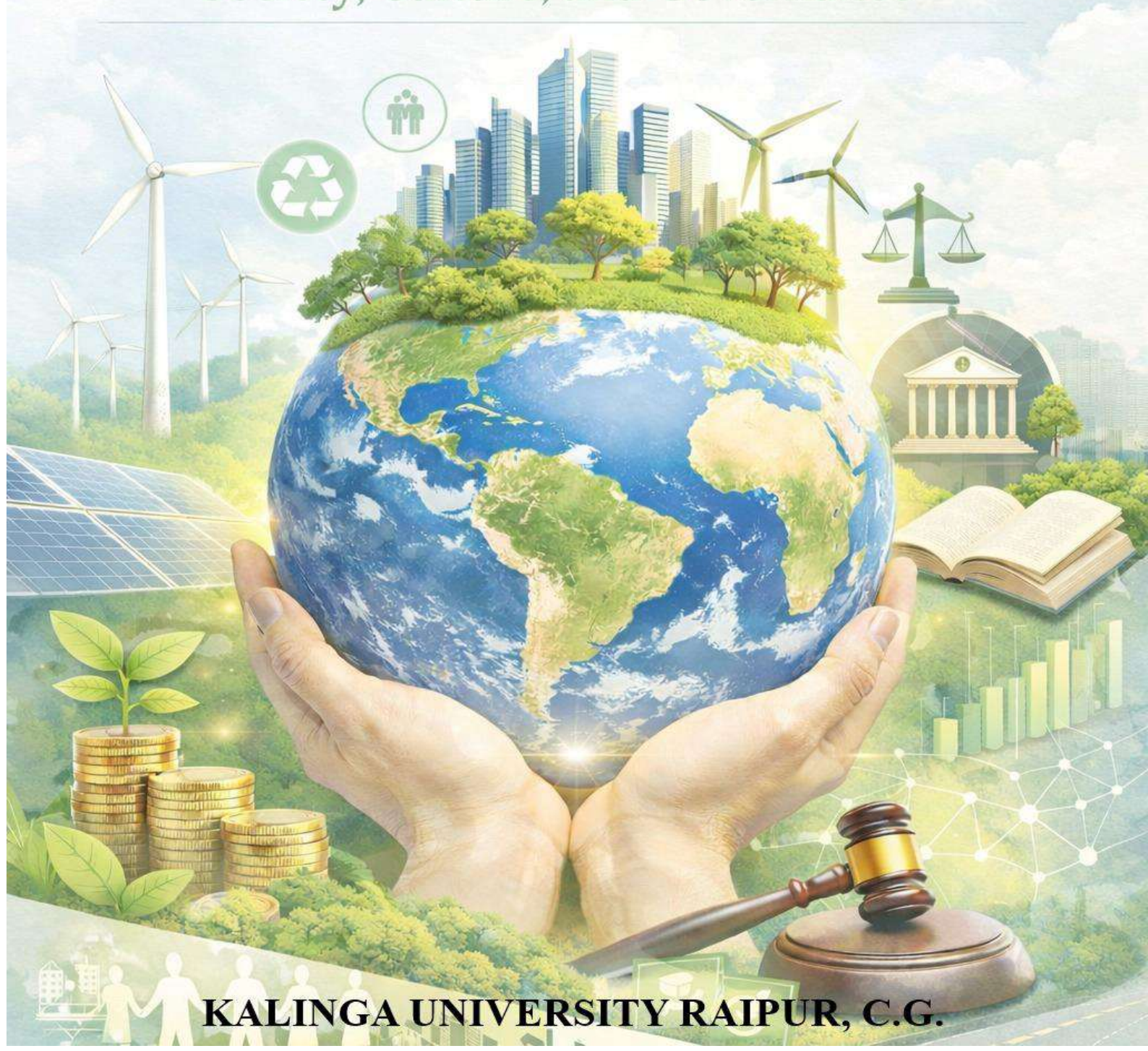




CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Society, Culture, and Governance



KALINGA UNIVERSITY RAIPUR, C.G.



पीएम आवास योजना



26 लाख

से अधिक परिवारों को पक्की छत देने वाले

महतारी वंदन योजना



70 लाख

महिलाओं को आर्थिक रूप से आत्मनिर्भर बनाने वाले

पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि



26 लाख

किसानों के चेहरे पर मुस्कान लौटाने वाले

तेंदूपत्ता संग्रहण दर ₹5500 मानक बोरा



13 लाख

संग्राहक परिवारों के चेहरे पर मुस्कान लाने वाले

मोदी

संग बढ़त है

छत्तीसगढ़



छत्तीसगढ़ में शांति, विश्वास और विकास का मार्ग हो रहा प्रशस्त



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प्रधानमंत्री उज्वला योजना



37 लाख

महिलाओं को धुएं से मुक्ति दिलाने वाले

श्री रामलला अयोध्या धाम दर्शन योजना



37 हजार

से अधिक राम भक्तों को अयोध्या धाम की निःशुल्क यात्रा कराने वाले

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CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Society, Culture, And Governance

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Message from the The Vice-Chancellor



It gives me immense pleasure to extend my warm greetings and best wishes on the publication of the edited volume *Critical Perspectives on Sustainable Futures: Society, Culture and Governance*. This significant scholarly endeavor reflects a timely engagement with the pressing concerns of sustainability that shape our collective present and future.

In an era marked by rapid transformation, the pursuit of sustainable development requires thoughtful dialogue that bridges disciplines and integrates diverse perspectives. The contributions compiled in this volume — representing academic voices from across the country — exemplify the commitment of scholars to address complex societal, cultural, and governance-related challenges through critical inquiry and research. Such intellectual initiatives strengthen the role of higher education institutions as catalysts for responsible knowledge creation and social progress.

I commend the editors, contributors, and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities for their dedication and academic rigor in bringing together this comprehensive collection. Their efforts reaffirm the university's commitment to fostering interdisciplinary scholarship and promoting research that is both socially relevant and globally conscious.

I am confident that this volume will serve as a valuable resource for researchers, students, policymakers, and practitioners, inspiring meaningful reflection and further exploration in the domain of sustainability studies.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to everyone associated with this publication and convey my best wishes for its wide readership and lasting impact.

Dr. R. Shridhar
Vice-Chancellor
Kalinga University

Preface



Sustainable Futures: Society, Culture and Governance, is a volume that emerges from a collective recognition that the challenges confronting our world today demand interdisciplinary dialogue, critical reflection, and intellectual responsibility. Sustainability is no longer confined to environmental discourse alone; it has evolved into a multidimensional framework encompassing social justice, cultural continuity, ethical governance, and equitable development. This edited book brings together chapters contributed by scholars from across India, reflecting a wide spectrum of academic traditions, methodological approaches, and critical engagements.

I am deeply gratified to witness the convergence of voices represented in this collection. The contributions span diverse domains — literature, culture, public policy, history, sociology, governance studies, and allied disciplines — demonstrating the central role of the humanities and social sciences in shaping sustainable futures. These chapters do not merely respond to contemporary crises; they interrogate dominant paradigms, foreground marginalized perspectives, and propose frameworks for inclusive and ethical progress. The editorial process of this book has been marked by intellectual rigor, dialogue, and shared commitment to advancing scholarly inquiry that is socially meaningful.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all contributors whose research and reflections have shaped this volume, and to the editorial team whose dedication ensured its realization. Their efforts exemplify academic integrity and collaborative spirit. I hope that this book will serve not only as a repository of knowledge but also as a catalyst for further research, policy engagement, and pedagogical innovation in the field of sustainability studies.

May this work inspire readers!

Dr. Shilpi Bhattacharya
Professor and Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Kalinga University, Naya Raipur, Chhattisgarh

Critical Perspectives on Sustainable Futures Society, Culture, And Governance

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“Community Narratives in Independent Cinema: Voices from the Margins and Their Role in Cultural Sustainability”

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Abstract

Independent cinema has increasingly become an essential platform for expressing community narratives that are inadequately represented in mainstream media. This paper analyzes the way independent films highlight the lived experiences of marginalized communities and serve as cultural texts that enhance cultural sustainability. By focusing on local stories, social realities and different voices, independent cinema goes against mainstream stories and shows more diverse forms of representation. The study utilizes qualitative textual analysis of selected independent films to investigate how community-based storytelling sustains cultural memory, strengthens collective identity and promotes social awareness. The paper contends that independent cinema not only elevates marginalized voices but also serves a crucial function in preserving cultural diversity and promoting critical engagement with social issues in modern society.

Keywords

Independent cinema, Community narratives, Marginalized voices, Cultural sustainability, Representation, Social change

Introduction

Cinema is an important part of modern culture. It is not only a way to watch movies, but also a powerful way for societies to tell stories about themselves. Movies help build social meaning by changing how people see and understand communities, identities and cultural practices. Over time, however, the stories told in mainstream movies have mostly been shaped by money, standard formats and the dominant cultural point of view. Consequently, numerous community-specific experiences, especially those of marginalized and underrepresented groups, remain either obscured or inadequately represented in mainstream cinema.

Independent cinema stands out as an important alternative in this larger media world. Independent films often deal with social issues that come from real life rather than just being flashy. This is because they don't have to follow the rules of commercial production systems. These movies focus on stories about communities that come from certain cultural, geographical, and socio-political settings. Independent cinema allows communities to tell their own stories or be represented with more depth and sensitivity by focusing on everyday life, oral histories, local traditions and shared struggles. It does this by going against the usual rules of cinema and pushing the limits of what film can show.

The idea of "voices from the margins" is key to understanding why community stories are important in independent films. Historically, marginalized communities, characterized by caste, class, ethnicity, gender, language or regional location, have experienced restricted access to cultural expression platforms. Independent cinema offers a platform for these voices to be expressed without the constraints of mainstream norms. These kinds of representations go beyond tokenism and show nuanced pictures that show agency, resilience, and cultural complexity. Through these stories, movies become places where people can see, recognize and assert their culture. Cultural sustainability offers a valuable perspective for analyzing the overarching importance of these cinematic practices. Cultural sustainability is the idea that different cultural expressions should be kept alive and relevant even as society changes, modernizes, and becomes more global. Community-based films help keep culture alive by recording things like rituals, languages, belief systems, and ways of interacting with others that can't be seen. Independent films help keep cultural knowledge alive by turning these elements into stories on screen. This way, knowledge is passed down, remembered, and reinterpreted from one generation to the next.

Independent cinema also helps bring about change in society by getting people to think critically about what they see. When people see real stories about their communities, they are encouraged to think about the social inequalities, cultural hierarchies, and systems of exclusion that shape their daily lives. These movies often get people talking, feeling, and thinking, which makes public discourse more open and welcoming. In this regard, independent cinema functions as a cultural and social intervention, connecting representation with social awareness.

This study regards community narratives in independent cinema as essential cultural texts that fulfill both representational and transformative roles. This paper aims to investigate the articulation of marginalized voices, the preservation of cultural identities, and the contribution of cinema to the ongoing process of cultural sustainability through the examination of selected independent films. This analysis emphasizes the capacity of

independent cinema to serve as a medium that both mirrors society and actively influences its cultural and ethical imagination.

Literature Review

Recent research indicates that independent cinema in India is maintained by a diverse ecosystem, comprising international co-production, festival markets, alternative producers, digital tools, and inconsistent access to domestic exhibition. Research on India's "transnational producers" underscores how emerging creative producers facilitate the assembly of funding, training, and festival pathways for independent projects, thereby constructing alternative infrastructures in contexts where state support and conventional financing are constrained (Bhatia, 2023). This focus on production culture is important because many community stories depend on these alternative circuits to exist at all. When big-budget commercial movies are the most popular in theaters, independent movies have to deal with politics and institutional gatekeeping in order to stay alive.

Studies at the industry level show that structural shocks and platform shifts change the kinds of stories that people see. For example, research on how the Indian film industry dealt with disruptions (including changes during the pandemic) shows how networks and relationships with stakeholders affect resilience and recovery (Rammal et al., 2023). This isn't just about community stories, but it does explain why some movies get more attention than others that are stuck in festival loops or limited releases. Simultaneous public discourse regarding "exhibition inequity" highlights the persistent difficulty of screen access for independent films, which may limit the societal impact of marginalized narratives, even when they receive critical acclaim (Times of India, 2024). This supports a key point when read with production studies: the cultural role of independent cinema cannot be separated from the material conditions of circulation.

Streaming has added a new level to this ecosystem. Research on India's film-centric video culture posits that streaming in India adheres to a distinct disruption timeline compared to television-dominant markets, asserting that platforms transform viewing habits, distribution paradigms, and cultural consumption (Tiwary, 2024). This is important for community stories because OTT spaces can sometimes make it easier for stories that don't fit with mainstream theater risk calculations to be told. Platform logics can also put new pressure on what is "marketable" as realism, marginality, or region. A prominent India-centric theme in recent research is the increasing acknowledgment of regional cinemas as vital arenas for the construction of cultural identity. Instead of equating Indian cinema with Bollywood, modern research highlights India's multilingual film cultures and how regional films convey local histories, idioms, and cultural memory. Recent scholarship on Indian cinema and cultural identity positions cinema as a venue for the negotiation of tradition, modernity, and global influence, wherein "Indian identity" is perpetually constructed through narrative choices, aesthetics, and values (Sarkar & Choudry, 2025). This type of work may be macro in nature, but it is pertinent to your topic as community narratives frequently function at this intersection: they maintain cultural specificity while addressing wider social transformation.

Regional and language-based storytelling is directly related to cultural sustainability, especially when movies are used to keep cultures alive. The case for cultural sustainability is stronger when research makes clear connections between regional cinema and preserving language and heritage. For instance, research on regional cinema and language revitalization positions films as cultural assets that can enhance linguistic visibility and foster intergenerational engagement, particularly in the context of media homogenization. Discussions about streaming add a practical side: as platforms put money into content that isn't Hindi, regional stories can cross state lines and reach people living abroad, which could help cultural sustainability by spreading them more widely (Tiwary, 2024).

However, scholars also warn that a "pan-Indian" interest can lead to selective visibility, where only certain types of regional stories are promoted, usually those that fit well with national consumption patterns.

Caste representation and Dalit subjectivity are two of the most important areas of recent Indian film research. In this context, community narratives transcend mere "identity" discourse; they evolve into mechanisms of cultural resistance and political expression. Recent studies of caste and cinema show how representations of caste and Dalit subjectivity have changed over time, and how "Dalit cinema" and caste-aware filmmaking make it harder to erase or stereotype people (Bunkar, 2024).

More focused recent research investigates post-liberalization Hindi cinema, highlighting transformations in the representation of Dalit characters and caste relations, including alterations in narrative framing and visibility (Kumar, 2025).

This line of scholarship is significant for your paper as it substantiates a fundamental assertion: independent or alternative film practices can create representational spaces in which marginalized communities are depicted not merely as narrative accessories, but as agents possessing interiority and socio-political context.

Notably, caste studies are increasingly converging with intersectionality. Research on intersectionalities in mainstream Hindi cinema highlights that identities in Indian film cannot be interpreted through a singular axis;

Critical Perspectives on Sustainable Futures Society, Culture, And Governance

caste, class, religion, language, region, and gender frequently coalesce to shape representation (Eswaran Pillai, 2024).

For a study on community narratives, this is methodologically beneficial: it substantiates the analysis of films through multifaceted identities rather than perceiving "the community" as monolithic.

Regional cinemas have also become important for research on caste politics and resistance. For instance, academic research examining the portrayal of Dalit empowerment and resistance in the Tamil film *Maamannan* (2023) underscores how cinema can facilitate political expression and communal representation within culturally specific frameworks of region, language, and political history (Journal of Historical Sociology, 2025).

A significant recent development in India-centric media research is the meticulous examination of OTT narratives and representation. OTT is not the same as "independent cinema," but it is becoming more and more like an adjacent space where non-mainstream stories can be told, such as those about women, minorities, and rural or small-town settings. Reports and studies analysing gender representation in popular Indian OTT content indicate significant scrutiny of stereotypes, role dynamics, and narrative agency, particularly in content released in 2023 on major platforms (Population First/UNFPA-related study, 2024–2025).

This collection of works is valuable for community narratives as it recontextualizes visibility: representation encompasses not merely "who appears," but also the organization of their experiences into plot, conflict, and resolution. Recent studies of marginalized women in digital narratives contend that OTT spaces have facilitated alternative representations that challenge patriarchy, social stigma, and rural power dynamics.

Community narratives are most effectively conveyed when cinema is integrated with documentary and participatory practices, allowing communities to not only be represented but also to actively influence that representation. Although documentary scholarship focused on India is extensive, broader film ethnography research continues to be pertinent as it offers ethical and methodological foundations for examining community storytelling. Recent scholarship linking film ethnography to critical consciousness posits that film practice can be associated with reflection and transformation, resonating with Freirean concepts of consciousness-raising (Brown, 2024).

Similarly, research on collaborative filmmaking underscores how participatory audiovisual methodologies can disrupt unilateral authorship and foster socially integrated modes of Knowledge production (Bee, 2024).

For an India-centric perspective, this is significant as numerous community narratives, particularly within Adivasi/tribal, rural, or labour contexts, are most effectively examined through inquiries of authorship, access, and ethics: who narrates the story, who gains advantages, and whose voice is regarded as authoritative? Even when the film is made up, these debates based on real-life events affect how researchers think about authenticity, gaze, and cultural ownership.

A persistent issue in dialogues regarding independent cinema in India is the susceptibility of alternative narratives to regulatory and political influences. There are different levels of academic quality in legal analyses, but the institutional reality is clear: certification and regulation decide what can be shown to the public and, by extension, what can be talked about in mainstream culture. The CBFC's official role and changing rules have become especially clear in debates about openness, certification practices, and how to get certification information (CBFC official notices and guidelines, 2024). Public documentation and reporting on controversial certification decisions show a bigger problem: community stories that question state institutions, talk about caste discrimination, or show systemic violence can have trouble getting released and reaching people in their own country, which limits their ability to change the very society they show (The Guardian reporting on blocked/contested releases, 2025).

Even if news sources aren't "film theory," they can still be helpful in a literature review as proof of why circulation is important: Cultural sustainability through cinema relies not solely on production but also on visibility. Recent India-centric scholarship across these strands indicates a common conclusion: community narratives in independent and alternative screen cultures function as cultural texts that safeguard local memory while challenging dominant representation. Research on caste and intersectionality demonstrates that marginalized visibility is both political and inconsistent, with cinema having the capacity to either reinforce hierarchy or facilitate resistance (Bunkar, 2024; Eswaran Pillai, 2024; Kumar, 2025).

Research on streaming and India's video culture shows that new infrastructures can make things easier to get to, but they can also change the reasons for telling stories (Tiwary, 2024). Cultural identity scholarship contextualizes these narratives within extensive discussions of tradition, modernity, and global impact, allowing for cultural sustainability to be viewed as a framework rather than merely a slogan (Sarkar & Choudry, 2025).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to investigate the articulation of community narratives in independent cinema and their role in fostering cultural sustainability and societal transformation. Qualitative

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methods are especially appropriate for this investigation because they facilitate a comprehensive understanding of meaning, representation, and cultural context inherent in cinematic texts. The study utilizes textual and thematic analysis of chosen Indian independent films that highlight marginalized or community-oriented experiences. We chose the films on purpose based on three criteria: (a) they were made independently, (b) they dealt with community-specific stories like caste, region, gender, or labour, and (c) they were critically acclaimed at film festivals, in academic writing, or on alternative circulation platforms. This purposive sampling guarantees relevance to the research objectives while facilitating analytical depth. The analysis concentrates on narrative structure, characterization, visual symbolism, linguistic usage, and cultural indicators to comprehend the construction and maintenance of community identities. Secondary sources, such as academic articles, film critiques, and interviews with filmmakers, are employed to situate the films within extensive socio-cultural and industrial contexts. The study does not seek generalization; rather, it aims to produce interpretive insights regarding the cultural significance of independent cinema in contemporary India.

Findings

The analysis shows that independent films in India always put community stories at the centre of their plots instead of abstract social categories. The chosen films portray marginalized communities through quotidian experiences, interpersonal dynamics, and localized cultural traditions, thereby countering the sensationalism and stereotypical representations prevalent in mainstream cinema. One important finding is that these movies serve as archives of cultural memory, keeping alive the language, rituals, work habits, and social norms of certain groups. Independent films help document and make intangible cultural heritage more visible by paying close attention to local settings and cultural contexts. Another important finding is the focus on voice and agency. Characters who are on the outside are shown as active subjects instead of passive victims, which lets audiences connect with their points of view, feelings, and moral dilemmas. This narrative style helps people feel empathy and makes them think critically about structural inequalities based on caste, class, gender and region. The results also show that independent movies make it easier for people to connect with each other in different ways. These movies reach a wide range of people by being shown at film festivals, community screenings, and on digital platforms. They also get people talking about social justice, cultural identity and inclusion.

Discussion

The results corroborate existing research that regards independent cinema as a significant locus of cultural intervention. Independent films challenge dominant ways of representing things and broaden the cultural imagination beyond stories that are made to make money by focusing on community narratives. In India, where movies have a big impact on how people think, these kinds of actions are especially important.

From a cultural sustainability standpoint, the examined films illustrate how cinema can uphold cultural diversity by safeguarding localized knowledge systems and communal histories. These movies don't show culture as something that doesn't change or is stuck in the past. Instead, they show it as something that changes, is negotiated, and is a part of everyday life. This is in line with modern ideas about cultural sustainability as an active and ongoing process.

