Ladakh

Long before the arrival of Mughals into the western Himalayas, Central Asian rulers and travelers were aware of Ladakh and its adjoining regions. The region appears in several Turko-Mongol chronicles and travel accounts that describe trade routes passing through Ladakh, Askardo (Skardo) and Baltistan toward places like Yarkand, Kashgar and Khotan etc. These routes not only supported the trade but also strengthened the cultural exchanges between Buddhism and Islam.

Prominent Central Asian figures such as Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat, a cousin of Babur and author of the *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, wrote about Ladakh and its neighbors in the context of his military campaigns in Kashmir and Baltistan in the 16th century. However, even before him, Ladakh had faced two attacks from Central Asian Khanate *amirs*, such as Mirza Aba Bakr and Mir Mazid. Mirza Aba Bakr sent his general Mir Vali to conquer *Bolor*,³ Ladakh and even some parts of Kashmir but the campaign appears to have failed. Mir Mazid who had earlier revolted against Babur, seems to have attacked Ladakh due to insufficient means of livelihood.⁴ His campaign also ended when a stone fell on his head at a place called *Ghazwa*, resulting in his death.⁵ There is no mention of these attacks in the *La dvags rgyal rabs* (Chronicles of Ladakh) and other Tibetan sources.

Following Mir Mazid, Ladakh was attacked by Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat who entered the region through Nubra valley. He was sent by Sultan Said Khan (ruler of Kashghar) along with Sikander Khan to attack Ladakh, Baltistan and Kashmir. Mirza entered Ladakh in 1532 CE and after defeating the chief of Nubra, he marched toward the capital *Shaya/Shey* and captured most of the forts. Later Sultan Said Khan himself joined Mirza but due to *Damgiri* which affected his health he had to march towards Baltistan while Mirza proceeded towards Kashmir via the *Zojila Pass*. He later appointed governors like Mulla Baqi and Mulla Qasim for Ladakh and Baltistan. However, he died in 1551 CE and the subsequent rulers were unable to maintain control over Ladakh and Baltistan.

Besides mentioning his military campaigns, Mirza dedicated chapters describing Ladakh's topography, religion, economy, wildlife, customs, and cultures. While describing the religion and customs of Ladakh, Haidar compared the *Imams* and

¹ Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat, *The Tarikh-i Rashidi: A History of the Moghuls of Central Asia*, edited and translated by Ney Elias and Sir Edward Denison Ross (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1895), 403.

² Hashmatullah Khan, *Mukhtasar Tareekh-e-Jammu wa Kashmir*, 2nd ed. (Jammu Tawi: JK Book House, 1992), 230.

³ Balor also known as Bolor/ Baluristan, refers to the mountainous region of present day Chitral, Hunza, Gilgit and Panyal etc.

⁴ The *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, edited and translated by Elias and Denison, 357.

⁵ Ibid.

mujtahids to learned figures like *Tunkana* and *Kahjavar*¹ or *Kichuva*.² He engaged in discussions with the Ladakhi *lamas*³ on Buddhism and the concept of reincarnation. According to him, the *Shakya Thuba*⁴, honored by most of the population, occupied a significant place in their religious beliefs, while the statue of *Jana Kasapa*⁵ was similarly venerated, both serving as important symbols of devotion and spiritual practice in the region.

Regarding the economy of the Ladakh, he mentions the extraction of gold especially from the *Champa/Changpa* districts as one of the major economic activities.⁶ Besides this, he mentions the production of *mah farfin* (zedoary),⁷ animals like wild yak and packs of sheep used for trade by the *Changpas* or *Champa*.⁸ These activities clearly reflect a society deeply reliant on its natural resources, where trade networks and livestock were essential for their daily life and livelihood.

While describing the climate of Ladakh, Haidar noted that the weather was extremely harsh and high altitude posed significant challenges. He observed that *damgiri* (motion sickness), affected both human and the horses in his camp. The Mughals referred to this condition as *Yas*, and Haidar had never encountered it before; moreover, according to him, there was no cure for it.⁹

Haidar further mentions the names of two kings, *Lata Jugdan* and *Tashikun*; however, as per scholars like Petech, Marx, and Cunningham, *Tashikun* was actually King *Tashi Namgyal* (*bKra-sis-rnam-rgyal*).¹⁰ It seems like Haidar may have mispronounced the name of the king. But Neil Howard on the other hand argues that *Tashikun* can't be Tashi Namgyal, because the submissive character of *Tashikun* towards Mirza is very uncharacteristic of a king like Tashi Namgyal who is described as a warrior and vigorous king in the La dvags *rgyal rabs* and the Alchi inscription¹¹. I would argue that he was undoubtedly a warrior king but he never faced a formidable military general like Mirza Haider, whose army was far superior and more advanced. Therefore, it is likely that

¹ *Tunkana* and *Kahjavar* refers to a Tibetan degree of divinity.

² The *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, edited and translated by Elias and Denison, 414.

³ Ladakhi or Tibetan monks.

⁴ *Shakya Thuba* is a Tibetan and Ladakhi epithet for Lord Buddha, literally meaning 'sage of the Shakya clan'.

⁵ Jana Kasapa was the Buddha who preceded Gautama Buddha and is worshipped by the *Bonpa*, followers of Tibet's pre-Lamaist religion.

⁶ The *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, edited and translated by Elias and Denison, 411.

⁷ A type of aromatic root used in traditional medicine.

⁸ *Changpas* are the nomadic herders usually found in the *Changthang* region of Leh, Ladakh. They mainly rear sheep and goats especially the pashmina goat.

⁹ The *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, edited and translated by Elias and Denison, 413.

¹⁰ Luciano Petech, *A Study on the Chronicles of Ladakh (Indian Tibet)* (Calcutta, 1939)123.

¹¹ Neil Howard, *What Happened Between 1450 and 1550 AD and Other Questions from the History of Ladakh* (Birmingham, UK: 27 Clarendon Road, B16 9SD), 133.

Haidar forced the king to submit. He also used the term *Maryul*¹ several times, though its exact geographical location remains unclear. It is likely that *Maryul* either refers to the capital of the region, which was Shey during that period or the whole Leh, Ladakh. This shows that his account reflects certain limitations in his understanding or transmission of local nomenclature and geography.

Mughal Involvement in Ladakh

With the rise of the Mughal Empire, the nature of Ladakh's external relations evolved. Mughal expansion into Kashmir under Akbar in 1586 CE brought Ladakh indirectly into the imperial orbit. During the reign of king Jamyang Namgyal (Jam-dbyans-rnam-rgyal), Akbar sent Mulla Takib Esfahani and Mihtar Yaari as ambassadors to Ladakh and the Ladakhi king agreed to pay tribute². Abul Fazl, in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, records Ladakh among the territories near Kashmir, indicating the empire's awareness of the strategic importance of the region. He describes the purity of Indus river, availability of gold in the region, garments such as *Kapardhar* (Tibetan material), various breed of horses, *Handu*³ and *Qutas*.⁴ *Ain-i-Akbari* further reports that Akbar was aware of the Buddhist monks and their way of life, and was particularly influenced by their practice of abstaining from meat.⁵

Inayat Khan in *Shahjahan Nama* describes the famous trade routes, various fruits, extraction of gold and the political relations between Ladakh and the Mughals. Inayat mentions that Mughal emperor Jahangir once considered establishing Mughal sovereignty in Ladakh, but due to the tough terrain the attempt seems to have failed miserably.⁶ Jahangir was also aware of the strategical and economic importance of the region and mentions the best quality of the wool produced in both Tibet and Ladakh in his autobiography.⁷

¹ As per Quentin Devers, Ladakh was a subdivision of *Maryul*, so Ladakh and *Maryul* were two different entities. See Quentin Devers, *Historical Sites of Purig, Kargil, Ladakh*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi : Indian National Trust for art and Cultural Heritage , Lodhi Estate , 2024), p.19.

² Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, ed. Agha Ahmad Ali and Maulavi Abdur Rahim, *Bibliotheca Indica*, 3 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1873–87), vol. III, pt. II, 552,569.

³ *Handus, also called Huniya, are mainly found in the high-altitude places of Ladakh, such as Changthang. They are used for their wool, meat and as pack animals and are an important source of wealth for the locals. See Abul Fazl, the Ā'in-i-Akbarī, trans. Jarrett, annotated by Sarkar, 353.*

⁴ *Qutas* refers to the Tibetan yak, an animal commonly found in the high-altitude regions of Ladakh. See Abu'l-Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, trans. H. Blochmann (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873), 157; and Jigar Mohammad, "Mughal Sources on Medieval Ladakh, Baltistan, and Western Tibet," in *Ladakhi Histories*, ed. John Bray, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 154.

⁵ Abdul Ghani Shiekh, *Ladakh: Tehzeeb wa Sakafat* (Jammu: Crescent House Publication, 2005), 107.

⁶ Inayat Khan. *The Shah Jahan Nama of Inayat Khan: An Abridged History of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan*. Translated by A.R. Fuller. Edited by W.E. Begley and Z.A. Desai. Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.213.

⁷ Jahangir, *Jahangir Nama* (Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri), 148, cited in Jigar Muhammad, "Mughal Sources on Medieval Ladakh and Western Tibet,155.

During the reign of Mughal king Shah Jahan, the Mughal governors of Kashmir maintained diplomatic contact with the Namgyal (rNam-rgyal) dynasty of Ladakh to secure the empire's vulnerable northern frontiers. Sengey Namgyal (Sen-ge-rnam-rgyal) was the ruler at that time. Abdul Hamid Lahori in *Badshah-nama* referred to him as the Zamindar of Tibet-i-Kalan and called him *Sangi Bamkhal* instead of Sengey Namgyal (Sen-ge-rnam-rgyal).¹ It seems like Sengey Namgyal was planning to annex *Tibet-i-Khurd*² and the chief of Skardo (Askardo), Adam Khan requested the Mughals for assistance.

Accepting the request, Ali Mardan Khan, the Mughal governor of Kashmir, sent an expedition to Ladakh under the command of his cousin, Hussain Beg. In 1639 CE, Hussain Beg defeated Sengey Namgyal (Sen-ge-rnam-rgyal) at the Battle of *Kharbu* and demanded tribute but the king refused to pay the tribute, as he was not ready to accept Mughal suzerainty³. The *Lad vags rgyal rabs* records a Ladakhi victory over the Mughals, whereas Ahmad Lahori and Bernier assert a Mughal triumph. Petech argues that the official chronicles of both Ladakh and the Mughals present only what is favorable to their respective sovereigns.⁴ After the battle, the king of Ladakh seems to close the Kashmir-Ladakh trade routes and also prohibits any person travelling to Ladakh via the Kashmir-Ladakh route.⁵ Due to it the caravans began to use different routes to visit *Lhasa*, other important places and it proved to be a disaster as Ladakh lose its place as an economic center. Petech rightly called it an economic suicide committed by the king.

Later, during the reign of Aurangzeb, an imperial *farmān*⁶ was issued directing Saif Khan, the Mughal governor of Kashmir, to send Muhammad Shafi to Ladakh.⁷ The *farmān* ordered Deldan Namgyal (bDe-ldan-rnam-rgyal), Sengey Namgyal's son and successor, to accept Mughal suzerainty, ensure the reading of the *khutba*⁸ in the Mughal emperor's name, construct a mosque in Ladakh and support the spread of Islam in the region.⁹ Facing pressure from Aurangzeb's *farman* and the unfulfilled promise of tribute made by his father, Deldan Namgyal was ultimately compelled to accept Mughal suzerainty.¹⁰

Deldan Namgyal was succeeded by his son Delegs Namgyal (bDe-legs-rnam-rgyal). There is some confusion among scholars about whether Delegs Namgyal became king. According to Cunningham, his father, Deldan Namgyal, abdicated the throne in favor of

¹ Petech., A study on the Chronicles of Ladakh, 144.

² Tibet-i-Khurd refers to Baltistan in Mughal sources.

³ See Petech, *A Study on the Chronicles of Ladakh*, 145.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656–1668*, trans. Archibald Constable, ed. Vincent A. Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1916), 426.

⁶ A royal decree.

⁷ Petech, *A Study on the Chronicles of Ladakh*, 152.

⁸ A formal sermon, often read in mosques during Friday or Eid prayers. In a historical context, its recital in a ruler's name signified recognition of his sovereignty.

⁹ Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656–1668*, ed. Smith, 422–424; Petech, *The Chronicles of Ladakh*, 152; Janet Rizvi, *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 71.

¹⁰ Petech, *A study on the Chronicles of Ladakh*, 152.

his son. However, Petech argues that Deldan did not relinquish the title of king but merely entrusted Delegs with the responsibility of managing state affairs.¹ He was not conferred any royal titles like other Namgyal rulers, and in the Mughal chronicles he does not appear as a king. He seems to have been only a prince representing his father, Deldan. However, a pivotal moment came during the reign of Delegs Namgyal when he supported the *Kagyüpa*² in a conflict against the *Gelugpa* (dGe-lugs-pa)³ led by the 5th Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho). This led to the invasion of Ladakh by Tibetan and Mongol forces (*Qalmaqs*).⁴ The king of Ladakh sought help from the Mughal Nawab of Kashmir, Ibrahim Khan and with their support, the Tibeto-Mongol forces were defeated at *Bya-rGyal* near *Basgo* (*Ba-mGo*).⁵ To resolve the conflict the Ladakhi king had to sign peace treaties with Kashmir in 1683 and Tibet in 1684 also known as the *Treaty of Tingmosgang*.⁶ As per these treaties the King had to accept Islam and assumed the new name Aqabat Mahmud Khan.⁷ However there is no mention of the king accepting Islam in the *La dvags rgyal rabs* probably due to the fact that they don't want the king to be shown as a subjected king under the influence of Islam or he accepted it just for a short period of time and later reverted to Buddhism.

The king also agreed to issue a special coin called *Jau* in the name of the Mughal Emperor. *Jau* as per Tibetologist like Francke and Cunningham was the first and only coin issued by the Ladakhis. Cunningham referred to it as *Jao/Jud* and observed that the coin had Mahmud Shah on one side and Butan on the other, together forming the term *Zarb-i-Butan*.⁸ However Charles K. Panish was skeptical about the coin and argued that it was not struck after the *Treaty of Tingmosgang*.⁹ The coin might have been struck primarily as a symbol of the conditions of suzerainty, rather than to serve any practical need for currency.

The Mughals further asked to encourage the spread of Islam in Ladakh and a mosque was to be built or repaired.¹⁰ The Ladakhi king had to send his son wife and son as hostages along with 18 piebald horses or ponies, 18 white yak tails and 18 pods of musk

¹ Luciano Petech, *The Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950–1842 A.D.* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1977), 69-70.

² The *Kagyüpa* also known as the Red Hat sect, is a major school of Tibetan Buddhism. The king of Ladakh supported this sect because the religious head of Bhutan was his patron *Lama*.

³ The Yellow hat sect.

⁴ Khan, *Mukhtasar Tareekh*, 310.

⁵ Karl Marx, *Three Documents Relating to the History of Ladakh: Tibetan Text, Translation and Notes*- By the late Dr Karl Marx, Moravian Missionary at Leh, Ladakh', Vol. LXIII, Part 1, JASB, Calcutta, 1894, introductory remark by the Rev. Dr Gustaf Dalman, Leipzig, Germany, 96.

⁶ Pascale Dollfus, *The History of Muslims in Central Ladakh*. (The Tibet Journal, Vol. XX NO. 1995), 37.

⁷ August Hermann Francke, *A History of Western Tibet: One of the Unknown Empires* (Delhi: Pilgrims Book Pvt. Ltd., 1999), 109; Nawang Tsering Shakspo, *A Cultural History of Ladakh*, ed. Kyle Gardner (Centre for Research on Ladakh, 2019), 22.

⁸ Cunningham, Ladakh, 255; and Francke, *History of Western Tibet*, 110.

⁹ For a detail discussion on coins see, Charles K. Panish, "The Coinage of Ladakh," *Museum Notes* 16 (1970): 185–88, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1580681>.

¹⁰ Petech, *A study on the Chronicles of Ladakh*, 160.

as a tribute¹ and in return the Mughal Nawab of Kashmir agreed to send 50 bags of rice to Ladakh.² The boundary between Ladakh and Tibet was also fixed bisecting the Pangong Lake,³ Ladakh gave up control of some important regions such as *Guge, Purang and Ruthog*,⁴ fine wool (Pashmina) from Ngaris Skor Sum (*Nga- ris-Skor-sum*)⁵ would only be sold to Kashmir.⁶ An official mission called *Lo-pyag/lo-Chak*,⁷ carrying gifts to Tibetan religious authorities was to be sent from Ladakh every three year.⁸

These two treaties significantly impacted Ladakh by reducing the kingdom's territory by more than half, and it never fully recovered from it. The economy also suffers due to the heavy tributes and gifts sent to Tibet and Mughal governors of Kashmir. Because of its weakened position, later Ladakh was fully annexed by the Dogras in the 19th century and never regained its independence.

The later Namgyal rulers, such as Ngyima Namgyal (Ni-ma-rnam-rgyal) and Deskyong Namgyal (bDe-skyon-rnam-rgyal) also maintained good relations with the Mughals governors of Kashmir. Ngyima Namgyal received a *Kharita*⁹ and a *mansab*,¹⁰ from Aurangzeb,¹¹ while Deskyong Namgyal received *Kharita* from the Mughal king Muhammad Shah in 1736.¹²

The Mughals had thus a significant impact on the socio-economic life of Ladakh, with both negative and positive effects. On the negative side, the imposition of tributes placed a heavy burden on the Ladakhi king, affecting the kingdom's economic stability and resources. On the positive side, Mughal contact encouraged trade and strengthened Ladakh's connections with other places. Kashmir-Ladakh corridor, linking the Indian subcontinent with Central Asia and Tibet, facilitated active exchange of pashm, shawls, and other goods. Besides the Persian language and *Ādāb-e Idārī*¹³ brought through both through Mughal and earlier Central Asian influences, became part of Ladakhi diplomatic practice. *Kharitas* and treaties were often written in Persian, and court culture reflected

¹Marx, *Three Documents Relating to the History of Ladakh: Tibetan Text, Translation and Notes*, Vol. LXIII, Part 1, 98.

² Francke, *A History of Western Tibet*, 112.

³ Janet Rizvi, *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 73.

⁴ Petech, *A study on the Chronicles of Ladakh*, 158.

⁵ A historical region comprising Ru-thog, Gu-ge, Burang (Purang) of present day Ngari Prefecture.

⁶ Marx, *Three Documents Relating to the History of Ladakh: Tibetan Text, Translation and Notes*, Vol. LXIII, Part 1, p. 97; Francke, *A History of Western of Tibet*, 112.

⁷ *Lo-chak*, also written as *lo-phyag* by Petech, is a Ladakhi term in which *lo* means 'year' and *chak* or *phyag* means 'salutation' or 'yearly salute'. Scholars like Petech and Hashmatullah Khan have considered it a triennial mission.

⁸ Khan, *Mukhtasar Tareekh-e-Jammu wa Kashmir*, 313.

⁹ A diplomatic royal letter, used to communicate grants, orders and messages.

¹⁰ A rank awarded to an individual.

¹¹ Petech, *Kingdom of Ladakh*, 90.

¹² *Ibid.*, 97.

¹³ Administrative Customs.

this mix of traditions. The *Baltis*¹ of Chuchot,² Nubra and Kargil composed *ghazals*, *marsiyas*³ and *nohas*⁴ enriched with Persian vocabulary, showing the deep literary and cultural influence of Mughals. In architecture too, elements like latticed wooden windows, floral wall paintings, and decorative motifs reflected Indo-Persian styles blended with local traditions.⁵

Conclusion

The history of Ladakh shows how its topography shaped its role in regional politics. Due to its connection with important passes and trade routes like *Zojila*, *Khardong La*, *Changla* etc, Ladakh was a nodal point for Central Asia, Tibet, and Kashmir. Early attacks from Central Asian *amirs* revealed its value as a trade route, while the writings of Mirza Haidar Dughlat highlights both the richness of Ladakhi culture and the difficulties of its weather and terrain. With the coming of the Mughals, Ladakh was drawn into the politics of India, sometimes through tribute and diplomacy, and at other times through open conflict and wars.

The important treaties of the 17th century marked a turning point. They reduced Ladakh's power and territory and imposed new political and economic obligations on Ladakh. At the same time, Mughal influence brought lasting changes in administration art, culture and architecture. Persian language became part of Ladakhi court practice. Indo-Persian styles shaped its literature and architecture, and new trade links also enriched its economy. Yet, the burden of tribute and political pressure weakened the region, and by the 19th century, it was finally annexed by the *Dogras of Jammu*.

In this way, Ladakh's relations with the Mughals were not only about control and subordination but also about exchange and adaptation. Despite being a small mountain kingdom of North, it played a very important role in connecting empires, and its history reflects both the challenges and the opportunities of living at the crossroads of Central Asia.

¹ The Baltis are the ethnic group, mainly found in Baltistan and some parts of Ladakh like Turtuk, Chuchot, Hardass, Latoo etc.

² Situated near the Indus at Leh, the area is widely known as a Balti village.

³ An elegiac poem composed to mourn the death of Imam Hussain and his companions at the battle of Karbala. It can also be written to commemorate the death of any notable person; for example, Shiekh Jamaluddin dedicated a *marsiya* on the death of Delhi Sultanate ruler, Iltutmish.

⁴ A mourning poem lamenting the tragedy of Karbala.

⁵ Ghani Sheikh, *Ladakh: Tehzeeb wa Sakafat*, 117.

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{D/33-15}

EXPLORING IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN HEER-RANJHA AND SUNDRI: INSIGHTS INTO THE 18TH CENTURY PUNJAB

Abstract

This paper examines the construction of identity in the Punjabi literary works “Heer-Ranjha” and “Sundri”, with a focus on the intersections of gender, religion, and culture in 18th century Punjab. By analyzing these texts, the study seeks to understand how they depict and shape both individual and collective identities within the socio-cultural framework of their time. The narratives of “Heer-Ranjha”, a classic tragic romance by Waris Shah, and “Sundri”, a novel by Bhai Vir Singh, offer contrasting yet complementary perspectives on identity formation, influenced by factors such as love, devotion, resistance, and societal norms.

A key aspect of this study is the gendered dimension of identity, as “Heer-Ranjha” explores the constraints placed on female agency within patriarchal structures, while “Sundri” presents an idealized vision of Sikh womanhood in the context of religious conflict. Additionally, this paper delves into the intersections of religion and identity, examining how Sikh and Muslim identities are portrayed, negotiated, and reinforced through literary expression. The role of region and cultural practices further enriches the discussion, as these works reflect the lived experiences of Punjabi society and the evolving notions of belonging.

Moreover, the influence of the author and the reception of these works provide insight into their lasting impact on Punjabi literature and cultural discourse. Ultimately, this paper contributes to a broader understanding of how literature serves as a medium for identity formation, emphasizing the significance of gender, religion, and regional consciousness in shaping historical and literary narratives.

Keywords: Identity Construction, Punjabi Literature, Urdu Literature, Heer-Ranjha, Sundri, 18th Century Punjab, Folk Tales, Qissa, Literary Analysis

Introduction

Literature has long served as a powerful medium for understanding the complexities of identity construction within societies. In the context of Punjab, two significant folk tales, Heer-Ranjha and Sundri, have captured the imagination of readers, delving deep into the intricacies of personal and collective identities. These texts, based on oral traditions,

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offer engaging narratives that provide invaluable insights into the historical, political, and socio-cultural dynamics of 18th century Punjab.

In 1766, Waris Shah gave written form to the tale of Heer-Ranjha, presenting it as a *qissa*/verse narrative, while Bhai Vir Singh penned Sundri in 1898. Due to limited knowledge about the Punjabi script, this paper utilizes English translations by Charles Frederick Usborne for “Heer-Ranjha” and Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani for “Sundri.”¹ Both texts share the backdrop of the 18th century, yet they represent different facets of Punjab, rendering the study all the more significant. Heer -Ranjha focuses on the lives of commoners, while Sundri delves into the conflicts between Sikhs and Mughal nobles, highlighting the struggle against authority. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of identity construction in Punjab by examining the diverse perspectives and contexts portrayed in these texts.

It is important to acknowledge that the characters portrayed in Heer-Ranjha and Sundri are not historical figures, but rather representations of reality. The study of these representations allows us to go beyond mere historical facts and delve into the deeper layers of societal dynamics. Through the exploration of love, religious beliefs, social hierarchies, and the interactions between diverse communities, we gain a deeper understanding of the society’s values and the multiple factors that influenced the construction of identities.

In this study, a microhistorical approach will be utilized to analyze these texts. Microhistory allows us to zoom in on the lived experiences of individuals and communities within a specific historical context. By closely examining the characters, events, and cultural nuances depicted in these texts, we can uncover the microcosm of 18th century Punjab society and gain insights into the complexities of identity formation, negotiation, and contestation.

By examining these representations critically, we can uncover the underlying narratives, symbols, and themes that shed light on the past and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of identity construction in 18th century Punjab. The study of Heer-Ranjha and Sundri allows us to bridge the gap between fiction and reality, enabling us to gain profound insights into the complexities of society and the intricate ways in which individuals navigated their identities within it.

¹ Charles Frederick Usborne was a British civil servant who served in India during the colonial period. He was the son of Thomas U. and Agnes Elizabeth Gibbs. Usborne studied at Balliol College, Oxford. Despite being rejected by the army due to his modest height, he joined the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) in 1898. He eventually became the Deputy Commissioner of Hissar (now in Haryana, India). He’s known for his translation of Panjabi Lyrics and Proverbs and Heer-Ranjha of Waris Shah.

Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani is a well-known educationist and a scholar of Sikhism. He has written a dozen books on Sikh history and religion. During his early years, he got interested in Hindustani music and learn it at the feet of his master—Swami Brahmanand of Sind. This well-known vocalist was invited to saying at different sessions of the all India music conference. He is a veteran classical singer and has specialized in Sikh sacred music. He knows a number of Shabad-rites of Gurmat Sangeet. He has participated in many Kirtan Darbars and also judged the performances of musicians in the Kirtan competitions. He has lectures on Sikh Kirtan indifference cities in the USA, Canada and UK.

Thus, By engaging with these literary treasures, this study embarks on a journey that offers profound insights into the cultural heritage and social fabric of Punjab, while contributing to the broader academic discourse surrounding identity construction in historical contexts.

Contextualization of the Text and Author's Influence

The works of Waris Shah and Bhai Vir Singh, particularly “Heer-Ranjha” and “Sundri,” are not just intricate literary creations but historical narratives deeply influenced by the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they were written. These novels delve into the complexities of identity and values, portraying characters whose lives are shaped by the historical events and social conditions of their time. In exploring the literary and artistic expressions of these authors, it is essential to consider the ground-breaking insights put forth by scholar Hayden White. In his book “Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe” (1973), White challenges the traditional view that history and literature operate in fundamentally different ways. He argues that historical writing is inherently shaped by narrative structures and literary devices.¹ White contends that historians of the late nineteenth century sought to dissociate history from literature by emphasizing its scientific nature, rooted in the pursuit of truth. However, he argues that historians and theorists in the late twentieth century began to recognize the connections between history, narrative, and rhetoric, leading to a “revival of narrative” in historical discourse.²

White suggests that historical reality is not simply an objective truth that can be discovered and represented accurately. Instead, historical reality is shaped by the historian's selection of facts, interpretation of events, and narrative framing. He highlights the role of imagination and storytelling in historical writing, arguing that historians inevitably engage in a form of fictionalization to construct historical narratives. In the vast domain of objective reality, history presents a challenge of capturing all crucial identifying details without omissions. Conversely, in the realm of fiction, writers enjoy the freedom to craft an imaginary world, selecting what to represent and what to exclude.³

According to White, historical fiction, in its creative exploration of the real and the possible, can sometimes offer a more nuanced understanding of historical reality than strictly factual historical accounts. He posits that the boundaries between history and fiction are not rigid, and that historical writing can benefit from incorporating elements of fiction, such as hypothetical exploration and imaginative storytelling.⁴ This perspective not only provides a framework for analyzing the works of Waris Shah and Bhai Vir Singh but also invites a broader exploration of the relationship between history, literature, and the construction of identity. These works employ literary devices to create

¹ Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 10.

² Ibid.

³ Hayden White, “Introduction: Historical Fiction, Fictional History, and Historical Reality,” *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 9, no. 2-3 (2005): 147-157, p. 150.

⁴ Ibid.

compelling images of a specific time and place. While not pure inventions, they transcend the distinction between truth and reality by providing artistic treatments of events that evoke a profound impact on readers' understanding and perception.

According to White, historical texts are not neutral representations of the past but are influenced by the subjective perspectives and biases of the historians who construct them. When applying White's argument to the works of Waris Shah and Bhai Vir Singh, it becomes evident that both authors were deeply influenced by their historical and biographical contexts. "Heer-Ranjha" and "Sundri" were written in specific historical periods that shaped the literary and artistic expressions of the authors and influenced their portrayal of identity and values of people living in Punjab.

"Heer-Ranjha" was written by Waris Shah during the 18th century in Punjab, a region under Mughal rule. This period witnessed significant political, social, and cultural changes. The Mughal Empire, known for its centralized authority and rich cultural traditions, influenced the social hierarchies and power dynamics of the time. Punjab, being a part of the empire, experienced the impact of Mughal rule on its society and economy.

In this historical context, Waris Shah's portrayal of identities in "Heer-Ranjha" is shaped by the prevailing social conditions and cultural influences of the era. The novel reflects the political and economic realities of Punjab under Mughal rule. The characters' identities are linked to their social status and interactions, reflecting the influence of power dynamics and social hierarchies. For example, Heer belongs to a higher social class, while Ranjha is depicted as a commoner or a cowherd. This distinction in social status contributes to the conflicts and challenges faced by the lovers, as societal norms and expectations often act as barriers to their union.

Furthermore, the economic conditions of the time, including the decline of trade and urban centers, affected characters' lives and identities. As the urban economy declined, there may have been a shift towards a greater emphasis on animal rearing in rural areas.¹ Waris Shah incorporates this economic shift in the portrayal of Heer's village, which is based on animal rearing rather than agriculture. The significance of animal rearing as a marker of high social status and the disdain towards those involved in agriculture could be a reflection of the changing economic landscape. The economic disparities resulting from these changes would have further shaped the identities of the characters in "Heer-Ranjha," particularly Ranjha, who belongs to a lower social class associated with agriculture.

In contrast, Bhai Vir Singh wrote "Sundri" during the British colonial era in India, a period marked by British dominance and the erosion of indigenous traditions. Bhai Vir Singh, as a prominent Sikh author, poet, and scholar, played a crucial role in reviving and promoting Sikh literature, spirituality, and values during this time. He was part of the Singh Sabha movement, which aimed to counter the influence of Western culture and preserve Sikh traditions.²

¹ Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 256.

² Anshu Malhotra, and Anne Murphy, eds. *Bhai Vir Singh (1872–1957): Religious and Literary Modernities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Indian Punjab*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2023, p. 6.

The historical context of British colonialism influenced Bhai Vir Singh's choice to set "Sundri" in the Mughal period. By doing so, he provided a historical perspective and context for the Sikh community, fostering a deeper understanding of their history, heritage, and resilience in the face of adversity. The novel explores the struggles and triumphs of the Sikh community under Mughal rule, instilling pride, resilience, and spiritual strength among Bhai Vir Singh's contemporaries.

Furthermore, "Sundri" can be seen as a response to the depiction of Indian women in Christian missionary writings, particularly the first Punjabi novel "Jyotirudae."¹ These writings often portrayed Indian women as inferior to their European counterparts, emphasizing gender inequalities and presenting European women as the standard of beauty. Bhai Vir Singh countered these stereotypes by presenting Sundri as a remarkably beautiful woman, surpassing even the moon and stars. Through Sundri's character, the author challenged prevailing gender norms and showcased the equality between men and women in Sikh society. Sundri's active participation in the struggle, fighting alongside men, demonstrated Sikh women's strength, courage, and dedication to Sikh values.²

Thus White challenged the view that history operates in a fundamentally different mode from literature, emphasizing that historical writing can incorporate aesthetic forms and narrative elements. In the case of Waris Shah's "Heer-Ranjha" and Bhai Vir Singh's "Sundri," the authors skillfully employed symbolism, imagery, and metaphors to shape the identities of characters and readers alike, blurring the boundaries between history and literature.

In "Heer-Ranjha," Waris Shah utilized the river Chenab as a recurring symbol, representing the timeless and powerful force of love that transcends societal barriers. The river symbolized the unbreakable bond between Heer and Ranjha, reflecting their shared identity as lovers who defy social conventions. Furthermore, the disownment of the village by the river Chenab metaphorically represented the characters' longing for freedom and autonomy, signifying their desire to break free from societal limitations and embrace their own identities and choices. It served as a symbolic affirmation of their right to love and be loved, regardless of societal expectations.

Waris Shah also employed the symbol of the "Rood of Noah" in "Heer-Ranjha" to depict the overwhelming impact of the Kheras' marriage procession on Heer and Ranjha's love. The reference to the biblical story of Noah and the Great Flood symbolized a catastrophic event of immense scale and destruction. The symbol suggested that the arrival of the Kheras' procession brought calamity and upheaval, representing the social and cultural norms that posed a significant threat to Heer and Ranjha's love. It evoked a sense of helplessness, highlighting the idea that external forces beyond the protagonists' control conspired against their union. The comparison to the "Rood of Noah" conveyed the magnitude of the challenges faced by Heer and Ranjha, marking a turning point in their lives and intensifying the conflicts they must confront.

In "Sundri," Bhai Vir Singh also utilized symbolism to represent Sikh identity and values. The lion, a powerful and revered symbol in Sikhism, was used to convey

¹ Gurpreet Bal. "Construction of Gender and Religious Identities in the First Punjabi Novel 'Sundari'." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 3528-3534, 2006, p. 3529.

² Ibid.

courage, strength, and fearlessness. By portraying Sikh identity as a lion, Bhai Vir Singh emphasized the valor and bravery inherent in Sikh beliefs, serving as a reminder of the community's resilience and determination. Additionally, Bhai Vir Singh employed the symbol of the Khanda, the Sikh emblem representing the double-edged sword, in "Sundri." The Khanda symbolized the struggle for justice and righteousness, embodying the core principles of Sikhism. It represented the characters' spiritual journey and their quest to uphold righteousness, inspiring readers and fostering admiration for the Sikh community's unwavering spirit.

Both authors effectively utilized imagery to create vivid sensory experiences and deepen the understanding of characters' identities. In "Heer-Ranjha," the detailed descriptions of natural landscapes such as valleys and fields contributed to the characters' sense of belonging and connection to their environment. The forest where Heer and Ranjha first met held nostalgic significance, evoking a sensory experience that highlighted their shared identity as lovers. Similarly, in "Sundri," Bhai Vir Singh employed detailed descriptions of Punjab's fields, rivers, and mountains, capturing the serene beauty of the surroundings. These descriptions allowed readers to envision the lush green fields, gentle flowing rivers, and majestic mountain peaks, further enhancing their connection to the story.

Religious and spiritual imagery played a significant role in both works. Bhai Vir Singh used metaphors and symbolic imagery to convey profound spiritual concepts. The metaphor of the lotus represented purity and spiritual growth, symbolizing Sundri's inner transformation and spiritual awakening. This imagery signified her journey from ignorance to wisdom and highlighted the resilience and purity of the human spirit. Furthermore, Bhai Vir Singh employed the image of "light" to symbolize enlightenment and divine grace. Through descriptions of divine light illuminating the characters' paths, he conveyed the presence of spirituality and the guiding force of faith in their lives. This imagery evoked a sense of awe and reverence, emphasizing the transformative power of divine intervention.

By highlighting the use of symbolism, imagery, and figurative language in the works of Waris Shah and Bhai Vir Singh, we can see how these authors bridge the gap between history and literature, demonstrating the potential for historical writing to incorporate narrative elements and engage readers on an aesthetic level. Also, the metaphorical analysis of the selected sections of the text reveals how the emotions are embedded in the linguistic choices made by the authors. The metaphors are emotionally charged colorful ornaments supporting various themes construed in the texts under analysis.¹ This supports White's argument that history and literature are not inherently separate disciplines, but rather intertwined in their modes of expression and the construction of meaning.

1.Exploring the Gendered Dimensions of Individual Experiences

¹ Tehseem Tazanfal, Rabia Faiz, Musarrat Azher, and Zahra Bokhari, "Exploring the Portrayal of Female Voice in 'Heer Ranjha': A Gender-Based Study," *Review of Education, Administration & Law* 4, no. 1 (2021): 155-168, p. 160.

1.1 Experiences of Heer and Ranjha as Individuals -

In examining the novels Heer and Ranjha, it is essential to delve into the experiences of the central characters as individuals. Heer and Ranjha, both navigate a complex web of societal expectations, familial obligations, and personal desires, ultimately shaping their identities and challenging established norms. The gendered experiences of Heer and Ranjha in "Heer-Ranjha" reflect the societal expectations, double standards, and power dynamics prevalent in Punjabi society at that time. Their lives are shaped by traditional gender roles and the constraints imposed upon them by their families and communities.

The tale begins with Ranjha, who is ridiculed by his brothers and sisters-in-law for not conforming to traditional masculine expectations. His love for playing the flute and his inability to work tirelessly in the fields are seen as signs of weakness and inadequacy, leading to his marginalization within his own family.¹ The gendered expectations placed upon him and the ensuing ridicule highlight the rigid societal norms that define masculinity in Punjabi society.

Meanwhile, Heer's status as a prized possession is evident in the way she is described and treated.² She is portrayed as a beautiful and desirable woman, sought after by many suitors. This objectification reduces her to an object of desire and underscores the limited agency she has over her own life and choices.

Ranjha's motivation for leaving home and embarking on the journey to win Heer's love is a result of a challenge presented by Sahiba, his sister-in-law. Sahiba taunts Ranjha, suggesting that he should go and marry one of the Sial girls if their family is not good enough for him.³ By framing Heer as a prize to be won, Sahiba reinforces the objectification of women and reduces Heer's agency and autonomy. Thus, Ranjha's motivation to leave his home and embark on the journey to win Heer's love is rooted in this challenge and the pressure to prove himself as a man. It suggests that his pursuit of Heer is not solely driven by love, but also by societal expectations and the need to meet the masculine ideal set by his sister-in-law. This further underscores the gendered power dynamics and the notion that men must exert their dominance and control over women to validate their masculinity.

Also, Heer's status as a woman is characterized by her subjugation. She refers to herself as a slave of Ranjha and calls him her master, indicating the power dynamics and gender hierarchy at play.⁴ Heer's passivity throughout the story further reinforces traditional gender roles. Despite expressing her love for Ranjha and standing up for herself against her parents, she does not actively take steps to change her circumstances. Instead, she

¹ "Ranjha's brothers mock him, stating, "He wears a looking-glass on his thumb like a woman. He plays on the flute all day and sings all night. Let the boy quarrel about the land if he so wills. His strength will not avail against us who are many." in Waris Shah, "The Adventures of Hir and Ranjha," translated into English by Charles Frederick Usborne, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Pakistan Series, p. 2.

² Ibid. 6.

³ Ibid. 2.

⁴ Waris Shah, "The Adventures of Hir and Ranjha," translated into English by Charles Frederick Usborne, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Pakistan Series. P. 7.

relies on Ranjha to rescue her, perpetuating the notion that women are dependent on men for their liberation. This passivity and reliance on male agency reflect the societal expectations placed upon women to be passive, submissive, and in need of male protection.

Heer's marriage to Saida Khera against her will exemplifies the lack of autonomy and control she has over her own life. Despite her love for Ranjha, she is forced into a marriage that aligns with her family's interests and societal expectations, highlighting the limited agency and decision-making power afforded to women.

Moreover, the characters' religious identities are shaped by their adherence to societal norms and customs associated with marriage. Heer expresses her concerns about returning home with Ranjha without a formal marriage, fearing societal judgment and criticism. Her apprehension indicates the importance placed on proper marriage rituals and the expectations surrounding a woman's marital status within the religious and cultural framework.

The characters of Heer, Ranjha, the Sial brothers (Chuchak and Kaidu), the Qazi, and the Mullah embody different perspectives and reactions to religious norms, reflecting the complex interplay between religious beliefs and the surrounding environment.

One significant clash that exemplifies the tension between religious orthodoxy and individual freedom of expression occurs between Ranjha and the Mullah. The Mullah, as a representative of religious authority, criticizes Ranjha's appearance, particularly his long hair, and demands that he conform to societal expectations by cutting his hair to be acceptable in God's sight.¹ However, Ranjha responds defiantly and challenges the Mullah's narrow interpretation of religious practices and beliefs, questioning the Mullah's understanding of purity, cleanliness, and righteousness. He seeks to expose the Mullah's shallow understanding of prayer and religious doctrine by asking pointed questions about its nature and purpose.

Similarly, the clash between Heer and the Qazi exemplifies the tension between religious authority and individual agency. Heer resists the Qazi's enforcement of an arranged marriage, asserting her love for Ranjha and questioning the interference of the Qazi in matters of the heart.² She emphasizes personal choice over external religious authority.

Furthermore, throughout the text, we see instances where individuals and communities adapt religious practices to suit their own needs and desires. For example, the Sial brothers conspire against Heer, manipulating religious customs to further their own agenda. They bribe the Qazi to facilitate Heer's forced marriage. The collaboration between Heer's family and the Qazi in coercing consent from Heer through gagging and reading the marriage service against her will, reveals the manipulation and abuse of religious practices for personal gain and societal conformity. This manipulation of religious practices reflects the complex interplay between religious beliefs and personal motivations, demonstrating how individuals can reinterpret and adapt religious rituals to serve their own interests.

¹ Ibid. P. 4.

² Ibid. P. 16.

Though, Religion, generally regarded as the mainstay of social life, was itself in a state of confusion. Waris Shah's story primarily focuses on Muslim characters and provides insights into the rural Islamic culture of Punjab. The people in the story have stronger faith in Pirs and faqirs compared to Mullas and Qazis, as the latter have lost the trust of the general public.¹ Waris Shah criticizes the Mullas for their hypocritical behavior, portraying them as sinners who use the veil of Sharia to hide their wrongdoings. Conversely, the Panj Pirs (group of five saints in South Asian Sufi traditions) gain the faith and trust of the people, supporting Ranjha in his love for Heer and assisting him in overcoming obstacles. Heer herself swears by Khwaja Khizr to demonstrate her unwavering love for Ranjha. In this society, Islam does not hinder individuals from becoming jogis or believing in them, but jogis have lost prestige due to their shallow, suspicious, and aggressive nature. However, if a jogi possesses mystical powers (karamat), they can impress the people and even command women's service, such as rubbing their feet. Notably, even powerful men like Raja Adali succumb to Ranjha's wishes, as he miraculously sets fire to the village, leading to the transfer of Heer to him.²

In the novel "Sundri," the individual experiences of the characters shed light on the gendered dimensions of their lives and the societal norms that shape their identities and actions. Through various examples, we can analyze Sundri's journey and the challenges faced by other characters, offering insights into the restrictive social structures prevalent in the depicted society.

Sundri's brother's plea to the stone-hearted Nawab exemplifies the objectification of women, as he offers gold and suggests the availability of other women to replace Sundri.³ His words reflect the belief that women can be easily replaced and treated as commodities. This example underscores the patriarchal attitudes that devalue women's worth. Furthermore, the significance of honor is emphasized as Sundri contemplates suicide to protect her and her family's honor. This underscores the societal pressure to preserve familial reputation and dignity, demonstrating the restrictive nature of social expectations and the sacrifices individuals are expected to make.

Moreover, Sundri's secret recitation of Sikh prayers within a Hindu family showcases the conflict of personal choice. It highlights the difficulties she faces in exercising her autonomy and exploring her spirituality in a religiously divided household. This example exposes the societal constraints and the resistance encountered by individuals who deviate from established norms, particularly in matters of faith.

Further, when Sundri questions the Khatri man's tears and states that tears are usual with women, but men do not shed tears, she reinforces the gender norms and expectations that restrict emotional expression for men.⁴ Sundri's statement solidifies the masculine norm that dictates that men should be strong and suppress their emotions. This example

¹ Pir and Faqir belong to the Sufi mystical tradition, emphasizing spirituality, personal devotion, and sometimes miracles whereas Mulla and Qazi are more aligned with formal Islamic scholarship and legal systems, focusing on doctrine, law, and societal order.

² P. Suri, "Heer of Waris Shah as a Document on the Social History of the Punjab in the 18th Century," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 28, 265-274, 1966, p. 271.

³ Bhai Vir Singh, "Sundri," translated by Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani, New Edition: 2009, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, p. 7.

⁴ Ibid. 25.

exposes the rigid gender roles and the pressures placed on individuals to conform to societal expectations based on their gender.

Additionally, the scenario of Khatri's wife being forced to eat mutton against her will in the harem showcases the violation of her personal autonomy and agency.¹ Her resistance and refusal to eat reflect her desire to maintain control over her own choices, even in a constrained and oppressive environment. This example exposes the power dynamics and the denial of personal agency experienced by women within the harem setting.

Furthermore, the conversation among the females about Khatri's wife being fine after some time and accepting her fate demonstrates the normalization and acceptance of emotional suppression in the society depicted in the novel.² The lack of empathy and understanding for the emotional turmoil experienced by women highlights the limited space for emotional expression and the expectation for women to conform to their designated roles without questioning their circumstances.

In conclusion, both "Heer-Ranjha" and "Sundri" delve into the individual experiences of characters to shed light on the gendered dimensions of their lives and the power dynamics within their respective societies. These narratives offer a deeper understanding of the constraints imposed by societal expectations, familial obligations, and religious norms on the individuals, particularly women. The examples presented in both novels reveal the violation of personal autonomy, emotional suppression, objectification of women, and the struggle for agency within a patriarchal framework. By examining these individual experiences, we gain insights into the complexities of power relations and the need to challenge and transform oppressive structures to create spaces for individual agency, freedom of choice, and emotional well-being.

1.2 Gender Roles and Challenging Traditional Norms -

In the story of "Heer-Ranjha," the central female character, Heer, emerges as a symbol of rebellion against traditional gender norms. She defies societal expectations and actively challenges oppressive norms through her outspokenness and occasional actions. Heer's refusal to conform to prescribed gender roles is evident in her bold expressions of dissent. For instance, when confronted about her feelings for Ranjha, Heer boldly rejects the notion of forced loveless marriages, stating, "The traditions of women who are forced into loveless marriages are worse than the love of women who are accused of being unchaste."³ This statement signifies her willingness to challenge the restrictive norms of arranged marriages and advocate for the freedom to choose her own love.

Heer goes beyond verbal defiance and takes actions to assert her agency. When her evil uncle Kaidu spreads rumours about her relationship with Ranjha, Heer's friends rally to her aid and suggest teaching Kaidu a lesson he won't forget. In a show of collective strength, Heer joins her friends in confronting Kaidu and surround him like a potter

¹ Ibid. 30.

² One of the ladies remarked, "She's a new sparrow in a cage. She will get used to it after some time." Ibid. 29.

³ Waris Shah, "The Adventures of Hir and Ranjha," translated into English by Charles Frederick Usborne, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Pakistan Series. P. 20.

catching an ass, and physically retaliate by tearing off his beggar's girdle, beating him, and destroying his objects.¹ Their actions demonstrate their agency and their willingness to challenge those who oppose Heer's relationship with Ranjha. This act of retaliation demonstrates Heer's determination to challenge oppressive figures who seek to undermine her autonomy and happiness.

As the story progresses, the character of Ranjha undergoes a transformation in his perception of women. Initially bitter towards his sister-in-laws, Ranjha considers women evil due to his past experiences. However, as he becomes a lowly servant and develops relationships with women, including Heer's friends, his understanding of the female gender evolves. In Heer's in-law's town, all the women adore Ranjha as a symbol of freedom. Through these interactions, Ranjha's perspective on women begins to shift, challenging his initial prejudices and paving the way for him to become an ally in their struggle against the patriarchal system.²

Additionally, Heer's sister-in-law, Sehti, emerges as a central character who risks everything to unite Heer with Ranjha and to find her own happiness with Murad. Sehti defies societal expectations and orchestrates a plan to bring Heer and Ranjha together. Her actions require courage, perseverance, and a willingness to challenge established norms. Despite the potential backlash from her family and community, Sehti remains committed to helping Heer and Ranjha unite, highlighting her agency and unwavering dedication to love and freedom.

Furthermore, the story highlights the solidarity among women from different backgrounds who join forces to challenge established societal norms. Women of all ages, classes, castes, religions, and occupations, including prostitutes and dancing girls, come together under Sehti's leadership to support Heer and Ranjha.³ This collective resistance against oppressive norms emphasizes the shared experiences of oppression and the power of unity among women in shaping social and cultural identities.

Turning to the novel "Sundri," the character of Sundri emerges as a powerful symbol of challenging traditional gender roles and norms within the context of Sikhism. Despite facing rejection from her own family, Sundri's unyielding faith in Sikh values remains steadfast, leading her to question and defy societal expectations placed upon women.

One pivotal moment that showcases Sundri's defiance of traditional gender roles is when she witnesses the wounded Sikh soldiers after a battle with the Turks. The sight of their sacrifice ignites Sundri's religious zeal and sense of duty. She realizes that she too can actively contribute to the defense of morality and religion by serving alongside the Sikh soldiers.⁴ By acknowledging the importance of women's participation in the struggle, Sundri challenges the prevailing belief that women should be confined to domestic roles.

¹ Ibid. 19.

² Ali Manzur Ejaz, "Waris Shah: The Ideologue," Sulaikh/Wichar, 2019, p. 45.

³ Waris Shah, "The Adventures of Hir and Ranjha," translated into English by Charles Frederick Osborne, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Pakistan Series, p. 47.

⁴ Bhai Vir Singh, "Sundri," translated by Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani, New Edition: 2009, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, p. 23.

Another significant instance occurs when Sundri confronts a barber who intends to cut hair of her Sikh brother, Balwant Singh. Despite being veiled and bound, Sundri summons immense courage and strength, discarding her veil and pushing the barber to the ground. This act of defiance surprises those around her, including the Nawab, and that challenged the perception of women as physically and mentally weak. Sundri's actions demonstrate that courage can empower women, making them resolute and unshakeable in the face of adversity.

Sundri's words to the Khatri man further highlight her determination to break free from traditional gender stereotypes. She refutes the notion that women are inherently weak, emphasizing the strength and firmness they possess when inspired by religious devotion.¹ Sundri's unwavering belief in the grace of the Guru fuels her confidence and resolves to challenge societal expectations.

Furthermore, Sundri displays remarkable courage when she defends herself against a sepoy attempting to restrain her. With agility and promptness, she draws her dagger, swiftly injuring her assailant. This act showcases her fearlessness and determination to protect herself, defying the perception of women as passive and submissive.

Through these instances, "Sundri" underscores the agency and resilience of its female protagonist. Sundri's unwavering faith, strength, and determination serve as a powerful example of women's potential to challenge and transcend traditional gender roles. Her actions illustrate that women can actively participate in the defense of their faith and fearlessly stand up against oppression.

By defying societal expectations and embracing her role in the struggle for morality and religion, Sundri becomes a symbol of empowerment and resistance. Her story invites readers to question and challenge traditional gender norms and recognize the potential of women to play significant roles in shaping their communities and societies. "Sundri" emphasizes the importance of agency and the ability of individuals to transcend the limitations imposed upon them by society, ultimately advocating for gender equality and the recognition of women's contributions in religious and social spheres. However, the influence of Bhai Vir Singh's ideology of Sikh superiority cannot be overlooked in the portrayal of women's empowerment. While the novel present strong female character challenging traditional norms, their transformation and courageous actions are closely tied to their admission into Sikhism.

In conclusion, the novels "Heer-Ranjha" and "Sundri" both provide compelling narratives that challenge traditional gender norms and roles. Both novels emphasize the importance of agency and the potential of women to contribute significantly to their communities and societies. Ultimately, these narratives advocate for gender equality and recognition of women's contributions in religious and social spheres.

1.3 Patriarchy, Misogyny, and Female Identity -

In "Heer-Ranjha," patriarchy, misogyny, and the construction of female identity are prevalent themes that shed light on the gender inequalities and restrictions faced by

¹ Ibid.

women in Punjab society. The double standards applied to Heer and Ranjha highlight the gendered inequalities present in the narrative. While Heer's actions and pursuit of love are met with severe criticism and condemnation, Ranjha's rebellious behavior is not subjected to the same level of outrage.

Heer's family and the women in the village actively participated in shaming and berating her, viewing her independence and pursuit of love as a threat to societal norms. The women express their concern about the influence Heer's actions may have on their own daughters, viewing her as a bad example and a disgrace to the village.¹ The pressure intensifies as her family members, such as Kaidu (her uncle) and Malki (her mother), join in shaming and berating her for bringing shame upon the family and tarnishing their honor.

In contrast, Ranjha's behavior, although rebellious and non-conformist, is not met with the same level of outrage or condemnation. He is not subjected to the same scrutiny, judgment, or threats of violence. This discrepancy in reactions underscores the gendered power dynamics at play, where women are expected to adhere to strict social and moral codes, while men enjoy more leniency and freedom.

The responses from Heer's family and the women in the village further demonstrate the limited agency and control she has over her own life. The women suggest drastic measures such as suffocating or poisoning Heer when she was born, indicating a desire to exert control over her choices and actions. The family's attempts to arrange her marriage against her will, and their intention to dismiss the cowherd (Ranjha) as a means of separating the two lovers, exemplify the efforts to suppress Heer's autonomy and preserve the family's honor.

Despite these oppressive forces, the female characters in "Heer-Ranjha" display resilience and resistance against patriarchal norms. Heer, in particular, challenges societal expectations by defying the arranged marriage and pursuing her love for Ranjha. She refuses to conform to the predetermined roles and behaviors assigned to women, asserting her own desires and agency.

The text also provides examples of how women were perceived as untrustworthy in society. Ranjha's statement that "women are ever deceivers" reflects the prevailing misogyny and negative stereotypes associated with women. He cites several historical instances to support his negative perception of women and their trustworthiness. One example he mentions is the story of Raja Bhoj, whom he claims was deceived and controlled by women. By referencing this story, Ranjha implies that women have the ability to manipulate and dominate men.²

Another example Ranjha cites is the destruction of the Kauros and Pan-dos, which he attributes to the actions of women. This reference suggests that women are responsible for causing conflicts and divisions among people. Additionally, he mentions that because of a woman Ravana got killed, further reinforcing the idea that women are capable of

¹ Waris Shah, "The Adventures of Hir and Ranjha," translated into English by Charles Frederick Usborne, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Pakistan Series, p. 13.

² Waris Shah, "The Adventures of Hir and Ranjha," translated into English by Charles Frederick Usborne, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Pakistan Series, p. 2.

deceit and treachery.¹ These negative perception further reinforces the patriarchal notions that undermine women's credibility and agency.

However, the examples of Zulaikha, Sohni, Laila, Sassi, and Shirin cited by Heer serve to counter Ranjha's negative perception of women and make him questions his own biases.² These legendary figures are portrayed as strong and steadfast in their love, willing to make sacrifices for their beloved. Through these examples, the text challenges the notion that women are inherently deceitful and highlights the bravery and loyalty exhibited by women throughout history.

As Ranjha's relationship with Heer deepens, he begins to see her as an individual rather than a representation of all women. He realizes that his previous perceptions were influenced by societal prejudices and that women, including Heer, are capable of genuine love and loyalty. Through Heer's actions and their shared experiences, Ranjha's perception evolves, allowing him to challenge and question the negative stereotypes associated with women.

By portraying Ranjha's changing perception, the text highlights the transformative power of personal relationships and lived experiences in challenging and dismantling ingrained misogynistic beliefs. Ranjha's journey from prejudice to a more nuanced understanding of female identity underscores the importance of recognizing the diversity and complexity of women's experiences and breaking free from rigid gender stereotypes.

The novel "Sundri" also provides a poignant analysis of the themes of patriarchy, misogyny, and female identity. Sundri's experiences and the treatment she receives illustrate the deep-rooted influence of these oppressive systems within a male-dominated society.

Sundri's capture by the Nawab exemplifies the objectification and dehumanization of women. She is seen merely as a game to be hunted, highlighting the disregard for her autonomy and worth.³ The Nawab's indifference to her family's pleas for compassion reflects the pervasive misogyny that allows men to exploit and dismiss women without consequence.

The patriarchal norms imposed on Sundri by her family are revealed when they implore her to take her own life to preserve her honor.⁴ This act of suicide is seen as the only way to protect her from the dishonor of being in the possession of the Nawab. It underscores the societal expectations placed upon women to conform to predetermined notions of honor, even at the expense of their lives.

The metaphorical representation of women as sparrows further emphasizes their vulnerability and disposability within the male-dominated society. The Nawab's proclamation of catching a "golden sparrow" highlights the objectification of women and their reduction to mere objects of desire.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid. 11.

³ "He saw a village in the distance and rode to it for quenching his thirst, and here he captured a lady as his game" in Bhai Vir Singh, "Sundri," translated by Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani, New Edition: 2009, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, p. 7.

⁴ Ibid. 33.

The experience of the Hindu woman, Dharam Kaur, being kidnapped and forced to eat Muslim food, shows how power dynamics shaped by patriarchy and religious biases come into play. Her distancing herself from her Hindu identity under the influence of her captors highlights the pressure on women to conform to societal expectations and the erasure of their ability to make choices for themselves. Sundri's admiration for Dharam Kaur's strength in maintaining her chastity despite the suffering she endures speaks to the internalized misogyny and judgment that women face, even from other women.

Following Dharam kaur's rescue, she encounters resistance from her own religious community, illustrating the strict adherence to patriarchal norms and religious traditions. The refusal of the Brahmins and Khatri to readmit her into the Hindu fold reveals the societal expectation for women to conform and the difficulty of reintegrating those who have deviated from established norms. The analogy of fallen fruit unable to be rejoined to the tree further underscores the rigidity and unforgiving nature of patriarchal systems.

Through the struggles faced by the female characters, the narratives highlight the gendered inequalities, double standards, and oppressive expectations imposed on women. The stories reveal the limitations placed on women's agency, their subjugation to patriarchal norms, and the harsh judgments they encounter, even from their own gender. Thus, both "Sundri" and "Heer-Ranjha" offers a powerful exploration of patriarchy, misogyny, and the construction of female identity. These narratives expose the objectification, violence, and suppression that women endure within a male-dominated society. They invite readers to critically reflect on the detrimental effects of these systems and the urgent need for transformation.

2.Region and Identity: The Intersections of Physical, Social, and Cultural Practices in Identity Construction

2.1 Analysing the ways in which the region is represented in the narratives -

In the *qissa* of "Heer-Ranjha," the portrayal of the region encompasses various aspects of the Punjab countryside. The author vividly describes "Takht Hazara," a scenic place situated on the banks of the river Chenab.¹ This depiction highlights the natural beauty of the region, characterized by flowing streams and flourishing gardens. The description of the Ranjha family living in proud luxury in Takht Hazara implies a sense of social hierarchy and power within the village. This portrayal sets the stage for the events that unfold in the narrative, emphasizing the influence of physical landscapes on social dynamics and individual identities.

The narrative also includes scenes where Heer and her friends meet Ranjha in the forest on the banks of the Chenab. These natural landscapes and the joyful interactions of the characters amidst the riverside scenery showcase the intimate connection between the people of Punjab and their natural surroundings. It highlights the significance of the

¹ Takht Hazara (old name: Khajjiyan Wala) is a village near the Chenab River in the Sargodha District of Punjab, Pakistan.

physical environment in shaping their experiences and fostering a sense of belonging to the region.

The description of traditional houses in the Punjab countryside provides further insight into the region's architectural style and social structure. These houses are depicted as having spacious courtyards surrounded by several living rooms and bedrooms. The reference to joint families, where multiple brothers live together with their parents, reflects the communal nature of the society and underscores the significance of family ties and collective decision-making within the community. Descriptions of morning activities, such as the chirping of sparrows, the singing of starlings, and engagement in agricultural and household tasks, offer glimpses into the daily routines and rhythms of life in the Punjab region.¹ These details illustrate the intricate connection between physical spaces, social dynamics, and the formation of individual and collective identities.

Cultural practices and traditions are also interwoven into the narrative, providing valuable insights into the everyday life of the region. The depiction of spinning parties, where young unmarried girls gather to showcase their spinning skills and engage in conversation, exemplifies a significant social institution in Punjab villages.² The spinning wheel itself symbolizes the importance of women's labor and their role in the production of cloth, linking it to historical and cultural aspects of rural society. These cultural practices reflect the intersection of physical actions, communal engagement, and traditional songs in shaping individual and collective identities.

Furthermore, the *qissa* of "Heer-Ranjha" alludes to other tragic romances like Laila-Majnun, Shirin-Farhad, Sohni-Mahiwal, and Sassi-Punnoo, which originate from different cultural contexts such as the Arabian desert, pre-Islamic Iran, and old Sind.³ The inclusion of these references adds depth to the narrative and portrays the Punjab region as a place where diverse stories and cultural traditions intersect. It indicates the cultural richness and the prevalence of classical love stories within Punjabi society, further emphasizing the region's cultural consciousness.

Turning to "Sundri," the novel also highlights the profound intersections of physical, social, and cultural practices in identity construction within the region of Punjab. The geographical setting of a remote village amidst flourishing farmlands, dense forests, Beas, sutlej, Serai (inn), Muslim's restaurants and Hindu's shops serves as a backdrop for the characters' experiences and interactions. This physical environment shapes their lives and influences their sense of self.

One example of the interplay between physical and social dimensions is the bridal farewell function, known as "muklawā," which takes place in the village.⁴ This event brings together people from different religious backgrounds, Hindus and Muslims, reflecting the diverse social fabric of the region. The celebration involves a spinning

¹ Waris Shah, "The Adventures of Hir and Ranjha," translated into English by Charles Frederick Usborne, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Pakistan Series, p. 5.

² Ibid. 15.

³ Ibid. 17.

⁴ Bhai Vir Singh, "Sundri," translated by Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani, New Edition: 2009, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, p. 5.

competition where young girls, both virgins and married, showcase their skills. This competition not only demonstrates the cultural significance of traditional crafts but also becomes a platform for young women to express their talents and assert their identities. The intertwining of physical actions, cultural practices, and social interactions highlights how identity is constructed through the convergence of various elements within the region.

Moreover, the presence of a dense forest and the villagers' familiarity with the topography of the region exemplify the close relationship between physical surroundings and identity construction. The Sikh community, in particular, seeks refuge in the forests during troubled times, using them as shelters. These forest hideouts become symbolic spaces where the Sikh community can preserve their religious practices and maintain their distinct identity. The forests serve as sanctuaries, protecting them from their adversaries and enabling the continuation of their religious rituals, such as the morning congregation and recitation of prayers. This connection between physical landscapes, religious practices, and identity formation showcases the profound influence of the region's environment on the construction of individual and collective identities.

The cultural practices and songs described in "Sundri" further contribute to the intricate web of identity construction. As the women gather to clean rice and wild berries, they engage in communal tasks while singing a folk-song that emphasizes unity and shared responsibilities.¹ The rhythmic pounding of rice in the mortar, accompanied by the melodic beats, creates a sense of belonging and collective identity among the women. This cultural practice reflects the fusion of physical actions, communal engagement, and traditional songs in shaping individual and collective identities.