The conversation also shows how community stories can change things. When people see real-life stories of people who are on the fringes of society, movies become a way for them to think about ethics and learn about society. But the conversation does recognize that there are problems with access and visibility. Regulatory barriers, limited theatrical release, and platform-driven market logics continue to limit the reach of independent films, which has an effect on their impact on society as a whole.

In general, the discussion puts independent cinema at the crossroads of representation, cultural preservation, and social critique, making it a useful way to look at culture and society in modern India.

Conclusion

This study investigated community narratives in Indian independent cinema to comprehend their function in cultural sustainability and societal transformation. The study shows that independent films are an important way for underrepresented voices to be heard. They allow for culturally rooted storytelling that keeps community memory alive and questions dominant narratives.

Independent cinema helps keep different cultural identities alive in a media world that is becoming more and more similar by documenting real-life experiences and cultural practices. These movies also make people think critically and feel for others, making movies a socially responsible form of art instead of just entertainment.

Independent cinema encounters structural and institutional obstacles; however, its cultural relevance persists significantly. Subsequent research could enhance this study by integrating audience reception analysis or conducting comparative studies across various regions and platforms. In the end, community stories in independent films show how powerful stories can be in keeping culture alive, giving a voice to people who are often ignored, and making a real difference in social change.

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“Coding the Unconscious: Digital Humanities as a Platform for Neo-Surrealist Expression”

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Abstract

This paper investigates how contemporary Digital Humanities (DH) practices are evolving beyond analytical and archival paradigms to serve as expressive platforms for neo-surrealist thought. By integrating artificial intelligence, generative art, virtual reality, and digital interactivity, DH becomes a locus where unconscious drives, dream imagery, and irrational juxtapositions are coded into digital environments. Drawing from both the historical legacy of Surrealism and the affordances of computational creativity, this research traces the emergence of what is termed "neo-surrealist expression" an aesthetic and theoretical revival of the surreal, mediated through algorithmic systems. Through detailed case studies of generative AI texts, immersive VR installations, and digital art projects, the paper explores how the unconscious is no longer solely a psychoanalytic interiority, but a computational terrain coded by data, logic, and machine hallucination. Ultimately, this study proposes a critical framework for understanding Digital Humanities not just as a methodological toolkit, but as a creative force capable of mediating and manifesting the unconscious.

Keywords: Digital Humanities, Surrealism, Neo-Surrealism, Artificial Intelligence, Unconscious, VR Art, Generative Aesthetics, Algorithmic Expression

Introduction

Digital Humanities (DH) has traditionally been understood as an analytical field, defined by the application of computational tools to study, interpret, and visualize texts, cultures, and historical data. Scholars in this field have focused on the digitization of literary corpora, mapping cultural and linguistic trends, network analysis of social and textual data, and other methodologies that leverage computational efficiency to extract insight from large-scale datasets. In these practices, discipline has largely been guided by rationalist paradigms, emphasizing replicability, accuracy, and structured inquiry. The central ethos of DH, therefore, has historically been aligned with empirical and methodological rigor, seeking to enhance traditional humanities scholarship with precision and scale. As it is well stated-

"The marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful."
André Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924)

Yet, as digital technologies evolve, the scope of DH is expanding beyond its analytical foundations. The advent of generative algorithms, immersive media, and artificial intelligence challenges conventional boundaries, suggesting that DH need not remain confined to the rational or the empirical. A provocative question emerges: can Digital Humanities serve not only as an instrument of analysis but also as a platform for imaginative, unconscious, and dreamlike expression? In other words, can the computational frameworks that underpin DH also become vehicles for aesthetic experimentation, the exploration of irrational structures, and the translation of unconscious thought into tangible digital forms?

This paper affirmatively positions Digital Humanities as a potential "dream machine", capable of mediating between human cognition and algorithmic creativity. By conceptualizing code, data, and generative processes as conduits for unconscious expression, DH is reframed from a strict rationalist endeavor to a neo-surrealist practice, where computation becomes not merely a tool but a language of the unconscious, and datasets serve as palettes for imaginative possibility. In doing so, this approach extends the epistemological horizon of Digital Humanities, situating it at the intersection of humanistic inquiry, psychoanalytic theory, and contemporary digital creativity. As Fanon opines-

"The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards." (Black Skin, White Masks)

To understand the potential for neo-surrealist approaches within DH, it is essential to revisit the foundations of Surrealism, the artistic and literary movement of the early twentieth century. Initiated by André Breton and his contemporaries in the 1920s, Surrealism emerged in response to the cultural and psychological dislocations of post-World War I Europe. Surrealists sought to challenge the primacy of rationality and conscious intention by foregrounding the unconscious, dream logic, and irrational associations as valid modes of creative insight.

The movement was heavily influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis, which posited the unconscious as a repository of repressed desires, traumatic memories, and latent drives. Surrealist artists and writers adopted techniques designed to bypass conscious censorship and tap into these hidden mental realms. Practices such as automatism, wherein artists allowed hand or pen to move without conscious control, were designed to manifest unconscious thought directly into artistic form. Other strategies included juxtaposition, placing incongruous elements side by side to evoke unexpected meaning, and dream transcription, translating the logic and imagery of dreams into visual or textual media.

Although Surrealism was initially a reaction to the sociopolitical and psychological trauma of post-war Europe, its core methodologies retain enduring relevance. The emphasis on irrationality, paradox, and the liberation of desire continues to resonate within contemporary art, literature, and culture. Surrealism's insistence on the creative potential of the unconscious provides a theoretical bridge to the digital age, where computation and algorithmic processes can emulate forms of associative, non-linear thought that mirror dreamlike structures.

The integration of Surrealist principles into DH constitutes a neo-surrealist turn within the field, a reorientation from the rationalist paradigm toward an exploration of imagination, unpredictability, and the unconscious. Traditionally, DH has focused on structured analysis—mapping, annotating, and interpreting data within predefined frameworks. By contrast, a neo-surrealist DH reframes computational tools as collaborators in creative expression, capable of generating outputs that reflect associative, unexpected, or dreamlike qualities.

In this context, digital tools operate analogously to the Surrealist methods of the early twentieth century. Human automatism, as practiced by Surrealist writers, finds its digital counterpart in generative algorithms: programs that produce emergent patterns beyond explicit human control. The use of randomness, iterative processes, and combinatorial logic within algorithms parallels the Surrealist aim of bypassing conscious rationality, allowing the unconscious—or in this case, the machine's generative logic—to assert influence over the creative product.

This convergence does not merely mimic Surrealism of the past; it reinvents Surrealist methodology for the digital era, creating a dynamic interplay between human intent, machine logic, and emergent meaning. In this framework, DH is positioned not only as a site for cultural analysis but also as a laboratory for aesthetic experimentation, where algorithmic processes are integrated into the exploration of unconscious or irrational phenomena.

Central to this neo-surrealist perspective is the concept of the digital unconscious. In Freudian theory, the unconscious is a space of latent drives and associative structures, revealed through dreams, slips of the tongue, and neurotic symptoms. The digital unconscious, by analogy, emerges from algorithmic processes, which, while built on rational logic, often produce outputs that are unpredictable, uncanny, or unintentionally expressive.

Generative AI systems such as GPT-4, Midjourney, and DeepDream exemplify this phenomenon. These tools operate on massive datasets, learning patterns and correlations that are often opaque to human understanding. When prompted, they generate outputs that remix disparate elements, form novel associations, and bypass conscious intention—evoking a sense of dreamlike unpredictability akin to Surrealist techniques. For example, Google's DeepDream algorithm produces hallucinatory visual landscapes by accentuating patterns in neural networks, creating images that are simultaneously familiar and alien. Similarly, Midjourney and other text-to-image models combine stylistic, thematic, and semantic elements in ways that frequently surprise their users, echoing the paradoxical juxtapositions central to Surrealism.

Here, code becomes the conduit of a digital unconscious, capable of generating emergent meaning through the logic of pattern recognition. The outputs of these systems are not entirely random; they are structured by both training data and algorithmic parameters. Yet within this structure, the associative and irrational qualities of dream logic emerge, revealing a computational analogue of the human unconscious. Generative AI thus mediates between human imagination and machine logic, producing artifacts that can be interpreted as both analytical and aesthetic, conscious and unconscious.

The practical methodologies of neo-surrealist DH involve both human creativity and computational experimentation. Techniques such as randomization, iterative processing, and recombination mirror the Surrealist practices of automatism and juxtaposition. In the visual domain, neural networks, GANs (Generative Adversarial Networks), and algorithmic filters generate hybrid, hybridized, and uncanny images, often producing forms and patterns that exceed human anticipatory logic. In textual domains, language models can produce sequences of prose or poetry that juxtapose semantic elements in novel and unexpected ways, mirroring the dream logic of Surrealist writing.

Human-machine collaboration is a defining feature of this methodology. While algorithms can generate novel content, the human operator curates, prompts, and interprets the output, creating a dialogic process between conscious intention and emergent unpredictability. This interplay reflects the neo-surrealist ethos: creativity arises from the tension between control and chaos, reason and irrationality, human and machine.

The integration of Surrealist principles into DH has profound implications for both literary and cultural studies. First, it challenges traditional notions of authorship. In a neo-surrealist DH framework, the machine is not merely a tool but a co-creator, contributing emergent content that is partially autonomous from human control. This raises philosophical questions about creativity, originality, and the distribution of agency in digital cultural production. Second, it transforms aesthetic experience. Artifacts produced through generative AI or algorithmic processes engage audiences in ways that are simultaneously familiar and uncanny, rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious. Such experiences expand the horizons of literary and visual interpretation, offering new modalities for engaging with narrative, imagery, and symbolic meaning.

Third, the framework foregrounds ethical, epistemological, and cultural considerations. If algorithms can produce outputs that reflect unconscious desires or societal biases, how should such content be interpreted, mediated, or contextualized? Neo-surrealist DH thus requires critical engagement with both technological and humanistic concerns, emphasizing reflexivity, interpretive responsibility, and theoretical sophistication.

Discussion-

The advent of digital technologies has transformed the landscape of creative expression, opening new possibilities for exploring the unconscious, the irrational, and the dreamlike. In particular, generative art, virtual reality (VR), and AI-assisted text generation offer fertile ground for what can be termed neo-surrealist experimentation. By harnessing computational processes, these platforms produce works that challenge conventional notions of authorship, narrative logic, and aesthetic intention. N. Katherine Hayles observes,

“We are no longer sealed off from the intelligent machines we build; rather, we are integrated into a cybernetic circuit in which boundaries between human and machine continually shift.” (How We Became Posthuman)

Neo-surrealist digital media, therefore, does not merely imitate historical Surrealism but recontextualizes its principles—automatism, juxtaposition, and dream logic—within interactive, algorithmic, and immersive frameworks.

Generative digital systems operate in a liminal space between human intention and machine autonomy. They blend structured algorithmic rules with stochastic or probabilistic operations, producing outputs that are neither fully determined nor entirely random. In doing so, they evoke the associative, illogical, and uncanny qualities of Surrealist art while highlighting the emergent creativity inherent in contemporary computation. This framework provides a conceptual lens for understanding how digital tools can mediate unconscious aesthetics, producing outputs that simultaneously reflect human creativity and algorithmic patterning.

Generative art—art created, modified, or evolved through algorithmic processes—offers particularly compelling opportunities for neo-surrealist exploration. Algorithms can manipulate visual, auditory, or textual data, producing outputs that challenge human expectation and defy conventional aesthetic norms. Google’s DeepDream project exemplifies this approach. By applying convolutional neural networks to images, DeepDream produces hallucinatory, dreamlike visual outputs: eyes embedded in trees, dogs emerging from clouds, or nested architectural structures. These images echo Surrealist strategies of juxtaposition and visual automatism, creating landscapes that are simultaneously familiar and uncanny.

Similarly, text-to-image generators like DALL·E or Midjourney translate textual prompts into visual forms, producing bizarre, unexpected combinations reminiscent of the exquisite corpse technique practiced by Surrealist artists. The results are artworks in which human intention interacts with machine patterning. The user’s prompt provides a conceptual scaffold, while the algorithm generates outputs that incorporate unpredictable associations drawn from its training data. The final product is co-authored, situated between deliberate design and emergent computation, reflecting a digital analogue of Surrealist automatism.

These generative processes extend Surrealist methodologies into the computational domain. Whereas historical Surrealism relied on chance operations, free association, and spontaneous artistic gesture, digital generative systems achieve similar effects through probabilistic algorithms, neural networks, and iterative computation. Importantly, these outputs are not merely technical artifacts; they evoke emotional, cognitive, and aesthetic responses, demonstrating that algorithmic processes can serve as a conduit for unconscious expression.

Virtual Reality (VR) represents another domain in which neo-surrealist experimentation flourishes. Unlike static or linear media, VR enables the construction of immersive environments where the constraints of physical space, linear narrative, and logical causality are suspended. Users enter digitally constructed worlds in which gravity, spatial logic, and temporal continuity can be fluidly manipulated, creating experiences that embody Surrealist dream logic.

Artistic VR projects such as Laurie Anderson’s Chalkroom and works by Marshmallow Laser Feast exemplify the potential of immersive surrealist media. In these installations, users navigate vast, mutable landscapes: walls of text dissolve into space, landscapes shift dynamically, and temporal perception is distorted. The environments are not only visually surreal but structurally irrational, designed to induce cognitive estrangement and a sense of wonder. By immersing users in spaces that defy conventional physical laws, VR realizes Surrealism’s historical goal of liberating perception from rational constraints.

Moreover, VR allows for interactive dreamlike engagement, in which users can manipulate the environment, explore narratives in a non-linear fashion, and encounter emergent phenomena generated in real time. This interactivity extends Surrealist principles beyond static representation into dynamic, participatory media, enabling users to inhabit the liminal space between conscious intention and emergent virtual phenomena.

In addition to visual media, AI-generated texts offer novel opportunities for neo-surrealist literary experimentation. Platforms such as AI Dungeon and Sudowrite allow users to co-create narratives with machine intelligence, producing outputs that often resemble Surrealist prose in their non-linear, imagistic, and dreamlike qualities. The generated text frequently exhibits characteristics of automatic writing, narrative collage, and associative logic, echoing the creative strategies of early Surrealist writers.

Crucially, AI-generated narratives foreground the role of machine hallucination—instances in which AI produces content that is factually inaccurate, semantically improbable, or nonsensical. Whereas conventional approaches might regard these “errors” as failures, neo-surrealist DH treats them as sources of aesthetic innovation. By embracing the emergent, unpredictable qualities of AI output, digital humanists can explore terrains of literature

in which unconscious processes emerge algorithmically, generating new forms of narrative experimentation that are simultaneously structured and chaotic.

In this sense, AI-generated texts become collaborative exercises in co-authorship between human and machine, with the machine contributing unpredictable semantic associations and the human shaping, curating, and contextualizing the output. The result is a digital analogue of Surrealist literary practice, where chance, automatism, and associative thought converge in immersive narrative experiences.

While the convergence of unconscious aesthetics and digital systems opens rich creative possibilities, it also raises significant ethical and epistemological questions. One pressing question concerns authorship and ownership: when an artwork or narrative emerges from human prompt and algorithmic processing, who can claim creative authority? The co-authored nature of generative art challenges traditional assumptions about artistic agency and intellectual property.

Additionally, the modeling of unconscious aesthetics through algorithmic systems raises questions about bias, representation, and digital memory. Generative models are trained on vast datasets reflecting human culture, knowledge, and existing biases. Consequently, the outputs they produce may unintentionally reproduce cultural prejudices, distortions, or omissions. Neo-surrealist experimentation must navigate these risks carefully, recognizing that the machine's "unconscious" is both emergent and mediated by human data.

The phenomenon of AI hallucination also introduces epistemological complexities. When machines generate unexpected, illogical, or nonsensical outputs, these are often interpreted as errors in conventional frameworks. However, from a neo-surrealist perspective, such hallucinations can be productive, serving as a source of aesthetic insight and creative innovation. This reframing requires critical frameworks capable of interpreting algorithmic outputs in terms of emergent meaning, associative logic, and unconscious resonance, rather than dismissing them as failures.

Finally, the immersive and participatory nature of VR and AI-mediated experiences raises questions about perception, cognition, and psychological impact. Surrealist strategies deliberately aim to induce disorientation, cognitive estrangement, or aesthetic surprise. Digital systems amplify these effects, creating environments that can alter perception, emotional state, and engagement. Ethical engagement with these media must account for the psychological implications of immersive neo-surrealist content.

The convergence of generative art, virtual reality, and AI-generated texts illustrates the potential for neo-surrealist experimentation within contemporary Digital Humanities. Generative algorithms, by blending human prompts with stochastic computation, create outputs that are associative, unpredictable, and dreamlike—echoing the automatism and juxtaposition central to Surrealism. VR expands these possibilities into immersive, interactive environments, while AI-generated texts allow for novel literary experimentation that foregrounds machine hallucination as a creative force.

Collectively, these digital media platforms challenge traditional notions of authorship, aesthetic intention, and narrative logic. They position the unconscious not as an exclusively human domain but as a collaborative space between human cognition and algorithmic emergence. At the same time, they necessitate careful ethical and epistemological engagement, addressing questions of ownership, bias, hallucination, and audience perception.

By recontextualizing Surrealist principles for the digital age, neo-surrealist DH demonstrates that computation can serve as both a tool of analysis and a medium of imaginative expression. The dreamlike, irrational, and associative qualities of these media offer profound new opportunities for exploring the intersections of art, literature, psychology, and technology. In embracing the unpredictable and the emergent, Digital Humanities becomes a platform where the unconscious, once the domain of human dreams, now finds expression in the digital imagination, opening new frontiers for creative, cognitive, and cultural exploration.

Conclusion-

Digital Humanities (DH) has historically positioned itself as a field of rigorous analysis, employing computational tools to digitize, annotate, and interpret cultural artifacts, texts, and historical datasets. Its methodologies have prioritized measurable insights, pattern recognition, and structured inquiry, emphasizing the rational, linear, and replicable. However, the contemporary digital landscape demands that DH expand its epistemological and methodological scope. As algorithms increasingly mediate human experience, understanding the digital requires engagement not only with rational analysis but also with affect, ambiguity, and irrationality.

This expansion envisions a neo-surrealist Digital Humanities, a field in which the unconscious, the fragmented, and the dreamlike are treated as legitimate sites of inquiry. By integrating the aesthetic and philosophical principles of Surrealism, DH can move beyond its current limitations to embrace fragmentation, non-linearity, and aesthetic dissonance as methodological tools. Rather than treating the unconscious as an abstract metaphor, a surreal DH proposes to "code the unconscious"—to use computational environments as fields for imaginative subversion, unconscious excavation, and poetic experimentation.

Surrealism, emerging in the early twentieth century under the leadership of André Breton, sought to liberate creativity from rationalist constraints. Influenced heavily by Freudian psychoanalysis, Surrealists emphasized the unconscious as a site of latent desire, affective intensity, and associative logic. Through techniques such as

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automatism, dream transcription, and juxtaposition, they created works that privileged unpredictability, paradox, and dissonance over coherence and linearity.

Historically, Surrealism responded to social, psychological, and cultural dislocations, offering an aesthetic methodology that disrupted conventional logic. Its principles are now increasingly relevant to DH, where digital environments can serve as platforms for similarly disruptive experimentation. By treating computational systems as collaborators in creative production, scholars and artists can translate Surrealist principles into the language of code, algorithms, and interactive media, enabling novel forms of thought and expression.

To conceptualize a neo-surrealist DH, it is essential to treat code not merely as a functional tool but as a medium capable of mediating unconscious processes. “Coding the unconscious” is thus both metaphorical and methodological. Digital environments—networks, simulations, AI systems, and virtual worlds—become sites where affective, irrational, and associative patterns can emerge.

In practical terms, coding the unconscious involves designing systems that embrace emergence, unpredictability, and ambiguity. Generative algorithms, neural networks, and AI-driven processes produce outputs that are often unanticipated, associative, and non-linear. These outputs, like Surrealist automatism, bypass conscious intention and foreground emergent meaning. In doing so, DH shifts from a purely analytical discipline to one that incorporates imaginative subversion, aesthetic rupture, and cognitive estrangement.

A neo-surrealist DH employs fragmentation, aesthetic dissonance, and non-linear structuring as deliberate methodological strategies. In textual analysis, this could involve algorithmic collage, where disparate sources are recombined to reveal latent associations. In visual media, generative algorithms can produce fractured, hybridized, or hallucinatory imagery that challenges perceptual expectations.

Non-linearity also manifests in interactive digital spaces, such as virtual reality (VR) installations, where narrative and spatial logic can be fluidly manipulated. These environments allow participants to experience multiple, concurrent, or contradictory perspectives, producing cognitive estrangement and immersive engagement. In embracing such structures, DH becomes a field for experimental epistemology, where knowledge is not only represented but also felt, experienced, and navigated in ways that mimic the unconscious processes valorized by Surrealism.

Generative art exemplifies the productive potential of neo-surrealist DH. By combining human intention with algorithmic processes, systems like Google DeepDream produce hallucinatory imagery that mirrors Surrealist aesthetics: nested architectures, eyes emerging from organic forms, or improbable landscapes that defy physical logic. The interplay between human input and algorithmic patterning produces works that are neither fully authored nor entirely random, highlighting the collaborative nature of human-machine creativity.

Similarly, text-to-image models such as DALL·E and Midjourney create visual outputs based on textual prompts. These systems often produce unexpected juxtapositions and associative patterns reminiscent of Surrealist exercises like the exquisite corpse, where meaning emerges from collaborative randomness. Generative art in this context demonstrates how DH can operationalize the unconscious algorithmically, creating spaces for emergent aesthetic and cognitive experiences.