Furthermore, the conflicts between the Sikhs and other groups in "Sundri" highlight the complex intersections of religion, social dynamics, and identity formation within the region. The incident of Sikhs entering a mosque and chanting Sikh Jaikara (Bolay So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal) illustrates the blurring of religious affiliations and community identities.² In this context, the Sikhs, who were associated with the Sikh community, deviated from the expected norms by entering a place of worship typically associated with a different religious group. By chanting Sikh slogans within the mosque, they challenged the established boundaries between religious communities and disrupted the traditional understanding of religious identity. This act of transgression created a complex situation where the lines between religious affiliations and community identities became blurred. It emphasized the intertwined nature of religious beliefs and social relationships, showcasing how religious practices can intersect with and influence the construction of communal identities.

Overall, the region of Punjab, as portrayed in the novels "Heer-Ranjha" and "Sundri," provides a rich tapestry of physical landscapes, cultural practices, and social dynamics. These depictions highlight the profound intersections between the physical, social, and cultural dimensions of the region and their influence on the construction of individual and collective identities. The detailed descriptions of the physical environment,

¹ Bhai Vir Singh, "Sundri," translated by Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani, New Edition: 2009, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, p. 6.

² Ibid. 17.

communal festivities, traditional songs, religious rituals, and conflicts within the region all converge to form a multifaceted understanding of identity in the context of Punjab. This intersectionality underscores the dynamic and intricate nature of identity construction and the significant role played by the region's physical, social, and cultural dimensions.

2.2 Representation of social classes and power dynamics in Punjab region -

Both "Heer-Ranjha" and "Sundri" offer nuanced representations of social classes and power dynamics within Punjabi society, each within its own political context. These literary works delve into the construction, maintenance, and distribution of power among individuals and communities, shedding light on the intricate nature of power relations.

In "Heer-Ranjha," a prominent focus lies on the examination of various social classes and their corresponding power dynamics. The narrative highlights the influence wielded by elite landowning families, such as the Sial clan and Saida Khera's family, who possess significant social power. These families exert control over individuals within their social circles through their wealth, social status, and overall influence. They dictate marriage decisions and enforce societal norms to safeguard their honor and reputation, thus establishing their power within the community.

Within the familial structure portrayed in "Heer-Ranjha," parental and elder authority play crucial roles in maintaining power. Parents possess significant power in arranging marriages and making decisions on behalf of their children, often overriding individual desires or personal happiness. This exercise of familial power is further reinforced by societal expectations and the pressure to conform to established norms. The narrative highlights the influence parents have in shaping the trajectory of their children's lives, emphasizing the interplay between familial and societal power dynamics.

Similarly, in "Sundri," power dynamics and social classes are explored within the Punjab region, albeit in a different political context. Bhai Vir Singh has shown three religious communities interacting with each other despite the existence of differences, hierarchies and exclusion, but they exist not in a harmonious manner rather in a contentious form. The construction of communities deprives them to share any eclectic space, which consists of traditions, cultural practices, local history and its consciousness. Bhai Vir Singh in Sundri creates religious communities by giving them specific identities. First of all there are Sikhs who are brave, strong and are saviours – an ideal. Second, the Hindus are portrayed as coward, meek, docile, helpless, tactless, deserving mercy and sympathy throughout the text. Among the Hindus we also have Diwan Kaura Mal who is sympathetic and helpful to the Sikhs. Third, there are Muslims who are tyrants and oppressors.¹ Each social class is depicted with distinct characteristics and experiences, providing valuable insights into the complexities of power dynamics prevalent during that time.

¹ Gurpreet Bal, "Construction of Gender and Religious Identities in the First Punjabi Novel 'Sundari'." Economic and Political Weekly, 3528-3534, 2006,p. 3531.

Another notable theme in “Heer-Ranjha” is Religious power. The figures of the Qazi and the Mullah represent religious authority and exert power through their interpretations and enforcement of religious doctrines. They play a significant role in dictating social norms, moral judgments, and codes of conduct within the community. The clash between Heer-Ranjha and the religious authorities underscores the power struggle between those challenging religious interpretations and those seeking to uphold them, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of religious power.

In “Sundri,” the novel also portrays not only religious power but also religious divisions. It presents the prevailing religious and hierarchical divisions of the time, where non-Muslims are treated differently and subjected to discrimination. Furthermore, the conflicting relationship between Sikhs and Lakhpat Rai, a Hindu *Diwan* at Lahore, highlights the tensions and desire for revenge between the two communities. These conflicts intensify the power dynamics existing between Hindus and Sikhs during that period.

Gendered power dynamics are another crucial aspect explored in “Heer-Ranjha.” The story depicts the subjugation of women in Punjabi society under the authority and control of male figures, such as fathers, brothers, and husbands. Women’s agency is limited, and their desires and choices are often overridden by the wishes of their families and societal expectations. This portrayal reveals the inequalities and restrictions faced by women, shedding light on the oppressive nature of gendered power dynamics prevalent during that time.

Similarly, in “Sundri,” the narrative highlights the vulnerability of Hindu women due to the lawlessness and aggression of local Mughal governors. Hindu daughters and daughters-in-law are confined to their homes as their safety and security are compromised by the actions of aggressive local governors. This portrayal underscores the power dynamics at play, where the well-being of Hindu women is endangered due to the actions of those in positions of authority. The novel portrays Muslims as violators of the faith of Sundri and Sikhs in general. They are depicted as dishonest, ungrateful, and hostile towards Sikhs. Muslim rulers and conquerors are presented as having the sole objective of eliminating Sikhs, and fierce battles occur between Muslims and Sikhs. Mir Mannu’s atrocities on Sikhs are recorded in history, and even those who were once sympathetic to Sikhs, like Adeena Beg, turn against them. Muslim rulers deny justice to Hindus and forcibly convert women to Islam after abducting them and making them eat prohibited food. The portrayal of Muslims in the novel highlights their cruelty, oppression, and loose moral character. However, it is important to approach this representation with caution, as Bhai Vir Singh, the author, had an ideology influenced by the Sikhism revival movement, which could potentially result in a flawed or incomplete portrayal aimed at vilifying Muslim authorities.

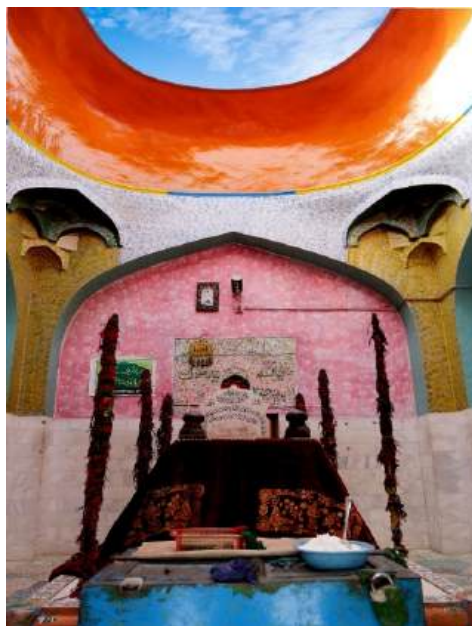
Nevertheless, amidst the complex power dynamics depicted in “Sundri,” the novel emphasizes the importance of preserving regional identity. One notable character, Diwan Kaura Mal, a Hindu figure in the narrative who works under Mir Manu, the Muslim governor of Lahore, exemplifies this perspective. Diwan Kaura Mal recognizes the need for reconciliation and peace between Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims to ensure survival

during attacks by Ahmed Shah Durrani.¹ He advocates for setting aside religious differences for the sake of regional identity, highlighting the significance attributed to regional identity over religious identity during times of turmoil and upheaval and this scenario is a historical reality too. These novels also seem to have particular utility in defining a Sikh homeland (that is, the Punjab) as well as particular notions of Sikh nationhood. The translations are replete with references to the Punjab as ‘my country’ (*desh*) and fellow Sikhs (*qaum*) as ‘countrymen’²

In conclusion, both “Heer-Ranjha” and “Sundri” provide insightful representations of social classes and power dynamics within Punjabi society, each within its own political context. These literary works delve into the struggles, conflicts, and power imbalances experienced by various social groups. While “Heer-Ranjha” primarily focuses on familial and religious power dynamics, “Sundri” explores the importance of regional identity and the side-lining of religious identity in the face of external threats. These narratives offer valuable insights into the historical context and complexities of power relations within the Punjab region.

3.Exploring the reception and impact of these narratives

“Heer-Ranjha” has left a profound and lasting impact on cultural and societal perceptions of identity, particularly in Punjabi literature and culture. The tomb of Heer and Ranjha stands as a revered pilgrimage site, embodying their elevated status in Punjabi folklore



¹ Bhai Vir Singh, “Sundri,” translated by Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani, New Edition: 2009, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi, p. 68.

² Gurpreet Bal, “Construction of Gender and Religious Identities in the First Punjabi Novel ‘Sundari’.” Economic and Political Weekly, 3528-3534, 2006, p. 3530.

and symbolizing the power of their love. The tomb, located in Jhang city in Punjab, attracts hundreds of visitors daily, who come with hopes and desires, seeking solace and blessings from the legendary couple. Waris Shah's *qissa* played a pivotal role in popularizing Heer and Ranjha's tale and their tomb. From the personal experience of Sidra Jamil, a Pakistani traveller, it is known that the physical space surrounding the tomb reflects the significance of Heer and Ranjha's love story.¹ Vendors gather near the tomb, selling various items such as threads, rings, bangles, and amulets, all believed to possess mystical powers and blessings. Performers sing Waris Shah's epic "Heer" while playing instruments, creating an atmosphere charged with cultural and spiritual significance. The entrance to the tomb is marked by a tile inscription, acknowledging it as the resting place of the true lovers Heer and Ranjha. The alleged miraculous roof of the tomb adds to its mystique, with conflicting narratives adding to the folklore and spiritual aura surrounding the site. Some believe that rain does not fall through the open dome as a sign of God's blessing upon the graves, while others claim that rain does fall inside, creating an atmosphere of awe and wonder.

Rituals and customs associated with the tomb reflect the deep-rooted beliefs and desires of the visitors. Unmarried girls tie their bangles to poles near the grave, hoping for an early marriage and seeking the blessings of Heer and Ranjha. Inside the tomb, a corner is designated for burning incense and lighting diya (small oil lamps) to fulfill wishes and prayers. Devotees often visit on Thursday nights, considered special in Sufism, and participate in distributing food items among the faithful, creating a sense of community and shared devotion.

The construction of the tomb and the role of Mian Fazal Elahi Ranjha as its caretaker highlight the veneration and admiration that Heer and Ranjha hold in the hearts of the people.² The location of the tomb in Jhang city further solidifies its connection to the region where the *qissa* of Heer-Ranjha is deeply rooted. It serves as a physical testament to the enduring legacy of the lovers and their profound impact on the local culture and identity.

In addition to its cultural significance, "Heer-Ranjha" has played a pivotal role in shaping Punjabi identity, even during the colonial period. According to Farina Mir, despite the British promotion of Urdu as the state language, "Heer-Ranjha" continued to be hailed as a seminal text for Punjabis. An anecdote highlights the reverence and value placed on the text as a symbol of Punjabi identity and resistance against colonial rule. It is said that during the colonial era, a Punjabi revolutionary refused to take an oath on any book except "Heer" during his trial for the murder of a former British governor of Punjab, demonstrating the profound significance and cultural relevance of the tale.³

The partition of India in 1947 marked a tumultuous period in history, and Amrita Pritam, a renowned Punjabi writer and poet, skillfully drew upon the enduring tale of Heer and

¹ Sidra Jamil, "The Tomb of Heer Ranjha, Jhang," Youlin Magazine, posted on September 04, 2018, <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/article/the-tomb-of-heer-ranjha-jhang/MTU2OA==>

² Ibid.

³ Anshu Malhotra and Farina Mir, eds., Punjab Reconsidered: History, Culture, and Practice (Delhi: Oxford Academic, 2012), online edition, accessed September 20, 2012, p. 116.

Ranjha to reflect on the social realities of the partition in her poem “Ajj Aakhaan Waris Shah Nu” (Today, I Call Upon Waris Shah).¹ By interweaving the past and the present, Pritam captured the collective history of pain and suffering, highlighting the impact of the partition on Punjab’s cultural life. In her poem, Pritam invoked Waris Shah, the poet who penned the epic “Heer,” as a figure who could comprehend the pain and anguish of the women of Punjab. By establishing this connection to “Heer-Ranjha,” Pritam offered a poignant reflection on the societal context of the partition and the construction of identities in Punjabi culture.

Amrita Pritam’s heartfelt plea to Waris Shah in her poem “Ajj Aakhaan Waris Shah Nu” symbolized her longing for a voice that could effectively express the profound suffering experienced during the partition, much like Waris Shah did for Heer in his iconic work. Pritam employed this connection to emphasize the shared experiences of pain among the women of Punjab, who yearned for a voice that could understand and express their anguish.

Through the verses of the poem, Pritam vividly depicted the devastating aftermath of the partition. The land of Punjab was portrayed as marred by violence and loss, with bodies strewn across village squares and rivers tainted with blood. The imagery of broken melodies and severed threads symbolized the rupture of love, harmony, and cultural continuity that occurred during this tumultuous period. By referencing the bansuri, a musical instrument played by Ranjha in the *qissa*, Pritam highlighted the shattered cultural heritage and the loss of artistic expression resulting from the partition. This served as a metaphor for the broader impact on Punjabi society, where shared narratives and traditions that once bound communities together were fragmented and forgotten.

The tale of Heer-Ranjha has continued to resonate through various mediums, including movies and songs, in independent India. Cinematic adaptations have helped to keep the essence of the *qissa* alive and accessible to new generations, contributing to its continued popularity and cultural significance. Notable examples include songs like “*Heer Aakhdi Jogia Ve Jhoot Bolle*” (Heer speaks, O Jogia, you speak lies) sung by Asa Singh Mastana.² This song captures a moment in the narrative where Ranjha, disguised as a wandering *jogi* (ascetic), encounters Heer and claims to possess the power to reunite her with her lost love. In response, Heer expresses her skepticism, stating that his words are untrue and that she has searched far and wide but found no one who can accomplish such a reunion. She then places her faith in the divine power, questioning when the true God will bring back her lost lover. Heer’s words convey her longing, her unwavering faith in divine intervention, and her desire to find a true companion who understands the depths of her love and longing. The verse has been preserved in folk songs and Sufi poetry, beautifully conveying Heer’s longing and her faith in the divine to reunite her with her beloved. Another song is “*Heere Ni Ranjha Jogi Ho Gaya*” (Oh Heer, Ranjha has

¹ Lyrics and English Translation of ‘Aj Aakhan Waris Nu’,” Social Village,

<https://www.socialvillage.in/resources/19301-lyrics-english-translation-aj-aakhan-waris>

² Verse – ‘It is not true, Jogi; parted friends cannot be reunited. I have searched far and wide but have found no one who can accomplish that. Tell me when the true God will bring back the lover I have lost. If anybody can remove the pain in my heart he may make shoes of my flesh. Oh poet Waris Shah! If I hear that my lover is returning, I will offer sweet cakes and light my lamps with rich butter for oil.’

become a *jogi*) by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. The phrase signifies a transformative moment in the narrative where Ranjha, the protagonist, embraces the life of a wandering jogi (ascetic) as a means of seeking spiritual enlightenment and detachment from worldly desires. By utilizing verse and dilemmas faced by the characters in the *qissa*, these songs resonate with audiences and keep the tale relevant in contemporary times.

These songs, along with numerous others, continue to be created, reaffirming the enduring popularity of Heer-Ranjha and its significance in contemporary culture. By incorporating elements of the *qissa* into their lyrics, musicians and artists keep the tale alive, contributing to the formation of collective memories and cultural identity.

“Heer-Ranjha” holds a special place in the hearts of people, who perceive it as a timeless symbol of love and passion. The tale resonates deeply with individuals, serving as a powerful reflection of their own romantic aspirations and challenges. It has become an enduring source of inspiration and a means of identification for countless people. The story’s timeless themes and characters evoke a sense of connection and understanding, allowing individuals to find echoes of their own experiences within the narrative. As a result, Heer-Ranjha has not only captivated audiences throughout history but continues to be cherished as a source of inspiration and a symbol of love and resilience.

Now, let’s move our discussion to the other text. The novel “Sundri” by Bhai Vir Singh has garnered considerable attention and acclaim, both in India and internationally. Its cultural significance and resonance have led to its adaptation in various forms, such as movies, comics, musical compositions, and dramatic presentations, which have enabled it to reach diverse audiences. These adaptations have piqued my academic interest in understanding the reception of Bhai Vir Singh’s work.

One notable adaptation is the animated movie titled “Sundri: The Brave Kaur,” produced by the Vismaad Video Team (Singapore).¹ Comprising Sukhwinder Singh, Navnit Singh, and Bakhtavar Singh, this team aimed to create animated movies based on Sikh history. The release of “Sundri” generated excitement and interest within the Sikh community. Inni Kaur, a Punjabi author and Creative Director at the Sikh Research Institute (SikhRI), shared her insightful experience of watching the movie in Stamford.² The Majestic Theatre served as the venue for the screening, attracting a diverse audience comprising children, parents, grandparents, and *Gurdwara granthis* (Sikh religious leaders). The film particularly resonated with the children, who were completely engrossed in the storyline and connected deeply with the characters.

Throughout the movie, the children displayed a range of emotions, showing empathy for the protagonists and admiration for the bravery and resilience of the Sikh characters. The audience as a whole responded enthusiastically to scenes portraying courage and resistance against captors, cheering and applauding in support. These reactions indicated the children’s profound understanding of Sikh history and values, including the significance of unshorn hair and the remarkable courage exhibited by Sikhs in the past.³

¹ “Sundri the movie.” SikhiWiki. Available at:
https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sundri_the_movie

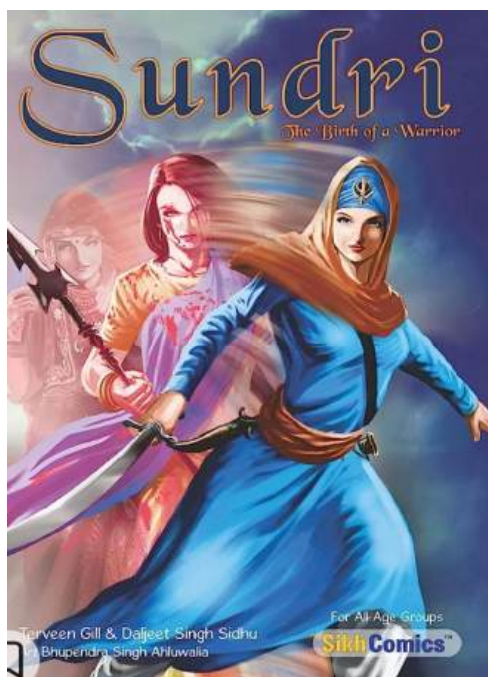
² Inni Kaur, “Sundri: The Brave Kaur – A Must See Film!” SikhNet. October 3, 2008. Available at: <https://www.sikhnet.com/people/sundri-brave-kaur-must-see-film>

³ Ibid.

The impact of the movie extended beyond mere entertainment, as it sparked meaningful conversations and inquiries among young viewers. It served as a catalyst for exploring Sikh history, culture, and values, prompting children to seek further knowledge and engage in discussions with their families and peers. The movie left a profound and lasting impression, being described by some as not only entertaining but also educational and inspiring.¹

Inni Kaur's account emphasizes the movie's ability to engage and educate the audience, especially the younger generation, about Sikh history, values, and the stories of remarkable Sikh individuals. It highlights the film's power to create empathy, foster pride, and stimulate curiosity, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Sikh heritage.

The comic adaptation titled "Sundri: The Birth of a Warrior" by Terveen Gill, published by Gyan Khand Media in 2020, has further extended the reach of the novel's narrative.²



Through illustrations and storytelling, the comic allows readers to engage with Sundri's story in a visually captivating manner. The cover image, depicting Sundri's transformation from a fragile bride to a strong Sikhni, effectively conveys the central theme of empowerment and resilience. This comic adaptation has played a significant role in popularizing the novel's narrative among a wider audience, particularly those inclined towards visual storytelling mediums.

¹ Ibid.

² "Sundri: The Birth of a Warrior (Sikh Comics)", Amazon.in. Available at: <https://www.amazon.in/Sundri-Birth-Warrior-Sikh-Comics/dp/9382887504>

Another noteworthy adaptation is the musical composition “Meri khidi rahe gulzar,” dedicated to the novel “Sundri” and presented by Kewal Dhaliwal.¹ This composition has emerged as a significant element in the reception of the novel. Staged at Punjab Natshala in Amritsar, the composition provides a platform for the audience to experience Sundri’s story through a unique and captivating musical journey. By blending music, lyrics, and storytelling, the composition creates a multidimensional experience, stimulating the senses and emotions of the audience. The musical adaptation also pays tribute to Bhai Vir Singh, honoring his literary contributions and celebrating his profound impact on Punjabi literature and Sikh culture not only in Amritsar but in Patiala and New Delhi too.

Additionally, the dramatization of “Sundri” by the Bhai Vir Singh Chair at Punjabi University, Patiala, in collaboration with Sarthak Rangmanch, in 2021, has expanded the reception of the novel within academic and theatrical circles.² This dramatic presentation, showcased at the university and made available on YouTube with English subtitles, aims to engage a wider range of audiences and promote accessibility. By bringing Bhai Vir Singh’s novel to life on stage, the adaptation provides a visually captivating and dynamic experience, allowing viewers to delve into the narrative’s themes and characters in a unique manner.

In times of adversity, such as during the challenging periods of 1985 and the aftermath of 9/11, the reinvocation of the novel “Sundri” gained added significance. Its portrayal of struggle, honor, and the strength of religious beliefs resonated with Sikhs facing adversity, serving as a reminder of the challenges the Sikh community had historically overcome and providing inspiration and solidarity. It fostered a sense of community and resilience, reinforcing the values of courage, compassion, and perseverance central to Sikhism.³

Furthermore, the availability of the story of “Sundri” to children serves a purpose. It introduces younger generations to the rich cultural heritage and history of the Sikh community. By presenting the story in an accessible format for children, it allows them to engage with the narrative, develop a sense of pride and identity, and learn valuable lessons of courage, resilience, and standing up for one’s beliefs from an early age.

In conclusion, the enduring resonance of both “Heer-Ranjha” and “Sundri” speaks to their profound impact on audiences, fostering connections, inspiring resilience, and imparting valuable lessons. These timeless narratives hold a significant place in literature and culture, shaping the identities of readers and viewers in today’s world. Their ability to captivate diverse audiences reaffirms their status as cultural and literary treasures, influencing how individuals perceive and relate to their own identities. The reception of these texts, even in contemporary times, showcases their lasting significance and their ongoing role in shaping the cultural landscape.

¹ Bhai Vir Singh’s literature presented through a musical composition, The Tribune, February 26, 2015, 12:20 AM, Available at: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/archive/amritsar/article-46866>

² Sundri (Cine-Play), YouTube video, posted by Sarthak Rangmanch, produced by Bhai Vir Singh Chair, Punjabi University Patiala, Available at: <https://youtu.be/Fn4K5vN8AdY>

³ Anshu Malhotra and Anne Murphy, eds., Bhai Vir Singh (1872–1957): Religious and Literary Modernities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Indian Punjab (1st ed., Routledge, 2023). P. 277.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has examined the construction of identity in the 18th century Punjab through the lens of two Punjabi literary works: Heer-Ranjha and Sundri. By analysing the gendered dimensions of individual experiences, the intersections of religion and identity, the role of region and cultural practices, and the influence of the author and the reception of these works, we have gained insights into the complexities of identity formation during this time period.

The findings of this paper underscore the significance of gender in shaping individual experiences and societal expectations. The portrayal of women as objects of desire, the restrictions placed on their agency, and the challenges they face in asserting their autonomy highlight the gendered power dynamics of the era.

Furthermore, religion emerges as a key factor in identity construction, with characters' religious beliefs and practices influencing their sense of self and their interactions with others. The exploration of Sikhism in Sundri and the religious tensions depicted in Heer-Ranjha shed light on the intricate relationship between religion and identity in 18th century Punjab.

The paper also acknowledges the role of region and cultural practices in shaping identity. The specific customs, traditions, and dialects portrayed in the works contribute to the distinctiveness of regional identities within Punjab, further emphasizing the complexity of identity formation.

Moreover, the influence of the author and the reception of these literary works cannot be overlooked. The writings of Waris Shah and Bhai Vir Singh have had a lasting impact on Punjabi literature and cultural discourse, shaping collective identity and contributing to the preservation of Punjabi heritage.

Overall, this paper contributes to a broader understanding of how literature reflects and influences identity formation. It highlights the importance of gender, religion, and region in shaping individual and collective identities in 18th century Punjab. By exploring the nuances of identity construction in Heer-Ranjha and Sundri, we gain valuable insights into the socio-cultural context of the time and the enduring significance of these texts in Punjabi literature and cultural discourse.

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{D/33-16}

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THE ROLE OF PERSIAN-ARABIC LANGUAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN INDIA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

Abstract: The history of Islamic education in India is deeply intertwined with the development of the Persian-Arabic linguistic tradition. The Persian and Arabic languages played a pivotal role in the establishment and development of Islamic learning across the subcontinent, serving as the primary instruments through which the Qur'ân, Hadith, and the vast corpus of classical Islamic knowledge were studied and transmitted. This paper examines the crucial role of these languages in shaping the intellectual, cultural, and religious fabric of Indian Muslim society.

Through an analytical approach, the study highlights that Arabic, as the language of divine revelation and the foundational Islamic sciences, provided the theological and doctrinal basis of education. Persian, meanwhile, functioned as the principal medium of administration, literature, and scholarly discourse for several centuries. The paper further explores the establishment of madrasas, the translation movements, and the contributions of scholars who successfully integrated Persian-Arabic linguistic traditions into the broader educational and intellectual framework of the region.

By analysing historical texts, institutional developments, and pedagogical practices, the study demonstrates that the Persian-Arabic linguistic tradition served not merely as a medium of instruction but also as a vital channel for cultural transmission, intellectual refinement, and socio-political influence. The findings suggest that this tradition continues to exert a lasting impact on contemporary Islamic education in India, embodying both its rich historical legacy and its enduring relevance in the modern context.

Keywords: Persian-Arabic Language, Islamic Education in India, Madrasas, Persian and Arabic Scholarship, Qur'ân and Hadith Studies, Indo-Islamic Intellectual Tradition, etc.

Introduction:

Islamic education in India represents a synthesis of religious learning, cultural transmission, and intellectual tradition, which has profoundly shaped the identity, social structure, and intellectual life of Indian Muslims for centuries. Language has always played a crucial role in the preservation and dissemination of knowledge, culture, and religious heritage. Within the broader framework of Islamic civilisation, Arabic holds a

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central position as the language of the Qur'ân, Hadith, jurisprudence, and theology, while Persian emerged as a significant medium for literary expression, administration, and scholarly discourse. Together, these two languages, commonly referred to as the *Persian-Arabic* tradition, formed a powerful linguistic foundation that guided the development of Islamic education across vast regions, including the Indian subcontinent.¹

In India, the advent and expansion of Islamic culture brought with it the widespread use of Arabic and Persian. Both languages assumed vital importance in educational and social life. Arabic served primarily as the medium for religious and theological studies, facilitating a deeper understanding of the Qur'ân, Hadith, and other branches of Islamic learning.² Persian, on the other hand, became the dominant language of administration, literature, and intellectual exchange. It effectively bridged the gap between religious scholarship and the cultural and social spheres of daily life. The integration of these two languages fostered the growth of *maktabs* (elementary schools), *madrasas* (institutions of higher religious learning), and other centres of scholarship, particularly during the periods of the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughal Empire, and thereafter.

This study explores how the Persian-Arabic linguistic tradition shaped Islamic education in India through its historical, cultural, and intellectual dimensions. By examining madrasa curricula, translation activities, and the contributions of eminent scholars, it highlights how Arabic and Persian functioned not merely as languages of communication but also as instruments for constructing identity, advancing knowledge, and promoting cultural synthesis. The study ultimately seeks to demonstrate that the legacy of the Persian-Arabic languages within Indian Islamic education is both historically profound and enduringly relevant, continuing to influence religious scholarship and cultural thought in contemporary times.

Description:

Arabic, the language of the Qur'ân and Islamic scholarship, and Persian, the language of administration and literature, together shaped the Persian-Arabic tradition in India. Arabic served mainly for religious sciences, theology, and jurisprudence, while Persian was used for governance, poetry, and intellectual life. This dual role gave the Persian-Arabic tradition a central place in the development of Muslim education in India. Madrasas taught Arabic texts for theology and Persian works for cultural and philosophical training. With royal patronage and translations, these languages expanded learning and linked India to the wider Islamic intellectual world.

The Development of Islamic Education and Intellectual Life in India

The development of Islamic education and intellectual life in India cannot be understood without recognizing the importance of the Persian-Arabic tradition. From the early medieval period until colonial times, Arabic and Persian were used not only for teaching religion but also for literature, culture, and political life. Together, they shaped a distinctive Indo-Islamic identity that deeply influenced education, literature, and society.

Arabic first entered India through trade and the arrival of scholars, saints, and merchants from West Asia. As Islam spread, Arabic gained special significance as the language of the Qur'ân, Hadith, and Islamic law.³ Persian, on the other hand, became prominent

during the rule of the Ghaznavids and the Delhi Sultans, reaching its peak under the Mughals, when it became the official language of administration, diplomacy, and royal culture. While Arabic was primarily associated with religion, Persian became the language of statecraft, and together they formed the foundation of Islamic education in India.

Arabic was central to religious studies. Madrasas and local schools taught subjects such as Qur'ânic sciences, theology, law, and philosophy in Arabic. Through this language, Indian scholars remained connected to the wider Muslim world. Thinkers like Shâh Walî Allâh Dihlawî (1703–1762) observed that most Indian Muslims of his time did not understand Arabic; therefore, he translated the Qur'ân into Persian to make it accessible to a broader audience. Waliullah himself authored around fifty-one works in both Persian and Arabic, highlighting that Persian continued to be an important scholarly language well into the eighteenth century.⁴

Persian, meanwhile, became the chief cultural and literary language of India for almost six centuries. It was used extensively for poetry, prose, historical writing, and courtly etiquette. Renowned writers such as Amîr Khusrau and Abû al-Faḍl combined Persian literary style with Indian themes, giving rise to a new Indo-Persian culture. Persian poetry, especially ghazals and masnavis, enriched Islamic literature in India and inspired local languages and traditions. Persian thus linked religious scholarship with cultural refinement and administration, serving as a bridge between spiritual learning and worldly affairs.⁵

This tradition had a profound impact on Indian languages. For example, Urdu developed from a synthesis of Persian, Arabic, and local dialects. Words, ideas, and literary forms from the Persian-Arabic tradition also entered Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, and other regional languages. Through translation and adaptation, Indian scholars spread Islamic knowledge in local forms, while simultaneously enriching indigenous literary traditions. This linguistic and cultural blending broadened the scope of education and literature across the subcontinent.

The Perso-Arabic tradition thus created a shared intellectual system that unified religion, literature, and culture. Arabic upheld Islamic faith and scholarship, while Persian fostered creativity, diplomacy, and cultural sophistication. Together, they formed the backbone of Islamic education in India. Even after Persian lost its position as the state language during colonial times, its influence persisted through Urdu and other South Asian literatures.

In conclusion, the Persian-Arabic tradition in India was far more than a linguistic legacy. It represented a dynamic exchange of ideas and culture that shaped Islamic education and literature for centuries, as Arabic and Persian combined to create a cultural synthesis that carried both religious knowledge and secular creativity. This cultural synthesis continues to influence South Asian identity, literature, and education today.

The Madrasa System and the Development of Islamic Education in India

The madrasa (Islamic school) system in India was not only a place for religious instruction but also an important centre for the spread of knowledge, literature, and intellectual thought.⁶ From the medieval period onward, madrasas became institutions

where students were trained not only in the Qur'ân, Hadith, and Islamic law, but also in subjects such as philosophy, history, literature, logic, and science. These institutions played a key role in shaping the intellectual life of the Muslim community and in connecting India with the broader Islamic world.

One of the most significant features of the madrasa system was its use of the Arabic and Persian languages. Arabic was mainly employed for religious and theological studies. As the language of the Qur'ân, Hadîth, and Fiqh (jurisprudence), it was essential for every student to attain proficiency in it. Persian, on the other hand, was not only the language of literature but also of administration, courtly culture, and poetry during the medieval period. In this way, madrasas helped students develop mastery over both Arabic and Persian, granting them access to a vast body of religious, cultural, and literary knowledge.

The madrasa system fostered an environment that encouraged literary creativity and intellectual discourse. Students were not merely required to memorize texts; they also studied poetry, prose, Persian-Arabic grammar, rhetoric, and logic. The famous *al-Dars al-Nizâmî* curriculum, introduced in the eighteenth century, included not only religious texts but also works on grammar, philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy.⁷ Through such a comprehensive curriculum, madrasas became centres of broad-based education, preparing students to engage with the intellectual debates of their time.

Many great scholars, poets, and historians of India were educated in madrasas. They produced valuable works in both Arabic and Persian, including commentaries on religious texts, collections of poetry, philosophical treatises, historical chronicles, and works on law. These writings not only served the Muslim community but also enriched Indian culture. The blending of local traditions with the Perso-Arabic intellectual heritage gave rise to a unique Indo-Islamic culture, which profoundly influenced literature, art, and education for centuries.

The role of madrasas extended far beyond the classroom. They became centres of cultural exchange, where scholars from different regions met, discussed, and shared ideas. In this way, Indian madrasas connected with other renowned centres of Islamic learning such as Baghdad, Cairo, and Bukhara. These intellectual exchanges allowed Indian scholars to remain part of the wider Islamic tradition of knowledge, while also contributing original insights and perspectives.

Madrasas also played an influential role in shaping the social and political life of India. Many of their graduates went on to serve in royal courts as judges, administrators, poets, and advisors to kings. Their proficiency in Arabic and Persian made them suitable for both religious and governmental positions. This close connection between education, literature, and governance illustrates how deeply the madrasa system was integrated with the broader cultural and political fabric of the country.

Equally important was the madrasa's contribution to the preservation and transmission of knowledge. At a time when printing was uncommon, these institutions trained students in manuscript copying, library maintenance, and the preservation of classical texts. Through such efforts, a vast corpus of Arabic and Persian literature was safeguarded and transmitted to future generations. Without the contributions of madrasas, much of this intellectual heritage might have been lost.

Even during the colonial period, when Persian declined due to the introduction of English, madrasas continued to serve as vibrant centres of learning. They emerged as symbols of cultural continuity and resistance, preserving the intellectual traditions of the Muslim community. By maintaining the study of Arabic and Persian, they ensured the continuity of Indo-Islamic scholarship and identity.

Thus, the madrasa system in India was far more than a network of religious schools. It was a centre of literary and intellectual development, where students were educated in both religious and secular disciplines. By promoting Arabic and Persian, madrasas contributed to the growth of literature, philosophy, and cultural exchange. Their graduates, poets, historians, philosophers, and administrators, left a lasting imprint on Indian society. The intellectual culture nurtured within these institutions played a central role in shaping Indo-Islamic civilization, and its influence continues to be felt in the educational and cultural traditions of South Asia today.

Translation and Adaptation of Texts:

Translation and adaptation of texts played a vital role in the growth of Islamic education and culture in India. Many Arabic and Persian works on religion, philosophy, history, and science were translated into local languages so that a wider audience could understand them. This process made Islamic knowledge accessible beyond the circle of scholars and helped connect ordinary people with new ideas.

One of the most significant outcomes of this translation activity was the rise of Urdu and other regional languages as media of learning. Religious texts such as the Qur'ân and Hadith were translated into regional languages and explained in simpler forms, enabling students and common people to engage with them more easily. At the same time, Persian and Arabic literary works, including prose and poetry, were adapted to suit the cultural background of India. This resulted in a creative fusion of Islamic thought and Indian traditions.

Adaptation was not limited to language alone; it also involved changes in style and content. Many scholars and writers modified stories, themes, and expressions to reflect Indian settings and experiences, while preserving the essence of the original works. Through this process, Islamic education became more localized, and literature gained new forms and meanings, enriching both Arabic-Persian and Indian traditions.

Thus, the translation and adaptation of texts served as a bridge between classical Islamic scholarship and local Indian culture. It made knowledge more accessible, spread Islamic learning to a broader audience, and at the same time enriched the literary and cultural heritage of India.

Prominent Scholars and Their Literary Contributions:

The Persian-Arabic tradition produced many scholars, poets, historians, philosophers, and religious thinkers whose works shaped education, literature, and culture in India and the wider Islamic world. Their writings not only preserved religious knowledge but also enriched literary expression, philosophy, and scientific thought. Some of the most influential figures include:

1. **Al-Farâbî (870–950 CE):** Abû Naşr Muḥammad Al-Farâbî was a renowned Muslim philosopher, Jurist, scientist, and music theorist of the Islamic Golden Age. He is designated as “Father of Islamic Neoplatonism” and the “Founder of Islamic Political Philosophy”. He is widely known as the “Second Master” after Aristotle for his deep engagement with Greek philosophy. His writings covered diverse fields such as logic, metaphysics, ethics, politics, and music. His contributions to music theory were groundbreaking and made him one of the earliest scholars to study the science of sound. Al-Farâbî wrote a book on music entitled *Kitâb al-Musîqâ al-Kabîr* (Grand Book of Music). In this book, he presents philosophical principles about music, its cosmic qualities, and its influences, and discusses the therapeutic effects of music on the soul. Al-Farâbî’s influence extended to later Muslim philosophers like Ibn Sina and reached medieval European thinkers. Living in cities like Baghdad, Aleppo, and Damascus, he became a key figure in shaping both Islamic and global intellectual heritage. He is remembered as one of the most significant philosophers of the medieval world.⁸

2. **Al-Bîrûnî (973–1050 CE):** Abû Rayḥân Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Al-Bîrûnî, known as al-Biruni, was a Muslim astronomer, mathematician, ethnographer, anthropologist, historian, and geographer of the Islamic Golden Age. He has been called variously “Father of Comparative Religion”, “Father of modern geodesy”, Founder of Indology, and the first anthropologist. He is often called one of the most brilliant minds of the Islamic Golden Age. Al-Bîrûnî wrote about many subjects, including astronomy, mathematics, geography, medicine, and history. He is especially famous for his studies on India, where he described Indian history, culture, religion, and sciences in his book *Kitâb al-Hind*. He measured the Earth’s circumference with surprising accuracy and made important observations about the solar and lunar eclipses. Al-Bîrûnî also explained the movement of planets and studied minerals and natural sciences. His works showed a strong love for knowledge, truth, and scientific observation. He influenced later scholars in both the Islamic world and Europe. Al-Bîrûnî is remembered as a universal genius who contributed greatly to human knowledge.⁹

3. **Al-Ghazâlî (1058–1111 CE):** Abû Ḥâmid Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazâlî was one of the most important Muslim scholars, philosophers, and theologians of the medieval period. He is often called *Hujja al-Islâm* (the Proof of Islam) for his great service to Islamic thought. Al-Ghazâlî wrote on philosophy, theology, law, and mysticism, seeking to bring harmony between reason and faith. His famous work, *Iḥyâ’ al-‘Ulûm al-Dîn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), became a classic in Islamic scholarship, combining deep spirituality with practical guidance for life. He criticized Greek-influenced philosophers in his book *Tahâfut al-Falâsifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), showing the limits of pure reason without revelation. Al-Ghazâlî also played a key role in shaping Sufism, giving it a strong foundation within orthodox Islam. His ideas influenced not only Muslim scholars but also Christian and Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages. Living in places like Baghdad and Tus, he became a guiding light for both intellectual and spiritual development. Al-Ghazâlî is remembered as one of the greatest thinkers who united philosophy, religion, and mysticism.¹⁰

4. **Firdawsî (940–1020 CE):** Abû al-Qasim Firdawsî was an eminent Persian poet who is best known for his monumental work *Shâhnâmah* (The Book of Kings). This book is considered the national epic of Iran. He was born in the year 940 CE in Tus. He devoted

more than three decades of his life to compiling and versifying ancient Persian myths, legends, and historical traditions into poetic form. His work preserved the Persian language and cultural identity at a time when Arabic influence was dominant. Through the *Shâhnâmah*, Firdawsî not only safeguarded Iran's pre-Islamic history but also enriched Persian literature with beauty, depth, and moral lessons. His poetry became a source of pride for Iranians and inspired later writers, scholars, and thinkers. Firdawsî passed away around 1020 CE, leaving behind a legacy that continues to shape Persian cultural and literary heritage.¹¹

5. Sa'adî Shîrâzî (1210–1291 CE): Sa'adî Shîrâzî, a celebrated Persian poet and writer of the 13th century, is remembered for his deep wisdom, humanism, and elegant literary style. Born in Shiraz around 1210 CE, he travelled widely across the Middle East and Asia, which gave him broad knowledge of cultures and human experiences. His two masterpieces, *Bûstân* (The Orchard) in poetry and *Gulistân* (The Rose Garden) in prose and poetry, are treasures of Persian literature that blend moral lessons, social criticism, and spiritual insight. Sa'adî's works highlight values such as justice, compassion, humility, and the importance of human dignity. His simple yet profound style made his writings accessible to both scholars and common people. Sa'adî's thoughts on humanity and ethics still resonate globally, and his famous lines about human solidarity are inscribed at the United Nations building, symbolizing his timeless contribution.¹²

6. Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî (1207–1273 CE): Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî, was a prominent Persian poet and Sufi mystic. He is one of the most influential spiritual figures in world literature. Born in Balkh (present-day Afghanistan) in 1207 CE and later settling in Konya (present-day Turkey), Rûmî lived during a time of social and political upheaval, which deeply shaped his thought. His meeting with the mystic Shams of Tabriz transformed his life, inspiring his poetry and spiritual vision. Rumi's greatest work, the *Mathnawî*, is often called the "Qur'ân in Persian" for its blend of stories, parables, and spiritual teachings. His writings emphasize love, unity, tolerance, and the search for divine truth beyond religious and cultural boundaries. Rûmî's simple yet profound verses have transcended time and geography, making him one of the most widely read poets in the world today. His legacy continues to guide readers toward inner peace and universal love.¹³

7. Amîr Khasraw (1253–1325 CE): Amîr Khasraw, also known as Abû al-Hasan Yamîn al-Dîn Khasraw was an Indian Sufi singer, musician, poet, and scholar who flourished under the Delhi Sultanate. He is often called the *Tuti-e-Hind* (Parrot of India) for his brilliance in Persian and Hindavi poetry. Born in 1253 CE in Patiyali (Now in Uttar Pradesh, India), he lived during the Delhi Sultanate and served in the courts of several rulers. Khasraw's works reflect themes of love, devotion, philosophy, and the blending of Persian and Indian cultural traditions. He is credited with enriching Indian literature by introducing Persian styles into local languages and is regarded as a pioneer of early Urdu. As a devoted disciple of the Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya, his poetry carries a deep spiritual essence. Khasraw also made lasting contributions to Indian music, being associated with innovations like Qawâlî and new ragas. He is also credited with founding the *Khaiz-e-Bari*, a Persian-Hindi dictionary. His legacy symbolizes cultural harmony, making him one of the most influential literary and artistic figures of medieval India.¹⁴

8. **Ibn Khaldûn** (1332–1406 CE): Ibn Khaldûn, the 14th-century Arab historian, philosopher, and social thinker, is regarded as one of the founders of modern social sciences. Born in Tunis in 1332 CE, he served as a scholar, judge, and statesman in North Africa and Andalusia. His most famous work, the *Muqaddimah* (Introduction), laid the foundation for sociology, economics, political science, and historiography. In it, he analysed the rise and fall of civilizations, the role of economy and environment in shaping societies, and the cycles of dynasties. Ibn Khaldûn stressed the importance of critical thinking, rejecting blind imitation in historical writing. Passing away in 1406 CE, Ibn Khaldûn left a legacy that continues to influence modern scholarship across many disciplines.¹⁵

Cultural and Literary Impact:

The cultural and literary impact of Perso-Arabic tradition in India was both deep and far-reaching. It is not only shaped the way in which knowledge was preserved and transmitted but also influenced the social, literary, and cultural life of the subcontinent for centuries. The introduction of Arabic and Persian as languages of learning, religion, and administration created a new intellectual and cultural environment where local and foreign traditions blended to form a distinct Indo-Islamic identity.

Persian quickly became the language of governance and high culture during the Delhi Sultanate and later under the Mughal Empire. It was used in royal courts, administrative records, diplomacy, and literary expression. Histories, biographies, and official documents were written in Persian, which gave the language a special prestige.¹⁶ Alongside official usage, Persian also flourished as a language of poetry and storytelling. Great poets such as Amir Khusrau enriched Indo-Persian literature by combining Persian literary styles with local Indian themes, images, and emotions. This cultural exchange resulted in a unique form of literature that carried the refinement of Persian tradition while remaining rooted in Indian society.

Arabic, on the other hand, was not as widely used in the royal courts, but it maintained its authority as the language of religion and scholarship. It remained central to Islamic theology, law, and philosophy, and was the primary language for the study of the Qur'ân, Hadith, and other religious sciences.¹⁷ Many Indian scholars wrote important works in Arabic, which linked Indian intellectual life with the wider Muslim world. This created a strong network of knowledge that connected India with centres of learning in the Middle East and Central Asia.

The influence of the Persian-Arabic tradition also extended into the development of vernacular languages in India. Urdu emerged as a product of the interaction between Persian, Arabic, and local Indian languages. It soon became not only a spoken language but also a rich medium for poetry and literature. The *ghazal*, *mathnawî*, and *qasîda*, forms that came from Persian, were adapted into Urdu and gave rise to a new wave of South Asian literary culture. Over time, this literary tradition influenced Indian languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Gujarati, Telugu and Punjabi etc. and these Indian languages have borrowed a great number of Persian-Arabic words and phrases that they have been using in the Indian society.¹⁸

Beyond literature, the Persian-Arabic impact could also be seen in art, architecture, and aesthetics. Calligraphy in Arabic and Persian became a highly respected art form, often

used to decorate mosques, tombs, and palaces. Manuscripts of religious and literary texts were copied with beautiful script and illuminated with rich designs. Persian inscriptions and verses on Mughal buildings, such as the Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Jama Masjid of Delhi, etc., are reminders of the lasting cultural presence of this tradition.

The role of Persian poetry was equally important in Sufi traditions. Many Sufi saints in India used Persian language as their medium to express spiritual truths, ethical teachings, and mystical experiences. Their verses were recited in gatherings and sung in musical forms, making Persian poetry accessible even to those who were not formally educated. This brought the influence of the Persian-Arabic tradition closer to ordinary people and made it an important part of India's cultural life.

Thus, the cultural and literary impact of Perso-Arabic in India went far beyond language. It shaped education, enriched literature, influenced local languages, and contributed to art, architecture, and spiritual life. By connecting India to the wider Islamic world while also blending with local traditions, the Perso-Arabic legacy created a cultural synthesis that continues to influence South Asian literature and thought even today.

Findings:

The analytical study on *The Role of the Persian-Arabic Language in the Development of Islamic Education in India* reveals that the intertwined use of Arabic and Persian established a rich intellectual and cultural tradition that profoundly shaped Islamic education in the Indian subcontinent. The two languages functioned as complementary pillars within the educational system, each serving a distinct yet mutually reinforcing purpose. Arabic, as the language of divine revelation, theology, jurisprudence, and the classical sciences, provided the doctrinal and theological foundation of learning. Its mastery was indispensable for the study of the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic law, ensuring that students acquired a direct understanding of the sacred texts and the principles of Islamic thought. Persian, in contrast, functioned as the primary medium for literature, administration, and scholarly exchange, bridging religious scholarship with broader social and cultural life. This dual linguistic framework gave Islamic education in India its distinctive character and ensured the preservation and transmission of both sacred and intellectual knowledge.

The establishment of *maktabs* (elementary schools) and *madrasas* (centres of higher Islamic learning) during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods institutionalised this Persian-Arabic educational model. Within these institutions, Arabic served as the principal language of religious instruction, while Persian facilitated cultural communication, literary sophistication, and administrative competence. This integration of the two languages produced generations of scholars who were equally proficient in the spiritual and intellectual dimensions of learning. Moreover, the bilingual tradition encouraged extensive translation movements, through which Arabic works were rendered into Persian and vice versa, thus expanding the reach of classical Islamic philosophy, science, and literature. This process of translation not only enhanced the accessibility of knowledge but also fostered an atmosphere of intellectual exchange that linked India to the broader Islamic world.

The study further demonstrates that the interaction of Persian and Arabic helped forge a distinctive Indo-Islamic identity, uniting theological precision with literary elegance. While Arabic maintained its sacred authority as the language of revelation, Persian became the vehicle of refinement, art, and poetry. Together, they cultivated an intellectual climate in which faith and reason coexisted harmoniously. The influence of this linguistic synthesis extended beyond education, shaping the social, political, and artistic life of Muslim India. Persian was the language of courtly culture, diplomacy, and governance, while Arabic served as the moral compass of society through its association with religious scholarship. This duality not only strengthened the cohesion of the Muslim community but also integrated Islamic learning into the broader cultural fabric of India.

The continuity of the Persian-Arabic legacy is also evident in modern India. Despite the decline of Persian as an administrative language under colonial rule, its literary and scholarly influence persists in contemporary education and cultural thought. Arabic, meanwhile, remains central to the study of Islamic sciences, continuing to form the basis of curricula in madrasas and Islamic universities across the country. Many educational institutions today still draw inspiration from this dual heritage, reflecting the enduring relevance of the Persian-Arabic linguistic framework. Furthermore, this tradition acted as a catalyst for intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as Persian literature, with its universal themes of love, justice, and spirituality, transcended religious boundaries and appealed to both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences. Arabic, by contrast, maintained India's intellectual and spiritual connection with the wider Islamic world, fostering dialogue, scholarship, and mutual understanding.

In conclusion, the findings of this study confirm that the Persian-Arabic linguistic tradition formed the cornerstone of Islamic education in India, shaping its theological, literary, and cultural dimensions. The integration of Arabic and Persian created an enduring intellectual legacy that cultivated learning, inspired moral thought, and connected Indian Muslims to a wider global heritage. This tradition ensured the continuity of Islamic civilisation in India, preserving its values and enriching its educational and cultural discourse for centuries. Even today, its influence can be seen in the linguistic, philosophical, and spiritual life of Indian Islam, standing as a testament to the unifying power of language as both a medium of knowledge and a vessel of civilisational continuity.

Conclusion:

The study of *The Role of the Persian-Arabic Language in the Development of Islamic Education in India* reveals that the intertwining of Arabic and Persian created a rich and enduring intellectual tradition that profoundly influenced the educational, cultural, and spiritual landscape of Indian Islam. The two languages complemented one another, Arabic providing the divine, theological, and juridical foundation through the Qur'ân, Hadith, and the classical sciences, while Persian served as the language of cultural refinement, administration, poetry, and scholarly communication. Together, they shaped a bilingual intellectual heritage that not only preserved Islamic knowledge but also adapted it to the social and cultural realities of the Indian subcontinent.

From the establishment of *maktabs* and *madrasas* to the flourishing of translation movements and literary production, the Perso-Arabic linguistic synthesis became the vehicle through which Islamic learning was institutionalised and transmitted across generations. Scholars, poets, and theologians utilised both languages to interpret, communicate, and expand upon Islamic thought, thereby creating a uniquely Indian expression of Islamic civilisation. The Delhi Sultanate and Mughal periods witnessed this synthesis at its height, as Persian became the language of governance and scholarship, while Arabic maintained its sanctity as the language of faith and divine revelation.

The influence of the Persian-Arabic linguistic tradition extended far beyond formal education. It shaped social values, artistic expression, and the moral imagination of Indian Muslims, linking the intellectual life of India with the broader Islamic world. Even after the decline of Persian as an administrative language under colonial rule, its cultural and literary legacy continued to enrich the educational and intellectual fabric of Indian Muslim society. Arabic, meanwhile, retained its central place in religious instruction and remains vital to the study of Islam to this day.

In short, the Persian-Arabic tradition in India was not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a civilisational force. It nurtured a holistic model of education that united faith and reason, language and literature, and spirituality and scholarship. The enduring presence of this tradition in contemporary madrasas and academic institutions demonstrates its lasting relevance. As modern India continues to engage with questions of cultural identity and intellectual heritage, the Persian-Arabic contribution to Islamic education stands as a testament to the historical depth, adaptability, and unity of Islamic thought in the subcontinent. It remains an essential bridge between the classical and the modern, the sacred and the intellectual, reminding us that language is not only a medium of communication but also a vessel of continuity, identity, and civilisation.

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MAHATMA GANDHI AND SUFISM: ETHICAL PARALLELS IN THE PURSUIT OF SOCIAL HARMONY

Abstract

The social harmony has been handled as an institutional or administrative by-product that ignores its ethical and moral basis. Social harmony is conceptualised in the paper as an ethical practise-political practise by the comparative analysis of the moral philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and the Sufi ethical traditions. Based on the Gandhian ideas of truth, non-violence, restraint, and moral community, and Sufi orientations to love, self-purification, humility, and moral universalism, the paper has shown that they overlap on how they solve conflict and coexist in plural societies. The paper studies that both traditions find the sources of social harmony in the disciplined self-transformation of an ethical individual, not use of the repressive power or the structure of institutions, even though no effort to build theological synthesis or historical derivation. Foregrounding ethics as a constitutive aspect of politics the analysis has a role to play in the contemporary discussions on pluralism, interfaith, and moral responsibility, providing a normative approach to reevaluating social harmony as a fragile yet possible moral accomplishment.

Keywords:

Social harmony, Gandhian ethics, Sufism, ethical politics, moral self-transformation

1. Introduction: Social Harmony as an Ethical–Political Problem

Social harmony is a concept mostly used in politics as a state of stability, co-existence, or social order. In policy orient approaches, it is commonly simplified to the variety in the management in terms of institutional organisations, legal protection, or administrative measures. This and similar kinds of approaches obscure, however, a more significant and challenging aspect of harmony, which regards it as an ethical-political issue concerned with the formation of moral self, with the way of approaching the other and regulating conflict without the need to engage in domination and violence. In this respect the absence of conflict and harmony is not exactly linked or identical but rather a normative practice where people and communities develop restraint, compassion and responsibility in the context of plural social orders.

This social concept of harmony has been put forward in a particularly strident form in two separate but historically overlapping traditions; moral politics of Mahatma Gandhi and the Sufi ethical imagination of Islam. The two traditions take their origin in various

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civilisational, theological, and historical settings, but find their point of contact in the fact that both demand social peace which cannot be guaranteed only by the external force or coercion. Rather, harmony basing is on self-transformation, desire discipline, nurturing love, humility and moral accountability to others (Gandhi, 2010; Schimmel, 1975; Ernst, 2011). This coincidence is particularly noteworthy in South Asia, where historically both Gandhian political ethics and Sufi moral practises influenced the life of the population, the relations between religions, ethical coexistence (Eaton, 1993; Metcalf, 2009).

Most of the contemporary political thought especially in its liberal and statist forms tends to divide the two aspects of ethics and politics, making the moral transformation a prerogative of the private and the maintaining of social order a prerogative of the institutions and legislations. The criticism of modern civilisation practised by Gandhi is a direct challenge to this distinction. The political institutions cannot provide harmony in his opinion without ethical self-restraint, truthfulness, and non-violence permeate at the individual level (Gandhi, 2010). At the same time, traditions of Sufism stress the importance of the fact that social peace can never be achieved without inner cleansing (tazkiyah), annihilation of ego, and development of love (ishq) beyond strict barriers of self-identification (Chittick, 1983; Green, 2012). Ethics in both traditions is not peripheral to politics but it is constitutive of politics.

In spite of this ethical point of converging, Gandhi and Sufism are not often initiated into durable comparative discourse in the political theory or ethics. Gandhi is frequently discussed in relation to nationalism, anti-colonialism, or non-violence as a political approach, and the Sufism is often viewed as an autonomous and mystical, social or political beliefs, that is not supported by political and social issues (Bilgrami, 2002; Ridgeon, 2020). Compartmentalisation of this nature restricts the knowledge of how moral traditions make themselves felt in the society and make it harmonious beyond the institutions. In South Asia, recent research on Sufism started to restore its social and ethical aspects, as it developed to generate pluralism, tolerance, and community of moral values (Singh and Gaur, 2023; Khan, 2022). On the same note, modern conceptualizations of Gandhi give more and more prominence to his applicability as a moral, ethical theorist and less as a political figure (Jahanbegloo, 2018).

The present paper holds that a comparative moral interpretation of the Gandhian philosophy and Sufi ethics can present a more conceptual way of conceptualising the concept of social harmony as an ethico-political practise. Instead of coming up with a theological synthesis or direct historical influence, the work takes the comparative framework with regard to parallels or resonances and limitations. The main argument is that the two camps find the roots of harmony in moral discipline, non-belittling and non-violent approach to conflict, and thus disturbs the instrumental and power oriented approaches to social order.

The qualitative, interpretive method is used to approach the paper methodologically, basing on the proximity methods of the text with the writings of Gandhian and other knowledgeable scholarship on the topic of Sufism, Islamic philosophy, and religious life of South Asian. Placing the two traditions in the context of their ethical terms and socio-

political situations, the research aims at contributing to the comparative political ethics, as well as to the current discussions about social peace in a plural society. By thus doing it recovers ethics not as an abstract ideal but as a lived and contested practise as a central feature of political life.

2. Conceptual Framework: Ethics, Spirituality, and Social Harmony

To have a significant involvement of social harmony, it is important that there is a conceptual clarity of how ethics, spirituality and politics are related. In a lot of contemporary political philosophy, harmony is regarded as a result of an institutional design or a legal order, whereas ethics and spirituality are relegated to the space of the personal world. A compartmentalisation of this nature ignores the traditions according to which moral self-cultivation, spiritual discipline is seen as the source of public life. The paper will take a frame work of approaching social harmony as an ethical-political state that is maintained by practising self-restraint, responsibility, and care in relation as opposed to coercion and strictly procedural governance.

The ethic in such a situation would not be treated as an abstract network of rules governed by moral principles, but rather as a form of imprisonment behaviour aimed at controlling the desires, forces and struggles. One of the main arguments in the writings of Gandhi is not to make a distinction between ethical life and political action because he believes that social order based on violence or moral apathy will not last long (Gandhi, 2010). To Gandhi, the ethical discipline identity- truthfulness, non-violence, simplicity and self-control cannot be separated with the seeking of justice and harmony. Nomads Politics which is not linked to its ethical aspects turns into a power tool instead of a tool of moral development of the population (Bilgrami, 2002; Jahanbegloo, 2018). This conception offers a critical perspective regarding a redefinition of harmony as not a passive coexistence or harmony as an active moral accomplishment.

Spirituality in this context can be seen as dogma, nor as inwards mysticism in lack of social realities. Rather, it suggests inner change processes that define external behaviour and social interactions. The traditions of Sufi in Islam are standard examples of such orientation, which focuses on the cleansing of the ego (tazkiyah), disciplining the ego, and the development of love and humility, which are the preconditions of ethical activity in relation to other people (Schimmel, 1975; Ernst, 2011). Quite on the contrary, Sufi spirituality at times in earlier periods served to inform societal actions, moral indoctrination and to shape communal livelihoods that were tolerant to and morally restraint in mixed communities (Green, 2012; Eaton, 1993).

The theoretical difference between religion and spirituality is thus very important. Whereas religion commonly refers to institutional belief systems and ritual authority, spirituality as used in the contexts of Gandhian and Sufi refers to the common system of moral responsibility towards self-transformation that has social implications. This difference is strengthened by the fact that Gandhi presented religion as an ethical quest and not a sectarian identity. He in *My Religion* introduces spirituality as a devotion to the truth and moral responsibility, which goes beyond the radius of doctrines and leads to social harmony (Gandhi, 1955). Such moral universalism echoes the Sufi ideas of love

and compassion that transcend strict communal boundaries, but do not remove the difference in religious affiliation (Chittick, 1983; Nasr and Leaman, 2020).

Social harmony in this ethical-spiritual perspective is not a stable state of affairs and a strictly institutional outcome. Being a dynamic process, it is maintained by the daily practises of restraint, empathy and peaceful activity. Both traditions do not accept the possibility of imposing harmony entrapment as it is above- From their perspective, it is obligatory that the failures in ethics will emanate at the level of the self and will be displayed in social conflict. This opinion is a challenge to contemporary ideas of political stability being reached in practise by ignoring moral life and a previous indication of the place of the ethical agency within plural societies (Metcalf, 2009; Ridgeon, 2020).

In line with this, the theoretical framework on which this research will be conducted views ethics as a part of politics, spirituality as an ethical self-transformation, and social harmony as a delicate yet possible result of a disciplined form of morality. This framework allows one to make a comparative analysis where convergence is acknowledged without closing out the difference which paves the way to investigate how both Gandhian ethics as well as Sufi moral thought is independent to express the pathways to social harmony based on ethical responsibility and not coercive power.

3. Ethical Foundations in Sufism: Love, Self-Purification, and Universalism

Sufism, which is often termed as the mystic or interior part of Islam, makes more sense as a moralistic tradition that is about moral self-change and disciplined dealing with the world. Instead of a form of withdrawal out of the social life, Sufi thought puts the ethical refinement at the centre of the human responsibility in which social harmony is achieved through the purification of the self and the development of compassion to others. In all its various historical and geographical forms, Sufism has expressed a moral vision, which was based on love, humility, restraint, and an outward gaze toward humanity (Schimmel, 1975; Ernst, 2011).

The most significant concept of the Sufi ethics is tazkiyah al-nafs or self-purification. It is a process of the constant conflict with the ego, pride, greed, and violence as its characteristics, which are perceived as the main factors of social disunity. Ethical failure according to Sufi view is not a personal morality failure but a disturbance that radiates outwards into the social relations. In turn, the moral task of punishing the self cannot be reduced to the practise of achieving peace and harmony in the community (Nasr and Leaman, 2020). Such focus on internal reformation creates a moral logic where social change starts by the self-regulation of morals and not external coercion.

In this moral vision love (ishq or mahabbah) is taken as a key position. The idea of love presented many times in the Sufi-literature treats love as the vehicle and as the goal of moral existence, the one that dissolves the ego-driven divisions and promotes the openness of relationships. According to the classical Sufi tradition, love to the divine and love to the creation are irresolvable because they are manifestations of the same morality to the idea of unity and sympathy (Chittick, 1983). This understanding of love does not

determine an absence of difference but relativises it, to promote a sense of humility and ethical restraint when interacting with other people. Redistributing the will to control into care offers love as an appropriate corrective to violence and marginalisation (Schimmel, 1975).