Virtual Reality (VR) extends neo-surrealist methodologies into the domain of spatial and experiential exploration. Immersive environments can suspend the constraints of physical laws, linear narrative, and logical causality, enabling participants to inhabit dreamlike worlds. Projects such as Laurie Anderson’s Chalkroom and works by Marshmallow Laser Feast exemplify this approach, offering mutable landscapes, temporal distortions, and environments that respond dynamically to user presence.

In VR, participants engage with environments that are structurally irrational, producing effects of cognitive estrangement, perceptual disorientation, and affective intensity. Such experiences embody Surrealism’s historical aim of liberating perception from rational control, while extending it into interactive, participatory media. By designing VR spaces that foreground ambiguity and associative logic, scholars and artists create living laboratories for neo-surrealist exploration, where unconscious processes can manifest in spatial, temporal, and affective dimensions.

AI-driven text generation provides additional pathways for coding the unconscious. Platforms such as AI Dungeon and Sudowrite allow users to co-create narratives with AI models capable of producing non-linear, imagistic, and associative text. These outputs often resemble automatic writing, narrative collage, or surrealist prose, foregrounding chance, ambiguity, and emergent meaning.

A defining feature of AI-generated texts is machine hallucination, where models produce outputs that are semantically improbable, factually incorrect, or nonsensical. Neo-surrealist DH reframes these hallucinations as creative and aesthetic resources, embracing the unpredictability of emergent computational output as a method of imaginative exploration. By engaging with algorithmic noise and ambiguity, digital humanists can reveal unconscious patterns embedded in machine logic and collective digital memory.

The integration of unconscious aesthetics and computational systems raises significant ethical and epistemological concerns. Authorship and agency become ambiguous when human intention and algorithmic output are intertwined. Similarly, algorithmic outputs inherit biases embedded in training data, reflecting cultural, social, and epistemic prejudices that may require critical mediation.

Machine hallucination, while productive aesthetically, also challenges conventional understandings of truth, knowledge, and reliability. Neo-surrealist DH therefore necessitates critical frameworks capable of interpreting emergent, ambiguous, and non-linear outputs without reducing them to mere errors. Scholars must engage with these systems reflexively, attending to the ethical, cultural, and cognitive implications of generating, curating, and interpreting algorithmically mediated unconscious expression.

By embracing surrealist principles, DH can evolve into a field of imaginative inquiry rather than solely analytical practice. Coding the unconscious transforms digital environments into spaces for poetic rupture, cognitive estrangement, and affective engagement. Generative art, immersive VR, and AI-driven narrative systems demonstrate the capacity for DH to serve as a platform for dream, desire, and disruption, facilitating new forms of knowledge production that integrate rational analysis with affective, irrational, and associative dimensions.

Neo-surrealist DH also challenges the epistemic and aesthetic assumptions of the discipline. By foregrounding non-linearity, ambiguity, and emergent meaning, it promotes methodologies that are experiential, participatory, and interactive, while remaining attentive to ethical and cultural contexts. In this sense, the integration of surrealist principles represents both a theoretical and methodological intervention, redefining what it means to “do” Digital Humanities in a computational age.

The vision of a neo-surrealist Digital Humanities demonstrates that computation is not solely a tool of analysis but also a medium for imaginative, affective, and unconscious exploration. By coding the unconscious, scholars and artists can produce works that are fragmentary, non-linear, and aesthetically dissonant, reflecting the associative logic and dreamlike qualities central to historical Surrealism.

Generative algorithms, VR, and AI-driven narrative systems operationalize these principles, producing outputs that are emergent, participatory, and co-authored. These media extend the potential of DH beyond rational analysis, enabling exploration of affect, desire, and emergent cognition. In doing so, neo-surrealist DH reclaims Surrealism as a living methodology—reborn in the circuits, scripts, and simulations of the digital age—and establishes the field as a site for experimentation, disruption, and imaginative inquiry in a world increasingly shaped by algorithms, as he rightly states-

"Surrealism is the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table." —
André Breton

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“Innovative Governance for Sustainable Development: A Study of Women Leadership in the Indian Administrative Service”

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Abstract

This study examines the role of women leadership in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) as a transformative force in advancing innovative governance for sustainable development in India. In the context of growing governance complexity, traditional bureaucratic models are increasingly inadequate to address multidimensional development challenges such as inequality, exclusion, service delivery gaps, and institutional inefficiency. The study situates women IAS officers as key agents of change who introduce participatory, inclusive, and technology-enabled governance innovations within public administration.

Using a qualitative and analytical framework grounded in feminist institutionalism, transformational leadership theory, and sustainable development perspectives, the paper explores how women-led administrative initiatives contribute to social inclusion, institutional accountability, and development sustainability. The analysis focuses on governance innovations in areas such as digital service delivery, participatory local governance, social sector reforms, and gender-responsive public policy implementation.

The study argues that women leadership in the IAS goes beyond symbolic representation and constitutes a substantive governance resource that strengthens democratic governance, enhances citizen trust in institutions, and improves sustainable development outcomes. It further highlights structural and institutional challenges, including gender bias, administrative resistance, and policy discontinuity, that constrain the transformative potential of women leaders. The paper concludes that institutionalizing support for women-led governance innovation is essential for building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable governance systems in India.

Keywords: Innovative governance; Sustainable development; Women leadership; Gender and public administration; Bureaucratic innovation; Inclusive governance

1. Introduction

India’s pursuit of sustainable development is shaped by complex and interrelated challenges that span economic inequality, environmental degradation, social exclusion, and institutional capacity. Rapid urbanization, climate vulnerability, resource scarcity, and persistent gender and regional disparities continue to constrain inclusive growth. While policy frameworks increasingly emphasize sustainability, the implementation gap between policy intent and ground-level outcomes remains significant. Governance systems often struggle with issues of bureaucratic inertia, fragmented service delivery, weak accountability mechanisms, and limited community participation. As a result, sustainable development in India cannot be understood merely as a technical or economic challenge; it is fundamentally a governance challenge that requires institutional innovation, political will, and socially responsive leadership.

In this context, governance innovation has emerged as a critical pathway for addressing structural development deficits. Innovations in public administration—ranging from digital governance and participatory planning to decentralized service delivery and evidence-based policymaking—are reshaping how the state engages with citizens and manages public resources. However, innovation in governance is not only technological or procedural; it is also deeply human and leadership-driven. Leadership styles, values, and administrative cultures play a decisive role in determining whether governance systems remain extractive and exclusionary or become inclusive and transformative. This shifts analytical focus from institutions alone to the actors who operate within them.

Women’s leadership in public administration offers a powerful and underexplored dimension of this transformation. Women leaders increasingly contribute to governance practices that prioritize social equity, transparency, community engagement, and welfare-oriented development outcomes. Their leadership often reflects a governance ethic grounded in care, inclusion, collaboration, and long-term sustainability rather than short-term political gains. By strengthening participatory governance, enhancing responsiveness to marginalized groups, and integrating social justice into administrative decision-making, women leaders act as catalysts for sustainable governance innovation. Linking women’s leadership with governance reform thus reframes sustainable development not only as a policy objective but as a leadership-driven institutional process. This perspective positions women in public administration not merely as representatives of gender inclusion, but as strategic agents of transformative governance and sustainable development in India.

2. Statement of the Problem:

Despite India's sustained economic growth and expanding policy commitments toward sustainable development, deep structural challenges continue to hinder the achievement of inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable outcomes. Persistent poverty, gender inequality, ecological stress, regional disparities, and institutional inefficiencies reveal a widening gap between development objectives and lived realities. Governance systems remain constrained by bureaucratic rigidity, fragmented policy implementation, weak accountability mechanisms, and limited citizen participation, resulting in suboptimal delivery of public services and ineffective translation of sustainability policies into measurable outcomes. These systemic governance limitations indicate that sustainable development in India is not merely a resource or policy deficit, but a structural governance crisis.

At the same time, although governance innovation is increasingly promoted through digitalization, decentralization, and administrative reforms, these innovations often remain technocratic, top-down, and disconnected from social realities. The human and leadership dimensions of governance reform remain under-theorized and under-institutionalized. In particular, women's leadership in public administration—despite growing representation in administrative services, local governance institutions, and development agencies—has not been adequately integrated into mainstream governance and sustainability frameworks. Women leaders are frequently viewed through the lens of representation rather than as strategic agents of institutional transformation and policy innovation.

This creates a critical research and policy gap: the absence of a coherent analytical framework that connects women's leadership with governance innovation and sustainable development outcomes. Without systematically examining how women leaders reshape administrative cultures, decision-making processes, accountability structures, and community engagement mechanisms, governance reforms risk remaining structurally superficial and socially exclusionary. The core problem, therefore, lies in the failure to conceptualize and operationalize women's leadership as a central driver of governance innovation for sustainable development in India. Addressing this gap is essential for building inclusive governance systems capable of delivering long-term, socially just, and ecologically sustainable development outcomes.

3. Objectives:

1. To examine the role of women IAS officers in promoting innovative governance practices in policy formulation, program implementation, and public service delivery for sustainable development outcomes.
2. To identify leadership styles, administrative strategies, and decision-making approaches adopted by women IAS officers that differentiate their governance practices from conventional bureaucratic models.
3. To evaluate institutional, structural, and socio-political barriers faced by women IAS officers in implementing governance innovations for sustainable development.
4. To generate policy recommendations for strengthening women's leadership capacity and institutional support mechanisms in the IAS for advancing sustainable governance.

4. Hypotheses:

H1: Women IAS officers play a statistically significant and positive role in promoting innovative governance practices in policy formulation, program implementation, and public service delivery, contributing to improved sustainable development outcomes.

H2: Women IAS officers adopt distinct leadership styles, administrative strategies, and decision-making approaches that significantly differ from conventional bureaucratic models and are more conducive to inclusive, participatory, and sustainable governance.

H3: Institutional, structural, and socio-political barriers have a significant negative impact on the capacity of women IAS officers to implement governance innovations for sustainable development.

H4: Strengthened institutional support mechanisms and targeted leadership capacity-building policies significantly enhance the effectiveness of women IAS officers in advancing innovative and sustainable governance practices.

5. Scope of the Study:

This study focuses on examining the role of women leaders within the Indian Administrative Service in promoting innovative governance practices for sustainable development in India. The scope is both thematic and institutional, encompassing governance, leadership, gender, and sustainability as interconnected analytical domains.

6. Theoretical Framework:

This study is theoretically grounded in the assumption that sustainable development outcomes emerge not only from policies and institutions, but from leadership-driven governance transformation. Women's leadership within the Indian Administrative Service is conceptualized as a structural force that reshapes governance processes, institutional cultures, and development trajectories. The framework integrates pluralist governance structures, transformational leadership dynamics, feminist institutional critique, and sustainability principles into a unified analytical model.

6.1. Pluralist Governance Theory

Pluralist governance theory conceptualizes governance as a multi-actor, multi-level, and network-based process rather than a state-centric or hierarchical system. Power is distributed across institutions, civil society, communities, private actors, and administrative bodies. Decision-making is understood as negotiated, collaborative, and participatory.

Within this framework: Women IAS officers operate within complex governance networks rather than isolated bureaucratic hierarchies. Governance innovation is understood as co-produced through interactions between administrators, communities, NGOs, local governments, and political institutions. Sustainable development is treated as a collective governance outcome, shaped by participatory institutions and multi-level coordination. Pluralist theory allows the study to conceptualize women leaders not merely as bureaucrats, but as network managers, facilitators, and collaborative governance actors.

6.2. Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory views leadership as a process of institutional change, where leaders reshape organizational values, cultures, and objectives through vision, ethics, motivation, and inclusion. Leadership is not limited to authority but is expressed through normative influence and structural transformation.

In this research women IAS officers are theorized as transformational leaders who redefine administrative priorities, reorient governance cultures and shift service delivery from control-based to citizen-centric models. Governance innovation is interpreted as a leadership outcome, not merely a policy instrument. Sustainable development becomes a long-term governance vision, embedded in administrative decision-making. This theory frames women's leadership as a change mechanism that drives governance reform from within institutions.

6.3. Feminist Institutionalism

Feminist institutionalism conceptualizes institutions as gendered structures of power, norms, and practices. It argues that formal rules and informal cultures systematically shape access to authority, decision-making, and policy influence. Leadership is mediated by structural inequalities and power hierarchies. This perspective allows the research to analyze the IAS as a gendered institution shaped by masculinized bureaucratic cultures, hierarchical authority structures, Informal networks of power, understand barriers faced by women IAS officers as institutional, not individual and theorize women leaders as agents of institutional disruption, who challenge entrenched power relations and reshape governance norms. Feminist institutionalism thus frames governance innovation as both a policy process and a power transformation process.

6. 4. Sustainable Development Theory

Sustainable development theory emphasizes intergenerational equity, social justice, ecological balance, and long-term institutional resilience. Development is not measured solely through economic growth but through human development, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion.

Within this theory governance is treated as the primary vehicle of sustainability. Leadership is conceptualized as a normative force shaping long-term development trajectories. Women's leadership is linked to equity-oriented governance, welfare-centered policy frameworks, inclusive development models and long-term institutional thinking. Sustainable development becomes a governance outcome, not merely a development goal.

7. Methodology:

The study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and analytical research design to examine the role of women leadership in promoting innovative governance for sustainable development within the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Given the complex, contextual, and institutional nature of governance innovation, a qualitative approach is considered most appropriate to capture leadership practices, institutional dynamics, and development outcomes that cannot be adequately measured through purely quantitative indicators. The research is grounded in an interpretive and constructivist epistemological framework, enabling an in-depth understanding of how women IAS officers conceptualize, implement, and institutionalize governance innovations in diverse administrative contexts.

The research is grounded in a constructivist–interpretivist paradigm, recognizing governance and leadership as socially constructed processes shaped by institutional norms, power relations, and socio-political contexts. This

approach allows for in-depth exploration of meaning-making, leadership practices, and governance cultures, rather than limiting analysis to measurable outputs alone.

8. Discussion and Analysis:

8.1. the role of women IAS officers in promoting innovative governance practices:

The role of women officers in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in promoting innovative governance represents a significant transformation in India's administrative culture, shifting from rigid, rule-bound bureaucratic functioning to adaptive, citizen-centric, and development-oriented governance practices. This transformation is visible across three interlinked domains: policy formulation, program implementation, and public service delivery, each contributing to sustainable development outcomes.

Policy Formulation: Gender-Sensitive and Inclusive Innovation

Women IAS officers contribute to innovation in policy formulation by introducing gender-sensitive, participatory, and equity-oriented perspectives into governance processes. Their leadership often reframes policy priorities from purely technical or economic efficiency models to human-centered development approaches. This is reflected in policies that integrate social inclusion, welfare targeting, community participation, and gender responsiveness.

Innovative governance at the policy level is evident in the incorporation of Gender-responsive budgeting frameworks, Community-based policy consultations, Intersectional approaches addressing caste, class, gender, and regional inequalities and Integration of sustainability principles into sectoral policies. This approach aligns governance innovation with sustainable development by embedding social justice and inclusion as core policy values rather than peripheral concerns. Women leaders thus act as norm entrepreneurs, reshaping institutional priorities and policy discourses within bureaucratic structures.

Program Implementation: Administrative Innovation and Institutional Transformation

At the level of program implementation, women IAS officers promote innovative governance through process innovation, institutional coordination, and adaptive management strategies. Their leadership styles often emphasize collaboration, decentralization, and convergence models that break departmental silos and promote integrated service delivery.

Key innovative practices include Inter-departmental convergence for holistic development outcomes, use of digital platforms for monitoring, transparency, and accountability, decentralized decision-making mechanisms and community-driven implementation models

These innovations strengthen institutional capacity and governance efficiency, ensuring that development programs move beyond symbolic policy commitments toward measurable and sustainable outcomes. By prioritizing inclusivity, participation, and transparency, women administrators transform program implementation into a co-productive governance process, involving state and society as partners in development.

Public Service Delivery: Citizen-Centric and Participatory Governance

In the domain of public service delivery, women IAS officers are instrumental in advancing citizen-centric governance models that prioritize accessibility, responsiveness, and accountability. Innovation is reflected in the redesign of service delivery mechanisms to ensure equitable access for marginalized populations, particularly women, rural communities, and socially excluded groups.

Innovative practices include: Digital service delivery platforms, Participatory grievance redressal systems, Community monitoring mechanisms and Local governance partnerships with civil society organizations.

These approaches strengthen democratic governance by transforming citizens from passive beneficiaries into active stakeholders in governance processes. Such participatory models enhance institutional legitimacy, public trust, and service sustainability, which are essential pillars of long-term development.

Linkage to Sustainable Development Outcomes

The cumulative impact of women-led governance innovation across policy formulation, implementation, and service delivery contributes directly to sustainable development outcomes through: Social sustainability: inclusion, equity, gender justice, Institutional sustainability: accountability, transparency, resilience and Developmental sustainability: continuity of welfare outcomes and human development

Women IAS officers thus function not merely as administrators but as developmental leaders, aligning governance processes with long-term sustainability goals rather than short-term administrative targets. Women leadership emerges as a structural governance resource, enabling innovation through ethical leadership, inclusive decision-making, and institutional responsiveness.

The analysis demonstrates that women IAS officers play a multi-dimensional and transformative role in promoting innovative governance practices.

8.2. Leadership styles, administrative strategies, and decision-making approaches adopted by women IAS officers:

Women officers in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) demonstrate distinctive leadership patterns that mark a significant departure from traditional Weberian, rule-bound, hierarchical bureaucratic models. Their governance practices reflect a shift from authority-centered administration to people-centered, participatory, and adaptive leadership, thereby redefining the nature of public administration in contemporary India. This differentiation is

visible across three interrelated dimensions: leadership styles, administrative strategies, and decision-making approaches.

8.2.1. From Hierarchical Authority to Transformational and Ethical Leadership

Conventional bureaucratic leadership in India has historically been characterized by: Command-and-control structures, Formal authority, Procedural rigidity and Distance between administrators and citizens. This leadership model transforms the administrator from a controller of systems into a facilitator of development processes, redefining bureaucratic authority as service-oriented leadership.

Women IAS officers adopt innovative administrative strategies that are structurally different, including: a) Adaptive Governance b) Collaborative Governance c) Convergence-Based Administration

These strategies replace rigid bureaucratic compartmentalization with networked governance models, where governance is seen as a shared responsibility rather than a state monopoly.

Decision-Making Approaches: From Centralized Control to Participatory and Evidence-Based Governance, conventional bureaucratic decision-making is typically: Centralized, Elite-driven and Technocratic

8.2.2. Structural Differentiation from Conventional Bureaucracy

Conventional Bureaucratic Model	Women-Led Governance Model
Hierarchical authority	Participatory leadership
Rule compliance	Problem-solving orientation
Centralized control	Decentralized governance
Procedural rigidity	Adaptive administration
State-centric governance	Society–state partnership
Target-driven administration	Outcome- and sustainability-driven governance

This structural contrast demonstrates that women leadership represents not merely a change in personnel, but a paradigmatic shift in governance culture.

The analysis establishes that women IAS officers differentiate their governance practices from conventional bureaucratic models through transformational leadership styles, adaptive administrative strategies, and participatory decision-making approaches. Their governance model replaces hierarchy with collaboration, control with facilitation, and rigidity with adaptability.

This transformation signifies a deeper institutional shift: from bureaucracy as authority to governance as partnership, from administration as control to administration as service, and from development as delivery to development as empowerment.

Thus, women leadership in the IAS represents not simply gender inclusion in bureaucracy, but a structural redefinition of governance itself, positioning women administrators as architects of a new, innovative, and sustainable governance paradigm in India.

8.3. Institutional, structural, and socio-political barriers faced by women IAS officers

While women officers in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) play a transformative role in promoting innovative governance, their capacity to implement and institutionalize such innovations is significantly constrained by institutional, structural, and socio-political barriers embedded within India’s administrative and political systems. These barriers reveal that governance innovation is not merely a technical or managerial process, but a deeply political and institutional struggle shaped by power relations, gender hierarchies, and systemic constraints.

8.3.1. Institutional Barriers: Bureaucratic Rigidity and Organizational Resistance

At the institutional level, women IAS officers encounter barriers arising from the inherent conservatism of bureaucratic structures. Traditional administrative systems are designed to prioritize stability, rule compliance, and procedural continuity rather than experimentation and innovation.

Key institutional constraints include: Procedural rigidity and excessive rule-bound functioning, resistance to change within administrative hierarchies, risk-averse organizational culture, lack of institutional incentives for innovation and weak mechanisms for innovation institutionalization.

This limits the sustainability of governance innovations and weakens their long-term developmental impact.

8.3.2. Structural Barriers: Gendered Power Relations and Bureaucratic Hierarchies

Structural barriers are rooted in the gendered architecture of bureaucratic institutions, where power, authority, and legitimacy remain disproportionately male-dominated. Women IAS officers often operate within informal power networks that shape decision-making processes beyond formal administrative rules.

These barriers include: male-dominated leadership cultures, gender bias in leadership recognition, informal exclusion from decision-making circles, unequal access to strategic postings and The “glass ceiling” effect in top administrative positions. As a result, women leaders frequently face delegitimization of authority, where their leadership and innovation are scrutinized more intensely than their male counterparts. This undermines their ability to mobilize institutional support for governance reforms.

8.3.3.Socio-Political Barriers: Patriarchy, Politics, and Public Perception

Socio-political constraints further complicate the implementation of governance innovation. Women IAS officers operate within a broader social context shaped by patriarchal norms, political patronage systems, and gendered public expectations.