It is this moralistic position that creates Sufi universalism and not abstract doctrines. Despite its strongly Islamic-based metaphysics, Sufi ethics has in the past expressed a vision of the human, which is exceedingly communal or sectarian lines. Ethical redemption does not lie in uniformity and is no longer about conformity but in the realization of a common moral frailty as well as moral responsibility. As Green (2012) observes, Sufi practises in various locales have tend to be moral mediators in plural societies providing some variant of the moral language that could cross religious/cultural boundaries. This universalism is moral instead of religious and based on virtues like humility, generosity, compassion and not on arguments of superiority of the doctrines.

The ethical principles of Sufism had a special social meaning in South Asia. The intricate religious background of the region gave good grounds to Sufi ethical activities that focused on coexistence, hospitality and moral accessibility. Historical research shows that Sufi networks, shrines and pedagogical traditions helped to create a type of ethical sociability which did not eliminate the differences but softened them (Eaton, 1993; Metcalf, 2009). All these practises were not politically neutral, they influenced the moral expectations, resolved a conflict and established ethical norms that restrained violence in the daily life.

Modernist commentators have more several months placed greater emphasis on the lay and moral aspects of Sufism, disputing its representations as individual mysticism. The analysis of Sufi sanctuaries and moral power demonstrates that moral charisma and ethical exemplary served as the assets of social glue, especially in those settings, where the level of political disunity or communal conflict was high (Heitmeyer, 2011; Singh and Gaur, 2023). Even in those areas where the Sufi institutions were mired in power their languages of ethics still focused on the ethical terms of humility, service and restraint as moral concepts against which power might be measured.

Notably, Sufi ethics does not disregard the fact of war. Instead, it redefines war as a challenge in train of moral control. The virtue of patience (sabr), forbearance, and non-retaliation are not considered as indicators of passivity, but they demonstrate the strength of character morally. Such an orientation opposes the vengeance and punishment cycles, and instead provides an ethic of moral bearings that is aimed at changing animosity in ethical behaviours (Ernst, 2011). This method brings the morals of Sufism in closer touch with the other more general traditions of non-violent moral reasoning, although Sufi morals retains its metaphysical context.

Combined, the moral principles of Sufism, i.e. self-purification, love, humility, and ethical universalism, form a logical ethical system, geared towards social harmonisation. In identifying the root causes of struggle in uncontrolled ego and lack of moral discipline, Sufi philosophy not only dictates that a lasting peace is impossible unless it is established via coercive frustrations. Peace is rather achieved, through moral

enlightenment of the individuals and societies. This moral view offers a vital point of reference before the Gandhian moral politics as both of them also base the social harmony on disciplined moral practise and not institutional control.

4. Gandhian Ethical Thought: Truth, Non-Violence, and Moral Community

Gandhian ethical thinking is based on the belief that social harmony cannot be created only by the use of coercive power, legal compulsion, and institutional power. It is, on the contrary, the result of rigid moral education and development of ethical relationships in the community. Gandhi have always opposed this contemporary division between ethics and politics claiming that political action which lacks moral grounding must always replicate violence and dominance (Gandhi, 2010). His moral code the focus of which is truth (satya), non-violence (ahimsa), and self-restraint is a full-fledged moral philosophy which is geared towards establishment of a fair and peaceful social order.

The most fundamental concept of Gandhian ethics is satya which does not only mean the factual truth but is also a moral obligation to act in a manner of integrity, transparency and responsibility. To Gandhi, truth could not be separated and applied in moral behaviour as the truth necessitated lifelong introspection and readiness to examine his or her activities in terms of morality (Gandhi and Desai, 1993). This moral vision of what truth was, criticised instrumental rationality and political expediency that tended to vindicate the infliction of bad in the name of efficiency or progress. Truth according to the belief held by Gandhi served as a regulative ethical ideal which cheques on power and also moderates political life in terms of ethical responsibility (Bilgrami, 2002).

Intimacy with satya is closely connected with such principle as ahimsa that Gandhi exalted as a principle of personal virtuousness to a universal approach to ethics and politics. In this context, non-violence does not denote merely refraining oneself physically but rather involves a vigorously practised moral discipline that oppresses, degrades and exploits no one in anyway. According to Gandhi, violence destroys the oppressor, the oppressed, and compromised the moral institutions of the social life (Gandhi, 2010). Ahimsa therefore serves as a good moral power that seeks to change relationships and not the threat. It requires boldness, steadfastness, and moral perseverance as that which Gandhi saw as the only way of maintaining social harmony in a situation of intense conflict.

The moral vision that Gandhi had cannot be divided with his principle of restraint and ordinariness. On the basis of his review of the contemporary civilisation, he argued that the unbridled desire, materiality, and ego competition were major causes of social disintegration (Gandhi, 2010). Ethical self-discipline, in this case was not a form of villainous withdrawal but a moral policy to restrain violence inherent in the relationship of economics and social environment. The voluntary poverty, manual labour and the disciplined consumption were the practises that were envisioned as ethical means to develop an empathetic-responsible attitude to the others and, in particular, the weakest members of the society (Gandhi, 1941).

Moral community which is the concept is placed at core of Gandhian ethics. Social harmony to Gandhi did not come as a result of homogenisation or oppression of difference rather of the ethical appreciation of interdependence. He based his community idea on mutual duty, and moral joint responsibility and failure to use others as tools towards political gains (Gandhi, 1955). It was this moral universalism of Gandhi that enabled him to express a vision of social togetherness that was neither the purely religious, nor caste, nor cultural apartheid whilst acknowledging the historical realities. In this scheme, religion acted as a moral resource, and not a denoting character of an exclusionary identity.

The constructive programme of Gandhi also demonstrates the way the principles of the ethic were applied into the social one. Programmes aimed to community peace, cleanliness, schooling and Village self-reliance were meant to develop the practises of cooperation and moral accountability on the grass root level (Gandhi, 1941). Such practises were meant to instil moral values in daily life to emphasise the fact that social peace is maintained by constant moral striving and not intermittent political action. Ethical inadequacy in this perspective was not merely an individual flaw and instead a common problem that needed to be ethically rejuvenated.

The academic meaning of those interpretations of the Gandhian thought focuses much closer on the ethical depth and modernism. Bilgrami (2002) highlights the idea of integrity as a starting point of political action stated by Gandhi, and Jahanbegloo (2018) puts Gandhian ethics in the context of the larger tradition of moral philosophies across the world dealing with non-violence and moral resistance. Fernree (2014) also brings out the psychosocial aspects of satyagraha whereby it is seen as a disciplined ethical practise that focuses on changing the self and the social world.

Collectively, Gandhian ethics philosophy is seen to offer a unified and rationalised moral system whereby the truth, non-violence and self-restraint are taken as pillars of harmony in the social scene. The resultant system of moral community and establishment of politics based on ethical discipline by Gandhi gives a long-term criticism of power-centric approaches based on social order. It is based on the sight of harmony as an element of ethical responsibility instead of coercive power, and on that basis his vision is fruitful as it can be compared with the Sufi moral thought which also views a way to social peace in transformation of the self and ethical control of desire and power.

5. Ethical Parallels between Gandhian Thought and Sufism

The comparative ethical reading of Gandhian thought and Sufism would bring out a parallel of striking similarities, which bring to light the social harmony as a moral-political accomplishment and not an institutional creation. These similarities do not mean that the doctrines are converging or borrowing history, they simply indicate similar ethical orientations that are independent of particular tradition facing the issue of violence, domination and moral fragmentation. Fundamentally, both traditions believe that sustainable harmony lies in the self-disciplined transformation and ethical control of power in social life.

The uppermost and the simplest similarity is in the fact that inner change is given the first rank as the source of a social one. The Gandhian insistence on the fact that, to be politically active, self-purification and moral discipline has to be central to the situation, is already Sufi, and is tazkiyah al-nafs, the purification of the self of ego, greed, and aggression. To him (Gandhi), any moral failure on the individual level can only translate into social violence with or without the comfort of an advanced institution (Gandhi, 2010). Equally, Sufi philosophers find the causes of social disarray in the unrestricted ego (nafs), in which they claim that external changes are weak until outer moral restraint (Nasr and Leaman, 2020; Ernst, 2011). Harmony is not achieved in either of these systems but rather developed by a long-term process of moral struggling.

A second similarity is the fact that love and compassion are central in the dynamics of ethics as they are able to combat acts of violence and exclusion. According to Sufi philosophy, love (ishq) is the kind of transformative moral force that breaks down the fixed boundaries and turns desire to domination into care and humility (Chittick, 1983; Schimmel, 1975). The implication of ahimsa as put across by Gandhi also goes further into non-injury to include the ethic of goodwill, which is proactive towards the opponent. To Gandhi, non-violence cannot exist without the presence of compassion, and does not aim at defeating the opponent but changing them morally (Gandhi & Desai, 1993; Fernée, 2014). Love, in both traditions, is an ethical practise, which limits retaliation and precludes coexistence in conflict.

One more type of convergence relates to the moral control of power. Both the Sufi moral thought and the Gandhian ethics are very suspicious of any power that is used without any moral restraint. The criticism of modern civilisation employed by Gandhi is aimed at moral ignorance in seeking power found in name of progress or efficiency (Gandhi, 2010). According to him, truth (satya) acts as a moral restraint to power, and by revealing truth, being answerable, and ready to suffer, as opposed to causing suffering, is expected (Bilgrami, 2002). A similar condemnation is spelled out by the so-called Sufi traditions, which focus on humbleness and service as an alternative to political or material power (Green, 2012). Although the borderlands between institutions of Sufi and the power were crossed, the ethically oriented vocabulary kept upholding the ideals of restraint and moral accountability, according to which authority might be evaluated (Heitmeyer, 2011).

The both traditions also have an ethical universalism which does not want to exclude identities but does not deny difference. Gandhi never believed in sectarianism, as this, according to him, should be used as a moral capital instead of a means of social segregation (Gandhi, 1955). His universalism in morality was based on the acknowledgment of common moral susceptibility and interdependence and not on cultural homogeneity. Sufi ethics also states a universal ethical position that is based on compassion and humility, allowing ethical interaction of any religious and social boundaries (Schimmel, 1975; Green, 2012). This universality is moral and not theological; new pluralism is supported but at the same time, there is the necessity to share moral duties in diverse societies.

The other parallel is another important one which is a parallel of ethical treatment to conflict. Both traditions do not deny the necessity of struggle in the social life, on the contrary, both of them reinterpret the conflict as a moral challenge. Gandhi approach to the satyagraha requires patience, self-suffering, and not to dehumanise the other side, and attempts to change the fight through moral patience instead of force (Gandhi, 2010; Fernée, 2014). Sufi ethics also appreciate patience (sabr) and forbearance as forms of moral power and frowns any form of vengeance and reprisals (Ernst, 2011). In both the restraint of ethics is not to be synonymous with passivity but rather as a proactive act of morality which is not concerned with breaking societal ties even in unjust circumstances.

The simplicity and restraint are further stressed, highlighting the moral connexion of the two traditions. The ideas of voluntary simplicity and disciplined consumption which are propagated by Gandhi can be explained by his belief in the fact that the materialistic overindulgence is the source of social inequalities and the downfall of moral principles (Gandhi, 1941). Sufi religions also focus on non-attachment related to a state of physical desiring that is not an end in itself but a way of developing moral clarity, sense of responsibility in society (Nasr and Leaman, 2020). Both traditions aim at minimising structural violence inherent in economic and social relations as they limit the desire.

Nonetheless, it is not essential to overestimate the ethical parallels, regardless of the convergences. The ethics of Gandhi is specifically focused on collective political mobilisation and social reform, whereas Sufi ethics tends to work via a pedagogical, communal and symbolic activity, and not via organised political action. But the difference does not in any way deny the common ethical grammar, which forms the basis of their corresponding vision of harmony. Rather, it shows the commonality in the way that the moral principles can be expressed in various forms of social activity.

Put together, these moral equivalence sheds light upon social harmony as being a discipline of moral restraint, sympathies, and moral restraint of power. Predicting internal change, love, non-violence and moral universal responsibility both Gandhian philosophy and Sufism confront instrumental and power-focused strategies of social order. Their meeting provides an interesting ethical illumination of reconsidering the harmony in plural societies not in the form of technocratic result but as delicate and continuing moral acquisition which is maintained by rigorous ethical exercise.

6. Points of Divergence and Contextual Limits

The ethical similarities between the idea of Gandhian and Sufism are significant; however, the strict comparative study has to focus on both the areas of similarity and differences, as well as on the situational boundaries that each of the traditions functions. It is vital to be aware of such differences to prevent too harmonising reading that blurs historical particularity, separate ethical paths and divergent ways of social interaction. When there is ethical convergence in this sense, there is no ethical equivalence that may occur.

One of the main deviations is the relationship that each tradition has to the organised political action. Gandhian ethics is, categorically, defined, in the context of the mass mobilisation, people protest, and institutional critique. Along with being a principle of individual commitment to personal morals, satyagraha is developed as a means of political opposition that makes it possible to change the unjust systems and rules using moral practises (Gandhi, 2010; Fernée, 2014). Self-sufferings that are ethical in the thinking of Gandhi would be inseparable to publicity and political challenge. In comparison, Sufi morality has long been meditated by the means of pedagogical traditions, shrines, poems and moral exemplification as opposed to systematic political action. Although Sufi traditions have influenced the life of the population and moral values, they have not been involved in the programmatic work with the state power and popular political movements (Green, 2012; Ridgeon, 2020).

The second point of divergence is the role that metaphysics and theology play in ethical reasoning. Sufi ethics is thorough ingrained in the Islamic metaphysical structures which focus on the religious love of God, unity of being and of spiritual ascension. The moral behaviour in this tradition is finally directed to the closeness to the divine even in cases when it generates the social effects (Chittick, 1983; Nasr and Leaman, 2020). In its turn, Gandhian ethics is explicitly opposed to the metaphysical abstraction. Even though Gandhi was spiritual in thinking, he always revisited religious ideas, in terms of ethics and practicalities which were obtained beyond the realms of religious differences (Gandhi, 1955). The fact that his focus on truth and non-violence is not a metaphysical doctrine but a moral language, enables his ethics to work in a plural open space.

There is also the issue of differences in the way each of the traditions negotiates authority and institutionalisation. An overt but direct criticism of institutional power, be it colonial, industrial or bureaucratic, is a hallmark of Gandhian ethics, which Gandhi considered liable to moral corruption in the event that they are separated by any methods of restraint (Gandhi, 2010). His positive programme aimed at decentralising political power and putting morals in day to day lives (Gandhi, 1941). The Sufi traditions have however been historically in complicated terms of correspondence to the political authority. Even though Sufi moral principles predominantly contested domination by becoming moral exemplars and by humility, the Sufi institutions have, in some cases, turned into tied to the patronage of the state and bureaucracy (Heitmeyer, 2011; Sumbal, 2021). This institutional lodging creates conflict between the morality ideals and social conditions which are not compatible with Gandhian approaches to ethical resistance.

There are also contextual limits which make comparison difficult. The ethics of Gandhi has appeared as a reaction to the colonial modernity, industrial capitalism, and nationalist politics and have developed a moral critique that conditions of different specificity (Jahanbegloo, 2018). Sufi ethics, in its turn, had been formed throughout centuries, in various cultural and political settings, rural and imperial empires as well as in the world of states-nations. It is a *longue durée* that is captured in its moral vocabulary, and it cannot be discussed directly with the morally political efforts of Gandhi without being somewhat selective (Eaton, 1993; Metcalf, 2009). Ethical similarities need hence to be

interpreted as commonality of moral orientation as opposed to reaction to the same social problems.

Lastly, the visibility of ethical practise is also different. The Gandhian ethics require moral openness and social responsibilities, and these are usually achieved by open struggle with injustice. Sufi ethics is often prone towards overtly indirect operation symbolic, affective and poetic in the sense that it induces ethical sensibility through indirect means (Schimmel, 1975; Singh and Gaur, 2023). These various ways of imparting ethical practises influence the way of experiencing harmony and even maintaining harmony.

Their launching does not make the comparative project weaker, but on the contrary, it makes it more acute. The analysis does not lose the integrity of any tradition but elucidates the particular circumstances in which the ethical insights of all traditions could be instrumental in informing the debates in the contemporary society on social harmony.

7. Ethical Politics and Social Harmony in Plural Societies

Plural societies face a long-term ethical-political quandary: by what means to maintain social unity in the face of profoundly different beliefs, identity and historical experience without mechanisms of coercion, or disappearance. Dominating responses have been biased towards institutional management- constitutional protection, legal equality and administrative objectivity. As important as they are, such mechanisms in many cases are not sufficient once the ethical trust becomes damaged and the political life is becoming polarised. Based on the comparative reflections of the Gandhian ethics and Sufi moral reason, another orientation seems possible; the idea that social peace is a product of ethical politics based on moral restraint, compassion, and accountability in the diversity.

The Gandhian thinking provides a very unique insight into the domain of ethical politics since it proposes that procedural neutrality cannot be the only method to stabilise pluralism. Gandhi considered social conflict as an issue of morality, fear and ego and not just a matter of contention of interests (Gandhi, 2010). The focus on satya and ahimsa was aimed at developing the practises of ethical interaction that would allow disagreeing without dehumanisation. In plural societies, the strategy reinvents politics as an ethical practise whereby opponents are being treated as moral subjects instead of being beaten like enemies. In such a way, harmony is maintained due to the ethical behaviour that restrains the development of the conflict and opens the chance of a dialogue (Bilgrami, 2002; Jahanbegloo, 2018).

The Sufi ethics balances this vision by providing a vocabulary of the morality sensitive to living together despite the difference. Instilled in the history of religiously varied contexts with a focus on the values of humility, hospitality, and compassion as moral prepositions that allowed for daily pluralism, Sufi traditions continued to exist (Eaton, 1993; Metcalf, 2009). Instead of trying to have uniformity, Sufi moral practises developed some forms of ethical sociability where multiplicity of identities can exist

without strict boundary demarcation. Modern analysis of the Sufi traditions in South Asia still emphasises how it has exercised a moderating function on inter-community relations and brought moral tolerance to conflicted social situations (Singh & Gaur, 2023; Khan, 2022).

Altogether, these traditions lead to the ethical politics that is not dulled with sectarian absolutism and technocratic neutrality. According to Gandhi and in the Sufi belief, ethical universalism does not reject difference, but rather relativises it by prepositioning and bearing collective moral vulnerability and accountability (Gandhi, 1955; Schimmel, 1975). This inclination questions the politics of identity based on enhancing social harmony to demographic balance or power sharing rather than focusing on the development of ethical dispositions that can uphold trust across difference.

Significantly, ethical politics do not mean moral idealism which is not attached to the social realities. Both traditions admit the existence of the conflict and inequality, but they state that the approaches to overcoming these issues influence the moral texture of the society. The motivation behind Gandhi to use non-violent approaches is based on the belief that violence or any exclusionary approach will eventually be counterproductive to the same harmony obtained through non-violence (Gandhi and Desai, 1993; Fernée, 2014). Patience and forbearance are also praised by Sufi ethics as the forms of breaking the patterns of retaliation and resentment (Ernst, 2011). Such moral restraint, in plural societies with historical grievance, acts as a stabilising effect and maintains social relationships in a transgressed society.

Such insights are especially timely in modern settings that have become polarised and morally disintegrated as a result of religion. This ethical politics based on the principles of Gandhian and the Sufi texts, can provide a way of reconsidering social harmony as a moral practise continuing constantly, and not as an institutional outcome. It highlights the importance of an ethical leadership, moral teaching, and civil practises due to which humility and responsibility will emerge in addition to rights and procedures. This framework disputes the popular belief that harmony is possible to be created without any moral behaviour.

It is in plural societies, then, not the repression of difference or the simple balancing of interests but prolonged ethical interaction across borders that leads to social harmony. Combining gandhian and sufism ethics provides some insight into the circumstances in which such an engagement is possible through providing a morally informed vision of politics that can enable coexistence in diversity.

8. Contemporary Relevance and Normative Implications

The moral lessons of Gandhian philosophy and the Sufi ethical traditions gain new values in the modern societies where polarisation, mobilisation by identity and a lack of ethical trust in the social life takes over. Though in the present day political system, diversity is firmly controlled using legal framework and institutional protection, such

structures are not usually successful in dealing with the ethical aspects of social disintegration. The comparative ethical model formulated within this study indicates that moral self-discipline, compassion and restraint remain as relevant normative resources when it comes to upholding social harmony in plural situations.

The fact that has one of the most prominent normative implications to deal with the boundaries of coercive or exclusionary strategies of social order. Gandhian ethics tries to raise questions regarding if a stability should be maintained by force, observation or moral conformity pushed down. The moral expenses of violence in the long term are emphasised in the approach used by Gandhi in insisting on ahimsa as a management ethical principle, despite the use of violence in the name of national interest or security (Gandhi, 2010). On the same note, Sufi ethics warns about accumulation of power that lacks humility and ethical responsibility, and that domination undermines the legitimacy of moral and the trustworthiness of the social relationship (Nasr and Leaman, 2020; Ernst, 2011). Combined, these traditions provide a normative critique of current forms of governance that place more emphasis on order as opposed to ethical responsibility.

Another implication is linked to the topic of ethical education and moral formation in the life of the population. The two traditions emphasise that social harmony is not possible to achieve without the development of ethical dispositions of individuals and communities. Gandhi discusses constructive work, disciplined living, and moral example indicating the desire to instil the ethical aspect into the routine process, instead of keeping it on the abstract level (Gandhi, 1941). The Sufi traditions also imbue ethical principles among pedagogical, ritual, and moral exemplary forms and create sensibilities that facilitate coexistence despite advancement due to variance (Schimmel, 1975; Singh and Gaur, 2023). In this respect, contemporary societies have to not only be concerned with the institutional reform but also with the ethical training of citizens.

The framework has what can be called a ramification of interfaith and intercultural interaction as well. On the place of the homogenisation and sectarianism, Gandhian and Sufi ethical universalism can serve as the substitute. Introducing religion as a moral resource and not an exclusion stressor, these traditions have the normative basis of dialogue based on mutual morality rather than conformity to the doctrine (Gandhi, 1955; Green, 2012). This is the method that is hostile to relativism but advocates pluralism, which allows ethical solidarity without erasing the existence of difference.

Lastly, the relative viewpoint that has been propounded here urges the re-pattern of the political ethic of moral modesty and moderation. Instead of proposing rigid solutions to the conflict situation, Gandhian and Sufi ethics describe the process of ethical self-control and responsibility as a perpetual activity. This opinion makes social harmony a precarious accomplishment that never is secured merely by the institutional design but through moral hard work. This normative insight in the context of modern plural societies revisits a vital requirement to reclaim the importance of ethics as a common practise that would help to restrain power, maintain dialogue and uphold the moral terms of co-existence.

9. Conclusion: Ethical Convergence without Synthesis

The research has contributed to the comparative ethical reading of the Gandhian thought and Sufi traditions of morality to make a reconceptualization of social harmony as ethical- political practise and not as an institutional or procedural product. Bringing ethics to the core of political lives, the two traditions oppose the contemporary belief that the social cohesion could be achieved without any moral self-control, empathy, and self-restraint. Harmony in this view does not mean no conflict but the ability to arrive at confrontation without recreating violence, domination or marginalisation.

It has been revealed that Gandhian ethics and Sufi moral thought converge in many of the fundamental principles: the first one is the primary importance of inner transformation, the ethical order of desire and power, the central role of love and compassion, and the demand of non-violent forms of engagement. In both cultures, order within society is developed by a well-trained ethical action and not through force or top-down authoritarian control and moral dominance. Finding the origin of conflict in uncontrolled ego and lack of moral discipline, they turn to other goals that are the moral obligations of individuals and society in promoting social peace.

Concurrently, the paper has actively opposed the desire to engage in any form of synthesis. The developments of gandhian ethics and Sufis moral traditions are based on their different historical, cultural, and intellectual contexts, and they develop ethics insights in a variety of different ways of social engagement. Moral politics conducted by Gandhi is clearly aimed at collective action and general opposition to injustice, whereas Sufi ethics has a tendency to be realised in pedagogical, symbolic, and affective activities inherent in the daily existence. These differences are important to acknowledge so that the integrity of both traditions could be maintained and not brought down to false comparisons.

The idea of an ethical convergence and not synthesis enables the development of a comparative framework that proceeds to recognise the common grounds of the moral orientation whilst at the same time sensitive to the contextual constraints and differences. This particular structure is especially useful when dealing with plural societies, where the allure to enforce homogenous ethical models frequently drives the coexistence away. Through the recognition of ethical accountability and the avoidance of obliterating the definition of difference, both traditions provide us with possibilities to reform a fresh understanding of harmony as an ongoing accomplishment of morality maintained through humility, patience and care.

Finally, this comparative investigation also adds to the general discussion of political ethics through rediscovering the place of moral self-constitution in the social world. In a polarised world, where ethical integrity is fractured, the ethical images of Gandhian thought and Sufism seek to revise the politics in the direction of restraint, responsibility and relational solidarity. Through this prism of social harmony is weak yet sustainable in terms of social harmony that is not based on institutional flawlessness but on the ongoing moral work of co-existing.

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RETHINKING VIRTUE: PANCHAKANYA AND THE FEMINIST STRUGGLE WITHIN MYTHOLOGY

Abstract: *Panchakanya*, a group of five significant female figures from Sanskrit epics *Tara*, *Mandodari*, *Ahalya*, *Draupadi*, and *Kunti* have been depicted in the tales primarily by men. They are viewed as symbols of purity and virtue, yet their stories also reveal the limitations imposed on them by gender role perceptions. Their representation as either victim of patriarchy or virtuous guardian of womanhood alters from reality. This paper looks at the representation of *Panchakanya* in a patriarchal setup. It aims to analyse whether these female figures are portrayed as self-actualised individuals, showcasing their remarkable agency and intellectual and spiritual liberation. It juxtaposes the complex interconnections between mythology and gender dynamics with social constructs to influence gendered roles and identities. The narratives highlighting their struggles within a male-dominated society serve as a poignant reminder of the injustice's women face, showcasing their fight for agency and empowerment against adversity. The *Panchakanya* narratives and this duality of being both guardians of virtue and victims of patriarchy is a central theme of this paper, which gives insights into the complex interplay between tradition, patriarchy, and female agency in ancient Indian society. The narratives highlight moments of resistance and subversion by female characters, indicating that while patriarchal norms often confine them, they also exhibit unwavering resilience. Through the lens of postmodern feminism, the present work critically examines the gender dynamics of the *Panchakanya* within mythological narratives, impacting the gender discourse of equality and empowerment and further interpretation of cultural symbols, especially in light of evolving social norms. This critical lens allows a more nuanced interpretation of women's roles in mythology and their implications for modern gender discourse. Thus, it aims to reconsider these narratives to understand how they shape contemporary perceptions of femininity and empowerment.

Keywords: *Panchakanya*, *Patriarchy*, *Indian Epics*, *Postmodern Feminism*, *Agency*.

Introduction: The *Panchakanya* refers to 'five virgins' in Sanskrit. They are *Ahalya*, *Draupadi*, *Kunti*, *Tara*, and *Mandodari*. The earliest reference comes from *Brahmanda Purana* (3.7.219) which says "*Ahalyā draupadi kunti tārā mandodari tathā pañcakanyā smarenityam mahapātaka nāśanam*"¹. It loosely translates to 'remembering the five

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¹ अहल्या द्रौपदी कुन्ती तारा मन्दोदरी तथा ।

पञ्चकन्याः स्मरेन्नित्यं महापातकनाशिनीः ॥ - ब्रह्माण्ड पुराण, 3.7.219

pious women as it was - *Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara* and *Mandodari* ever, would destroy the greatest of sins. Famously known as the '*Mahapatakatānashani*', i.e. 'redemption of sins' hymn, its legends have transcended over time and continue to be embedded in Indian cultural narratives (Bhaduri, 2025). These virgins, *Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara*, and *Mandodari*, are found in the Sanskrit epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and are considered the symbol of purity, chastity, virtue, austerity, and resilience within the *Puranic* tradition. On the other hand, according to South Asian philosophy, the five classical elements of nature are said to be earth, water, fire, wind, soil and sky. Each *Kanya* (virgins) is believed to be descended from one of these components, and these five natural elements have shaped their personalities (Swati, 2023). However, the study of the Indian *Itihāsa purāṇa* tradition and relevant literature situates the dichotomy of the *Panchakanya* as both guardians of virtue and victims of patriarchy. Multifaceted tales of these iconic individuals only extricate the layers of cultural, social, intellectual, and popular gender dynamics shaping the *Panchakanya*'s portrayal and significance of the *sati nārī* as 'chaste woman' rhetoric. The *Panchakanya* is a fascinating critical lens through which to examine the intricate interplay between mythology, cultural perceptions, and gender roles in Indian society from time immemorial.

1.1 *Panchakanya* Discourse in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*

The *Panchakanya* characters are weaved into unique stories within the corpus of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Each of these women occupies a distinct narrative space. Their stories embody virtue, loyalty, and wisdom while grappling with societal parochial limitations imposed by patrilocality or patriarchal norms. Traditionally, the *Panchakanyas* are invoked in Indian rituals to ward off hostile forces and to inspire sacredness. Their complex characters and enigmatic lives reflect the dual themes of resilience and victimisation within a deep patriarchal framework. They symbolise both the ideal virtues of parochial womanhood and the struggles of a patriarchal society faced by women while navigating life (Swati, 2023).

With growing feminist interpretations of ancient texts and literature, the relevance of the *Panchakanya* and the discourse around them have been repeatedly reassessed to shed light on their duality as "Guardians of Virtue" and as "Victims of Patriarchy." Agency and resilience remain two core qualities of the *Panchakanya*, which have been redefined. Viz. *Draupadi* had a polyandrous marriage to the *Pandavas*. *Pandavas* was already in bad blood with their cousin *Kauravas*. However, *Draupadi* was publicly humiliated in the royal *Kuru* court. She speaks for herself while being disrobed by *Duhsasana*, and all the elders of Hastinapur remain silent. Mondal (2020) observes that "it was her ability to use her position with responsibility and insight that showed her true power as a woman". *Draupadi*'s fearlessness and uncompromising nature represent a woman's resistance and agency within an oppressive system. Likewise, *Mandodari* is wise and loyal to her husband *Ravana*. Nevertheless, *Ravana* abducts *Sita* and brings a war to Lanka's doorstep. *Mandodari* fails to alter her husband's destructive course. She remains helpless in her marital and familial duties, even being virtuous. *Mandodari*'s portrayal is "intricately constructed to reinforce the inferiority of her husband, *Ravana*, who is Rama's main antagonist, and to draw comparisons with *Sita*, Rama's consort."

Therefore, her resilience is not merely individualistic but emblematic (Kumhaeng, 2024). On the other hand, *Kunti* is devoted to *dharma*. She makes lifelong sacrifices as a daughter, foster daughter, wife and the mother of the *Pandavas*. She is celebrated for her enduring motherhood yet suffers for adhering to societal norms and expectations. *Kunti*'s "intellectual agency, her inclination towards administrative matters of state, her empathetic conscience towards her husband and her love are those elements of *Kunti*'s life vis-a-vis different masculine characters in her life that make her the agent of her own life rather than a follower (Upadhyay, 2022)." Still, her story remains a gendered sacrifice demanded of a woman in a patriarchal setup. – Such complex portrayals make the *Panchakanya* integral to discussing feminism and gender roles in Indian civilisation. The *Panchakanya* reflect both veneration and victimhood. They serve as exemplars of *dharma* but face gynocentrism and misogyny that often curtail their autonomy.

Such a dichotomy in *Panchakanya* myths resonates with complexity, sexual construction and objectification. Contemporary discussions on gender and mythology unpack the nuanced construction of this 'otherness' in *Panchakanya*'s portrayal within the corpus of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Their lives are, therefore, re-examined as metaphors of reflection of sexual discourse and gendering ideology even among the elite vis-à-vis commoner women's lives navigating restrictive gender norms (Bhattacharya, 2022). Furthermore, *Panchakanya*'s characters underscore the intersection between moral virtue and gendered suffering. It illuminates how traditional 'femininity' idea often necessitates sacrifices in the guise of patriarchal expectations. Hence, *Panchakanya* embodies virtues such as chastity, loyalty, wisdom, and perseverance. Meanwhile, the epics reveal how patriarchy co-opts these virtues to reinforce specific roles to them. Such reinforcement effectively extends the inclusion of a meritorious spouse but limits women's agency and autonomy (Draupadi: The Woman 2002).

Therefore, studying *Panchakanya* in epic literature creates an essential paradox. Karve (2006) opines that these women are considered the impetus and the reason for *yuganta*¹ and remain influential figures of womanhood. Their resilience and survival are gauged, valued and weighed within patriarchy. Rajeshwari Rajan's (2003) feminist critic highlights that the "women in Indian fiction through ages have been represented as the embodiment of purity and spiritual power and respected as godly beings on the one hand and on the other, viewed as essentially weak creatures constantly requiring the protection of man as their love and master." The experiences of the *Panchakanya* provide insight into the figurative functionality of both idealised virtuous embodiment and symbolic constraints on women. Such dichotomy invites readers to question the traditional valorisation of female suffering. On the other hand, it appreciates their strength in navigating those impositions (Ganguly et al. 2024). In any way, the *Panchakanya* remains relevant as the focal point for any mythological re-reading and consequent modern reinforcement on gender, agency, and patriarchy.

1.2 *Panchakanyas* of *Ramayana*:

¹ *Yuganta* means the end of an epoch, transition between cosmic cycles of creation and destruction.

The story of *Ramayana* revolves around *Sita*. The war between her husband, *Rama* and abductor, *Ravana* constitutes the climax. However, the epic depicts many other prominent or minor layered women characters like *Kaikeyi*, *yakṣī Tāṭakā*, *Śūrpaṇakhā*, and *Sulochana* as well. Interestingly, *Sita* chooses to die rather than convince society and her husband, *Rama*, time and again of her loyalty and fidelity, thus becoming the epitome of a chaste wife; her name is not to be found in the *Panchakanyas*. Instead, we find *Ahalya*, *Tara*, and *Mandodari*, who were married and lived domestic lives but often indulged in polyamory. Their fascination for the concept of 'purity' carried forward even after that.

Ahalya's tale is primarily found in *Ramayana*, *Jaiminiya Brahmana*, *Sadvimsha Brahmana*, *Shatapatha Brahmana*, *Taittiriya Brahmana*, *Bhagavata Purana*, and *Harivamsa Purana*. A Sanskrit play called *Ahalyamoksham*, penned by Kunchan Nambiar, is staged in the *Ottamthullal* tradition.¹ In the state of Kerala. – Everywhere, she is considered the most beautiful woman ever created by *Brahma* and was betrothed to the sage *Gautama*. *Indra* seduced her, her husband cursed her to be petrified of adultery, and *Rama* released her from the curse (Bhaduri, 2025).

Tara is an underrated character in *Ramayana*. She is an *apsara*² who emerged from the *Samudra Manthana*³. She was born to the *Vanara* clan as the daughter of the physician *Sushena*. Initially wed to *Vali*, a powerful and fearless king of *Kishkindha*, she became the queen of the *Vanaras*. She becomes pivotal in the epic's unfolding events, stabilising amid *Vali's* conflicts with his brother *Sugriva*. *Tara* demonstrated wisdom and patience, embodying virtue and loyalty throughout this familial discord. Her life takes a turn with the arrival of *Rama*, leading to *Vali's* demise and her widowhood. Later, *Sugriva* appropriates her and makes her the queen. Despite the personal loss, *Tara* remains resolute, counselling *Sugriva* during the alliance with *Rama*. Her narrative epitomises strength, resilience, and unwavering devotion. *Tara* remains a 'varietist' woman, transcends traditional widowhood and contributes to the larger story of *dharma* while highlighting the value of knowledge and integrity (Bhaduri, 2025).

Mandodari is considered the last of the *Panchakanyas* and is celebrated as the iconic woman in *Valmiki's Adbhuta Ramayana* and *Krittivasi Ramayana*. She is a central figure in *Devi Bhagavata Purana* as well. *Uttara Kanda* mentions *Mayasura* visiting heaven, where the *apsara Hema* was bestowed upon him. *Mandodari* was born of their union and was left with her father when her mother returned to heaven. Born of such celestial parents, *Mandodari* possessed captivating beauty, making *Ravana* fall for her. *Mandodari* and *Ravana* end up in a turbulent marriage. When it comes to her husband's flaws and her empathy for *Sita*, who was kidnapped by her husband, *Mandodari*, the queen of Lanka, stumbles. Few regional and Southeast Asian *Ramayanas* refer to *Mandodari's* disgrace in the hand of *the Hanuman* or *Angada* of the *Vanara* clan. She is

¹ Dance form through which the tales of the epics and history are narrated.

² celestial nymph

³ churning of the ocean

crucial in promoting justice during *Ravana's* last battle with *Rama*. In the face of catastrophe, *Mandodari's* heartfelt mourning upon *Ravana's* passing illustrates her profound devotion. Though *Adbhuta Ramayana* is silent on *Mandodari's* fate after *Ravana's* death, few regional and Southeast Asian versions refer to *Mandodari's* remarriage to *Vibhishana*, suggesting some matrilineality. She demonstrates perseverance as a widow reconstructing *Lanka* as the *Uttara Kanda* delves more into it. *Mandodari* adds a rich symbolism to Indian mythology, representing patience, kindness, and moral rectitude (Bhaduri, 2025).

Hence, *Ramayana* produced polemic women like *Ahalya*, *Tara* and *Mandodari*, who are not one-dimensional characters. They have layers to their personalities which speak to the lusciousness of loyalty and fidelity yet transcend beyond the general understanding of monogamy, as required for women. They remained influential and were followed as guides to living life in India, reinforced through the retelling of epics and mythologies that played a core role in perpetuating the culture of the time.

1.3 Panchakanyas of Mahabharata:

The Mahabharata features a number of multifaceted female characters that are essential to the epic story, including *Damayanti*, *Savitri*, *Shakuntala*, *Satyavati*, *Amba*, and *Gandhari*. They frequently encounter difficulties in a patriarchal environment, despite the fact that many demonstrate considerable agency. Interestingly, two well-known Panchakanya, *Kunti and Draupadi*, suffer social disgrace in spite of their pivotal roles. *Kunti's* life is characterised by sacrifices and moral quandaries. She is adopted by King *Kuntibhoja* after being born as *Pritha*. The sage *Durvasa* gives her a divine mantra that allows her to have offspring with gods. As a result, *Karna* has a premarital child, whom she deserts in order to save face. She has to repeat the mantra because of *Pandu's* infertility, which makes her marriage to him even more difficult. *Kunti*, who was widowed at a young age, is responsible for rearing the Pandavas and managing their banishment and the Kurukshetra conflict.

Her story takes on a sad dimension as a result of her hiding her identity as *Karna's* mother. Following the destruction of the conflict, *Kunti* withdraws into vanaprastha, which represents introspection and renunciation. Her life exemplifies the conflicts between responsibility, selflessness, and autonomy, making her a multifaceted and enduring Panchakanya figure. A pivotal character in the Mahabharata, *Draupadi* also called *Krishnā*, *Panchali*, and *Yajnaseni* symbolizes tenacity, devotion, and inner power. She was born of fire and is the daughter of King *Drupada*. Her unusual destiny is marked by her special political marriage to the five Pandavas. Despite being humiliated in the Kuru court and losing loved ones throughout the conflict, she continues to be a source of courage and insight, bolstered by her close relationship with *Krishna*.

According to *Bhattacharya (2020)*, *Draupadi* and *Kunti* share similarities in that they both experience personal loss, transition between active and passive agency, and embody purity via resilience. Despite being associated with men, they wield power by audacious choices, as *Draupadi's* disobedience in court and *Kunti's* invocation of gods. Despite frequently being ignored, both women influence the epic's plot by subtly yet

effectively expressing their agency. They are enduring personalities in the Panchakanya because of their profound emotional depth and daring decisions.

2.1 Panchakanya as Guardians of Virtue

The *Panchakanya* protagonists are pioneers of feminism. They fought for their rights, stood for themselves and spoke up aloud against male-perpetrated injustices yet their lives reflect the contradictions inherent in their roles. They are revered as paragons of virtue. Still, they were victimised, defiled, and marginalised. They could not pervade the prevailing gender biases of their times. Henceforth, the reverence for the *Panchakanya* as ‘guardians of virtue’ interweaves their struggle, resilience, and agency. It questions the binaries of victimhood and moral exemplarity. Thus, *Panchakanya* personifies virtue while simultaneously subverting or confronting patriarchal norms.

For example, *Ahalya*’s virtue is tarnished by deceit. *Indra*, the god of thunder, tricked her. He disguised himself as her husband, sage *Gautama*, and seduced her. Sage *Gautama* cursed his wife for her ‘supposed adultery’. *Ahalya* was turned into stone, ensuing patriarchy. This curse symbolises the severe punishment that patriarchy often gives out to women for perceived transgressions, regardless of the circumstances that led to them. However, *Ahalya*’s redemption by *Rama*, who frees her from the curse, positions her as a figure of moral restoration and spiritual resilience. Her tale highlights a more profound cultural emphasis on forgiveness and restoration of virtue (Sharma, 2024). On the other hand, it is interesting to note that this is the same person *Rama*, who will later accuse his wife, *Sita*, of infidelity, ask for a trial by fire and abandon his pregnant wife out of suspicion! – *Ahalya* embodies the virtue of endurance and reflects how societal judgments often fall disproportionately on women, even when their actions stem from victimisation rather than choice.

Draupadi contrasts *Ahalya* as she is the ‘defiant wife’ who faced extreme humiliation when she was gambled away by her five husbands and attempted disrobing by the *Kauravas*, only to be saved by her friend *Krishna*. *Draupadi* maintains her composure and fiercely questions the moral framework that allows her objectification despite being stripped of her dignity. Her virtue lies in her unwavering spirit and determination to stand against injustice, questioning her position and treatment (Sen, 2023). Unlike *Ahalya*, *Draupadi* does not seek redemption or forgiveness but justice and accountability, reflecting a powerful narrative of resistance against patriarchal oppression. Her assertive demands for justice redefine her not merely as a victim but as a strong-willed individual who exemplifies courage and moral strength.

Whereas, *Kunti* represents a complex mixture of maternal virtue and personal sacrifice. Having birthed *Karna* before her marriage, she abandons him out of fear of societal rejection. This act, driven by social constraints, mirrors the sacrifice and guilt that many women are forced to carry in patriarchal structures, where personal choices are heavily regulated. Later, as the *Pandava* matriarch, *Kunti*’s guidance and diplomacy are pivotal in her sons’ lives. Her strength of character shines through her actions as a dowager and her ties with *Bhisma* and *Vidur* and queen consort *Gandhari*. Despite her sufferings and sacrifices, *Kunti*’s adherence to dharma portrays her as an embodiment of maternal

virtue. However, her story also underscores the burdens placed on women to conform to societal expectations at the cost of personal desires and attachments (Deshpande 89).

Meanwhile, *Tara* exemplifies a unique blend of wisdom and political insight. Known for her intellect, she is crucial in advising her husband, *Bali* and later *Sugriva*, on matters of statecraft and warfare. *Tara's* virtues are manifested not in conventional femininity but in her strength as a wise counsellor who dares to speak truth to power. Her intervention in the conflict between *Bali* and *Sugriva* and preserving *Angada*, her son from *Bali*, testify to her diplomatic acumen and courage, as she risks alienation to protect her family and her kingdom. *Tara's* story is marked by her intellect, showcasing a form of virtue rooted in wisdom and responsibility, qualities often sidelined for women within traditional narratives (Menon, 2005). Her character challenges the limited roles often assigned to women, highlighting her agency as both a regnal authority and a mother.

Finally, *Mandodari* is celebrated for her unwavering loyalty and compassion despite her husband's manifold flaws. As a virtuous and devoted wife, she tries to counsel *Ravana* against his destructive choices, especially his obsession with *Sita*. *Mandodari's* virtue is rooted in her commitment to *dharma* and her empathy, even as she grapples with the moral shortcomings of those around her. Her adherence to duty and moral integrity in the face of her husband and son's downfall epitomises the ideal of virtue within a marital context (Iyengar, 2001). *Mandodari's* story is a poignant reminder of the resilience and inner strength required to maintain one's virtue amid surrounding corruption and moral decay.

Henceforth, the *Panchakanya* collectively present a nuanced portrayal of virtue transcending simple moral binaries. While they are celebrated for their purity, loyalty, and resilience, each woman's life story also reflects her subjugation by the patriarchy, suggesting a more profound commentary on the costs of maintaining virtue in a society that often treats women as mere symbols of honour or morality. These women's actions reflect agency and moral strength, yet their fates are often dictated by patriarchal norms that limit their choices and autonomy (Motswapong, 2017). This paradox between their revered status as virtuous figures and their victimisation within the epics prompts a re-evaluation of how these stories have been used to enforce traditional gender roles and moral expectations. The characters of *Panchakanya*, thus, raise critical questions about the concept of 'virtue' itself. Does virtue consist of silent suffering, as seen in *Ahalya's* and *Mandodari's* stories, or assertive defiance like *Draupadi's*? Or is virtue found in wisdom, diplomacy and prudence, as *Kunti* and *Tara* exemplify? By portraying virtue through diverse manifestations like endurance, defiance, sacrifice, wisdom, prudence, wit and loyalty, the *Panchakanya* challenge the monolithic and monochromatic understanding of virtue. Instead, it represents a multifaceted, fluid approach that acknowledges women's resilience within restrictive social frameworks (Mehta, 2010).

The stories of the *Panchakanya* reveal an intricate interplay between cultural reverence and parochial and patriarchal constraints. By examining these figures through a feminist lens, we see that their narratives are not merely about virtue but also about agency, resilience, and the struggle against societal limitations. Their lives reflect both adherence to and subtle resistance against the structures that seek to confine them. In analysing the

Panchakanya, we introspect them as more than mere ‘guardians of virtue’. They shine as complex figures who embody virtue in inner strength, prudence, resilient wisdom, and ownership, even if they confront the existing limitations. – The reverence for the *Panchakanya* should evolve to include an appreciation of their agency and an acknowledgement of their resistance to patriarchy. In sum, the *Panchakanya* serve as profound symbols of virtue and victimhood, challenging us to reconsider traditional ideals of female morality. While rooted in epic narratives, their stories continue to resonate today as symbols of resilience and strength in the face of adversity. These women's tales encourage a deeper understanding of virtue that embraces complexity and champions agency. They serve as timeless inspirations for rethinking women's roles and virtues in myth and reality (Tripathi,2023).

2.2 Panchakanyas as Victims of Patriarchy

In the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the well-respected but misinterpreted Panchakanyas represent both virtue and the limitations of patriarchy. Although they are praised for their power and wisdom, gender norms confine and mould their lives, limiting their agency and autonomy. Their experiences demonstrate the marginalisation of women by patriarchal systems, which value their pain as virtue and subject them to social control and moral judgement. For example, *Ahalya* is punished with a curse for being deceived and seduced by the god *Indra*. Despite being the victim of deceit, she bears the brunt of societal condemnation, while *Indra's* transgression goes unpunished mainly, reflecting the gender bias that pervades patriarchal structures (Sharma, 2023). *Ahalya's* punishment signifies a social norm where the burden of moral accountability falls disproportionately upon women, stripping them of agency and making them bear the consequences of actions over which they had little control. Similarly, *Draupadi's* humiliation in the *Kuru* court, where she is gambled away by her husbands and subjected to public disrobing, illustrates how women are often treated as possessions. A symbol of male honour, *Draupadi* is to be traded, punished, or dishonoured at men's discretion, even as a queen. Her attempts to assert her dignity by questioning the assembly go unheeded, exposing the entrenched patriarchal norm that prioritises male pride and authority over women's autonomy (Sen, 2011). It is to be remembered that she was finally ‘saved’ by *Krishna*, a male authority. *Draupadi's* plight underlines how women's voices are frequently marginalised within epic narratives, with their suffering rendered secondary to the concerns of male honour.

The Panchakanya are compelled to make sacrifices and decisions that expose the hidden costs that women in patriarchal cultures pay. Kunti's decision to give up Karna demonstrates how the social stigma associated with premarital childbirth forced her to put her family's dignity before her own desires. Deeply ingrained cultural standards that link a woman's value to maintaining her family's reputation are reflected in this. Similarly, *Tara* and *Mandodari*, though intelligent and wise, find their agency suppressed within male-dominated structures. The men's decisions overshadow *Tara's* role as an advisor to her marital relations with *Bali* and later *Sugriva*. Her husband's disregard her insight and counsel for their ambition and ego. *Mandodari*, despite her marital and familial devotion, fails to dissuade *Ravana* and their sons from demise. Her husband's obsession with *Sita* and her offspring

Meghanada, *Atikaya* and *Akshayakumara*'s blind filial pride to father *Ravana* completely ruined her family and kingdom. Both *Tara* and *Mandodari*'s wisdom are thus undervalued. They are instrumentalised by the men around them to serve political or familial ends, reducing their influence and casting them into roles of passive suffering (Iyengar, 2000).

Social conventions that marginalise and idolise women while tying them to roles based on patriarchal ideals are the root cause of the *Panchakanya*'s victimisation. Despite being praised for qualities like sacrifice and obedience, they actually represent restricted power rather than true autonomy. Some shared characteristics of *Panchakanya* that emerge through their '*Mahapatakatatanashani*' rhetoric are resilience, moral uprightness, and loyalty. All said and done, *Ahalya*, *Draupadi*, *Kunti*, *Tara*, and *Mandodari* remain, in their heart and soul, committed to only one man, *Gautama*, *Arjuna*, *Pandu*, *Bali* and *Ravana*, respectively. They also remain loyal to the purpose they have chosen or are thrust upon them. *Ahalya*'s petrification, subsequent silencing, and final empowerment through redemption highlight the subversion of traditional power dynamics and symbolic resistance to patriarchal control. *Tara* and *Mandodari* remain appropriated by *Sugriva* and *Vibhishana*, respectively, after their unfilial fratricide to maintain a status quo in the regnum. *Draupadi* does not give up on justice for herself despite knowing the destruction that it would lead to. *Kunti* dedicatedly aids *Bhishma* in administration despite wanting to detach herself (Chaudhari, 2005). In this way, the *Panchakanya* remain a symbol of how patriarchy sanctifies women's sufferings. What a valorising trauma as a form of moral excellence fails to recognise the systemic and systematic inequality that underpins it (Mehta, 2010) Although the *Panchakanya* are admired for their power and purity, they represent the inconsistencies of patriarchal tales that elevate the suffering of women. Sacrifice and subordination form their identities and reduce their autonomy. The way that epic traditions minimise women's autonomy while exalting pain is called into question by these tales (Tripathi, 2023).

Conclusion

The *Panchakanya* stand as timeless symbols of resilience and complexity within the epics of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Their illustrious presence is deemed indispensable in upholding notions of purity, civilisation, and merit layered with themes of chastity, power dynamics, and sacrifice. As exemplars of virtue and endurance, such contouring ensures their parity with their respective man in life. These elements collectively contribute to the enhancement of their respective husband's image. Moreover, beneath this 'ideal woman' rhetoric lies a deeper narrative of survival. The representation of *Panchakanya* is inextricably associated with the concept of 'the ideal queen', 'the ideal wife' and 'the ideal mother'. They all are physically attractive women possessing a 'virtue' allure! Such appeal is synonymous with purity, endurance and innocence. Such idealised femininity defines their roles and choices. It conforms to the epitomised qualities of beauty and grace, rendering them the fitting partner for the male stakeholder. Hence, the *Panchakanya* theme navigates a delicate balance between embodying societal ideals of womanhood and resisting the patriarchal constrictions

imposed upon them. Such contrast has made them enduring figures in Indian mythology, offering a rich canvas for feminist critique and postmodern reinterpretation. In examining these women's lives, one finds not only the affirmation of their virtues but also an unyielding spirit of survival and metamorphosis that transcends traditional gender roles.

Postmodern feminists revisit the *Panchakanya* narratives as stories of moral exemplars and as testimonies to the malleability of *Ahalya*, *Tara*, *Mandodari*, *Kunti*, and *Draupadi* exhibited within an oppressive socio-political, intellectual and aesthetical structure. Postmodern scholars challenge traditional readings by reinterpreting the power dynamics and examining the gender narratives that define these characters' lives. *Ahalya's* loyalty, *Tara's* wit, *Mandodari's* prudence, *Kunti's* sacrifices and *Draupadi's* defiance are seen less as passive virtues and more as acts of agency within constraints. This approach allows for an understanding of the *Panchakanya* not as mere victims of patriarchy but as women who navigate, adapt, and survive within it, subverting, even if subtly, the structures that attempt to control them (Warrier 93).

The Panchakanya are frequently described as exotically beautiful and in unconventional partnerships, which reinforces male control over female sexuality by setting them apart from monogamous, "ideal" women. However, by emphasising these women's agency, resiliency, and complexity, postmodern feminist interpretations cast doubt on this notion. They are viewed as independent characters negotiating and quietly opposing patriarchy rather than as helpless victims or moral role models, providing a deeper, more complex understanding of gender and power in mythology.

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**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MALIK MUHAMMAD JAYSI'S
'PADMAVATI' AND FARID UDDIN ATTAR'S 'MANTEQ UT- TAIR'**

Abstract : The aim of this article is to focus attention on a comparative analysis of Farid Uddin Attar's 'Mantiq ut-Tair' and Malik Muhammad Jaysi's 'Padmavati' and to explore the confluence and divergence of their allegorical and mystical narratives. These two prominent works has rooted in a rich tradition of Sufi literature and employs an elaborate symbolic framework to convey profound spiritual truths. It has to be mentioned that Attar's Persian epic focuses on the birds' arduous journey to seek the mythical Simorgh, representing the divine, on the other hand, Jayasi's Awadhi romance utilizes the narrative of Queen Padmavati's pursuit by Sultan Alauddin Khalji to allegorically represent the soul's yearning for union with the Supreme Being. Malik Muhammad Jaysi's epic poem 'Padmavati' is originally written in 1540 in Awaadhi language and originally in the Persian Nastaliq script and has been considered an important piece of Sufi literature that has consisted of allegorical symbolism related to Sufi mysticism and Farid Uddin Attar's mystical poem 'Mantiq ut-Tair' which was written in 1177, describes the journey of birds to find their king, the Simorgh and this journey is an allegory for the Sufi journey to find the almighty God. They have created a unique blend of romantic and spiritual themes that resonated deeply with reader and influenced countless poets and writers across cultures. Their ideas permeated influencing poetry and storytelling for their blend of mystical and social theme which emphasized devotion and love for the blending mystical poetry with traditions. Whatsoever, Sufistic ideas and thought have enriched various languages and literary traditions, promoting themes of love, compassion and their influence can be noticed in every corner of literature like in various forms like in poetry, music and popular culture and generations.

Key Words: Romantic, Blend, Journey, Reality, Countless love, Cross Culture, Sacrifice

Introduction

Sufi saints contributed substantially to the growth of Hindi literature. Their deep thought and practices have had a significant impact on Hindi literature particularly during the time of Bhakti movement. Sufi thought often draw inspiration from various sources and incorporates elements from various philosophical traditions and shape their understanding of reality, the nature of soul and the path of enlighten. They used 'Poetry' as an important instrument to draw attraction from various fields and it has been a

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significant medium for expressing Sufi ideas and experiences. It has interacted with other religious traditions and enriched sufi thought and practice leading to cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. Though there is an outstretched list of writers and poets in this field but the name of Malik Muhammad Jaysi and Farid Ud-Din Attar is remarkable.

Malik Muhammad Jaysi was a 16th century Indian Sufi poet and mystic. He was deeply influenced by Sufi mysticism and his works are basically exploring themes of divine love, spiritual longing and the unity of existence. His notable contribution '*Padmavat*' is a captivating tale of the beautiful queen Padmavati and her unwavering devotion to her husband, Raja Ratan Sen. This poem features the ruthless Alauddin Khilji, who is obsessed with conquering Chittor and possessing Padmavati. *Padmavat* is considered a masterpiece of Awadhi literature. It is basically renowned for its lyrical beauty, vivid imagery and profound exploration of human emotions. It has a significant impact on Indian literature and culture and has been adapted into various forms including films in Bollywood, plays and series in television. On the other hand, Farid uddin Attar was the second great celebrated Sufi poet and thinker of Persian literature who is mostly familiar with various sciences such as the Quran, Hadith, jurisprudence, interpretation, medicine, astronomy, and theology. He used to follow his father's profession as a pharmacist and travelled to India, Iraq, Syria and Egypt to gain his knowledge and then returned to Nishapur and lived there until the last breath of his life.

Padmavati

Malik Muhammad of Jayas in Oudh and the author of the "*Padumawati*", or "*Padmavati*" had flourished under Sher Shah in the year 1540 A.D. Malik Muhammad is the oldest vernacular poet of Hindustan of whom we have any uncontested remains. The preservation of the "*Padumawati*" is due mainly to the happy accident of Malik Muhammad's religious reputation. Although profoundly affected by the teaching of Kabir, and familiarly acquainted with Hindu lore, and with the Hindi Toga philosophy, he was from the first revered as a saint by his Muhammadan co-religionists.

He wrote his poem in what was evidently the actual vernacular of his time, tinged slightly with an admixture of a few Persian words and idioms due to his Mussalman predilections. It is also due to his religion that he originally wrote it in the Persian character, and hence discarded all the favorite devices of pundits, who tried to make their language correct by spelling (while they did not pronounce) vernacular words in the Sanskrit fashion. He had no temptation to do this. The Persian character did not lend itself to any such false antiquarianism. He spelled each word rigorously as it was pronounced. His work is hence a valuable witness to the actual condition of the vernacular language of Northern India in the 16th century. It is with the exception of a few hints in Alberuni's *Indica*, the only trustworthy witness which we have. It is trustworthy, however, only to a certain extent, for it often merely gives the consonantal frame work of the words, the vowels, as is usual in Persian being generally omitted.

Besides, the *Padumawati* also deserves notice for its contents. In itself it is a fine poetical work, and one of the few original ones, not dealing with either Rama or Krishna, with which we are acquainted in any Indian language. It is also remarkable for the vein of tolerance which runs through it, —a tolerance in every way worthy of Kabir or of Tul'si Das. The story of the poem has been a favorite one with eastern authors. Husain

Ghaznawi wrote a Persian poem on the subject, entitled “Qissiae Padmawat”. In 1652 AD, Rai Gobind Munshi wrote a version in Persian prose, called (after the chronogram of its date) “Tukfatul-Kulilb”. Again Mir Ziyad-din 'Ibrat, and Ghulatin 'Ali 'Ishrat wrote a joint version in Urdu verse in 1796 A.D. Malik Muhammad's poem was written in 1540 A.D¹. He tells himself that he was the disciple of Sayyad Muhiud-din. The only other fact is known that he was blind of one eye. He studied Sanskrit Prosody and Rhetoric from Hindu Pundits at Jayas. He belonged to the Chistiya Nizamiya and was the eleventh disciple in descent from the well-known Nizamud-din, who died in 1325 A.D. Muhiud-din's teacher was Shaikh Burhan, who resided at Kalpi in Bundel Khand, and who is said to have died at the age of a hundred years in A.D. 1662-63. The poet was patronized by Sher Shah. He is said to have attended his court. Two of Malik Muhammad's four friends, whom he mentions in his poem, were also patronized by Jagat Dev. These were Yusuf Malik and Saloni Singh (whom Malik Muhammad calls *Miya* as if he was a Musalman). It is said that another attendant at Jagat Dev's court was a *Katthak*, named Gandharv Raj, who was skilled in the art of singing. Malik Muhammad was greatly attached to him and gave him his blessing, prophesying that skill in song would always remain in his family, and, at the same time, begging him to take, as a sign of affection, his title of *Malik*. Ever since, Gandharv Raj's descendants have called themselves Malik, and members of the family still live in Taluka Raipuri-a and at Haldi in Baliya District, and are renowned singers². The text of the *Padmawati*, being in their Hindi language, and written in the Persian character, is very difficult both to read and to understand but an attempt has been made the actual words written by the poet³.

Malik Muhammad Jayasi's Padmavat tells the story of the love between the beautiful princess Padmavati of the Southern island of Simhal and the Rajput king Ratansen from the North. The work was composed in the sixteenth century and written in early Avadhi. The story of Ratansen and Padmavati is loosely based on the historical event of the conquest of the Rajput fortress Citor by the sultan 'Ala' al-din Khilji in 1303. In Jayasi's poem, the ruler becomes enamored of the princess after hearing a description of Padmavati's extraordinary beauty, and decides to lay siege to the fortress in order to conquer the beautiful woman⁴. This semi-historical episode of Padmavat is preceded by a part that describes how king Ratansen becomes a yogi for the love of Padmavati, relinquishing his throne and travelling to Simhal while heading an army of yogis. His guide on the journey is the parrot Hiramani, Padmavati's former companion. The king can only reach Simhal and marry the princess if he is prepared to sacrifice his life for his beloved. The two parts of the poem together form a tale of mystical love that, in terms of Sufi symbolism, represents the voyage of the soul to God, the ideal state of union and the return to living in a transient world, full of conflict and deceit⁵. Jayasi was a Sufi poet from the region of Jais in North India, who was initiated in the Chishti Sufi lineage of Saiyid Ashraf Jahangir Simnani (d. 840/1436- 37). In his poems he claims affiliation to a local branch of this silsila (congregation) in Jais, as well as to other important religious figures of his days. Although there is no historical evidence of patronage by local elites, one of his poems seems to suggest such an affiliation. Patronage of Indian Sufi centers by worldly rulers in exchange for support from the charismatic Pirs (Sufi teachers) was a common practice. The choice for the story of the siege of Citor and the role of the Rajput queen Padmavati as the main theme of Padmavat makes the poem particularly relevant to this context. It locates the poet in a literary field defined by the interests of both worldly and spiritual patrons. His role as a mediator between these worldly and spiritual parties

provides a key to Jayasi's transformation of the tale of love between Ratansen and Padmavati and that of 'Ala' al-din's campaign against Citor into a mystical romance.

Muhammad Jayasi follows in the footsteps of earlier Indian Sufi poets who used Indian folk stories as a base for their premakhyaans – their poems of mystical love. His Padmavat stands out in this genre because of its complex polyphony of themes, images and poetical elements from a range of literary and oral sources from the hybrid North Indian cultural environment. It illustrates how the genre of the Sufi premakhyaans matured as part of an Indian Islamic literary culture that integrates Persian and Indian forms and content. Within these conditions, Jayasi was a poet of great skill and creative vision, which makes his Padmavat a highlight of early modern Indian literature. His work confirmed the status of the Sufi romances in Avadhi and created a model for religious romances in other Indian vernaculars. The critical editions compiled by Ram Chandra Sukla and Mata Prasad Gupta consolidated the status of the text as a classic in Hindi literature and introduced it to many modern readers. The recognition of the literary and cultural value of the text placed Padmavat prominently on academic curricula of Hindi literature in India and elsewhere⁶. This syncretistic interpretation of early Sufi poetry in the vernaculars by Indian scholars was reinforced by a strong interest on the part of Western audiences for oriental writers that were seen as 'Prophets of Unity'. This interest came in the wake of popular translations such as Edward Fitz Gerald's Rubaiyat 'Umar Khayyam (1859), or Rabindra Nath Tagore's translation of verses by Kabir (1915) and reflected on readings of Jayasi's poetry in India. On the one hand, this perception reduced the interaction between Hindu and Muslim communities to a binary opposition; on the other hand, it idealized exchange and circulation of early modern Indian culture as an idyllic syncretism⁷. Padmini also has known as Padmavati a significant subject of Rajput folklore and Rajputana traditions. Padmini or Padmavati was the queen of the Mewar kingdom married to King Rawal Ratan Singh. She was the daughter of King Gandharvasen of Sinhala and the second wife of King Rawal Ratan Singh. It is believed that Queen Padmavati the epitome of beauty, intelligence, and bravery, chose to commit Jauhar (self-immolation) rather than fall into the hands of the enemy Alauddin Khilji, the Sultan of Delhi. Some historians believed that she was a fictional character created by Malik Muhammad Jayasi, however, she is a legendary figure, and over some time she has become a historical figure too. She has captivated readers and audiences with her unforgettable sacrifice and has become a precedent for many generations. She is presented as a strong female with unbeatable courage that created a buzz and gained the attention of many writers, novelists, and cine directors all around the world⁸.