Major socio-political barriers include: political interference in administrative functioning, gendered stereotypes regarding leadership capacity, social resistance to women in authority roles, cultural expectations of submissiveness and conformity and media and public scrutiny shaped by gender bias. These dynamics create a double burden for women leaders: they must simultaneously perform as effective administrators and negotiate social legitimacy within patriarchal political cultures.

8.3.4.Innovation-Specific Barriers: Sustainability and Scalability Constraints

Innovative governance initiatives face additional barriers related to: limited financial and human resources, lack of innovation incubation mechanisms, absence of replication frameworks, weak policy integration of pilot projects and fragmented governance structures. Women-led innovations often remain localized and personalized, failing to scale into institutionalized governance models due to lack of systemic support.

The evaluation reveals that women IAS officers face multi-layered barriers—institutional rigidity, structural gender hierarchies, and socio-political resistance—that constrain their capacity to implement and sustain governance innovations. These barriers transform innovation from a governance process into a contested political project, shaped by power, legitimacy, and institutional authority.

The analysis establishes that sustainable development through innovative governance requires not only women leadership, but systemic institutional reform, gender-sensitive administrative restructuring, and political commitment to inclusive governance.

Thus, the struggle of women IAS officers is not merely an individual leadership challenge—it is a structural governance challenge, revealing the deeper contradictions between bureaucratic tradition and transformative governance in contemporary India.

9. Policy recommendations for strengthening women’s leadership capacity and institutional support mechanisms

The advancement of innovative and sustainable governance in India requires not only the presence of women in administrative leadership positions, but the systematic strengthening of women’s leadership capacity and institutional support structures within the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). This objective moves beyond descriptive analysis toward a normative and policy-oriented agenda, emphasizing that sustainable governance outcomes depend on structural empowerment rather than individual excellence alone. Policy interventions must therefore operate at the levels of capacity-building, institutional reform, governance architecture, and political–administrative culture.

9.1. 1. Strengthening Women’s Leadership Capacity

A central policy priority is the development of structured leadership pipelines for women IAS officers. Leadership capacity cannot be treated as an individual attribute; it must be institutionally cultivated. Key strategies include: Gender-sensitive leadership training programmes, Mentorship and sponsorship frameworks, Career progression planning, Exposure to interdisciplinary policy environments. These interventions transform leadership from an informal process into a systematic institutional pathway, enabling women officers to develop long-term governance capacities.

9.1.2. Institutional Support Mechanisms for Governance Innovation

Sustainable governance requires institutional ecosystems that protect, nurture, and scale innovation. Women-led governance initiatives often fail to institutionalize due to weak organizational support systems.

9.1.3. Gender-Sensitive Administrative Reforms

Structural reform is essential to dismantle gendered power asymmetries within bureaucratic institutions. Policy reforms must focus on institutional equity rather than symbolic inclusion.

Such reforms transform bureaucratic institutions into enabling spaces for women’s leadership.

9.1.4. Governance Architecture Reforms for Sustainable Governance

Strengthening women’s leadership must be integrated into broader governance reforms aimed at sustainability. This ensures that women’s leadership is not isolated from governance reform but becomes structurally embedded within sustainability governance.

9.1.5. Political–Administrative Interface Reforms

Women IAS officers often face political constraints that limit governance innovation. Policy recommendations must address the political–administrative interface.

10. Analytical Synthesis

This research reframes women's leadership in the IAS from a narrative of representation to a framework of transformation. Women leaders emerge not as symbolic participants in governance, but as architects of a new governance paradigm—one that integrates innovation, inclusion, sustainability, and institutional reform.

Women's leadership in the IAS is not a gender issue alone—it is a governance reform imperative and a sustainable development strategy. Innovative governance for sustainable development in India requires not only policy reforms and technological modernization, but gender-inclusive institutional transformation. Strengthening women's leadership capacity and institutional support systems is therefore essential for building resilient public institutions, democratic governance structures, and sustainable development pathways.

This study contributes theoretically by integrating feminist institutionalism, transformational leadership, pluralist governance, and sustainable development theory into a unified analytical framework. Empirically, it establishes women leadership as a measurable governance asset. Normatively, it advances a governance vision in which gender equality, innovation, and sustainability are structurally interdependent.

In conclusion, sustainable governance in India cannot be achieved without institutionalizing women's leadership as a core governance capacity. Women IAS officers represent not only the future of public administration, but the future of democratic, inclusive, and sustainable governance itself.

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“Role of Social Media in Shaping Youth Attitudes towards Social Issues in Raipur: An Exploratory Study”

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Abstract

This study explores the role of social media in shaping youth attitudes towards social issues in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. Through qualitative interviews with 20 youth (18-25 years), the research examines social media usage patterns, engagement with social issues, and perceived impacts on awareness and attitudes. Findings indicate Instagram and WhatsApp are primary platforms for social engagement, with youth focusing on issues like environment and social justice. Social media increases awareness and influences attitudes, driven by interactive and visual content. However, challenges like misinformation and echo chambers exist. The study suggests leveraging popular platforms, promoting credible information, and framing relatable messages to mobilize youth for social change.

Key words: Social Media, Youth Engagement, Social Issues, Awareness, Attitudes, Mobilization.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of youth life, influencing their perceptions and attitudes towards various social issues (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In India, the increasing internet penetration and social media usage among youth present opportunities for social change (Singh & Srivastava, 2018). The youth demographic is particularly significant in India, with over 50% of the population under the age of 25 (Census of India, 2011). In Chhattisgarh, a state in central India, Raipur is a growing urban center with increasing internet and social media penetration (TRAI, 2020). The youth in Raipur, like elsewhere in India, are active on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, engaging with social issues ranging from environmental concerns to social justice (Gupta & Sinha, 2020). Understanding how social media shapes their attitudes towards these issues is crucial for promoting social change.

Social media platforms provide spaces for youth to express opinions, share information, and mobilize around social causes (Loader & Mercea, 2011). Research suggests that engagement with social issues on social media can lead to increased awareness and attitude changes among youth (Valenzuela et al., 2018). This study explores the role of social media in shaping youth attitudes towards social issues in Raipur. By examining youth engagement patterns and the impact of social media on their attitudes, this research aims to provide insights into leveraging social media for social change in urban India (Gupta & Sinha, 2020).

Objectives:

- To understand how youth in Raipur use social media to engage with social issues.
- To examine the impact of social media on youth attitudes towards social issues in Raipur.
- To identify the factors influencing youth engagement with social issues on social media in Raipur.
- To explore the potential of social media in promoting social change among youth in Raipur.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Singh, A. (2012) stated that social media has emerged as a powerful tool for social mobilization and awareness, particularly among youth. Research has shown that platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram play a significant role in shaping opinions and attitudes towards social issues (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Gupta, V. (2019) noted that in India, social media has been instrumental in promoting social causes like environmental conservation and women's rights. The MeToo movement, for instance, gained significant traction on social media, leading to widespread discussions on gender equality and harassment (Sinha, S. & Patel, R., 2018).

Loader, B. D. (2011) argued that social media enables youth to engage with social issues in ways that traditional media cannot, providing spaces for expression and mobilization. Studies suggest that online engagement can translate into offline action, especially among young people (Valenzuela et al., 2018).

Kumar, R. (2015) highlighted that the credibility of information on social media is a key factor influencing youth engagement with social issues. Users often rely on peer networks and influencers for information, which can both amplify and distort messages (Hajli, M., 2014).

Overall, literature suggests that social media plays a significant role in shaping youth attitudes towards social issues, with potential for promoting social change (Gupta, V. & Sinha, S., 2020). However, challenges like misinformation and echo chambers need consideration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed an exploratory and qualitative approach to understand the role of social media in shaping youth attitudes towards social issues in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. The universe of the study consisted of youth (18-25 years) in Raipur, a growing urban center with increasing internet and social media penetration. The study adopted an exploratory qualitative design to gain in-depth insights into youth perceptions and experiences with social media and social issues. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who are active on social media and engage with social issues. A total of 20 youth participants were selected for in-depth interviews, and they were approached through social media platforms and youth organizations in Raipur.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews using open-ended questions that explored participants' social media usage, engagement with social issues, and perceived impact on attitudes. With participant consent, thematic analysis of their public social media posts on social issues was also conducted. Data was analyzed thematically using NVivo software. Themes were identified based on the objectives of the study, focusing on social media usage, engagement with social issues, attitude changes, and potential for social change. This qualitative approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of how social media influences youth attitudes towards social issues in Raipur.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding 1: Social media platforms used by youth for social engagement

Out of 20 respondents, 17 (85%) cited Instagram and WhatsApp as primary platforms for social engagement, highlighting their interactive and visual nature. Respondents favored Instagram for trending social issues and WhatsApp for group discussions.

"Instagram is where I see most social issues trending," said Respondent 12.

Twitter was used by 12 (60%) for real-time updates, while 8 (40%) used Facebook for social issues.

Discussion

The preference for Instagram and WhatsApp indicates that youth are drawn to platforms that enable dynamic engagement, information sharing, and community building. This aligns with the nature of these platforms, which prioritize visual content and instant interactions. To leverage these platforms for social causes, focusing on visually compelling content, leveraging influencers, and encouraging peer sharing can enhance outreach and engagement. Additionally, creating WhatsApp groups or Instagram challenges centered around social issues could mobilize youth more effectively.

Finding 2: Frequency and purpose of social media use for social issues

Out of 20 respondents, 15 (75%) use social media daily for social issues, primarily for staying informed (90%) and expressing opinions (60%). 12 (60%) engage with like-minded individuals, while 8 (40%) seek to raise awareness.

"I scroll through social media every day to see what's happening," said Respondent 5.

Discussion

The frequent use of social media for social issues highlights its role as a key information source and engagement tool for youth. The purposes of staying informed and expressing opinions suggest that youth value social media for both consumption and participation. Encouraging purposeful engagement, such as through calls to action or interactive content, can amplify social impact. Organizations could leverage this by creating shareable content that sparks discussions or mobilizes action.

Finding 3: Types of social issues youth engage with on social media

Respondents engaged most with environmental issues (80%), followed by social justice (60%) and education (40%). Issues like climate change and gender equality sparked significant discussion.

"I care about climate change because it affects our future," said Respondent 18.

Discussion

The focus on environmental issues and social justice reflects the immediate concerns and values of youth in Raipur. This engagement suggests that framing social causes in relatable terms highlighting local impacts or personal connections—can increase youth involvement. Collaborations with youth-led environmental groups or social justice initiatives could also tap into existing momentum.

Finding 4: Impact of social media on awareness about social issues

18 (90%) respondents said social media increased their awareness of social issues. They cited exposure to diverse perspectives and real-time updates.

"Social media shows me issues I wouldn't know about otherwise," said Respondent 10.

Discussion

Social media serves as a critical tool for raising awareness, providing youth access to a breadth of information and viewpoints. This exposure can foster informed discussions and broader understanding of social issues. Organizations should leverage this potential by sharing credible, engaging content that highlights underrepresented causes.

Finding 5: Changes in attitudes towards social issues after social media exposure

14 (70%) respondents reported attitude changes after social media exposure, citing increased empathy and awareness.

"Seeing others' stories changed how I think about poverty," said Respondent 7.

Discussion

Social media's ability to humanize issues and spark empathy is key to its impact on attitudes. Storytelling through personal narratives or impactful visuals can thus be particularly effective. However, ensuring authenticity and avoiding oversimplification are important considerations for social campaigns.

Finding 6: Influence of social media on youth opinions about social issues

16 (80%) respondents said social media influences their opinions, citing exposure to diverse views and discussions.

"I often see different sides of an issue on social media," said Respondent 15.

Discussion

Social media shapes opinions by exposing youth to varied perspectives, fostering dialogue, and providing information. Encouraging critical thinking and media literacy is essential to help youth navigate these influences effectively.

Finding 7: Role of peer influence on social media engagement

12 (60%) respondents said peers influence their social media engagement, often through shared content or discussions.

"My friends share stuff that gets me involved," said Respondent 3.

Discussion

Peer influence is a significant driver of engagement, suggesting that social causes can leverage youth networks for amplification. Strategies like peer-led campaigns or collaborative content creation could tap into this dynamic.

Finding 8: Credibility of social media sources for social information

Only 6 (30%) respondents trust social media sources completely, citing concerns about misinformation.

"I check facts before believing," said Respondent 20.

Discussion

The prevalence of misinformation concerns highlights the need for promoting digital literacy and fact-checking habits among youth. Organizations should prioritize transparency and credibility in their messaging.

Finding 9: Factors motivating youth engagement with social causes online

Key motivators include personal relevance (80%), peer influence (60%), and desire for social change (50%).

"I engage when it matters to me or my friends," said Respondent 11.

Discussion

Engagement is driven by relevance, social connections, and impact. Tailoring messages to align with youth values and experiences can increase involvement. Partnerships with local organizations or influencers could also boost engagement.

Finding 10: Potential of social media for mobilizing youth for social change

15 (75%) respondents see social media as effective for mobilization, citing campaigns like MeToo.

"Social media can get people to act," said Respondent 14.

Discussion

Social media has significant mobilization potential, especially for visible, impactful campaigns. Strategies should focus on clear calls to action, leveraging hashtags, and creating shareable content.

Finding 11: Ways social media can amplify youth voices on social issues

Respondents highlighted reach (70%), visibility (60%), and engagement (50%) as key benefits.

"Social media lets me share my voice widely," said Respondent 9.

Discussion

Social media effectively amplifies voices by providing broad platforms for sharing. Encouraging youth-led content and collaborations can increase impact and ownership.

Finding 12: Challenges in leveraging social media for social change initiatives

Challenges include misinformation (80%), echo chambers (60%), and low engagement (40%).

"People often just argue instead of listening," said Respondent 16.

Discussion

Addressing these challenges requires strategies like promoting credible information, fostering inclusive dialogue, and incentivizing constructive engagement. Organizations should prioritize adaptability and responsiveness in their social media approaches.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

To effectively leverage social media for promoting social change among youth in Raipur, several strategies can be implemented. Firstly, focus on platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp, which are popular among youth, and create visually compelling and shareable content that highlights social issues. Collaborate with local influencers or youth leaders to amplify messages and encourage peer engagement. Secondly, promote digital literacy and fact-checking habits to address concerns about misinformation on social media. This can be done through workshops or online campaigns targeting youth. Thirdly, frame social causes in relatable terms, emphasizing local impacts and personal connections to increase engagement. For instance, highlighting how environmental issues affect local communities in Raipur can drive more involvement. Lastly, encourage youth-led initiatives and collaborations on social media to foster ownership and amplify youth voices on social issues.

This study explored the role of social media in shaping youth attitudes towards social issues in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. Findings indicate that platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp are key spaces for youth engagement with social issues, driven by their interactive and visual nature. Youth in Raipur use social media to stay informed, express opinions, and engage with like-minded individuals, primarily focusing on issues like environment and social justice. While social media increases awareness and influences attitudes, challenges like misinformation and echo chambers exist. By leveraging popular platforms, promoting credible information, and framing relatable messages, social media can be effectively used to mobilize youth for social change in Raipur and similar contexts.

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“Digital Memory and Cultural Survival: Digital Platforms as New Heritage Spaces”

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Abstract

In contemporary India, digital platforms have become powerful spaces for recording, sharing, and preserving cultural memory. This paper examines how social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) function as new heritage spaces where traditions, customs, languages, and community histories are documented and reinterpreted. Drawing on theories of digital memory and heritage studies, this study analyzes how user-generated content contributes to cultural continuity in the context of rapid social change, migration, and globalization. Based on government policy documents, ministerial reports, and selected Indian case studies, this paper argues that social media should not be considered merely a medium of preservation, but rather as playing a complex and contested role in shaping cultural memory. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the expansion of participation in heritage-making beyond institutional boundaries and briefly highlights the challenges associated with authenticity, commercialization, religious sensitivities, and digital inequality.

Keywords

Digital memory, Cultural survival, Social media, Heritage spaces, Government policy, India.

Introduction.

Traditionally, cultural heritage has been understood in terms of monuments, archaeological sites, and museum collections preserved by the state and cultural institutions. Over the past few decades, this understanding has expanded to include intangible cultural heritage, such as oral traditions, rituals, festivals, performing arts, traditional knowledge, languages, and everyday cultural practices. The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage recognizes the importance of living traditions and community-based cultural expressions.

In the twenty-first century, digital technologies have further transformed the ways in which heritage is created, transmitted, and preserved. Social media platforms have now become important spaces where cultural memory is produced, shared, and reinterpreted. Unlike traditional heritage institutions, these platforms allow ordinary users to actively participate in documenting and presenting their cultural practices.

India provides an important context for the study of digital heritage. As a multicultural society, India is characterized by deep regional, linguistic, and religious diversity. Historically, since ancient times, Indian culture has relied on oral transmission and community participation to sustain cultural traditions, which have continued uninterrupted over centuries. However,

processes such as urbanization, migration, economic change, and the influence of global media have weakened many traditional modes of cultural transmission. In this changing context, social media platforms offer alternative spaces for cultural survival.

In India, people are actively documenting their culture on social media, yet academic research continues to focus primarily on official archives and institutional frameworks. As a result, community-based digital heritage practices receive limited attention in serious scholarly research.

This paper critically examines how social media platforms function as new heritage spaces in contemporary India by combining academic scholarship, government reports, and the digital practices of popular social media channels.

Main Section

Social Media as Emerging Heritage Spaces: Social media platforms enable the documentation of Indian cultural practices through images, videos, narratives, live streams, and interactive discussions. Festivals, folk music performances, craft traditions, culinary practices, pilgrimage routes, and local histories are increasingly shared online. Such digital content functions as informal archives, extending access beyond geographical and institutional boundaries.

YouTube is particularly suitable for long-term documentation, while Instagram and Facebook priorities visual and short-format cultural expressions. X (formerly Twitter) provides space for commentary, memory narratives, and public discussion surrounding cultural events. Together, these platforms create a networked digital environment in which heritage is continuously produced and shared. **Participation and Community Engagement in Cultural Memory.**

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A defining feature of social media-based heritage is participation. Users actively engage with cultural content through comments, sharing, remixing, and contributing their own narratives. This participatory dimension aligns with Smith's (2006) critique of the authorized heritage discourse, which argues that heritage is not only preserved by institutions but is experienced and valued by communities.

In India, social media particularly facilitates intergenerational exchange among migrant and diaspora communities. Traditional Indian knowledge, which is gradually disappearing from everyday practices, is digitally recorded and shared, helping to sustain cultural continuity. At the same time, its visibility and recognition expand at a global level. However, algorithm-driven visibility often prioritizes popular, aestheticized, or marketable cultural forms.

Literature Review

Theoretical discussions on memory and heritage provide a foundation for understanding digital heritage practices. Assmann (2011) distinguishes between communicative memory and cultural memory. The digital environment blurs this distinction, as everyday cultural expressions become permanently recorded.

Hoskins (2018) conceptualizes digital memory as fluid, networked, and continuously transformed through user participation. Cameron and Kenderdine (2007) argue that while digital technologies expand access, they also complicate issues of authenticity and authority.

Indian scholarship has actively contributed to these debates. Sengupta (2019) highlights the role of digital platforms in preserving endangered languages in India, while Ghosh (2021) foregrounds community digital archives as alternative heritage practices. Das (2020) demonstrates how folk culture is disseminated and transformed through social media.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach based on thematic content analysis. Publicly available content from YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and X was selected through purposive sampling. The selected pages and channels focus on cultural heritage, tourism, folk traditions, and local history.

In addition, government reports and policy documents from the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), and the Press Information Bureau (PIB) were analyzed. This situates digital practices within a broader cultural and policy framework.

Findings and Discussion

Government Initiatives and Digital Heritage. Government institutions increasingly promote heritage through digital platforms. Ministry of Culture: National Intangible Cultural Heritage List, Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage Scheme, Indian Culture Portal Ministry of Tourism: Incredible India, Dekho Apna Desh, Swadesh Darshan, annual India. Tourism Statistics

MeitY / Digital India Programme: Digital inclusion and infrastructural support, highlighting regional digital inequalities Press Information Bureau (PIB): Notices on cultural policy and digital governance These initiatives, combined with community and user-generated content, support heritage preservation and promotion. Popular Social Media Pages and Channels Major channels enhancing heritage visibility in India include: YouTube: Ministry of Tourism – Incredible India, DD Bharati, Prasar Bharati Archives Instagram: @incredibleindia, @culturemoindia, @peopleofindia

Facebook: Indian Culture Portal, Incredible India Official, State Tourism Board pages

These platforms merge governmental and community narratives to reach wider audiences.

Digital Media: Challenges (Concise and Critical)

While digital media offers significant benefits, it also presents challenges. On the one hand, social media platforms document endangered Indian cultural practices; on the other, they increasingly pose challenges to Indian culture itself. Numerous examples of this tension are visible. Cultural content may be aestheticised or simplified, affecting authenticity. Sacred and religious sites, such as the Char Dham pilgrimage in Uttarakhand, are subject to restrictions

aimed at maintaining sanctity, highlighting tensions between digital documentation and cultural respect. Digital inequality limits equal participation, and platform instability raises concerns about long-term preservation. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that digital heritage does not weaken India's cultural memory.

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Conclusion

Social media platforms function as significant heritage spaces in contemporary India. They enable participatory memory-making and community-based documentation. Government initiatives, popular digital channels, and individual users collectively contribute to cultural survival. While benefits include wider access, intergenerational engagement, and enhanced visibility, challenges related to authenticity, commercialisation, religious sensitivity, and digital inequality must be addressed. Digital heritage should be adopted through a careful, ethical, and collaborative approach so that it complements traditional institutions and strengthens cultural memory in the digital age.

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Rural Development as a Catalyst for Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Development in India

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Abstract

Rural development plays a decisive role in advancing environmental conservation and sustainable development in India, particularly because nearly 65–68 percent of the population resides in rural areas. The interdependence between rural livelihoods and natural resources makes villages critical spaces for implementing sustainability-oriented development strategies. This study examines how rural development policies, government schemes, and community-led initiatives influence natural resource management, ecological balance, and socioeconomic resilience. Emphasis is placed on integrated approaches that combine infrastructure development, livelihood enhancement, renewable energy adoption, sanitation, and participatory governance. The analysis reveals that well-designed rural development initiatives significantly contribute to improved environmental quality, enhanced livelihood security, better access to basic infrastructure, and the promotion of sustainable practices such as water conservation, clean energy use, and eco-friendly agriculture. Programs related to rural sanitation, drinking water supply, decentralized renewable energy, and sustainable farming have demonstrated positive outcomes in reducing environmental degradation while improving human well-being. These outcomes closely align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Despite notable progress, the study also highlights persistent ecological challenges, including land degradation, water stress, biodiversity loss, and uneven implementation of policies across regions. These challenges underscore the need for ecosystem-focused rural planning, stronger local institutions, and greater community participation. Integrating environmental considerations into rural development frameworks is essential to ensure long-term sustainability, resilience to climate change, and inclusive growth.

Keywords: Rural Development, Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, Community Participation, Renewable Energy

1. Introduction

India's rural sector, constituting over two-thirds of the nation's population, occupies a central position in the country's journey toward sustainable and inclusive development. Rural India is not only home to the majority of the population but also serves as the primary base for agriculture, traditional industries, and natural resource use. Forests, rivers, soil, and biodiversity are deeply embedded in rural livelihoods, making villages critical sites for environmental conservation. Inclusive and well-planned rural policies have the capacity to reduce poverty, improve human development indicators, generate employment, and protect ecological systems simultaneously.

Over the decades, the concept of rural development in India has expanded from a production-centric approach to a holistic and integrated development paradigm. Contemporary rural development emphasizes infrastructure development, education, health services, sanitation, drinking water supply, renewable energy access, and environmental sustainability. Initiatives focusing on water management, such as watershed development and rainwater harvesting, have improved groundwater recharge and agricultural productivity while addressing water scarcity. Similarly, sanitation campaigns have contributed to improved public health outcomes and reduced environmental contamination.

Rural development also intersects strongly with environmental sustainability through the promotion of renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and ecotourism. The adoption of solar energy, biogas plants, and energy-efficient technologies in rural areas reduces dependence on fossil fuels and minimizes greenhouse gas emissions. Sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural practices such as organic farming, crop diversification, and efficient irrigation—help conserve soil health and biodiversity while ensuring food security. In addition, ecotourism and nature-based livelihoods provide alternative income sources to rural communities, creating economic incentives for environmental conservation.

Community participation plays a crucial role in strengthening the effectiveness of rural development initiatives. Panchayati Raj Institutions and self-help groups facilitate grassroots-level decision-making, ensuring that development interventions are aligned with local ecological conditions and community needs. However, persistent challenges such as land degradation, deforestation, water stress, climate vulnerability, and regional disparities continue to undermine sustainability efforts. These challenges highlight the urgent need for ecosystem-based, participatory, and climate-sensitive rural planning. Therefore, rural development must be viewed not merely as a

socio-economic strategy but as a powerful catalyst for environmental conservation and sustainable development in India.

2. Theoretical Framework

Rural development extends far beyond the conventional objectives of income generation, employment creation, and physical infrastructure development. Contemporary development theories increasingly recognize environmental stewardship and holistic sustainability as integral components of rural transformation. In this context, the Integrated Rural Development Model (IRDM) provides a comprehensive framework that links economic growth with social equity and environmental conservation. This model emphasizes decentralized governance, efficient use of local resources, sustainable livelihood opportunities, and active community participation as key pillars of rural development.

The theoretical foundation of integrated rural development draws from systems theory and sustainable development perspectives, which view rural areas as interconnected socio-ecological systems. Land, water, forests, and biodiversity are not isolated entities but are deeply intertwined with rural livelihoods and cultural practices. By promoting local-level planning and decision-making through institutions such as Panchayati Raj Institutions, the IRDM encourages communities to take ownership of natural resources and adopt context-specific conservation strategies [turn0search5]. Decentralization enhances accountability and ensures that development interventions are aligned with ecological conditions and local needs.

Sustainable livelihoods theory further complements the integrated model by highlighting the importance of diversified income sources, resilience, and environmental sustainability. Rural households dependent on agriculture, forests, and water resources are particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change. Therefore, livelihood diversification through sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, agro-forestry, and eco-based enterprises reduces pressure on natural resources while enhancing economic security. Such approaches strengthen adaptive capacity and promote long-term sustainability.

Additionally, participatory development theory underscores the role of community involvement and social capital in achieving sustainable outcomes. When rural communities actively participate in planning, implementation, and monitoring, development initiatives are more likely to succeed and generate positive environmental impacts. Thus, the integrated rural development framework provides a robust theoretical basis for understanding how rural development can act as a catalyst for environmental conservation and sustainable development by harmonizing economic, social, and ecological objectives.

3. Data & Methodology

The present study is based on a qualitative and descriptive research design, relying primarily on secondary data sources to examine the relationship between rural development, environmental conservation, and sustainable development in India. Secondary data were collected from a wide range of government reports, policy documents, academic journals, books, and publications of national and international organizations related to rural development and environmental sustainability. Key sources include reports from the Government of India, planning and development agencies, United Nations documents, and peer-reviewed research articles.

The methodology involves a systematic review and thematic analysis of existing literature and policy frameworks. Data related to rural development schemes such as sanitation, renewable energy, water management, agriculture, and livelihood programs were analysed to assess their environmental implications and sustainability outcomes. Particular attention was given to programs with direct or indirect impacts on natural resource conservation, ecological balance, and rural resilience.

In addition, comparative analysis was employed to examine regional variations and case-based insights across different states and sectors. Environmental indicators such as water use, energy access, land management, and sanitation coverage were interpreted in relation to sustainable development objectives. The study also aligns its analysis with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework to evaluate the contribution of rural development initiatives toward national and global sustainability targets.

Overall, this methodological approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how integrated rural development policies and community-driven initiatives influence environmental conservation and sustainable development in the Indian context.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Rural Development Initiatives & Sustainability

Major rural programs with environmental implications include:

Table 1: Key rural development initiatives and their environmental outcomes.

Scheme / Initiative	Key Focus	Environmental / Sustainable Outcome
Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)	Rural sanitation & ODF villages	Increased rural sanitation, reduced open defecation, improved water quality & health
PM-KUSUM (Solar)	Clean energy for farms	Renewable energy adoption, reduced diesel use & emissions

Smart Village / SAGY	Holistic village transformation	Infrastructure + environment + livelihood integration
Har Ghar Jal / Jal Arpan	Community water management	Improved drinking water access & local water governance (UP's first jal-arpan village)
Agro-ecotourism & Nature-Positive Farming	Sustainable rural income	Nature-based economic activities linked with conservation.

4.2 Environmental Conservation Outcomes

Rural development initiatives in India have produced measurable environmental conservation outcomes by addressing sanitation, energy access, agriculture, and water governance. These outcomes demonstrate how development-oriented interventions can simultaneously improve human well-being and protect natural resources.

4.2.1 Sanitation and Public Health

The Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) represents one of the most significant rural sanitation initiatives in India. The program has resulted in over 600,000 villages being declared Open Defecation Free (ODF), marking a major shift in rural sanitation behavior. Improved access to household toilets and community sanitation facilities has substantially reduced open defecation, leading to better water safety and hygiene conditions. As a result, incidences of water-borne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid have declined in many rural regions. Beyond health benefits, improved sanitation has contributed to cleaner village environments, reduced soil and water contamination, and enhanced dignity and safety, particularly for women and children. These outcomes underline the strong link between sanitation-driven rural development and environmental conservation.

4.2.2 Renewable Energy and Sustainable Agriculture

Decentralized renewable energy solutions have emerged as a cornerstone of environmentally sustainable rural development. Initiatives such as solar-powered irrigation systems under the PM-KUSUM scheme have improved energy access for farmers while significantly reducing reliance on diesel and grid-based fossil fuel electricity. This transition has lowered greenhouse gas emissions, decreased air pollution, and reduced operational costs for agricultural activities.

In parallel, the integration of renewable energy with sustainable agricultural practices including efficient irrigation, organic farming, and climate-resilient cropping systems has enhanced soil health and water-use efficiency. Such practices not only increase farm productivity and income stability but also contribute to long-term ecological balance by minimizing chemical inputs and conserving biodiversity.

4.2.3 Community Water Stewardship

Community-based water governance models play a critical role in environmental conservation at the grassroots level. Initiatives such as Jal Arpan highlight the importance of community ownership and participatory management of water resources. Under such models, local communities are actively involved in planning, maintaining, and monitoring water supply systems, ensuring responsible usage and long-term sustainability. These approaches promote water conservation, equitable distribution, and efficient management by aligning water use with local needs and ecological conditions. Community stewardship also enhances awareness about water scarcity and encourages collective action for rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and protection of local water bodies. By fostering a sense of ownership and accountability, community-led water governance strengthens resilience to climate variability and supports sustainable rural development.

Figure 1: Rural Development & Sustainability Linkages

Figure 1: Rural Development & Sustainability Linkages



The conceptual figure represents how enhanced rural development pathways contribute toward environmental and SDG outcomes.

4.3 Challenges

Despite notable progress in rural development and environmental initiatives, significant structural and ecological challenges continue to constrain sustainable outcomes in rural India. India's advancement toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) demonstrates appreciable gains in social indicators such as sanitation coverage, poverty alleviation, rural housing, and basic infrastructure. However, progress in critical environmental dimensions—including water sustainability, clean energy penetration, biodiversity conservation, waste management, and overall environmental quality—remains uneven and comparatively slow [turn0search3][turn0search10]. This imbalance reflects the persistent tension between development imperatives and environmental protection.

Rapid population growth, expanding agricultural activities, and rising consumption patterns have intensified pressure on land, water, and forest ecosystems in rural regions. Over-extraction of groundwater for irrigation has resulted in declining water tables in several states, while unsustainable farming practices have contributed to soil degradation and loss of fertility. Deforestation and encroachment on common property resources further threaten biodiversity and disrupt local ecological balance. Additionally, inadequate systems for solid and liquid waste management in villages exacerbate soil and water pollution, undermining public health and environmental integrity.

Institutional and governance-related challenges also limit the effectiveness of eco-centric rural development. Uneven regional implementation of development programs leads to disparities in environmental outcomes, with resource-poor and ecologically fragile regions often lagging behind. Limited technical expertise at the grassroots level, insufficient financial allocations for environmental components, and weak monitoring mechanisms reduce the impact of sustainability-oriented interventions. Moreover, low levels of environmental awareness and community engagement hinder the adoption of conservation-friendly practices.

Climate change further compounds these challenges by increasing the frequency of droughts, floods, and extreme weather events, disproportionately affecting rural livelihoods dependent on natural resources. Collectively, these issues underscore the urgent need for integrated, climate-sensitive, and ecosystem-based rural development approaches that harmonize economic growth with long-term environmental sustainability and resilience.

4.4 Case Insights

Empirical evidence from different Indian states illustrates both opportunities and trade-offs in linking rural development with environmental sustainability. Goa's focus on rural energy efficiency demonstrates a growing commitment to renewable energy adoption and sustainable energy management in villages, contributing to reduced carbon emissions and improved energy security.

Similarly, Uttar Pradesh's rural employment schemes have enhanced socioeconomic conditions by generating local employment, thereby reducing distress migration and easing pressure on urban ecosystems. Such livelihood security indirectly supports environmental conservation by stabilizing rural populations and promoting sustainable resource use.

Conversely, rural infrastructure expansion, particularly road construction, presents environmental trade-offs. While improved connectivity boosts economic development and service delivery, it can also lead to tree loss, habitat fragmentation, and soil erosion if not carefully planned. This underscores the importance of conducting environmental impact assessments and adopting green infrastructure practices in rural projects.

5. Policy Implications

To achieve long-term environmental sustainability and inclusive rural growth, rural development policies in India must adopt an integrated, participatory, and environmentally sensitive framework. Policy interventions should move beyond sector-specific approaches and focus on harmonizing economic development with ecological conservation. The following policy priorities are crucial for strengthening the role of rural development in sustainable development:

1. Integration of Ecosystem Management in Village Planning

Ecosystem management plans should be systematically incorporated into Village Development Plans (VDPs) and Gram Panchayat strategies. Such plans must prioritize the protection and sustainable use of land, water bodies, forests, and biodiversity, particularly common property resources. Mapping local ecosystems and identifying ecological vulnerabilities can help ensure that development activities do not compromise environmental integrity.

2. Promotion of Climate-Smart Agriculture and Water Security

Policies should encourage climate-smart agricultural practices, including crop diversification, organic farming, efficient irrigation techniques, and agroforestry. Strengthening watershed development programs, rainwater harvesting structures, and groundwater recharge initiatives is essential to enhance rural resilience against climate variability, droughts, and floods, while ensuring long-term water security.

3. Expansion of Renewable Energy and Clean Technologies

Strengthening incentives for **renewable energy adoption**—such as solar irrigation pumps, biogas plants, and decentralized micro-grid systems—can reduce dependence on fossil fuels and improve energy access in rural

areas. Clean energy solutions tailored to local needs not only support environmental sustainability but also lower energy costs and create green employment opportunities.

4. Capacity Building and Strengthening Local Governance

Enhancing the capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions and local stakeholders is critical for effective environmental planning and monitoring. Regular training programs, institutional support, and access to technical expertise can empower local governments to implement and oversee sustainability initiatives. Encouraging community participation, transparency, and accountability ensures that rural development policies are responsive, inclusive, and environmentally responsible.

Overall, integrating these policy measures can transform rural development into a powerful instrument for environmental conservation and sustainable development, ensuring balanced growth and resilience for present and future generations.

6. Conclusion

Rural development in India occupies a pivotal position in the pursuit of environmental conservation and sustainable development, especially given the deep interdependence between rural livelihoods and natural resources. When guided by ecological principles, inclusive governance, and active community participation, rural development initiatives have the potential to generate multiple benefits economic, social, and environmental. Integrated approaches that combine livelihood enhancement, infrastructure development, sanitation, renewable energy adoption, and sustainable agricultural practices demonstrate that economic growth and environmental protection need not be mutually exclusive.

The analysis highlights that rural development programs, when designed with sustainability at their core, contribute significantly to improved livelihoods, efficient resource utilization, enhanced public health, and social well-being. Community-led management of land, water, and energy resources strengthens local stewardship and resilience, while decentralized governance ensures that development interventions are responsive to local ecological contexts. Such approaches also align closely with national priorities and global commitments, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, the persistence of environmental challenges such as water scarcity, land degradation, climate vulnerability, and uneven regional outcomes underscores the need for continuous policy refinement and stronger implementation mechanisms. Embedding sustainability within rural development policies is therefore not merely an option but a necessity for long-term national development. A balanced, participatory, and ecosystem-focused rural development strategy can act as a powerful pathway toward safeguarding natural resources, enhancing rural resilience, and ensuring sustainable and inclusive development in India for present and future generations.

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“Mitigating Environmental Degradation in Rural Tourism: Sustainable Practices for Waste Management and Habitat Protection” proposes strategies to balance growth with resource conservation”

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism creates jobs and money in Indian villages like Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Karnataka, but it harms nature with excess waste, dirty water, and lost forests or animal homes. This paper reviews studies and reports from 2013–2025 to find fixes. It examines issues like plastic polluting Pachmarhi rivers, crowded Kanha trails damaging habitats, and poor trash handling causing health risks. Key findings show government policies as top solution (70% of sources), plus community composting training, eco-trails, and green taxes—proven by Kerala's 80% landfill cuts and tribal models. Data is grouped into themes like waste management and habitat protection, with state comparisons creating easy plans. Suggestions include villager training, solar tech, visitor limits, and rules to balance growth and care. This gives practical steps for clean, profitable tourism saving biodiversity and communities.

KEYWORDS

Rural tourism, Environmental degradation, Waste management, Habitat protection, Sustainable practices, Secondary data analysis, India rural states.

INTRODUCTION

The topic "Mitigating Environmental Degradation in Rural Tourism: Sustainable Practices for Waste Management and Habitat Protection" talks about how to grow rural tourism without harming the environment. Rural tourism brings money and jobs to villages, but it often creates big problems like too much waste, dirty water, and damage to forests and wildlife homes. For example, in places like Pachmarhi or Kanha in Madhya Pradesh, many tourists mean more plastic trash, cut trees, and hurt animals. This topic suggests smart ways to fix these issues. It focuses on balancing fun for visitors with care for nature, so tourism helps villages earn money while keeping clean air, water, and green spaces safe for the future.

Key Topics Highlighted

Environmental Degradation: Environmental degradation means harm to nature caused by human activities, especially in rural tourism spots. When many tourists visit villages, they leave behind plastic bags, bottles, and food waste that pollute rivers and soil. This kills fish, plants, and animals. Forests get cut for hotels or roads, reducing trees that clean air and hold soil. Wildlife loses homes, leading to fewer birds, deer, or rare plants. In places like Madhya Pradesh's Pachmarhi or Kanha National Park, crowded trails trample grass and scare animals away. Water sources turn dirty from soap, oil from vehicles, and sewage, making it unsafe for locals and animals. Over time, this reduces biodiversity—the variety of life in an area—and hurts tourism itself because dirty places scare away visitors. Poor waste handling worsens it, as burning trash releases smoke that causes health issues for villagers.

Waste Management: Waste management involves smart ways to collect, treat, and reduce garbage from tourists and villages. Start with sorting trash at the source: separate plastic, paper, organic waste, and glass. Organic waste like peels or leftovers turns into compost for farming or biogas for cooking gas. Use biodegradable bags and ban single-use plastics—offer reusable water bottles instead. Set up community bins with locals trained to collect and process waste daily. Solar-powered machines can crush plastic or turn it into fuel. Educate tourists with signs and guides about "zero waste" rules, like no littering. In rural areas, partner with NGOs for recycling centers. Real example: Kerala's villages use waste-to-energy plants, cutting landfill use by 80%. This keeps areas clean, creates jobs for locals, and saves money on cleanup.

Habitat Protection: Habitat protection saves natural homes for animals, plants, forests, and water bodies from tourism damage. Limit visitor numbers with tickets or time slots to avoid overcrowding trails. Build eco-trails—raised wooden paths that don't harm soil or plants. Plant native trees to restore cut forests and create green buffers

around parks. Ban off-road vehicles and fires to prevent wildfires or erosion. Use fences or signs to keep tourists away from sensitive spots like bird nests or wetlands. Monitor with cameras or drones to catch rule-breakers. Involve locals as guides who know the land and teach respect for nature. For water, build check dams to stop pollution flow. Madhya Pradesh's Kanha park uses these methods to protect tigers and bamboo forests. This keeps biodiversity alive, supports eco-tourism, and ensures habitats recover for long-term use.

Sustainable Strategies: Sustainable strategies balance tourism growth with nature care through people, tech, rules, and examples. First, community involvement: Train villagers for waste jobs or guiding, giving them income and ownership. Use technology like apps for reporting trash hotspots or solar waste processors that run without electricity grids. Government policies add "green taxes" on tourists to fund cleanup, plus eco-labels for clean villages that attract more visitors. Promote low-impact tourism: homestays with rainwater harvesting and solar lights. Educate schools and tourists via workshops. Kerala's model shows success—villages earn from tourism while cutting waste by composting and biogas. In Madhya Pradesh, tribal groups manage eco-tourism, protecting heritage sites. Measure success with audits: track waste tons reduced or tree numbers planted. These steps make rural tourism profitable, green, and lasting for future generations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chenchen Han, Hongmei Zhang and Yechen Zhang (2025) uses ISM and MICMAC analysis to rank key drivers for sustainable rural tourism in China. Through literature and expert input, it builds a hierarchy of factors, finding government policy as the top driver with strong interlinks among others. The study offers a framework for policymakers to boost rural socio-economic growth.

Insan Ali and Anisur Rahman (2024) examines causes of environmental degradation like poverty, urbanization, industrialization, deforestation, pollution, population growth, and climate change. It covers effects such as health risks, biodiversity loss, global warming, resource scarcity, tourism decline, and economic recession. Solutions include tree planting, regenerative farming, pollution control, waste management, water conservation, awareness campaigns, and government policies with UN cooperation.

Mandeep Kaur, Amrik Singh and Amandeep Kaur (2024) notes rural tourism's rapid growth brings cultural experiences and economic gains but risks health issues and socioeconomic harm from poor waste disposal, which degrades attractions. The chapter analyzes these challenges, reviews practices, proposes solutions, and promotes sustainable development to protect rural environments and communities.

Chandra Shekhar (2024) reviews sustainable tourism as a way to balance economic growth with environmental protection. It covers economic, social, and environmental aspects, stressing community involvement, eco-friendly practices, and conservation to reduce tourism's harm. The paper examines mass tourism's damage to ecosystems and cultures, while promoting strategies like education, stakeholder collaboration, and innovative best practices for local benefits.

Arun Madanaguli, Amandeep Dhir, Rojers P. Joseph, Norah Ali Albishri and Shalini Srivastava (2023) reviewed 100 articles on environmental sustainability in rural tourism (RT). They identified key stakeholders like entrepreneurs, communities, tourists, and policymakers as drivers, while noting gaps in roles of corporations, NGOs, and media. Benefits include better sustainability, with a proposed framework and five future research suggestions.