Mantiq Ut-Tair

This illustrated manuscript of Farid al-Din 'Attar's mystical poem Mantiq ut-Tair (Language of the Birds) is one of the most important illustrated manuscripts from Timurid Persia and a highlight of the Islamic collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is an allegorical poem in the form of an anecdote. The birds under the leadership of the Hoopoe are on a long pilgrimage to seek the *Si-Murg* (Phoenix) as their highest goal. Out of so many birds only thirty theme in fact reached their goal by way of an inner perfection. Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali's Resaleh tair in prose served the poet 'Attar to a great extent as model. This poem displays the author in his characteristics role

of allegorist, introducing to Persian verse the mystical parable⁹. This manuscript has several distinctive features. It was initiated under the Timurid court in Herat and completed in the Safavid court in Isfahan. It contains illustrations that are often attributed to the celebrated painter Bihzad, who served the Timurid monarch Husain Baiqara and a nobleman, Mir 'Ali Shir Nava'i and is one of the few extant illustrated manuscripts of the *Mantiq Ut-Tair*.

As from the certain sources it states that this manuscript was completed on the first day of the fifth month of the second year of the last ten years preceding 900 that is, A.H. 892 (April 25, 1487), and several illustrations were attached. Although four illustrations can be dated to the late 1480s, for some reason the manuscript was not completed. More than a hundred years later, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it came into the possession of Shah 'Abbas, whose artists remounted the folios and added a frontispiece and four contemporary illustrations in a new binding.

However, he is regarded as one of the most celebrated poets of Sufi literature and inspired the work of many later mystical poets. The story is as follows: The birds assemble to select a king so that they can live more harmoniously. Among them, the hoopoe, who was the ambassador, sent by Sulaiman to the Queen of Sheba, considers the Simurgh, or a Persian mythical bird, which lives behind Mount Qaf, to be the most worthy of this title. When the other birds make excuses to avoid making a decision, the hoopoe answers each bird satisfactorily by telling anecdotes, and when they complain about the severity and harshness of the journey to Mount Qaf, the hoopoe tries to persuade them. Finally, the hoopoe succeeds in convincing the birds to undertake the journey to meet the Simurgh. The birds strive to traverse seven valleys:

- The Valley of the Quest
- The Valley of Love
- The Valley of Knowledge
- The Valley of Detachment
- The Valley of Unity
- [The Valley of Bewilderment and Stupefaction](#)
- [The Valley of Poverty and Annihilation](#)¹⁰

Finally, only thirty birds reach the abode of the Simurgh, and there each one sees his/her reflection in the celestial bird. Thus, thirty birds see the Simurgh as none other than themselves. In this way, they finally achieve self-annihilation. This story is an allegorical work illustrating the quest of Sufism; the birds are a metaphor for men who pursue the Sufi path of God, the hoopoe for the pir (Sufi master), the Simurgh for the Divine, and the birds' journey the Sufi path. This manuscript originally consisted of sixty-seven folios and had nine illustrations. Since many text pages and illustrations had been lost or damaged, Safavid artists added or replaced fifteen text folios, four illustrations, and a frontispiece in order to reconstruct the manuscript.

However, Attar has been able to occupy a prominent place in the roll of distinguished Persian poets. His most famous work on Sufism, written eight centuries ago, is the *Mantiq-ut-Tayr*, or the "Colloquy of the Birds," an allegorical poem in which the gifted mystic describes the quest of the Birds (symbolizing Sufi pilgrims) for the Simurgh

(the Lord of Creation) where he describes the seven valleys through which the Sufi pilgrim has to make his way before he reaches the Divine presence, appeared in "The Porch,"¹¹.

Conclusion

Malik Muhammad Jaysi's Padmavati and Farid Uddin Attar's Mantiq Ut-Tair has played an important role to shape the society. Attar has emphasizes the significance of an inward spiritual quest over outward appearances or material pursuits and has tried to convey a message that to gain a goal everyone needs their collective effort then the destination can be reached and birds have used as a symbol. There may arise or come across many hindrance to achieve the destiny and this is what the poem encourages overcoming these obstacles, which socially implies resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity. Everything is hidden within ourselves and can be achieved from it. Likewise Jaysi has strongly emphasizes the values of Rajput honor, particularly the concept of "sati" (self-immolation) as a symbol of ultimate devotion and protection of honor. The characters exemplify unwavering loyalty and a willingness to sacrifice everything for their kingdom and honor. It also works as an allegory for the human soul's journey to the divine. However, both works inherently holds messages of tolerance, and that the path to the divine, has many expressions and struggle between good and evil, providing insights into the social and moral values.

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**REFORMS OF BANDA SINGH BAHADUR: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND
RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATIONS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PUNJAB**

ABSTRACT

Banda Bahadur, born as Lachhman Dev, was a man of great valour, who brought about significant changes in the political and religious landscape of Punjab. In a long journey of his endeavours and encounters with different spiritual figures, Lachhman finally settled with Guru Gobind Singh, whom he met at Nanded. Being a devout follower of Guru, he was bestowed with the responsibility of taking the revenge of death of the two *sahibzaade* and the attacks of Mughals on Sikhs. Guru made him the leader of the Khalsa, and an army of Sikhs were put under his command. During the battles, Banda adopted a range of strategies which helped him in successfully routing Mughal armies numerous times. In between, he established Lohgarh as the Sikh capital and introduced a range of reforms. Multiple interpretations have sometimes portrayed Banda Bahadur in a dark light wherein he is understood to have succeeded the Guru, however Banda by himself remained a devout servant of the Guru, and can be understood as the ruler of the first Sikh state. While there are deviations in understanding and interpretations, the contributions of Banda Bahadur cannot be understated, and his legacy continues to this day in the form of *Bandais*, who recognize themselves as the followers of Banda Singh Bahadur.

Keywords: Banda Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh, Mughals, Khalsa, Bandais

EARLY LIFE AND ENCOUNTER WITH GURU GOBIND SINGH

Lachhman Dev was born in October 1670 in a Rajput family residing in Rajouri village of Jammu. He belonged to a simple agricultural family, and was an expert of horse riding, martial arts, and hunting.¹

Once in his youth, he shot a doe. At a closer look, he was deeply in pain seeing the pregnant doe and her two fawn aborted, in pain and finally dead. This incident shook Lachhman inside out. He left his home and became an ascetic. He met Janki Das, an ascetic sadhu, and became his disciple. As part of the tradition, he was renamed as

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¹ Gurwinder Singh, "Life and Achievement of First Sikh Ruler: Baba Banda Singh Bahadur," *International Journal of Scientific Development and Research* 7, no. 10 (October 2022), p. 89.

Madho Das.¹ After being with his guru for some years, he left Janki Das and became a follower of Sadhu Augghar Nath and served him for about five years. Impressed by his devotion, Sadhu taught him magical tantric practices. Madho Das, at the age of 21 years, moved to Nanded to establish his own *ashram*. Being a master of occult practices, Madho forgot his original aim of renouncing his household and his arrogance made him disrespect other saints, sadhus, fakirs, and all those who came to his *dera*.

In 1708, Madho Das met Guru Gobind Singh. On seeing him in his dera, Madho tried the same magical trick on the Guru. His attempt failed. Madho realised the higher power of Guru, fell to his feet, and asked him to make him his votary. Guru Gobind Singh then gave *Khande di Pahul* (nectar) to Madho Das and initiated him into the Khalsa with a new name, Banda Singh Bahadur. He was no longer a *bairagi* and was thus a member of the faith of Guru Gobind.² At this meeting place of Banda Singh and Guru Gobind Singh stands Gurudwara Banda Ghat today.

MILITARY REFORMS OF BANDA SINGH BAHADUR

Banda Singh became a devout Sikh and took keen interest in stories of the Guru. Upon learning about the painful death of the *sahibzaade*, Banda took upon himself the duty to take the revenge from Wazir Khan. In October 1708, Guru Gobind Singh was attacked by a Mughal agent, Jamshed Khan. The wounds later proved to be fatal. These activities of Mughals prompted Guru Gobind Singh to give Banda Singh the authority to take the revenge on his part and retreat to Punjab. For the same, he appointed a council of five Sikh elders, namely, Bhai Binod Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh, Bhai Baj Singh, Bhai Daya Singh, and Bhai Ram Singh, along with twenty other Sikhs to assist Banda.³ Further, Guru Gobind also gave him a *nishan sahib* (flag), a *nagara* (drum), *hukumnama* addressed to all the Sikhs of Punjab to treat Banda as their leader, and five arrows from his own quiver that symbolized the divine support.⁴

Banda, in his quest, tried to assemble all the Sikhs under his leadership. This made them stand strong in the face of crisis. To consolidate his position, Banda first settled the disputes with the hill chiefs, making it to be a safe space for his forces to take refuge whenever required. Muzaffar Alam has correctly remarked, "it was with his tactfulness and statesmanship and the demonstration of use of force that Banda Singh Bahadur made the hill chiefs his allies. It provided him easy access to the hills."⁵ The Persian accounts presents instances of retreat to hills in times of struggle. In *Ibratnama*, Mirza

¹ Bhai Sohan Singh Sher-i-Babar, *Banda The Brave*, (Lahore: The Punjabi Novelist Co., 1915), pp. 10-11.

² Harbans Kaur Sagoo, *Banda Singh Bahadur and Sikh Sovereignty*, (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2001), pp. 114-117.

³ Karamjit Kaur and Surbhjit Kaur Bhullar, "Banda Singh Bahadur's Contribution for Establishment of a Great Sikh Kingdom," *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts* 6, no. 2 (April 2018), p. 822.

⁴ Sohan Singh, *Banda The Brave*, pp. 23-24.

⁵ Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 161.

Muhammad writes “the black faced ‘Guru’, this time again, entered the hills and disappeared there. This was in the beginning of the year 1126 A.H. (1714).”¹

Constrained by the resources and military strength, Banda Singh used guerilla warfare tactics in his expeditions. This allowed them to engage when the situation in conducive, and retreat whenever a threat was sensed. *Ibratnama* also presents the evidence for the same: “On reaching to Lahore, he (Abdus Samad Khan Bahadur Diler Jang) marched to Multan to suppress some of the seditious zamindars and repeatedly punished that rebellious crew. In the meantime the “Guru” once again came out of the hills and engaged himself in raising rebellion in the Bari Doab, plundering the territory and the people.”²

The Rajasthani archival documents suggest a constant communication between Banda Singh Bahadur and the Rajput chiefs of Udaipur, Amber, and Jodhpur. Taking the advantage of fragile Mughal-Rajput alliance during the reign of Bahadur Shah, Banda Bahadur constantly wrote them letters asking for their support to defeat the Mughal forces.³ This was the first ever attempt from the Sikhs in order to make a military alliance for anti-Mughal struggle, covering them from different sides and ultimately lead to their defeat.

Under Banda Singh’s leadership, the Sikhs had captured all areas of Punjab from Lahore to Delhi in less than one year. With the conquest of Sirhind, Banda Bahadur chose Mukhlispur in Himachal Pradesh, as the Sikh state capital which was to serve as their base for all future military expeditions. It was later renamed as Lohgarh.⁴

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

While fulfilling the military aims, Banda Singh equally focused on creating an egalitarian Khalsa state, that is free from oppression and fear as was the case with the Mughal state.

Near Thanesar, Banda Singh had a sign board put up which read “*Badshah Khabardar Khalse de raj de Had ittho shuru hundi hai*” (Mughal emperor be cautious, the boundary of Khalsa rule begins here), which was intended to humiliate the emperor.

There were about 5000 muslims in the Khalsa army,⁵ which points to the harmony and equality that prevailed within the faith. The equality within the faith is well recorded in Muhammad Shafi’s *Mirat-i-Waridat* where he writes “whoever became enrolled among the Sikhs, should be of one body and take their meal together so that the distinction in honour between the lowly and the well- born was entirely removed and all achieved

¹ J. S. Grewal and Irfan Habib, eds., *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2001), p. 138.

² Grewal and Habib, *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 138.

³ Balwant Singh Dhillon, *Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur: A Source Book*, (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2016), pp. 67-68.

⁴ Bhupinder Singh, “Banda Singh Bahadur: An Unsung National Hero,” *International Journal of Political Science and Governance* 1, no. 2 (2019), p. 69.

⁵ Apinder Singh, *Banda Singh Bahadur: The Rise of Khalsa* (Singapore: Sikh Missionary Society, Central Sikh Gurdwara Board, 2016), pp. 16-17.

mutual unison, acting together. A sweeper of spittle sat with a *raja* of great status, and they felt no hostility to each other. He thus initiated numerous innovations and strange practices and put them into effect.....”¹

He further writes that a person even from lowest caste or the most downtrodden who were without a caste, went to and became a part of Banda Singh’s Khalsa, he would return being appointed as the governor of his own town. “No person could oppose his orders. Such is the power of Almighty that in the twinkling of an eye, he can put such a lowly person in authority over a whole world of the high- born in such a manner that so many thousand of persons who had displayed bravery in so many manly contests, became helpless and lost even the courage to speak in front of that single man.”²

One of the most important reform of Banda Bahadur was abolition of Zamindari system. The Sikhs were agriculturalists themselves and knew the pain of suppression they faced from corrupt Zamindars.³ Before the Khalsa rule, the Zamindari system was based on landlord and serf system, which was more or less equal to slavery. A bunch of people were granted the ownership of lands. Disturbed by the poverty among the agriculturalist class, Banda abolished the Zamindari system and made the farmers proprietors of their own land. The taxes were then directly given to the state rather than the mediation of Zamindars.

Banda also held regular durbars and resolved the grievances of the public. Nobody would move out of his durbar without a solution. Banda, thus, was successful in winning the love and sympathy of people.

It is recorded that during his military expeditions also, he heard the local people coming to him for resolution. Two such instances are recorded. During his march to Sadhaura, a group of local Hindus near Kapuri complained to him about Qadam-ud-din, chief of Kapuri, who abducted Hindu girls for his sexual pleasure. On the other side, a similar instance was that of Usman Khan, who had violated the chastity of almost all Hindu women. He hated Hindus and hindered their rituals, and imposed four times tax on them.⁴ Banda, along with his forces, subdued these chiefs and restored peace and order in those areas.

Banda Singh was also a skilled statesman. His contacts with the Rajput Rajas, as found in the archival sources, were capable of keeping Rajputs at a distance from engaging in affairs. The call of the Sikhs had put Rajput chiefs in a dilemma whether to chose the Sikhs or to comply with their generations old Mughal alliance. They decided to follow a wait and watch policy. Balwant Singh Dhillon records that this delay on part of Rajputs to take any action had resulted in Mahabat Khan, the third bakshi, to summon the Wakil of Raja Jai Singh. He further told the Wakil that due to this unusual delay on the part of Rajas, various charges have been leveled against him, and his position had become

¹ Grewal and Habib, *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 161.

² Ibid., p. 162.

³ Harbans Kaur Sagoo, *Banda Singh Bahadur and Sikh Sovereignty*, p. 158.

⁴ Singh, “Banda Singh Bahadur: An Unsung National Hero,” *International Journal of Political Science and Governance*, p. 69.

precarious in the Mughal court.¹ This was a breakthrough event wherein the Rajputs, despite their generations old alliance with Mughals, had taken a neutral and distanced stance which not only gave time and opportunity to the Sikhs, but also reduced the Mughal military capability for a long time.

Establishing Khalsa Raj as a proper kingdom, Banda also minted coins. Any powerful emperor who had ever came on the throne minted coin in his name to showcase their social, administrative, and economic power. Following a similar trend, Banda also minted coins in Khalsa kingdom. However, it is to be noted that Banda did not mint the coins in his own name, rather the coins paid tribute to Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.

On the observe side was written:

“Sikah zad bar har do alam tegh-i-Nanak wahabast

Fateh Gobind Singh Shah-i-Shahan Fazal-i-Sacha Sahib ast.”²

(Coin struck in the two worlds by the grace of the true Lord, victory to Guru Gobind Singh, the king of kings, the sword of Guru Nanak is the granter of desires.)

And on the reverse side:

“Zarbba aman-ud dahar massawarat shahr zinat-ut takht-i-mubarak bakht.”³

(Coined at the model city, the refuge of the world, the ornament of the fortunate throne.)

Banda also minted the seal of the Khalsa on a similar pattern. It read:

“Degh-o-Tegh-o-Fateh-Nusrat-be-dirang Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.”⁴

(The kettle- symbol means to feed the poor, and the sword-symbol signifies power to protect the weak and helpless, victory and unhesitating patronage have been obtained from Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.)

RELIGIOUS REFORMS

Banda Singh was a devout follower of Guru Gobind Singh. Through his deeds, he took forward the legacy of Sikhi as Guru desired. However, some scholars and historians have critique Banda for his attempt to proclaim himself as the next Guru.

Banda Singh is often critiqued for changing the general salutation and war cry of the Khalsa. Khafi Khan's Muntakhabul Lubab is probably is the only Persian text that records *Fateh Darshan* as the war cry of Banda Singh's followers. He further records that before the battle, the Sikhs raised the war cry of *Fateh Darshan* and *Sachcha Badshah*.⁵ Sikh writers have unanimously condemned Banda Singh for introducing the

¹ Balwant Singh Dhillon, *Rajasthani Documents on Banda Singh Bahadur: A Source Book*, pp. 69-70.

² Apinder Singh, *Banda Singh Bahadur: The Rise of Khalsa*, p. 16.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵ Grewal and Habib, *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, p. 156.

new war cry instead of *Waheguru ji da Khalsa, Waheguru ji di Fateh*. Further, it is noted that the later Sikhs were not happy with the new war cry as it meant "Victory to the sect". This, in a way, meant as if Sikhism was just a sect of Hinduism. On the other hand, Sachcha Badhshah was a title already bring used by the Sikhs to designate God or Guru.¹ Banda Singh soon gave up this war cry seeing the dissent among the people.

However, a group of people continued to follow *Fateh Darshan* and were differentiated by the mainstream Khalsa. This group of people came to be known as Bandais, or the followers of Banda Singh Bahadur. Dera Baba Banda Bahadur lies today in Reasi, approximately 28 kilometers from Katra. It is an important pilgrimage site for the Bairagi Sikhs and it is believed that Banda Bahadur's ashes were brought here.

ANALYSIS

Lachhman Dev, later Banda Singh Bahadur, was a skilled horserider and archer. Growing up, the incident of killing a pregnant doe made him seek reclusion from wordly life. After being associated with different spiritual gurus, it was Guru Gobind Singh with whom he could finally settle.

Being called Banda (slave) of the Guru, he truly took upon him the task of taking revenge from the Mughals and its nobles for the atrocities incurred by Sikhs. Looking from a different lens, Banda would surely have been a devout follower that Guru Gobind trusted him to lead the Khalsa and blessed him with a *hukumnama*, arrows from his own quiver, and his own *nagara*. Many of these relics of Banda Bahadur are today housed in Reasi.

Banda Singh was a skilled statesman. He was a charismatic leader, and a man of strong physique and endurance. He could ride for miles and even all day long without fatigue. He was a liberator of the poor and helped everyone in need. Muslim contemporary writers record that Sikhs under the leadership of Banda Singh were always ready for sacrifice.

In sphere of warfare, Banda was a strategist. His tactics of guerilla warfare and retreating to hills saved his forces from receiving a heavy blow. He also made many forts like Gurdas Nangal Fort and Lohagarh Fort, and mud fortresses in a short period of time. Further, Banda formalized the military training of the Khalsa. It is also noted that he had taken a vow not to inflict harm on anyone other than his enemies. He stuck to war ethics and fought within the limitations.

In administration, Banda was a remarkable governor. It was under his leadership that the first Sikh empire could come up. This legacy was then taken up by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The Persian sources are probably the first and only text to record Banda Singh as "Guru", inspite of the fact that Banda never proclaimed himself as the Guru. The name "Banda" itself meant a votary, and throughout his life, he remained a devoted slave of the then Guru.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

The common critic of Banda as proclaiming himself the next Guru is the minting of coins and the sect of Bandais as his followers who proclaimed him the next Guru. However, the fact that Banda minted coins in the name of Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh may be better understood as a tribute to all the gurus, from first to the last human guru. On the other hand, Banda was never the founder of a sect within Sikhism. It was much later after the death of Banda Singh Bahadur that his followers identified themselves as Bandais and made Reasi an important pilgrimage centre.

In the words of Ganda Singh, "The accounts given by Muslim historians are mostly influenced by their pro-Islamic prejudice against the non-Muslims, and Banda Singh has been painted by them in the blackest colour. Every act of cruelty, which their fertile imagination could invent, has been ascribed to him. The Sikh writers, on the other hand, have unreservedly condemned him for his introduction of the *Fateh Darshan*, which he never insisted upon after its rejection by the Khalsa, and other things of which he was never guilty. But he was a far different man from what he has been represented to be."¹ This statement broadly sums up the critique of Banda Singh Bahadur, presenting a clear image of how a negative image of Banda Bahadur had been portrayed by both the sides.

Lastly, Banda Singh Bahadur should better be seen in light of his unprecedented reforms and the stories of valour and sacrifice on his part, rather than his critiques. As a follower of Guru, Banda fulfilled his role till his last breath, howsoever tough the circumstances had been. His leadership is remarkable for the new inventions, initiations, and the values of equality and harmony that prevailed. The legacy of Banda Bahadur was then taken up by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who established the second Sikh kingdom. The Bandais today follow the teachings and ways of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, and the rich legacy that he left behind continues to inspire millions.

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**NATURE, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY: AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF
PATRICIA GRACE'S *DOGSIDE STORY***

Abstract

This paper aims to identify the relationship between Patricia Grace's novel *Dogside Story* and ecocriticism by examining the intertwined relationship between natural environment and Maori community. Ecocriticism is the literary theory that emphasized the nature and the relationship between literature and the physical as well as biological environment, particularly the ecological problems and human perceptions of nature. Ecocriticism is a broad approach which combines environmental literary criticism, eco poetics and green studies, in recent days it bloomed as central concern because of the growing social emphasis on environmental deterioration and the development of innovative technologies. *Dogside Story* focuses on the contemporary life, family and identity; the significance of land and extended family is highlighted in this work and the novel promotes a comprehensive approach to build respect, accountability and harmony with nature by emphasizing environmental principles and Indigenous wisdom. Additionally, it also brings out the effect of colonialism and contemporary development of ecosystem which endangers the Maori tradition and ecological equilibrium. Generally, the Ecological principles of Indigenous people priorities the spiritual bond between natural world as well as humans and about the sustainable usage of resources and environmental management. By analysing Patricia Grace's novel *Dogside Story*, this paper will highlight the portrayal of the land, nature and sea as living things that influence the communal life, spirituality and cultural identity from ecocritical standpoint.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Patricia Grace, *Dogside Story*, Nature, Indigenous ecology, Land.

Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as "the study of relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty, xviii). Generally, ecocriticism takes an earth centered standpoint on literary theory by analysing how literature depicts the nature and its interaction with humans. Eco critics usually investigate the issues such as how the nature is portrayed in the literary text, the function of the physical settings of the landscapes, values of the environment and also, they include the concept of environmental disasters and their effects in literature and culture. Ecocriticism looks at how the literature intersects other fields like ecology, philosophy, history, ethics and

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psychology. The fundamental tenet of this theory is the close relationship between human and the natural world, literature as a part of broader ecological system in which people, culture and nature are constantly influencing one another rather than existing in a vacuum. William Rueckert first used the word "ecocriticism" in his 1978 paper "Literature and Ecology," which advocated for the development of ecological poetics. Following the release of two volumes, *The Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell and *The Eco critique Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, the phrase "eco criticism" became widely used.

Ecocriticism was a term coined in the late 1970s by combining 'criticism' with a shortened form of 'ecology' - the science that investigates the interrelations of the fall forms of plant and animal life with each other and with their physical habits. 'Eco criticism designates the critical writings that explores the relations between literature and the biological and physical environment, conducted with an acute awareness of the damage being wrought on that environment by human activities. (Abrams and Galt, 98)

When Michael P. Branch gave an introduction to his papers titled "What is eco criticism?" he is credited with coining the term "eco criticism" in late 1970 at Western Literature Association meetings. Lawrence Buel, Greta Gaard, Ursula, Jonathan Bate, Ashton Nicholas, Robert Watson, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Hellen Tiffin, Joni Adamson, William Howarth, and Patrick Murphy, are the notable Eco critics. The literary works of nineteenth-century American writers, praised nature, life, and the wilderness as they appeared in the country, by this eco criticism first emerged in the United States. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller are the three notable authors, essayists, and philosophers; belonged to the group named transcendentalists.

All ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman. (Glotfelty, xix)

The phrase Ecocriticism, came from the combination of the Greek terms such as 'oikos' means home or nature and 'kritis' meaning judge or critic. The main aim of the eco critics is to encourage the ecological responsibility and advance the environmental preservation as well as restoration with social actions and critical thinking. Nature is seen as humanity's 'widest home', eco critics evaluates the literary texts whether it honour, celebrate or take advantage of it and they critique the works that mirror or cause environmental devastation in addition to praising the works which promote environmental consciousness.

In today's world, there are two relevant communities to which we all belong. We are all members of humanity, and we all belong to the global biosphere. We are members of oikos, the Earth Household, which is the Greek root of the word "ecology, and as such we should behave as the other members of the household behave – the plants, animals, and microorganisms that form the vast network of relationships that we call the web of life. (Capra and Luigi, 439)

Patricia Grace is an author of children's books, novels, and short stories. She attended Wellington Teacher Training College, St. Anne's School, and St. Mary's College after being born in Wellington in 1937. Her first book, a collection of short stories called *Waiariki*, was published in 1975. In 1978, she published her first book, *Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps*, which was acknowledged as the first book written by a Maori woman. *Potiki* (1986), *Cousins* (1992), *Baby No-Eyes* (1998), *Dogside Story* (2001), *Tu* (2004), and *Chappy* (2015) are some of her other novels. Her Nonfiction works includes *Ned and Katina: A true love story* (2009), and *From the Center: A writer's life* (2021). Short story collections includes *The Dream Sleepers* (1980), *Electric City and Other Stories* (1987), *Selected Stories* (1991), *The Sky People* (1994), *Collected Stories* (2001), *Small Holes in the Silence* (2006), *Bird Child and Other Stories* (2024), and she published six children's books. She received prestigious honors like the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in 2006, and Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for her services to literature in 2007. Most of her works deal with the depiction of Maori culture and the challenges faced by Maori people to retain their lands.

Dogside Story was published in 2001, it dealt with whanau, land, aroha (love and compassion), tension, and conflict within the family. It also had a strong connection to the environment and culture. The narration of the story blends with the interpersonal disputes along with the shared past of the community in order to show how Maori identity is maintained by the strength of whanau (extended family) and ties it with their ancestral land. In 2002, it was shortlisted for the Montana New Zealand Book Awards and longlisted for the esteemed Booker Prize after winning the coveted Kiriama Pacific Rim Book Prize for fiction, which was announced during the Vancouver International Writers Festival in Canada.

The story begins with two sisters named Ngarua and Maraenohono, who fight each other for a canoe which belonged to their late brother, the split into two communities, Dogside stands for self-reliance, fortitude as well as flexibility and Southside stands for entrenched power as well as symbol of custom is the result of their fierce rivalry. The plot of the fiction revolves around family battle over custody of girl; the protagonist of the novel is a young Maori man named Te Rua, who had an unforgettable secret filled with sadness. Kiri is the important character in the story for whom the custody case is taken, she was raised by her great aunties who were referred as The Sisters in the book. However, to the fact, the secret is Te Rua was the biological father of Kiri, he wished to take care of her but The Sisters rejected his plan and also they threatened him by taking legal action in order to maintain the custody of the child for their personal benefits. After knowing this situation Te Rua finally decided to expose the truth which he kept concealed for many years in order to become Kiri's father by both means of spiritual and legal.

His admission of the truth might harm his family member's reputation as well as it unmasks the long-kept conflict between the community members. The narrative part of the fiction gradually reveals the secret about the family dynamics, accountability and prior transgressions in the progress of custody case. The remaining part of the story is about the visit of large number of tourists to the East coastal area in order to see the first sunrise of new millennium year, it also describes about the changes in the daily life of the Dogside community people because of the tourist's arrival along with enthusiasm,

business prospects and disputes about tourism and development. Some people are concerned with maintaining and safeguarding their customs, tradition and ancestral lands on the other hand, some focused to make money. The climax of the novel leads to Te Rua's eventual divulgement of the truth which he had been keeping, though it hurts many people but eventually it opens the door for reconciliation; the story ends with the Dogside community people's movement towards new millennium with fresh hope along with their strong connection towards Maori values and traditions.

Patricia Grace's novel *Dogside Story* opens with a beautiful description of the bay, tidal river, the cliff, rising and setting of the sun represent that the ecology is not only a physical landscape but also an active force that shapes out the identity, memory, history and community. "the morning sun tipped up out of the sea and flipped back across the sky like a slow, many-coloured fish, travelling the high arc until it dropped and splashed down again beyond the mountains. This northern curve of the bay was bordered by rock and steep white cliffs." (Grace, 9). Grace used many imageries in this fiction like she compared the rising of the sun to the coloured fish and river is virtually shown as a living thing; she used these metaphors and personification to the natural world in order to mention the message that the nature as living being takes parts in the survival of the community. This is consistent with Lawrence Buell's statement about the environmental imagination, in which he says that the literary landscapes ought to be viewed as living elements as opposed to the fixed surroundings.

The sisters' conflict over their brother's canoe further demonstrates the effect of possessiveness, ultimately it leads to disturb the communal cohesion, Maraenohonoho's action illustrates that the ecosystem and cultural heritage are harmed by conflicts of human beings. The words of writer "There was a horn-shaped moon giving ragged light to the water through the branches and foliage of trees that lined the inlet, and it was when a cloud passed over the moon (Grace,10); which symbolizes that the nature took its active role in the conflict of the sisters and the migration of the people towards the southside is the start of the cultural and ecological transformation, they build homes, gardens, new cemetery without any destruction to the environment; this represent the indigenous ecological ideas, that the Maori community can preserve their culture with interaction to environment. According to the indigenous environmental concept of stewardship, the people must work as the guardian of the earth, they should not consider it as their own property, as well as it also stresses the social responsibility of maintaining natural and cultural permanence in contrast to the land ownership concept of western peoples.