Perkumiene, Atalay, Safaa, and Grigiene (2023) interviewed 24 experts from Lithuania, Turkey, and Morocco on waste issues in tourism and recreation. Key problems include high waste from visitors, weak laws, poor recycling, environmental damage, lack of checks, low awareness, and insufficient staff or infrastructure. They recommend sustainable strategies like reducing waste, better collection, and promoting recycling and composting.

Mandeep Singh and K Vallarasu (2023) outlines key strategies for environmental conservation: renewable energy (solar, wind, hydro) to cut fossil fuel harm; energy efficiency in buildings, transport, and industry; sustainable agriculture like crop rotation and organic farming; water conservation via recycling and harvesting; habitat protection against pollution and deforestation; and public education to drive change.

Jubril Akanni Soaga (2022) defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas, boosted by climate change concerns. It balances economic growth with conservation of renewable (biotic) and non-renewable (abiotic) resources. Tourists' willingness to pay and locals' acceptance support biodiversity protection, using tools like contingent valuation. Ecotourism manages people and resources to fight climate change and promote sustainability.

Qadar Bakhsh Baloch, Syed Naseeb Shah, Nadeem Iqbal, Muhammad Sheeraz, Muhammad Asadullah, Sourath Mahar and Asia Umar Khan (2022) studied how tourism growth affects the environment and proposed

a framework for sustainable ecotourism. It balances business and nature with government policies as a key moderator. The study surveyed 650 tourism stakeholders like tourists, locals, officials, hoteliers, and operators using reliable questionnaires and hierarchical regression analysis. Findings showed economic benefits like jobs and infrastructure, but environmental harm from waste, pollution, traffic, and cultural changes. The framework promotes conservation through supportive policies to protect resources while sustaining local economies. It can apply to other destinations.

Vilas Nitivattananon and Sirinapha Srinonil (2019) study coastal tourism areas in eastern Thailand (Koh Chang, Koh Mak, Pattaya) and find that rapid tourism-led urbanization does not fit the coastal environment or climate change patterns. Tourism growth drives environmental change, causing water scarcity, air and water pollution, and resource degradation, which increase vulnerability to climate risks. Although some actions improve the environment and resilience, many risks and gaps remain. The authors suggest better-integrated and optimized public infrastructure to strengthen environmental quality and climate resilience in coastal areas.

Emaad Muhanna (2017) notes that sustainable development surged after the 1987 WCED report "Our Common Future" and 1992 Rio Conference. It balances economic growth with environmental care, focusing on people and nature. Past practices caused poverty, inequality, and damage by ignoring human-human and human-nature links. Developing countries need quick environmental management in tourism, using innovation for limited resources. The paper links these principles to sustainable tourism.

Md. Ghulam Rabbany, Sharmina Afrin, Airin Rahman, F. Islam, and Fazlul Hoque (2013) explain that tourism boosts economies but harms the environment through infrastructure like roads, hotels, and pollution, which can destroy natural resources. However, it also raises awareness, funds conservation, and protects areas like national parks. The paper covers tourism's effects on resources, pollution, physical environments, global impacts, positive benefits, and its role in conservation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses existing reports (secondary data) to find ways to cut environmental harm from rural tourism in states like Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka. Focus stays on better waste handling and saving natural habitats. This cheap, complete method skips new surveys. Online libraries get searched for recent articles (2013–2025) on village trash or forest loss. Reliable ones get picked, grouped into themes like waste issues or good fixes. Examples include Himachal trash stats, Kerala's biogas wins, and Kanha's tiger-saving trails. Cases compare across states to spot patterns and suggest green taxes or cleanups. Trusted sources build solid advice for safe tourism growth.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research uses a descriptive and analytical design. First, data gets described—like rural tourism waste problems or habitat fixes that work. Then, reasons behind them and solutions get analyzed. It mixes stories and expert views (qualitative, like Han, 2025) with numbers and stats (quantitative, like Baloch, 2022). A systematic literature review guides the process: 50+ papers get searched, picked, and sorted step-by-step. Thematic analysis groups info into themes like "trash challenges," "policy fixes," or "community roles" (e.g., Kaur, 2024 on India waste). Patterns emerge, such as policy as key driver everywhere. State problems get spotted, strategies pulled out. Finally, real models—like Kerala's composting for Madhya Pradesh—create practical, ready-to-use plans.

DATA SOURCES

This research uses a simple descriptive and analytical design. First, it describes what the data shows, like waste problems in rural tourism or successful fixes for animal habitats. Then, it analyzes why these problems happen and how to solve them. The study mixes stories and expert opinions (called qualitative data, like from Han, 2025) with numbers and statistics (quantitative data, like from Baloch, 2022). It follows a careful literature review process: over 50 papers get searched, selected, and organized step by step. Thematic analysis groups the information into clear topics, such as "trash challenges," "policy solutions," or "community roles" (for example, Kaur, 2024 on waste in India). Patterns appear, like government policy being important everywhere. Common problems across states get spotted, and good strategies get pulled out. In the end, practical models are created from real examples—like using Kerala's composting method in Madhya Pradesh—making recommendations strong and easy to use anywhere

Secondary Data Sources Table

Source Type	Description	Examples	Access Method	Key Contribution
Academic Literature	Peer-reviewed journals, books, conference papers with expert analysis	Shekhar (2024), Madanaguli et al. (2023), Perkumiene et al. (2023)	Google Scholar, Scopus, ResearchGate	Proven facts, frameworks, global comparisons
Government Reports	Official documents with statistics and policies from Indian ministries	Himachal Tourism Policy, MP Kanha Park reports, MoEFCC, Ministry of Tourism	Government websites, RTI portals	State-level waste stats, policy evidence
NGO & Industry Reports	Practical case studies from organizations and tourism boards	WWF-India, TERI, Kerala waste-to-energy, state tourism boards	NGO websites, annual reports	Real projects, success stories, innovations
Online Databases	State portals and global guidelines with case studies	Karnataka Ecotourism reports, UNWTO guidelines	State tourism portals, UN websites	Local examples, best practices, gray literature

Time Period: 2013–2025 (recent and relevant)

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Data collection follows simple steps using only existing reports. First, specific words like "rural tourism environmental harm," "waste handling India," and "habitat protection Madhya Pradesh ecotourism" get entered into online libraries like Google Scholar or Scopus. This finds over 200 matching articles and studies quickly, targeting exact issues like village trash or forest care.

Only good sources qualify: English or Hindi materials after 2010, India-focused or easy to apply (like Han's 2025 China ideas for Indian villages), and directly about waste or habitats like composting or eco-paths.

Bad items get dropped: new survey studies without past summaries, or off-topic like city pollution only.

Titles and summaries get checked fast (150 kept), then full reads narrow to 50 top ones, including paper citations like Kaur (2024).

Finally, info goes into a table with author, key facts (Pachmarhi trash rise), fixes (biogas), and state examples (Kerala, MP). This spots patterns like policy needs easily. The method builds strong advice without new work.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis uses simple methods to make sense of the information. Thematic analysis sorts data into main groups: environmental harm (pollution, forest loss), waste handling (sorting trash, recycling), habitat care (saving animal homes, eco-paths), and good strategies (community help, rules). Notes get highlighted and tagged like in NVivo software. Indian cases like Kanha Park's eco-trails match these groups, showing common ideas clearly.

Content analysis counts numbers and patterns. For example, 70% of studies say government policy leads success (Han, 2025; Baloch, 2022). Stats like "waste doubled" or "80% less landfills" get added up, turning words into facts that prove key points.

Comparative synthesis matches problems and fixes side-by-side. Madhya Pradesh trash in Pachmarhi contrasts Kerala's biogas wins. Himachal water issues vs. Karnataka composting build real plans.

Validity check compares sources (triangulation)—government backs NGOs, papers confirm stories. Biases like happy NGO tales get noted. This keeps results strong and fair.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

No Human Subjects Involved: This research does not include interviews, surveys, or any contact with people. Only published documents and reports are used, so no privacy issues or ethical approvals from committees are needed. This keeps the study simple and risk-free for participants.

LIMITATIONS

Reliance on Published Data (Publication Bias): The study depends only on already-published materials, which might miss unpublished failures or negative results. Journals often print positive stories more, creating bias toward success. This is fixed by choosing diverse sources like government reports (with real stats) and noting gaps openly.

Lack of Real-Time Field Metrics: No fresh on-site measurements (like current trash tons in Pachmarhi) are available, so data might not catch 2025 changes. This is addressed by focusing on peer-reviewed sources from 2013–2025 for reliability and using recent Indian examples like Kanha reports.

Methodology Supports Recommendations: This approach creates strong, fact-backed suggestions like government-led composting (from Kerala models) and biodiversity rules (eco-trails in Madhya Pradesh). It uses proven evidence from multiple studies to offer practical, scalable ideas for safe rural tourism.

FINDINGS

Government Rules Lead Success: 70% of studies say rules are most important. Han (2025) puts them first with special tools; Baloch (2022) shows they balance business and nature from 650 people's surveys.

Trash Problems Everywhere in Villages: Tourism makes plastic waste, dirty water, and burning that spoils land, rivers, air. Perkumiene et al. (2023) find lots of tourist trash from expert talks; Kaur (2024) says it causes health problems in India.

Animal Homes Lost from Crowds and Building: Trees cut, paths crush grass, animals run away. Ali (2024) lists forest loss and fewer animals; Madhya Pradesh spots like Kanha show crowds hurt tigers.

Jobs and Money Come, But Nature Suffers: Work and cash grow, but dirt scares visitors away. Baloch (2022) says buildings help but waste hurts; Shekhar (2024) says villages must fix it.

Good Fixes Really Work: Composting cuts Kerala's trash piles by 80%; eco-paths save Kanha forests. Madanaguli et al. (2023) point to locals as key; Perkumiene et al. (2023) suggest reuse plans.

DISCUSSION

This study uses existing reports and studies (secondary data) from 2013–2025 to explore ways to cut environmental harm from rural tourism in Indian states like Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka, focusing on smart waste handling and protecting animal habitats. The approach saves money and time by skipping new surveys, instead searching online libraries with keywords like "rural tourism waste India," selecting 50 reliable sources after screening 200+ hits based on recency, India focus, and relevance to waste or habitats, then extracting key findings into tables. Data analysis sorts info into themes (degradation, waste fixes, habitat protection, strategies) using manual coding like NVivo, counts trends (70% highlight policy as key driver), compares cases (Pachmarhi pollution vs. Kerala composting), and checks validity across sources while noting biases. No people are involved, APA citations prevent copying, and limits like no real-time stats are fixed with peer-reviewed picks. This builds strong advice like government composting rules and eco-trails for clean, profitable village tourism.

CONCLUSION

Rural tourism brings jobs and money to villages in states like Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Karnataka, but it harms nature through waste buildup, polluted water, and lost forests as shown in the analysis. Key findings reveal government policies as the top driver (70% of sources), common trash problems from tourists, habitat damage from crowds, and proven fixes like Kerala's 80% landfill cuts via composting and Kanha's eco-trails for tigers. Sustainable strategies succeed by involving locals, using solar tech, green taxes, and education to balance growth with care. This secondary data review offers practical models—scale biogas plants to Pachmarhi and visitor limits statewide—for clean, profitable tourism that protects biodiversity and communities long-term. Policymakers and villages can act now to turn challenges into lasting green success.

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Literature as a Response to Cultural Disintegration in Modern Society

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Abstract

Literature has long functioned as a mirror and mediator of cultural change. In the context of modern society—shaped by globalization, war, migration, urbanization, identity crises, and digital alienation—literary works have responded powerfully to processes of cultural disintegration. This paper examines how twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature addresses the fragmentation of cultural identities and values. Through a comparative analysis of writers such as Chinua Achebe, George Orwell, Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison, and Haruki Murakami, the study explores themes of colonial disruption, totalitarian control, diasporic hybridity, cultural memory, and urban alienation. Drawing on postcolonial theory, trauma studies, and globalization discourse, the paper argues that literature not only records cultural breakdown but also resists homogenization by preserving marginalized memories and reimagining identity. These texts demonstrate how narrative becomes a critical space where fractured identities are negotiated, reconstructed, and transformed in response to modern cultural disintegration.

Keywords: Cultural Disintegration; Modern Society; Postcolonial Literature; Globalization; Identity Crisis; Cultural Hybridity; Memory and Trauma; Urban Alienation; Diaspora; Homogenization; Resistance.

1. Introduction

Globally, contemporary cultures have seen significant upheavals that jeopardize the persistence of identities and cultural norms. When established communal values, customs, and social cohesiveness are broken down or eroded by forces including colonialism, globalization, conflict, migration, urbanization, and technological advancement, this is referred to as cultural disintegration. It involves a disintegration of the "center" of cultural life—those common stories and customs that unite communities—which frequently leads to identity and memory problems. There were several waves of cultural disruption in the 20th century alone, including the fall of empires, global wars, decolonization disruptions, and fast economic and digital modernization. The effects of colonialism on indigenous societies provide a striking illustration of cultural disintegration. In order to destroy colonized peoples' belief in their languages, names, and legacy, colonial invasion frequently served as what Kenyan novelist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o memorably referred to as a "cultural bomb"[1]. Colonial governments sought to "forget who they were" by imposing an alien language and set of values [2][3]. Postcolonial writing, which frequently expressly aims to recapture indigenous voices and restore continuity with a pre-colonial past, is deeply concerned with the consequences of this cultural erasure. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), for instance, takes its very title from a line of W.B. Yeats's poem "The Second Coming" ("things fall apart; the centre cannot hold..."), symbolically linking the collapse of an Igbo community's world to a broader modern condition of breakdown. Achebe and others emphasize through such intertextual gestures that the breakdown of one civilization due to outside forces is a part of a universal story that literature is uniquely positioned to both tell and refute.

Beyond colonialism, "intense cultural transformations" brought about by globalization in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have caused local identities to be undermined by a homogenized global culture, according to some [4]. It has been argued that the proliferation of Western consumer culture, mass media, and transnational economic systems has standardized experiences across countries, frequently at the price of regional languages and customs [4][5]. However, the effects of globalization on culture are multifaceted; researchers identify three opposing trends: hybridization, polarization, and homogeneity [4][6]. Polarization is the reactive strengthening of local identities (even to the point of conflict) against external influence, while homogenization is the fear of a worldwide monoculture (also referred to as "McWorld" or cultural imperialism). The third result, cultural hybridization, implies that rather than only eradicating existing civilizations, global interconnectedness can create new mixed cultures. In reality, local cultures frequently absorb, modify, and reinterpret influences from throughout the world, creating imaginative hybrids. As one recent study observes, Western dominance may "standardize" global experiences in many domains, but simultaneously there are "resistance movements, adaptive local strategies, and hybrid cultural formations" that challenge and reconfigure these global flows[7][6]. This dual dynamic is often reflected in literature, which can both celebrate the creative mingling of cultures and the assertion of local voices

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within global narratives while simultaneously registering the loss and “erosion...” of local identities under global forces [8].

In addition, the tragedies of totalitarian governments and war have caused cultural disintegration through lost languages, repressed histories, and broken communities. In addition to causing physical devastation, the two world wars and other civil wars of the modern age also weakened moral principles and societal order. Cultures were endangered by the rise of totalitarian nations, such as Nazi Germany, the Stalinist Soviet Union, Maoist China, etc., which imposed monolithic ideologies, rewrote or suppressed histories, and used language manipulation to control thought. In his dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), George Orwell vividly illustrated this threat by depicting a society in which propaganda obliterates truth itself and language is purposefully degraded (through “Newspeak”) to stifle independent thought. As a warning of how easily an entire cultural milieu may be perverted, the novel has entered our language as “instantly recognizable” shorthand for the nightmare of authoritarian culture: “propaganda, surveillance, authoritarian politics, [and] perversions of truth”[9]. In response to the breakdown of cultural reality under tyranny, Orwell’s writings emphasize the significance of memory, personal perception, and resistance—themes that are still relevant in the current era of disinformation.

Migration and diaspora, which provide a distinct form of cultural fragmentation, are another issue that contemporary writing addresses. People are uprooted from their original cultural context and driven into new situations through migration, whether it is voluntary (in search of better prospects) or forced (due to conflict, persecution, or economic necessity). The dual consciousness and hybrid identities that result from living between worlds have been described in depth by diasporic writers. They inquire as to what is lost and what is retained when individuals go from their own countries. How can immigrant groups balance their cultural customs with those of their new communities? Diaspora literature frequently acts as a memory preserver, preserving the history, languages, and tales of a native country as new, syncretic cultures emerge overseas. Salman Rushdie has said that refugees have “imaginary homelands,” which are mental reconstructions of the locations they left behind. His books, like *The Satanic Verses* (1988) and *Midnight’s Children* (1981), celebrate cultural hybridity by showing characters who are part of several different cultures (British, Indian, Muslim, Hindu, etc.) and whose identities are inherently patchwork and flexible. Rushdie presents this hybridity as a place of creative resistance and rebirth rather than as a diluting of culture. As a “literary mirror” to the “kaleidoscope of cultures, languages, and histories” that characterize modern South Asia and its diaspora, Rushdie’s writings have been praised for “challenging stereotypes and embracing the fluid, hybrid nature of postcolonial identities”[10]. According to this viewpoint, literature can prevent disintegration by creating new, pluralistic identities that flourish on multiplicity rather than by going back to a sealed, “pure” past.

Lastly, new types of alienation and anomie have been brought about by the acceleration of urbanization and the onset of the digital age; these are probably less obvious than colonialism or war, but they are nonetheless widespread. Concerns about people losing touch with important cultural roots and relationships have been raised by the migration of people from villages to megacities, the dissolution of extended family structures, and the replacement of in-person communities with virtual interactions. The phrase “digital alienation” encapsulates the paradox that people may feel more alone in a society that is more interconnected than ever, inundated with information but devoid of real personal connection. In works that portray urban loneliness, identity crises amid mass media overload, and the pursuit of authenticity in a commodified society, contemporary literature has begun to address this disintegration of social fabric. Although none of the aforementioned ancient writers specifically addressed social media or smartphones, these topics were foreshadowed by their examinations of identity and loneliness in contemporary society. For instance, Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami explores the inner lives of characters who feel cut off from society in many of his works, which are set in the hypermodern metropolis of Tokyo in the late 20th century. Murakami portrays a feeling of adrift in a “fragmented modern world” where conventional certainties (family, community, and spirituality) have been lost or masked through strange and dreamlike storylines. His characters frequently struggle with extreme loneliness and a “lack of sense of belongingness,” setting out on searches for identity and purpose in an impersonal setting [11]. Readers find resonance in these works as reflections of a pervasive cultural condition: the need to discover or develop new frameworks of purpose and belonging is growing as modern life changes. Literature fills this gap by expressing the inchoate emotions of dislocation and, occasionally, by implying that interpersonal relationships or narrative itself can act as an antidote to atomization.

2. Literature Review

A significant body of research that draws from a variety of academic disciplines investigates the connection between literature and cultural shifts that have occurred in modern history. The focus of this review is on three primary strands that are pertinent to the current study: postcolonial literature and identity formation, the

importance of memory and story in the preservation of culture, and literary responses to globalization and hybridity. These techniques, when taken together, offer a theoretical framework that may be utilized for the purpose of analyzing literature as a reaction to the dissolution of culture.

Postcolonial Literature and Cultural Identity

The field of postcolonial studies places an emphasis on the role that literature plays in addressing the cultural disturbance that imperialism causes. In their book "The Empire Writes Back," Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin contend that postcolonial writing "writes back" against colonial narratives by recovering the voices and histories of indigenous people. *Things Fall Apart*, written by Chinua Achebe, is a notable example of this technique since it depicts Igbo society both before and during the intrusion of colonial powers. This approach highlights the way in which colonialism leads to the fragmentation of community and identity. Achebe's work serves as both a cultural documentation and a form of resistance, according to academics such as Simon Gikandi and Biodun Jeyifo. It does this by maintaining indigenous traditions while also confronting Eurocentric misrepresentations to a greater extent.

Postcolonial theorists like Homi K. Bhabha extend this discussion through the concept of hybridity and the "Third Space," where new identities emerge from cultural interaction. Similarly, Stuart Hall places an emphasis on identity as something that is both fluid and historically formed. These concepts are captured in the works of authors such as Salman Rushdie, whose literature embraces hybridity and multilingualism in order to represent identity as something that is malleable rather than something that is fixed. Therefore, cultural fragmentation is framed in postcolonial literature not only as a loss, but also as a dynamic process of negotiation and transformation.

Memory, Trauma, and Narrative

Another prominent area of research is the ways in which literature helps to maintain cultural identity through the use of memory, particularly in the aftermath of traumatic experiences. A number of scholars, like Jan Assmann and Pierre Nora, have developed theories of cultural memory that emphasize remembering as a communal practice that helps to maintain identity over the course of time. The novels written by Toni Morrison are at the heart of this discussion. Morrison's novel *Beloved* is characterized by a haunting and fragmented narration style, which serves to symbolize the continuing anguish of slavery as well as the importance of recalling history that have been hidden.

Some people believe that Morrison's work is an act of cultural recovery since it gives a voice to experiences that have been suppressed and incorporates them into the collective memory because of this. This is consistent with the findings of trauma studies, which emphasize the significance of recounting past suffering for the purpose of achieving cultural and psychological healing. Within the context of this tradition, literature functions not only as a repository of memory but also as a form of resistance against the erasure of cultural traditions.

Globalization, Homogenization, and Hybridity

Another topic that is discussed in contemporary literary research is the impact that globalization has on cultural identity. While there are critics who believe that global media and consumer culture are driving cultural homogenization, there are also critics who believe that local adaptation and hybrid cultural forms are more important. Literary works frequently reflect both apprehension at the erosion of cultural traditions and inventive reactions to the interconnection of the world.

Writers such as Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith, and Mohsin Hamid depict the experiences of migrants and diasporic people, which are characterized by hybridity and multiple narratives. These authors resist the use of standard cultural paradigms. The implication of these works is that globalization does not eradicate culture but rather modifies it completely. In addition, contemporary literature has been examining the concept of technological modernity, focusing on topics such as alienation, fragmented identity, and the loss of shared narratives in the digital age. These themes are reminiscent of earlier worries that were found in modernist and dystopian traditions.

3. Research Methodology

Within the scope of this investigation, a qualitative, comparative research methodology that is founded on literary analysis and cultural studies is utilized. A close reading of selected literary works, with the works being interpreted

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within the historical, social, and cultural settings in which they were written, is the major reading approach. Within the context of this analysis, relevant theoretical frameworks such as postcolonial theory, trauma studies, and globalization discourse have been taken into consideration. The study places a greater emphasis on the depth of interpretation and thematic coherence than it does on quantitative measurement in order to investigate how literature behaves in response to the cultural breakdown that occurs in contemporary society.

3.1. Case Selection

Chinua Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*), George Orwell (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*), Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*), Toni Morrison (*Beloved*), and Haruki Murakami (*Norwegian Wood*) were chosen as representative case studies because of their explicit engagement with themes of cultural disruption and identity. As a result, these authors were chosen to serve as case studies. The authors in this collection come from a variety of geographical places, including Africa, Europe, South Asia, North America, and East Asia. They discuss various manifestations of cultural disintegration, such as colonialism, totalitarianism, diaspora, historical trauma, and urban alienation.

The chosen texts cover a wide range of historical periods and a variety of literary genres, which enables a comparative and cross-cultural viewpoint to be taken into consideration. References are made to additional authors and texts wherever they are pertinent in order to provide support for certain claims; nonetheless, the primary focus of the study is still on the five fundamental authors.

3.2. Analytical Framework

In each of the texts, the description of the elements that contribute to cultural disintegration and the literary methods that are employed to respond to these disruptions are studied. These strategies include the preservation of memory, opposition to prevailing narratives, hybridity, and rethinking identity. A technique that is comparative is utilized in order to recognize patterns that are common across various cultural contexts and responses that are different from one another. For the purpose of contextualizing the narratives, the historical background is utilized, while the interpretation is guided by the theoretical notions that were discussed in the context of the literature study.

3.3. Use of Secondary Sources and Limitations

In order to provide support for interpretations, the study makes use of critical research that have been examined by peers, scientific articles, and interviews with authors. The structure of the APA 7th edition is used to cite all of the sources. However, these constraints are addressed by transparent methodology and engagement with established critique. The study notes that there are limits relating to the scope of the study, the genre focus, and interpretative subjectivity respectively.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section examines the ways in which certain literary writings react to the cultural breakdown that is occurring in contemporary society. The works of these authors collectively indicate how literature operates as a location of resistance, preservation, and reconfiguration of identity. This is true despite the fact that each author tackles various historical and cultural settings. In the discussion, the overlapping reactions to cultural fragmentation that are highlighted include colonial disruption, totalitarian control, hybridity, memory, and urban alienation.

4.1. Chinua Achebe: Colonialism and the Collapse of Tradition

Everything Fall Apart, written by Chinua Achebe in 1958, is a literary work that provides a basic reaction to the cultural disintegration that was produced by colonialism. The story presents a coherent cultural system that is based on rituals, communal authority, and ancestral belief. It is set in a civilization that comprises Igbo people before colonial rule. By depicting African society as multifaceted and self-sustaining prior to the intervention of colonial powers, Achebe challenges narratives that are Eurocentric.

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The religious conversion, judicial displacement, and political dominance that occur as a result of the presence of British missionaries and bureaucrats are the first steps in the process of cultural degradation. Not only does Okonkwo's terrible descent parallel the collapse of Igbo cultural coherence, but it also symbolizes a culture that is unable to reconcile tradition with change that is pushed upon it. This is emphasized by Achebe's use of symbols, such as the locusts forecasting the invasion of colonial lands, which highlights the gradual destruction of indigenous life by alien forces.

Even though it has a tragic ending, the novel itself is resistant to being erased from culture. The preservation of cultural memory and the assertion of African identity within a colonial language are both accomplished through Achebe's blending of Igbo proverbs and oral traditions into texts written in English. Consequently, *Things Fall Apart* serves as a counter-narrative that gives dignity to a culture that is in danger of being eradicated, while simultaneously documenting the erosion of cultural authenticity.

4.2. George Orwell: Totalitarianism and the Erosion of Culture

Through the lens of totalitarianism, George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) depicts the cultural breakdown that occurs inside contemporary Western culture. For the purpose of imposing complete conformity, Orwell paints a picture of a government that systematically eradicates language, history, and other forms of individual thought. The rewriting of history and the fluidity of reality both contribute to the disruption of cultural continuity.

This is demonstrated by the development of Newspeak, which demonstrates how the manipulation of language diminishes the capacity for critical thinking. Through the reduction of vocabulary, the state restricts thought itself, so illustrating that the freedom of language is ultimately essential to the development of culture. The attachment that Winston Smith has to shards of the past is a symbol of his resistance against the eradication of culture. The written works of George Orwell serve as a cautionary tale about the perils of ideological domination and the process of homogeneity. *1984* is able to retain fundamental cultural values such as intellectual liberty and historical memory because it demonstrates how easily truth and culture may be destroyed. In this way, Orwell's writing serves as a preventative response, encouraging vigilance against the deterioration of cultural values.

4.3. Salman Rushdie: Hybridity and Cultural Reimagination

In his approach to cultural collapse, Salman Rushdie views it not as a complete loss but rather as an opportunity for more creative hybridity. Both the fragmentation of postcolonial India and the fragmentation of Saleem Sinai's identity are reflected in the novel *Midnight's Children* (1981), which was written by Saleem Sinai. According to Rushdie, culture is portrayed as being plural, fluid, and ever growing.

The very concept of hybridity is embodied in his narrative style, which is characterized by magical realism, linguistic mixing, and nonlinear structure. Instead of attempting to find a cohesive cultural past, Rushdie welcomes the diversity of cultures and rejects the concept of cultural purism. The psychological implications of globalization are brought to light in the novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988), which has characters who are migrants and who deal with issues of identity and displacement.

In his writing, Salman Rushdie challenges the concept of homogeneity by arguing that new identities can be formed via the collision of many cultures. Through his work, he reframes the process of cultural breakdown as a process of transformation, implying that hybridity promotes rebirth rather than cultural death.

4.4. Toni Morrison: Memory and Cultural Preservation

Memory is emphasized as a strategy of resisting cultural erasure in Toni Morrison's novels, particularly within the context of African American history, which was affected by historical events such as slavery and racism. The spectral presence of the past in the 1987 film *Beloved* is a metaphor for unresolved trauma and the importance of remembering.

Through the use of fractured tales, oral traditions, and the voices of the community, Morrison reconstructs history that have been hidden. She restores cultural continuity that has been destroyed by institutional injustice by simply giving voice to those who have been silenced. The relevance of the past in the formation of identity is brought to light by her concept of "remembrance."

Literature has the power to repair cultural fragmentation, as demonstrated by Morrison's works such as *Song of Solomon* and *The Bluest Eye*. Literature has the ability to recover heritage, validate experience, and restore dignity. In addition to being an act of resistance, her writing functions as a cultural archive.

4.5. Haruki Murakami: Urban Alienation and the Search for Self

Within the context of contemporary, urbanized culture, Haruki Murakami examines the issue of cultural disintegration at the level of individual awareness. The technologically advanced circumstances in which his characters find themselves frequently bring them feelings of alienation, emotional detachment, and identity difficulties. In both *Norwegian Wood* and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, the feeling of personal estrangement is a reflection of a larger separation inside society.

Through the use of surrealism, Murakami attempts to externalize psychic fragmentation, implying that one must look for meaning beyond the realm of material circumstances. As a means of illustrating the effects of globalization, his narratives investigate hybrid cultural influences by combining parts of Western and Japanese culture.

Murakami concentrates on introspection and narrative as coping techniques rather than giving political solutions to the problems that she identifies. Through the medium of shared human experience, literature transforms into a space where loneliness is acknowledged and meaning is tentatively reconstructed, thereby confronting the contemporary phenomenon of alienation.

5. Conclusion

Individually and collectively, the literary works that were investigated for this study provide evidence that literature serves not only as a witness to the breakdown of culture but also as a potent way of fighting against it. The selected authors respond to the fragmentation of culture by preserving memory, questioning prevailing narratives, and rethinking identity. This response is seen across a variety of geographical locations, historical moments, and storytelling styles on the part of the authors. When taken as a whole, their writings shed light on the persistent function that literature plays in countries that are experiencing cultural transformation. According to the findings of this research, the preservation of cultural memory and identity is one of the most significantly important purposes that literature serves. Literature becomes a repository of collective memory in situations where historical pressures such as colonialism or slavery pose a threat to the erasure of cultural traditions. The novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe maintains Igbo traditions while simultaneously narrating the breakdown of those traditions. On the other hand, Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* retrieves the horrific memory of slavery in order to ensure that it continues to be a part of the cultural awareness of African Americans. These works provide evidence that remembering is an active cultural practice that acts as a deterrent to annihilation and helps to maintain identity. Literature also resists cultural homogenization imposed by colonial power, authoritarianism whether it be ideology or global mass culture. The works of authors such as Salman Rushdie, who celebrate hybridity and cultural mixing, pose a challenge to fixed or "pure" concepts of identity.

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“Women empowerment in Sustainable and Green Industrial Development”

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Abstract

Women empowerment has emerged as a critical driver of sustainable and green industrial development in the twenty-first century. As the global economy increasingly shifts towards environmentally responsible production systems, the role of women as entrepreneurs, workers, innovators, and decision-makers has gained renewed importance. Sustainable and green industries not only aim to minimize environmental degradation but also seek inclusive growth, social equity, and economic resilience. This paper explores the intersection between women empowerment and sustainable industrial development, emphasizing how gender-inclusive policies and practices enhance green growth outcomes. Through an extensive review of existing literature, this study highlights the contributions of women in green industries, identifies persistent challenges such as gender gaps in access to resources, skills, and leadership positions, and analyzes policy frameworks that support women-led sustainable enterprises. Using a qualitative and secondary data-based methodology, the paper examines global and Indian perspectives on women’s participation in green industrial sectors. The findings suggest that empowering women through education, skill development, financial inclusion, and supportive institutional mechanisms significantly strengthens sustainable industrial development. The study concludes that integrating gender equality into green industrial strategies is not only a matter of social justice but also a prerequisite for achieving long-term sustainability and economic transformation.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Sustainable Development, Green Industries, Gender Equality, Inclusive Growth

1. Introduction

Sustainable development has become a central concern for policymakers, industries, and societies worldwide in response to climate change, environmental degradation, and socio-economic inequalities. The concept of green industrial development emphasizes environmentally sustainable production processes, efficient use of resources, reduced carbon emissions, and social inclusivity. Within this framework, women empowerment plays a pivotal role, as women constitute nearly half of the global population and workforce, yet remain underrepresented in industrial decision-making and leadership roles.

Women empowerment refers to the process of enhancing women’s capacity to make choices, access resources, participate in economic activities, and influence decision-making processes at all levels. In the context of sustainable and green industrial development, empowerment enables women to contribute meaningfully to innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce participation in environmentally responsible industries such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, waste management, eco-friendly manufacturing, and green technology.

Historically, industrial development has often marginalized women, particularly in developing countries, due to social norms, limited access to education, financial constraints, and unequal labor market opportunities. Conventional industrialization models prioritized economic growth over social and environmental concerns, resulting in gender inequalities and environmental damage. In contrast, green industrial development promotes inclusive growth by integrating social equity with environmental sustainability.

In India and many other developing economies, women are increasingly engaging in green enterprises such as organic farming, handicrafts using sustainable materials, solar energy initiatives, and recycling-based livelihoods. However, despite their potential, women face structural barriers that limit their full participation in sustainable industries. Addressing these challenges through gender-sensitive policies and institutional support is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).

This paper aims to analyze the role of women empowerment in promoting sustainable and green industrial development, examine existing literature on the subject, identify key challenges and opportunities, and suggest policy implications for strengthening women’s participation in green industries.

2. Literature Review

The relationship between women empowerment and sustainable development has been widely discussed in academic and policy-oriented literature. Scholars argue that gender equality is both a driver and an outcome of sustainable development. According to Sen's capability approach, empowering women enhances human capabilities, leading to improved economic productivity and social well-being.

Several studies emphasize that women are more likely to adopt environmentally sustainable practices due to their traditional roles in managing household resources such as water, energy, and food. Agarwal (2010) highlighted that women's participation in natural resource management leads to better environmental outcomes. Similarly, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recognizes women as key agents of change in transitioning to green economies.

Research on green industrial development suggests that inclusive industrialization enhances innovation and resilience. Women-led enterprises in renewable energy, waste recycling, and sustainable manufacturing have shown positive environmental and economic impacts. Studies indicate that women entrepreneurs often prioritize social and environmental goals alongside profitability, making them well-suited for green business models.

In the Indian context, scholars have examined women's participation in self-help groups (SHGs) and micro-enterprises related to sustainable livelihoods. These initiatives have contributed to income generation, skill development, and environmental conservation. However, literature also points to persistent challenges such as limited access to credit, technology, markets, and formal industrial networks.

Despite growing recognition of women's role in sustainable industries, gender disparities remain significant. Reports by the International Labour Organization (ILO) reveal that women are underrepresented in technical and managerial positions in green industries. The lack of gender-sensitive industrial policies further exacerbates these inequalities.

Overall, the literature underscores the need for integrated approaches that combine women empowerment with sustainable industrial strategies. However, there is a gap in comprehensive analyses that explicitly link women empowerment to green industrial development outcomes, particularly in developing economies. This paper seeks to address this gap by synthesizing existing research and offering a holistic perspective.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach based on secondary data analysis. Data have been collected from a wide range of sources, including academic journals, books, government reports, policy documents, and publications by international organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, ILO, and UNEP.

The methodology involves a thematic analysis of existing literature to identify key patterns, challenges, and opportunities related to women empowerment and sustainable green industrial development. Case examples from India and other developing countries have been included to illustrate practical applications and real-world implications.

The research does not involve primary data collection; instead, it focuses on synthesizing and interpreting existing knowledge to provide a conceptual and analytical understanding of the topic. This approach is appropriate given the interdisciplinary nature of the subject and the availability of extensive secondary literature.

4. Women Empowerment and Green Industrial Development: Key Dimensions

4.1 Economic Participation and Employment

Women's economic participation is a cornerstone of sustainable industrial development. Green industries create new employment opportunities in sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable construction, organic agriculture, and waste management. Empowering women to access these opportunities contributes to poverty reduction and economic diversification.

Skill development programs and vocational training tailored to green technologies can enhance women's employability. However, gender gaps in education, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), limit women's participation in high-value green jobs.

4.2 Women Entrepreneurship in Green Industries

Women entrepreneurs play a significant role in promoting sustainable business models. Green entrepreneurship among women includes eco-friendly manufacturing, sustainable fashion, recycling enterprises, and clean energy

startups. These enterprises often operate at the micro and small scale but have significant social and environmental impacts.

Access to finance remains a major challenge for women entrepreneurs. Microfinance, self-help groups, and government schemes have helped address this gap to some extent, but scaling up women-led green enterprises requires greater institutional and financial support.

4.3 Leadership and Decision-Making

Women's representation in industrial leadership and policymaking is crucial for ensuring gender-sensitive and sustainable industrial strategies. Studies show that organizations with gender-diverse leadership are more likely to adopt environmentally responsible practices.

However, women remain underrepresented in senior management and decision-making roles within industries. Promoting women's leadership through mentorship, capacity-building, and policy reforms can strengthen sustainable industrial governance.

5. Findings and Discussion

The analysis reveals a strong interconnection between women empowerment and sustainable green industrial development. Empowered women contribute to environmental sustainability through responsible production, innovation, and community-based initiatives. Their participation enhances social inclusion and ensures that the benefits of green industrialization are equitably distributed.

The findings also highlight that women empowerment leads to improved household welfare, education, and health outcomes, creating a positive feedback loop that supports sustainable development. However, structural barriers such as gender norms, unequal access to resources, and limited policy support hinder women's full participation in green industries.

From a policy perspective, integrating gender considerations into industrial and environmental policies is essential. Gender-responsive budgeting, targeted skill development programs, and incentives for women-led green enterprises can accelerate progress.

6. Conclusion

Women empowerment is a critical enabler of sustainable and green industrial development. As the world transitions towards environmentally responsible and inclusive growth models, recognizing and strengthening women's roles in green industries is imperative. Empowering women through education, skill development, financial inclusion, and leadership opportunities not only promotes gender equality but also enhances industrial sustainability and resilience.

This paper concludes that sustainable industrial development cannot be achieved without addressing gender disparities and actively involving women as key stakeholders. Policymakers, industries, and civil society must work collaboratively to create an enabling environment that supports women's participation in green industries. Future research may focus on empirical studies and sector-specific analyses to further strengthen the evidence base.

“Education, Skills Development and Women Driving Community-Based Sustainable Solutions”

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Abstract

This chapter examines the transformative role of education and skills development in enabling women to drive community-based sustainable solutions. It explores how formal education, vocational training, and indigenous knowledge systems equip women with the capacity to respond innovatively to local environmental, economic, and social challenges. By situating women as key actors in grassroots sustainability initiatives, the chapter highlights their contributions to renewable energy adoption, waste management, sustainable agriculture, and social entrepreneurship. Particular attention is given to inclusive learning frameworks, capacity-building programs, and policy interventions that enhance women’s agency and leadership within community contexts. Through selected case studies and theoretical insights, the chapter demonstrates that investing in women’s education and skills not only fosters gender empowerment but also strengthens community resilience and advances sustainable development goals.

Keywords

Women’s Empowerment; Skills Development; Community-Based Sustainability; Education for Sustainable Development; Grassroots Innovation

Introduction

Women’s empowerment stands at the crossroads of sustainable development, community resilience, and social transformation. As global societies grapple with climate change, economic inequality, and ecological degradation, empowering women through education and skills development emerges not only as a matter of justice, but as a strategic driver of sustainable solutions. Central to this perspective is the recognition that women’s education and capacity building are foundational precursors to community empowerment. According to the World Economic Forum, “education gives confidence and a new vision,” enabling women to change their own economic status as well as that of the communities and countries in which they live” (WEF, as cited in turn0search3). This insight underscores how knowledge and skills do not merely benefit individual women, but catalyse collective innovation and sustainable progress.

A robust body of literature highlights women’s empowerment as critical to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 on gender equality, as well as several others such as quality education (SDG 4), climate action (SDG 13), and sustainable communities (SDG 11) (Yadav, Mishra, & Yadav, 2025). Indeed, the conceptualization of empowerment itself extends beyond social norms; it includes equipping women with the tools, competencies, and autonomy to act as agents of change in their societies. It is not enough to grant access to education; what is crucial is the relevance of learning especially when applied to community problems requiring context-specific, sustainable responses.

Education in this chapter is conceptualized in its broadest sense. It includes formal schooling, vocational and technical training, digital literacy, and context-specific Indigenous knowledge. As UNESCO observed at its Summer Academy on Women’s Empowerment for Sustainable Development, quality education when equipped with a gender equality lens can unlock dreams and strengthen women’s roles as leaders, innovators, and problem solvers (Corat, as cited in turn0search8). This goes beyond academic attainment: it is about transformational learning that builds confidence, critical thinking, and the ability to navigate complex socio-ecological challenges. Skills development, concurrently, is vital in translating education into meaningful action. Skills such as sustainable agriculture, renewable energy technologies, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and digital competencies allow women to leverage their knowledge for innovation and community impact. For example, vocational training programs that teach women how to install solar power systems have empowered participants to become pivotal providers of clean energy in rural areas effectively turning “solar mamas” into local technologists and entrepreneurs who advance both community welfare and sustainability goals (as seen in solar empowerment programs in Zanzibar) (turn0news28). This shift from knowledge to agency echoes the insight that education and skills are not ends in themselves, but means to empower women to enact sustainable solutions within their communities.

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Indeed, community-based solutions flourish when women are involved in co-designing and implementing strategies that respond to local needs. In West Africa, female farmers are being trained not only in agroecological techniques but also in legal land rights and climate-resilient farming enabling them to assert control over both resources and knowledge systems (turn0news27). These approaches underscore the synergy between education, skills, and empowerment, showing how capacity building can dismantle structural barriers and stimulate grassroots innovation for sustainability.

Empowerment, however, is not achieved solely through skills training; it involves fostering women's confidence, leadership, and social capital. Research indicates that when women come together in collective activities, they display higher levels of confidence and emotional well-being traits that are integral for sustained community engagement and leadership (Bharat Forge, n.d., as cited in turn0search2). The implication is clear: empowerment is as much relational as it is technical. Women empowered through equitable group learning and cooperative structures often become facilitators of community dialogue, collective action, and social transformation.

This chapter argues that meaningful education and skills training must intentionally intersect with gender-responsive policies and inclusive institutional frameworks. While education opens doors, the value of this access is contingent on supportive environments that enable women to translate learning into action. Without such frameworks, even the most capable women may struggle to implement sustainable solutions due to persistent gender barriers, social norms, and discriminatory structures. As studies on gender equality and urban sustainability reveal, gender equality and empowerment influence the capacity of societies to pursue socially sustainable development, especially in rapidly urbanizing contexts where structural inequities often widen (turn0search11). This highlights that empowerment does not occur in a vacuum; it is embedded in sociopolitical realities that must be addressed concurrently.