The Northsiders, were the stayers, the originals, those resident in the place where their ancestors' bones were buried. They had established gardens on the fertile areas of flat land at the base of the hills and were the caretakers of lands, sacred sites and of the ancestral meeting house-all of which made them superior, at least in their own eyes. Neither did the Southsiders have outstanding bad feeling for those they'd left behind. They were all family after all and they'd lived together well enough for many generations. (Grace, 12)

The alteration of Nature and indigenous sceneries are the main root cause of the capitalized development, which are symbolized by the construction of buildings, roads and agriculture in the fiction. Te Rua's comparison of two black spiders to the two eyes

of Kiri, represent the Timothy Morton's concept which emphasis that human beings are inextricably linked to the larger environmental framework. In Maori culture, the marae (the meeting house), which played an important role in the life of community people is considered as a landscape of culture which links their community, ancestors and land. Rua captured only the matured fishes in the sea in order to protect the younger ones additionally he did it without exploiting the aquatic life, his actions are presented as an example to the Indigenous Maori philosophy of environmental ethics, sustainable usage of the resources and idea of Kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and it also demonstrate the ecological interrelationship, a crucial ecocritical idea given by Fritjof Capra in System Theory and Barry Commoner in First Law of Ecology.

In the epistemic approach to science, nature is seen as an interconnected web of relationships, in which the identification of specific patterns as "objects" depends on the human observer and the process of knowing... everything is connected to everything else... Since all natural phenomena are ultimately interconnected... (Capra, and Luigi 141)

The detailed description about the landscape shows the ecological connection between human and nature; the Maori people also adapted themselves with the environment because they depend only on the marine resources, tides and crayfish harvesting, these works turn into a collaborative natural endeavor. Even the weather and scenery continued to be an integral part of their daily activities, they opted outdoor cooking, gathering ferns, harvesting watercress and preparing the hangi. The construction of new wharekai (dining hall) using the modern methods of construction instead of traditional natural shelters made of brush and harakeke (flax) symbolizes the post-colonial ecocriticism. Even the pet animals are considered as a companion not as a piece of property, their friendship challenges the anthropocentric presumptions that favour human beings over the other creatures of life by implying the fact that human and animals are mutually dependent.

He came to the narrow ledge leading to the blowhole where he had to slow down. He shifted sideways, put his back against the bank and edged round the jutting rocks and bushes before turning into the cold, salt air of the opening with its curved dark walls as smooth as skin, its floor of round, velvet-nubbed boulders with their attachments of silky orange tufts, coarse black strands, trails of beaded hair, limpets like little tattoos. (Grace, 21)

The protagonist, Te Rua suffered a lot after the death of his mother, he relied only on the nature for source of healing rather than the social institution; he turns to the sea for solace instead of his house which was filled with grief. The sea absorbed his pain, acted as a healing force and changed his emotional state, by this action it reestablished the equilibrium of nature. "The cold of it had loosened him, unlocked his throat and his chest as he pushed in against the first wave and the next until it all became easier" (Grace, 42). His identity transcends his physical form and integrates with the surrounding environment, even his survival depends on nature because he maintained the watercourse, gathered wood, job of fishing, and cultivated plants. Natural things such as fire and water influence the human experience in the novel, fire takes an active role in transforming the quiet scenario into a communication and healing, Rua and Maina share their unpleasant recollection over the fire which they never discussed before. Water in

the creek has a capacity to heal both mind and body of the community people by providing purification and brief reprieve from the stresses of the contemporary life.

Maori people have Traditional Ecological Knowledge in which they hold the ecosystem through observation rather than using technological proficiency; while learning to collect the crayfish, the nature is portrayed as a teacher not only as resource. In the novel, the character Archie teaches the kids the importance of diligence, observation and environmental awareness before learning about catching fish. Nature is considered as holy and worthy of preservation, Archie denied the children entry into the cave by saying that the fish and old Parai will handle it because the Indigenous ecological ethics that protects specific landscape for their spiritual values; here cave is considered as an area which belonged to the spirits and marine life. "The ghost of Parai Maaka, kina as big as plates and big fish feeding,' Arch had said. 'Never mind, leave it. Leave it to the fish and old Parai.'" (Grace, 69). Capitalism turned the sacred place of Maori people into the lands that can be purchased or traded, Maina learns that her husband had a plan to promote the coastal areas as corporate campground for the travelers, who visited their area in order to see the first sunrise of the new millennium; beach area, marae grounds, and sunrise spots are no longer considered as sacred places but as tourist destinations. "he's done here is set himself up as an agent for the new millennium—an agency providing campsites for all these tourists who want to be first in the world to put their eyeballs on the sun on the first of January 2000. But he's got no land you know, not even under his big toenails." (Grace, 86)

The nature will destroy the environment because of the careless activities of the human beings; generally, the soil and river are protected by the trees in the forest, when people begin the deforestation, nature in turns will destroy this harmony. These natural changes are the signals of demonstrating the tremendous reaction of nature to the ecological devastation. The action of the protagonist in clearing the creek which was blocked represent the environmental responsibility, it helps the ecosystem as well as his community people from the flood; he collaborated with the nature to re-establish the ecological balance rather than taking advantage on it. Land is considered as an outgrowth of Maori cultural identity and social memory rather than the private possession; in this story, people's identity, belonging and nature are inextricably linked with their ancestral location called turangawaewae highlighting the Indigenous ecological conscience.

There were only fifty people now living there, there were those from elsewhere to whom Dogside was turangawaewae, and who had the same rights as those in residence. Dogside was their place to stand, their place to speak and give voice. Shares from land incorporation were owned and dividends due to them just as much as they were to their on-site relatives, and they claimed descendency from Ngarua in the same way as their home relatives did. (Grace, 107)

The personification of the trees by the novelist reflect a most powerful ecocritical component, she frequently mentioned about the communicative skill and consciousness of the trees in most of the scenes in the fiction; this symbolically represent David Abram's concept of ecocritical theory that the trees are the living things with the ability to transmit the knowledge rather than being quiet commodities and it acted as a witness to the actions of Te Rua and Ani by preserving their memories and secrets. Maori children's physiological and psychological maturation is reflected through the roots,

insects, as well as plants; their inner feelings are mentioned as the extension of the nature which indicate the close relationship between ecological mechanism and human identity.

Ani Wainoa went into the trees so I watched, saw the way the trees moved, it's how trees talk.'... I thought she could be carefully carrying something that was secret. It's what the trees told me, moving their heads here, there and hardly at all... There could be another time when he'd have to tell it all, but for now the trees would have something to keep. 'At last she came out from the trees with her secret. You were her secret. She came out of the trees with you... (Grace, 124)

Patricia Grace's novel *Dogside Story*, shows that nature is a living force that influences continuity in culture, sense of self, memory, and not as a physical surrounding; she further depicted the environment as an active factor in the individual's spiritual and emotional healing through the recurring imagery of tides, rocks, birds, trees, land as well as sea. The protagonist's choice of living in his ancestral land and his observations on sea and rocks demonstrate a deeper ecological relationship with the nature with mutual understanding.

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**IMAGINED HOMES BEYOND IDEOLOGY: CULTURAL MEMORY AND
NATIONAL BELONGING IN ANUJA CHAUHAN'S *BATTLE FOR BITTORA***

ABSTRACT

India's postcolonial democracy is often praised for its multicultural ethos, yet the unresolved memories of Partition continue to test the terms of national belonging. Anuja Chauhan's *Battle for Bittora* (2010) offers a significant literary lens on this historical tension through the character Zain Altaf Khan, a Muslim ex-royal who contests for Lok Sabha seat despite his elite lineage and communal histories. This paper utilizes the framework of cultural memory to explore Benedict Anderson's concept of the imagined community, highlighting how Chauhan shifts the notion of national belonging from ideological constructs to a more personal, lived experience. Additionally, drawing on Paul Ricoeur's idea of productive forgetting, it posits that the novel's intentional omission of detailed Partition trauma serves as a strategic mnemonic approach, fostering a sense of democratic belonging. Zain's participation in electoral politics, his rootedness to place, and his insistence on claiming Bittora as his own land dramatize a form of post-Partition citizenship grounded in personal identification rather than doctrinal nationalism. The article analyzes how the narrative negotiates Partition's lingering trauma through family histories, communal undercurrents, and campaign rhetoric, yet ultimately imagines the nation as home only when its citizens inwardly choose it, beyond coerced loyalty or party discipline. Through close reading and textual analysis, the study demonstrates how *Battle for Bittora* presents individuals, despite historical traumas, religious identities, and political tensions, who can still perceive themselves as part of a larger national community based on shared citizenship, cultural integration, and the idea of belonging that transcends religious or ethnic divisions. In doing so, the novel opens a nuanced space where Partition memory, minority identity, and democratic practice intersect and presents what weighs the most in the hearts of the people.

Keywords: Cultural Memory, Imagined Community, Multiculturalism, National Belonging, Unsaid Past and Forgetting.

Introduction

India's postcolonial democracy is often celebrated for its multicultural fabric and institutional endurance. Yet the unresolved legacy of Partition memory continues to define the boundaries of national belonging in postcolonial India. Though the republic claims to be secular, democratic, and plural, the break of 1947 is still entrenched in its political consciousness, especially in the context of Muslim identity. Partition was not merely a redrawing of territorial boundaries but a process that brought about long-term psychic and communal effects that have made the grammar of citizenship difficult.

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Literary interactions with a post-Independence India tend to react to this inheritance by either anticipating trauma or addressing its reality by means of more subtle narrative techniques. The latter mode is taken into consideration by the Indian Author, Anuja Chauhan, in *Battle for Bittora*, which takes into consideration the Partition without making it the centre of narration.

The novel presents Zain Altaf Khan, a Muslim ex-royal who is participating in the Lok Sabha election in the small town of Bittora. His subject position is stratum-layered. Being from a Muslim royal family, he represents a pre-national order that has been restructured following British shrinkage and democratic accumulation. He is a Muslim citizen in post-Partition India, and he bears the burden of the communal splintering, which is hereditary. Zain is neither ignorant nor indifferent to history. In an interview, he asserted that India is the only home he recognizes and the only place he belongs. The critical awareness of this statement is its historical awareness. He expresses it consciously.

The present paper highlights that the sense of belonging is shaped by the modulation of memory in Chauhan's narrative. The presence of the partition and post-partition is mentioned, though the traumatic density has not been detailed. It is not a structurally meaningless containment. By eliminating the repetition of violence, the storyline focuses on present-day civic engagement. The theme of National belonging is actively demonstrated in the context of Zain's candidacy, represented through campaign activities, open dialogue, and democratic contestation.

This study utilizes Benedict Anderson's concept of Imagined Communities to examine the idea of national belonging in a detailed and nuanced way. Anderson theorizes that a nation functions as a perceived political community that is both defined and sovereign, sustained through collective discourses and institutional practices. In this framework, electoral participation plays a crucial role in reinforcing collective identity. For instance, Zain gains entry into parliament by framing his Muslim identity within the broader context of citizenship, thereby aligning himself with the collective vision of the republic. However, the notion of community is shaped not only by participation but also through the construction of narratives.

Through the recognition of Partition without reliving its violence, Chauhan establishes an arena of discourse where a Muslim ex-royal could claim Bittora as his home without being bound by the memory of partition. The novel is therefore a critical approach to modern fiction that attempts to reconcile the conflict between traumatic inheritance and democratic aspiration, and in the process, the novel argues that national belonging is achieved through intentional modes of association made by means of memory that is carefully tended.

Literature Review

The most common preemptive interpretive approaches in critical scholarship on Partition literature have been the focus on trauma, displacement, and testimonial memory as main interpretive frameworks. Histories of post-1947 fiction often prioritize violence, discontinuity, and the intergenerational inheritance of loss and place Muslim subjectivity into the frames of marginality and precarious belonging. Within this literature, Partition is approached as a wound of origin, which requires narrative expression and moral memory. Although these methods have made Partition a long-lasting cultural phenomenon, they tend to put more emphasis on explicit representation of trauma, as opposed to narrative methods that mediate or embrace it.

Similar to Partition literature, the literature of cultural memory has moved beyond the question of what is remembered to the question of how memory is organized. Memory is not a passive recalling process but an active process which is influenced by framing, mediation, and selective emphasis. The practice of foregrounding and backgrounding certain histories is what constitutes collective identities. In post conflict societies, this modulation can function as a stabilizing mechanism, allowing civic identity to persist without constant reactivation of divisive pasts.

Imagined belonging is the concept described by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* that has further informed discussions of collective identity in South Asian contexts. This formulation has been used extensively to study the way in which political engagement and collective institutions produce a sense of fraternity that cuts across religious or ethnic divisions. Nevertheless, the overlap between imagined community and selective memory in modern popular fiction is understudied. Recent memory studies, particularly the work of Paul Ricoeur, have emphasized that forgetting can operate as a regulated and productive force within collective identity formation rather than as simple erasure. However, this dimension of narrative withholding remains underexplored in existing readings of *Battle for Bittora*, which have not sufficiently examined how selective containment of Partition trauma enables the articulation of Muslim belonging within democratic imagination.

Existing criticism on *Battle for Bittora* has primarily focused on genre, style, and popular narrative elements rather than its negotiation of memory, identity, and nationhood. Some scholars have explored its stylistic significance within world Englishes; for instance, E. Dawson Varughese, in his research paper “Style in World Englishes Literature: *Battle for Bittora* (2010) by Anuja Chauhan,” situates the novel within broader discussions of global English literary practice, emphasizing its linguistic hybridity and narrative texture. Additionally, the research paper titled “Wit, War, and Wooing: The Language of Love in Anuja Chauhan’s Romantic Comedies” by Trivedi Nikhilkumar Jayantilal and Dr. Rohit Govindprasad Kushwaha examines Chauhan’s integration of humor, Hinglish, and cultural context to generate emotional resonance, though its focus remains on romantic and stylistic devices rather than memory politics. These studies provide useful insight into Chauhan’s narrative strategies, yet they have not engaged deeply with how the novel narratively contains traumatic Partition memory to enable discourse on belonging. This gap underscores the need for a cultural memory approach that foregrounds how selective emphasis and narrative modulation operate in the novel’s construction of Muslim citizenship and national affiliation.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on the framework of Cultural Memory, which examines the process of collective identity formation by scrutinizing the mechanisms of remembrance, framing, and selective forgetting. Cultural memory is not treated as archival recall but as a mediated, socially organized practice through which communities stabilize identity across historical rupture. Within post-partition India, memory of 1947 operates as a structuring presence that informs Muslim subjectivity, national discourse, and democratic imagination. However, memory is never totally true. It is framed, emphasized, or contained depending on the needs of the present. This study draws on Paul Ricoeur’s concept of productive forgetting in *Memory, History, Forgetting* to argue that the withholding of detailed Partition trauma functions as a deliberate mnemonic strategy.

The study unequivocally employs Benedict Anderson's concept of the Imagined Community from his work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* to articulate a robust sense of national identity through a mnemonic structure. Anderson's characterization of the nation as an imagined political community, offers a powerful framework for understanding how collective affiliation is strengthened by symbolic and institutional forms beyond mere primordial unity. This imagined community is grounded in a shared understanding of sovereignty and fosters a horizontal comradeship among citizens who, despite never fully knowing one another, are bound together.

Combined, this framework allows two analytical perspectives. Initially, it investigates the functioning of democratic participation as a performative reenactment of imagined belonging. Later, it discusses the role of the containment of traumatic memory in such reaffirmation. Cultural memory theory underlines that forgetting is not just unavailability but a structural process that governs identity constructions. Traumatic past, in a post-conflict society, can be recognized but placed in the background to ensure civic continuity. Applying this integrated framework to the novel, *Battle for Bittora*, it enables an analysis of how the Muslim identity is repositioned in terms of the democratic present. Belonging is created by the interaction of inventive sovereignty and disciplined memory practices, which determine how national identity is maintained both through participation as well as through deliberate narrative austerity.

Analysis

In the novel, *Battle for Bittora*, Anuja Chauhan engages with a multifaceted legacy of Partition through the character Zain Altaf Khan, a former Muslim royal, who participated in the Lok Sabha election. The campaign led by Zain is not presented as a simple quest to hold the political office. It is presented as a space for the intersection of history, identity, and citizenship. As a descendant of royal lineage functioning in post-partition India, he has inherited several inheritances simultaneously. These include the remnants of feudal power, the shade of communal fragmentation, and the obligations of democratic involvement.

Although the novel openly acknowledges Partition and its historical consequences, it refrains from dramatizing the violence in graphic or sensational terms. Instead, the narrative adopts a measured and restrained tone. This choice is significant. It shifts attention from spectacle to structure, from traumatic excess to civic performance. As Paul Ricoeur observes, narrative necessarily contains a selective dimension, since it is impossible to recount everything exhaustively. The restraint in Chauhan's narrative, therefore, does not signal erasure, but configuration. Recounting may occur by eliminating or shifting the emphasis, and here the emphasis is redirected from traumatic spectacle to democratic agency.

Such restraint invites analysis through the lens of Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism as articulated in *Imagined Communities*, particularly in relation to how nations are sustained through selective memory and narrative calibration. Within this framework, Zain's political participation can be seen not only as individual ambition but as a performative act within the broader process of imagining and stabilizing the nation. Similarly, the narrative withholding highlights Ricoeur's reflections in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, where forgetting is theorized not merely as absence but as a regulated and productive dimension of collective life. Ricoeur's distinction between pathological forgetting and deliberate, structural modulation of memory enables the reading of this

restraint as mnemonic recalibration rather than erasure. Partition is recognized as a historical rupture, yet it does not dominate the interpretive horizon. In this sense, the containment of graphic trauma functions as an ethical and narrative act that allows civic continuity to take precedence over affective repetition, thereby facilitating the articulation of belonging within the sovereign present.

Benedict Anderson characterizes the nation in his work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* as “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). Zain’s participation in electoral politics gives concrete form to this formulation. His candidacy is not an advancement of personal career but a performance of faith in the sovereign system of the Indian republic as the legitimate ground of political identity. Coming from an aristocratic lineage historically associated with localized and hereditary authority, Zain enters a regime of constitutional process and democratic election.

The symbolic value of this shift is very heavy. The power formerly based on descent and status is to be judged by the decision of the electorate. During this transformation, the former vertical systems of privilege are replaced by the horizontal reasoning of citizenship whereby legitimacy is acquired not through lineage but through a democratic contract. The constructed nature of the nation is emphasized by the so-called imagined dimension of the nation instead of the question of authenticity. As Benedict Anderson observes, “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (6). This observation emphasizes the focus of the narrative style and focus.

The narrative style used by Chauhan plays a significant role in the novel. Paul Ricoeur’s argument in *Memory, History, Forgetting* suggests that collective identity relies on structured processes of both remembering and forgetting. In this context, the stylistic choice in question can be viewed as a conscious modification of traumatic memory, rather than a rejection of it. Partition is still a constituent of the historical consciousness in the novel, but it is not presented in graphic or emotionally loaded images of violence. Instead, the narrative energy is shifted towards campaigner tactics, citizen interviews, constituency relationships, and the games of electoral politics. Through these elements being foregrounded, the text values any form of democratic participation as it is more than the retrospective immersion in suffering. In this structure, Zain experiences of belonging are not constructed through the inherited accounts of disruption but through the exercised activities of being a citizen. His political activity turns out to be the place where identity is bargained and confirmed, so that the belonging is established in the current practice of democracy, instead of being reiterated in articulating trauma.

This difference becomes especially important when Zain does not hesitate to tell the world that India is the only place he has ever lived. In contrast, “most members of my family chose to go to Pakistan after independence, while my grandfather decided to stay here. Because this was his home”(147). This claim cannot be disaggregated out of the historical atmosphere of 1947, in which Muslim belonging was severely examined and prone to suspicion. His words do not erase that past. Instead, they function as a conscious and self-aware affirmation of attachment. As Benedict Anderson explains, the nation is an imagined community “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (6). Zain’s declaration operates within this imaginative field. By articulating that Bittora was my mother, he subconsciously

identifies himself with a large and mostly invisible community, potentially forming fellowship with people he will not physically meet.

The concept of limitation plays a significant role in understanding national identity. Benedict Anderson emphasizes that nations are perceived as limited entities, stating that even the largest nation, which may include over a billion individuals, has defined, albeit flexible, boundaries that separate it from other nations. These limitations are not solely geographic; they also pertain to the criteria for political membership. Historical events such as partition have redefined these boundaries, transforming religious differences into territorial divisions and shaping the political consciousness surrounding that delineation. Consequently, Muslim identity becomes intricately linked to issues of loyalty and geographical affiliation. For Muslims—particularly those from royal lineages—participating in elections within the framework of a post-Partition republic challenges the traditional assumptions regarding who is entitled to occupy and represent the national space.

Zain's candidacy is an indication of the assertion of presence in those finite boundaries. He does not appear as a person at the periphery of national consciousness but as an active member of its sovereign system. By contesting in the election, he situates his Muslim identity squarely within the context of the Indian constitution, implying that the Indian Muslim should no longer be bound to the memory of territorial discontinuity. The treatment of the partition memory in the novel raises close observation. Narrative silence emerges first from the structural limits of memory and storytelling. As Paul Ricoeur asserts, "The narrative necessarily contains a selective dimension" (448). Every narrative organizes experience through inclusion and omission. Silence, therefore, is not inherently repression; it is constitutive of emplotment itself. What matters is the purpose and effect of that selectivity.

Benedict Anderson notes that countries are commonly imagined as though their boundaries have been provided by nature itself, even though they are historically produced formations (6). Anderson asserts the nation as:

No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet.

It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the allomorphism between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.

Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. (7)

The concept of partition illustrates the constructed nature of national boundaries, which were established for practical reasons but resulted in significant and enduring consequences. Chauhan does not dwell on the arbitrariness of these boundaries, but instead, the narrative emphasis shifts to the continuation of citizenship within the established boundaries. The involvement of electoral politics by Zain is representative of

a reorientation of sovereignty. Power is no longer based on colonial boundaries or social division, but one based on the will of the people expressed in democratic processes. In this way, the novel places the sense of national belonging in the context of the contemporary operationalization of the republic as opposed to the conflicting sources of the boundaries.

Voting, campaigning, and public debate operate as civic rituals by means of which the country is constantly redefined. In this context, Zain's candidacy goes beyond just electoral race; it is a ceremonial confirmation of membership. In doing so, by entering the civic world and exposing himself to the scrutiny of voters, he concurs with what Anderson refers to as a deep, horizontal comradeship. This horizontality is decisive since it dilutes differences based on lineage, status, or communal background and places all candidates within the same evaluative field of democratic judgment. Being related to the royal heritage, Zain is now an equal candidate with the rest of the aspirants; his Muslim identity is recognized but does not always have a deterministic effect on his national legitimacy.

At the same time, the novel neither blindly glorifies nor, conversely, denounces the ideological story of India as a multiethnic and democratic nation. Zain's emphasis on inclusivity reflects the principles of secular nationalism, enhancing its aspirational quality. However, his quest to define his sense of belonging reveals an underlying tension: if national unity were truly self-evident, such proclamations about identity and belonging would likely be unnecessary. The repetition of his affirmations thus underlines the performative nature of the imagined community which suggests that the cohesion must be acted upon, rather than assumed.

The comparative displacement of the Partition trauma within the narrative can be interpreted as an intentional, aesthetic, and political decision. The eschewing of long-term concentration on violence in Chauhan creates a domain where a declaration of home by Zain does not feel defensive. The absence of a detailed description of violence prevents his words from sounding like an attempt to counter accusations or to prove his loyalty when suspected. Had the plot been so concentrated on communal brutality, his affirmation could have been seen as a reactionary force, as a response to explain his existence within the nation. Rather, the circumspect approach to history allows his attachment to seem self-determined; his belonging becomes an act of conformity and not a counterargument. Such positioning echoes the definition of sovereignty by Anderson as an imaginative construction maintained by the collective identification. The country survives due to the deliberate projection of people in the realm of the country. This expressed desire to belong in the sovereign community, not by force, but by choice, is best explained by Zain as he speaks of Bittora, as home.

It is necessary to define that this narrative restraint does not necessarily mean erasure. The text accepts Partition as a historical fact, but it rebels against the conversion of the historical fact into the spectacle of emotion. This memory management implies a controlled mechanism of remembering where the past is not rejected or given the opportunity to overshadow the present. Memory does not seize the narrative field, but it is recognized. This modulation may also be used as a stabilizing act within the post-conflict situation, since, it allows collective identity to move forward without the renunciation of historical break. The novel enacts an imputed prospective understanding of nationhood by prefiguring civic action in the face of inherited hostility.

This orientation is supported by the fact that Zain has been rooted in Bittora. His identity with the town grounds, national belonging in lived geography, as opposed to abstract rhetoric. The imagined community is made real through constituency meetings, campaign speeches, negotiations with local actors, and the rhythms of quotidian political life. The construction of national identity in this context is performed in the everyday practice of democracy and not articulated through sweeping historical myths. The nation thereby becomes actualized within the mundane participatory spaces, where affiliation is undertaken in concrete, localized forms. This situation illustrates the negotiations of the national identity in postcolonial India in the intersection of historical memory and civic performance. The Muslim identity that Zain has developed, in most cases, under the influence of the Partition legacy, does not restrict his role in the polity; his engagement in elections actively serves to redefine that identity in the sovereign context of the republic. In the context of democratic participation, inherited communal positioning is being re-formatted as constitutional belonging.

Thus, the model presented by Anderson explains how nations endure through imaginative affiliation. The novel by Chauhan implies that it might take careful tuning of traumatic memory to maintain any connection; the past is accepted and acknowledged, but it is not allowed to control the conditions in which belonging is articulated. Overall, national belonging in the novel, *Battle for Bittora*, is presented as something imaginatively affiliated and narratively restrained. By just referencing the Partition without describing the trauma related to it, the novel creates space for a Muslim ex-royal to express national commitment that is not subject to negotiation. The candidacy of Zain serves as an enactment of imagined sovereignty, which supports Anderson in his claim that nations are sustained through collective belief in communal relations despite historical rupture. Selective emphasis does not deny history; instead, it rearranges it in such a way that civic involvement becomes the main mechanism that keeps the imagined community alive.

Discussion and Findings

The present paper examines the way the novel *Battle for Bittora* negotiates the issue of Muslim identity in post-Partition India, particularly through the character Zain Altaf Khan, a former royal Muslim candidate and Lok Sabha contender. The discussion does not merely note that Partition is mentioned as a historical reference but analyzes how the event is structurally positioned within the narrative. The findings indicate the implementation of a strategy of purposeful containment by Chauhan. Partition is acknowledged as a historical rupture, yet its traumatic dimensions are not exhaustively dramatized. This restraint enables the text to foreground civic participation rather than perpetuate communal antagonism as the dominant prism of identity.

Utilizing Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined political community, the analysis demonstrates that Zain's candidacy embodies this framework. His participation in democratic electoral politics marks a shift from inherited aristocratic authority to participatory sovereignty. Feudal lineage and communal memory no longer function as primary markers of legitimacy; instead, citizenship is redefined within the constitutional and institutional framework of the republic.

This repositioning is reinforced by Zain's assertion that India is the only country he has ever called home. His claim is grounded not in genealogy or historical entitlement but in civic identification with the nation-state. Belonging, in this context, appears as a deliberate political association shaped through democratic participation rather than as a

defensive reaction to the legacy of Partition. The narrative approach of Chauhan is central to this reconfiguration. As Anderson notes, communities are distinguished not by their falsity or genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined (6). The nation in the novel is visualized not through scenes of violence or retrospective mourning, but through campaign speeches, electoral competition, media engagement, and direct interaction with constituents. National identity is expressed through democratic routine as the primary site of articulation. By foregrounding these political processes, the narrative shifts attention from inherited trauma to contemporary agency.

The key finding concerns the function of selective memory. Partition remains an irrefutable historical phenomenon shaping Indian political consciousness, especially in relation to Muslim identity. However, the novel does not present this trauma through prolonged or graphic recollection. Such silence does not constitute denial; it signals narrative modulation. Communal history is recognized but does not dominate the interpretive horizon. This framing allows Muslim identity to move beyond exclusive association with rupture and instead be situated within the ongoing practice of democratic citizenship.

A significant tension between ideological inclusion and lived complexity also emerges. The novel resonates with the ethos of multicultural and democratic India and reflects broader postcolonial investments in secular citizenship. Yet Zain's repeated affirmation of belonging suggests that inclusivity is not automatic. The imagined community requires continual reaffirmation through symbolic declaration and institutional participation. Electoral politics thus transcends routine procedure and becomes a site where memory and sovereignty are negotiated, and where civic rituals recalibrate the relationship between historical inheritance and present identity.

Another notable finding concerns the transformation of Zain's aristocratic identity within democratic modernity. His royal lineage links him to a pre-national order disrupted by colonial reorganization and Partition. Through electoral politics, that lineage is reinterpreted within a constitutional framework rather than discarded. Hereditary authority is transformed into participatory legitimacy. This shift illustrates the adaptability of the imagined community in accommodating historical complexity while aligning allegiance with contemporary sovereignty.

The study further suggests that Chauhan's narrative technique reflects patterns observable in post-conflict contexts, where cohesion is sustained through calibrated emphasis. By declining to render Partition violence in graphic detail, the novel avoids reactivating antagonistic memory. Instead, it privileges civic procedure and collective mobilization, positioning historical fragmentation as contextual rather than central. The endurance of the imagined community thus depends less on the exhaustive reconciliation of the past than on active engagement in the present.

These findings complicate trauma-centered readings of Partition literature. While the ethical importance of testimony and remembrance remains evident, *Battle for Bittora* advances an alternative narrative logic in which belonging is consolidated through restraint as much as through recollection. National identity, in this configuration, is sustained not solely by memorializing rupture but by managing its narrative prominence so that civic continuity and democratic affiliation remain primary.

Finally, the paper demonstrates that *Battle for Bittora* intervenes in contemporary discussions of postcolonial nationalism by illustrating how the imagined community can be sustained through active engagement and selective memory. Zain's electoral

participation underscores the performative dimension of belonging; citizenship materializes through speech, participation, and collective validation. This enactment becomes possible through the relative marginalization of Partition trauma, enabling Muslim identity to be articulated within the democratic nation-state rather than positioned in structural opposition to it.

Thus, *Battle for Bittora* encapsulates a central insight: national belonging in post-Partition India is neither instinctive nor reducible to abstract ideology. It is continuously negotiated through political participation, historical consciousness, and calibrated narrative emphasis. By positioning trauma at the periphery rather than the center, Chauhan establishes a discursive space in which civic identity can supersede communal fragmentation. The imagined community endures not because historical rupture is fully resolved, but because citizens repeatedly enact affiliation within democratic structures.

Conclusion

The present paper argues that *Battle for Bittora* reconstructs the discourse of Muslim belonging in post-Partition India through narrative restraint and civic performance. Zain Altaf Khan, a Muslim former royal, carries within him the historical memory of Partition and its communal consequences. Yet the narrative does not confine him to a trauma-defined subjectivity. Partition is acknowledged as rupture, but it does not function as the organizing center of his identity. In this sense, the novel exemplifies what Paul Ricoeur identifies as the selective configuration of memory, where remembering and forgetting operates not as opposites but as structured dimensions of narrative construction.

Zain's declaration that India is the only country he has ever called home derives its force from its absence of defensiveness or rhetorical excess. His belonging is grounded in democratic participation rather than inherited grievance. By entering electoral politics, he situates himself within the sovereign civic structure of the republic and affirms membership through institutional engagement. In light of Benedict Anderson's formulation in *Imagined Communities*, this gesture may be read as a reaffirmation of the imagined community, sustained through shared political practice rather than ethnic uniformity.

The novel therefore proposes a model of post-Partition identity formation that neither denies historical rupture nor permits it to dominate the present. What emerges is a form of narrative modulation consistent with Ricoeur's insight that recounting always involves selection and shifting emphasis. Memory is acknowledged yet contained. Civic action becomes the primary site through which belonging is articulated. National identity, in this configuration, emerges as a deliberate and historically conscious affiliation enacted in the present rather than a reactive position defined solely by inherited trauma.

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