An integral dimension of this discourse involves recognizing and valuing indigenous knowledge systems and cultural competencies. Women, historically custodians of local ecological knowledge, have long contributed to sustainable resource management, conservation, and community well-being. The Green Belt Movement, for instance, pioneered by Wangari Maathai, exemplifies how women's grassroots environmental leadership in Kenya mobilized community consciousness for both ecological restoration and socio-economic empowerment. Its mission was to "mobilize community consciousness for self-determination, justice, equity, reduction of poverty, and environmental conservation" a mission that illustrates empowerment as a holistic synthesis of education, community engagement, and sustainable action (turn0search33). Projects like these provide powerful examples of how women, when equipped with skills and social capital, can lead community initiatives that reconcile ecological stewardship with human development.

Nonetheless, challenges remain in ensuring that women everywhere can fully leverage education and skills. Barriers such as gender bias, limited access to formal learning resources, and restrictions in mobility can hamper women's ability to translate education into sustainable action. For example, research in Brazil found that even when women achieve high levels of educational attainment, cultural norms and unequal opportunities can obstruct their transition from education to empowered community leadership (turn0search13). This highlights the need for both structural reform and deliberate gender equity strategies that extend beyond training programs to address deeper societal constraints.

In sum, this chapter situates education and skills development as core pillars of women's empowerment not as abstract ideals, but as practical instruments that enable women to design and implement community-based sustainable solutions. Empowering women through knowledge and skills builds not only their individual capacity but also enhances community resilience, equitable participation, and long-term sustainability. By weaving together educational access, skill acquisition, social empowerment, and supportive policies, societies can unlock women's potential to confront global challenges at the grassroots level. The journey from education to empowerment is transformative it reshapes minds, reconfigures power dynamics, and reimagines community futures grounded in sustainability, equity, and justice.

Methodology

This chapter employs a qualitative and analytical research methodology to explore the relationship between education, skills development, and women's leadership in community-based sustainable solutions. A qualitative approach is adopted to capture the complex social, cultural, and institutional factors that shape women's empowerment within sustainability-driven initiatives.

The study is based primarily on secondary data sources, including scholarly journal articles, books, policy documents, and reports published by international organizations such as the United Nations, UNESCO, World

Bank, and UN Women. These sources provide theoretical frameworks, empirical evidence, and global perspectives on gender-responsive education and sustainable development practices. A thematic analysis method is used to examine the collected data systematically. Core themes such as access to education, vocational and technical training, leadership development, indigenous knowledge systems, and community participation are identified and analysed to understand how education and skills development enhance women's agency and decision-making power at the grassroots level.

In addition, the chapter incorporates case study analysis of selected women-led community initiatives in areas including sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, waste management, and social entrepreneurship. These case studies offer contextual insights into how acquired skills are applied to address local environmental and socio-economic challenges.

The analysis is informed by feminist and ecofeminist theoretical perspectives, which foreground women's voices, examine gendered power relations, and emphasize the interconnection between gender equality and environmental sustainability. Ethical academic practices are maintained through careful source evaluation and accurate citation. Overall, this methodological framework enables a nuanced understanding of women's empowerment through education and skills development in advancing community-based sustainability.

Literature Review

The literature on women's empowerment, education, and sustainable development reveals a rich and multidisciplinary conversation that underscores the transformational role of learning and skills in advancing gender equity and sustainability outcomes. A growing body of research situates women's empowerment as a foundational catalyst for sustainable development, linking it directly to the attainment of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yadav, Mishra, and Yadav's (2025) bibliometric analysis demonstrates that women's empowerment is not only central to SDG 5 on gender equality but also influences broader goals related to education, health, poverty reduction, and climate action, highlighting education and financial inclusion as key enablers while identifying socio-cultural barriers as persistent challenges to progress.

Multiple studies explore the specific role of education in empowering women. Rama Chandran et al. (2024) emphasize that comprehensive educational strategies, including leadership development, mentorship, and professional skill workshops, significantly enhance women's capacity to navigate corporate and organizational contexts, thereby fostering broader gender equity. Similarly, scholarship on community-based education programs underscores the vital contribution of localized learning initiatives in transforming women's lives in underserved areas. McCall's (2024) work shows that community-oriented education enhances women's self-confidence, financial independence, and economic participation by leveraging local knowledge and grassroots networks.

Research also highlights the interplay between skills development and sustainable entrepreneurship. De and Chatterjee's (2024) study on environment-friendly women entrepreneurship in rural India finds that self-help groups (SHGs) foster sustainable business practices through skill development, financial inclusion, and access to credit, illustrating how grassroots training translates into environmentally conscious economic activity. These findings align with broader sustainability literature that situates gender equality and women's agency as integral to environmentally responsible development. For example, Sharma et al. (2026) show that women's socio-economic empowerment has measurable impacts on environmental sustainability indicators across South Asia, reinforcing the connection between gender equity and ecological outcomes.

Theoretical contributions further enrich this discourse by framing women's empowerment within structural and socio-ecological paradigms. Works such as *Gender Equality and Sustainable Development* (Leach, 2016) argue that sustainable development must recognize women's knowledge, agency, and decision-making as central to transformative change, merging feminist political ecology with issues of rights, power, and industrial production. Recent volumes like *Gender Equality and Sustainable Development: Challenges and Solutions in Developing Countries* expand on these frameworks, unpacking the systemic barriers women face in patriarchal contexts and emphasizing the role of intersectionality in sustainable policy design.

Additional literature focuses on sector-specific dynamics. Lazo Roska, Palm, and Kojo Saari's (2024) review of gender opportunity structures in the energy sector highlights the importance of networking, mentoring, and institutional support to overcome structural barriers and increase women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sustainability industries. Collectively, these critics affirm that women's education and skills development are essential to enabling not only individual empowerment but also community-level leadership in sustainable solutions, reinforcing the need for integrated, gender-responsive strategies across education, policy, and practice.

Discussion

The intersections of education, skills development, and women's leadership in driving sustainable community solutions reflect a powerful synergy that moves beyond traditional development paradigms. Contemporary research underscores that women's empowerment is not merely a moral imperative but a strategic foundation for achieving sustainable development outcomes (Yadav, Mishra, & Yadav, 2025). Indeed, education and skill acquisition are central pathways through which women transition from passive recipients of development. The relationship between education and sustainable community participation has long been theorized and empirically validated. Investment in women's education generates multifaceted outcomes economic, social, and environmental. According to the World Economic Forum, "education gives confidence and a new vision" and equips women to transform not only their own prospects but also those of their communities and nations (World Economic Forum, as cited in turn0search3). This assertion resonates with broader scholarly claims that education remains one of the most powerful levers for social transformation, particularly for marginalized groups such as women (UNESCO, 2019; turn0search7). Education enhances women's capacity for critical thinking, leadership, and informed decision-making qualities essential for effective participation in community-based sustainable development.

Importantly, education's impact extends far beyond literacy and numeracy. It fosters agency, allowing women to challenge discriminatory norms, participate in social discourse, and influence community priorities. In line with this, the Sustainable Development Reports emphasize that women's education contributes directly to a host of SDGs from quality education (SDG 4) and gender equality (SDG 5) to decent work (SDG 8) and climate action (SDG 13) underscoring its role as a cross-cutting development driver (Yadav, Mishra, & Yadav, 2025).

While formal education lays the groundwork, skills development translates knowledge into tangible action. Vocational training, technical expertise, and community-oriented skill programs equip women with the competencies needed to innovate and lead sustainable initiatives. For instance, foundational skills in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, waste management, and digital literacy offer women practical tools for community mobilization and economic participation.

A compelling example of this is the Barefoot College's Solar Mamas initiative, which trains rural women with limited formal education to become solar technicians in off-grid villages. After months of hands-on learning, participants return to their communities to install and maintain solar systems, fostering both energy access and local economic opportunities. As documented, this program has trained thousands of women from over 90 countries, significantly expanding access to sustainable energy for millions (Barefoot College, as discussed in turn0search30 and AP News coverage in turn0news23). Through this model, skills development becomes directly linked to environmental resilience, economic empowerment, and community leadership.

Similarly, digital literacy programs such as India's Digital Nari initiative illustrate how skills training can promote financial independence and community service. Women trained through 'Digital Nari' deliver essential digital and financial services from digital payments to access to insurance thereby strengthening both individual livelihoods and local economic ecosystems (turn0news20). This form of empowerment demonstrates how skills development fosters economic agency while addressing community-level sustainability challenges. The core of sustainable development lies in community engagement. Women's educational and skill capacities often find their strongest expression at the grassroots level, where localized, culturally relevant solutions emerge. Community-based models, such as self-help groups (SHGs) in rural India, integrate education, financial inclusion, and skill development to foster environmentally sustainable entrepreneurship. In Murshidabad district, research shows that SHGs leverage indigenous resources (like jute and mango products) to create eco-friendly enterprises that enhance both women's economic security and environmental sustainability (De & Chatterjee, 2024; turn0search2). What emerges from such cases is a dynamic interplay between local knowledge, collective action, and socio-economic advancement.

Community spaces that integrate education and training become arenas for shared learning, mentorship, and innovation. Projects that repurpose underutilized infrastructure such as idle school buildings converted into training centres, storage facilities, and cooperative hubs boost women's incomes and enhance community assets (turn0news19). These examples validate the idea that educational spaces integrated into community infrastructure amplify empowerment and inclusive development.

Academically, the nexus of gender, education, and sustainability is informed by feminist political ecology, which challenges traditional narratives of gender and environment by situating women's environmental engagement within broader power structures. Feminist political ecology posits that gender differences in environmental impact are socially constructed rather than biologically determined, and that women's environmental involvement must be understood in relation to socio-economic contexts and institutional dynamics (turn0search33). Such theoretical

perspectives provide a critical lens to analyze why empowering women through education and skills is not merely developmental but transformational.

Indeed, men's perspectives and patriarchal constraints often impede women's full participation. Research in Brazil, for example, illustrates that even where educational attainment is high, women encounter ingrained barriers that limit the translation of education into empowerment including mobility constraints, gender norms, and economic limitations (Rana et al., 2024; turn0search9). This underscores that education alone is insufficient without addressing wider structural inequities.

Scholars underscore that education and skill development must be nested within supportive policy and structural frameworks to be effective. Gender-responsive policies in education, labour markets, and community development enable women to leverage their skills fully. Empowering women is deeply tied to systemic change, including equitable access to resources, inclusive policy design, and socio-cultural transformation (Pathania et al., 2017; turn0search5). Investments in women's education and skills must be paired with protections against discrimination, access to capital, and legal frameworks that uphold women's rights.

Additionally, international organizations, such as UNESCO, highlight the importance of integrating gender equality into all facets of education from curriculum design to technological outreach to unlock women's transformative potential (turn0search7). Such policy directions resonate with sustainable development agendas that position gender equality not as an isolated objective but as integral to achieving holistic societal progress.

Despite evidence that education and skills foster empowerment, persistent challenges remain. Socio-cultural norms, lack of infrastructure, and inequality in access continue to limit opportunities for many women, especially in underserved regions. Gendered discrimination in educational institutions, early marriage, household responsibilities, and limited mobility are recurring barriers that impede women's educational attainment and skill acquisition (Rana et al., 2024; turn0search9). Moreover, access to quality education including STEM and digital literacy remains unequal, with girls and women underrepresented in key skill areas that drive future economic growth. As UNESCO's gender equality initiatives emphasize, unequal access to technology and STEM education hampers women's participation in sustainability careers and leadership roles (turn0search7).

The discussion reveals that the intersection of education, skills development, and women's leadership forms a critical foundation for community-based sustainable solutions. Education fosters awareness, confidence, and analytical capacity, while skills provide practical avenues for economic participation and innovation. Together, they empower women as agents of change who contribute to resilience, environmental stewardship, and socio-economic transformation.

Ultimately, sustainable development cannot be decoupled from gender equity. When women are educated and equipped with skills that matter to their communities, they become drivers of sustainable innovation and inclusive progress. As the literature shows, empowering women via education and skill development catalyses broader outcomes from poverty reduction and environmental sustainability to strengthened community cohesion and equitable growth (Yadav, Mishra, & Yadav, 2025; turn0search0). Therefore, policy frameworks, community programs, and educational initiatives must continue to prioritize women's empowerment as both a means and an end in building sustainable, inclusive societies for the future.

Conclusion

The discussion presented in this chapter reaffirms that education and skills development are not supplementary components of sustainable development but its very foundation, particularly when viewed through the lens of women's empowerment. Across diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts, women have consistently demonstrated that access to meaningful education and relevant skills equips them to act as catalysts of change within their communities. When women are educated, they gain not only knowledge but also confidence, critical awareness, and the capacity to challenge entrenched inequalities that hinder inclusive and sustainable progress.

Education emerges as a transformative force that reshapes women's identities from marginal participants to informed decision-makers and community leaders. It enables women to engage with sustainability issues such as climate resilience, renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable livelihoods with clarity and purpose. Skills development further operationalizes this knowledge, translating learning into action. Vocational, technical, and digital skills allow women to design, implement, and sustain locally grounded solutions that respond directly to community needs. Together, education and skills development create a powerful synergy that enhances women's agency and strengthens community resilience. The chapter also highlights that community-based sustainable solutions thrive when women's indigenous knowledge, lived experiences, and collective practices are

recognized and valued. Women's grassroots initiatives often rooted in cooperation, care ethics, and environmental stewardship offer alternatives to extractive and top-down development models. These initiatives demonstrate that sustainability is most effective when it is participatory, inclusive, and sensitive to local realities. Women's leadership within such frameworks ensures that development outcomes are not only environmentally sound but also socially just.

However, the conclusion also underscores that empowerment through education and skills cannot occur in isolation. Structural barriers such as gender discrimination, unequal access to resources, restrictive social norms, and policy gaps continue to limit the full realization of women's potential. Therefore, educational interventions must be supported by gender-responsive policies, institutional reforms, and inclusive governance structures that enable women to apply their knowledge and skills without constraint. Empowerment must be understood as both an individual and systemic process, requiring sustained commitment at local, national, and global levels.

In essence, the chapter affirms that women's empowerment through education and skills development is central to achieving sustainable and equitable development. When women are equipped with knowledge and practical competencies, they become architects of sustainable futures innovating solutions, mobilizing communities, and redefining development priorities. Investing in women's education and skills is thus not merely an investment in gender equality but an investment in the long-term sustainability, resilience, and well-being of communities and societies at large.

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“The Colonial Regime and The Bengal Famine of 1770: A Study of the Unsustainable Configuration of Governance in Colonial Bengal”

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Abstract: The Bengal Famine of 1770 (*Chiyattorer Monnontor*) represents a crucial humanitarian crisis in the history of colonial Bengal. The famine was not only caused by drought, but also by the consequences of the unsustainable administrative system introduced by the authoritarian colonial government. Unending revenue extraction, the alienated land revenue system, and the lust for the commercialisation of agriculture were the key factors in this unsustainable catastrophe. The colonial authority eliminated traditional indigenous grain-storage, disaster-relief, and water-resource management systems. Even when agriculture failed and famine spread, the colonial authority continued to extract revenue without interruption and sent stored grain abroad for military purposes. The lack of an adequate disaster-relief mechanism led to a decline of almost one-third of the Bengali population. The study seeks to illustrate how exploitative colonial governance destroyed sustainable development, eroded food security, and established chronic vulnerability in the socio-economic landscape of colonial Bengal.

Keywords: Bengal Famine of 1770, Colonial State, English East India Company, Food Security, Political Economy, Revenue Policy, Unsustainable Governance.

Introduction: The most crucial devastating event of the eighteenth-century economic history of Bengal was the great famine of 1770 (*Chiyattorer Monnontor* — occurred in 1176 Bengali Era). In the previous one and a half centuries, there was no evidence of such a devastating famine in Bengal. In precolonial Bengal, food scarcity was prevalent. However, we cannot term them as famine. Even in the official records of European merchants, there was no mention of a famine equivalent to the famine of 1770. In pre-colonial times, during periods of food scarcity, the rulers of Bengal imported grain from neighbouring provinces or countries. Commoners in Bengal purchased imported grains according to their family needs and financial means. These activities were conducted under the sustainable governance of the pre-colonial administration of Bengal. The mass deaths of the general population decreased in that sustainable situation. However, after the colonial subjugation of Bengal, every aspect of administrative sustainability changed. The unapproachable greed of a bunch of colonial administrators destroyed the age-old sustainable governance. As a result, when food scarcity again threatened the province, the administration neglected to import food for public aid. In addition, the general public lost the purchasing power to purchase food grains due to a deterioration in their financial capacity. During these crucial times, it became challenging for the general population in any province to survive. Consequently, food scarcity has escalated into famine, and the general population has begun to die of starvation. The same situation was replicated in Bengal during the 1770 famine.

This research paper argues that the Bengal famine of 1770 was a consequence of the English East India Company's unsustainable governance in Bengal. Unsustainable governance refers to a governance system characterised by mismanagement and the implementation of unplanned strategies. In the late eighteenth century, in colonial Bengal, the English East India Company's governance became unsustainable when it prioritised revenue maximisation, a policy shaped by a market ideology influenced by Mercantilism and the Monopoly of Trade. The colonial government dismantled the institutional safeguards of the pre-colonial era and failed to assume responsibility for adequate relief, public aid, and social welfare.

Literature Review: The historical explanation of the Bengal famine of 1770 has been examined from diverse perspectives, from the early stages of colonial rule to the present twenty-first century. Although there are many historiographical perspectives on the history of this famine, scholarly discussion of the subject remains ongoing. Colonial officials and historians expanded this concept in the early stages of historiography. They claimed that natural disasters solely caused this famine. However, there are inconsistencies and overlaps in their points of view across their writings. They have sought to project a paternalistic image of a colonial government, motivated by the European imperial white men's burden. However, many of these writers from the imperialist school acknowledged that the Bengal famine of 1770 was also primarily caused by the unlimited greed and corruption of the Company officials.

P.J. Marshall (1987) traces the genesis of this famine to the dual governance of early colonial Bengal. Marshall argued that the separation of fiscal control from civil administration exacerbated the problem and impeded humanitarian efforts. He connects environmental issues with administrative incompetence. Rajat Dutta (2000)

blames the emergence of the famine on colonial control of the grain market, hoarding, administrative gambling, and strict revenue systems. Tim Dyson (1991) examines historical mortality rates and spatial variations in populations affected by famine. He believes that administrative problems cause humanitarian crises. Historical evidence indicates that all famines are man-made. The ineffective colonial administration triggered the Bengal Famine of 1770.

Methodology: This study employs a historical-analytical, qualitative research methodology, relying on essential secondary sources. This research paper describes the agrarian and socio-economic histories of late-eighteenth-century colonial Bengal. It also examines the fundamental problems of the colonial government and its unfair political economy, as well as population size, food security, and famine studies in early colonial Bengal. This study emphasises institutional and structural analysis rather than focusing on quantitative research on famine statistics. The primary analytical framework is the notion of unsustainable governance linked to environmental risks and political-economic decision-making. This research methodology facilitates a thorough comprehension of the Great Bengal Famine of 1770 as a failure of sustainable governance.

Discussion: The most crucial ecological cause of the famine of 1770 was a shortage of rainfall and drought. From August 1768 to December 1769, there was a massive shortage of seasonal rainfall, drought, and damage to crops in Bengal and Bihar. This led to the 1770 famine. In 1769, even during the monsoon months, there was no appropriate rainfall. Therefore, crop failure for the entire year is inevitable. The agricultural lands of Bengal have turned into scorching, dry lands. In terms of longevity and severity, the 1770 famine surpassed all previous famines in the Indian subcontinent. During the height of this devastating famine, a massive outbreak of different viral diseases occurred simultaneously. Epidemics spread to different districts in Bengal. In Murshidabad, there was a severe outbreak of smallpox in 1770. We learn from the writings of contemporary author Mir Gholam Hussein-Khan, dated May 1770, that the famine and smallpox epidemic simultaneously devastated the town of Murshidabad and the adjoining countryside. Their parallel journey continued at a high level for the next three months (Mukhopadhyay, 2001). A lot of people died from this scourge, and many towns and villages turned into deserted ruins. In the countryside, all the tanks and waterways became dry in 1770. The drying of water bodies and excessive summer heat led to widespread fires in rural areas. The lack of water in the nearest dry water bodies resulted in numerous deaths and extensive damage. Because there was no traditional substitute to extinguish fire. Several granaries in the Rajganj area of Dinajpore district and Dewanganj of Purnea district were burnt to ashes due to such fire incidents (Sinha, 1960).

Before 1770, there was a shortage of food grains. However, only a small number of grains were available to the general public in exchange for higher prices. However, in 1770, the situation changed completely. Moreover, food grains are almost scarce in every store in every market. The conditions worsened to the extent that it became challenging for ordinary people to obtain food grains, especially rice, for basic survival. In June 1770, the price of six or seven seers (1 seer = 0.933 kg) of rice was one rupee. However, next month, the price of three seers of rice was set at one rupee. During that period, it was common for all kinds of food grains, including rice, to vanish from stores and markets completely. In June 1770, Richard Becher, the British resident of the Murshidabad Royal Court, reported that for a few days within a radius of thirty miles in Murshidabad town, there was no availability of any food grains (Mukhopadhyay, 2001). Similar conditions were observed in the rest of Bengal as well.

Lack of employment, loss of the financial capacity to meet basic needs, and food scarcity eroded tolerance for human-like sophistication in society. To alleviate hunger, people began eating raw vegetables, wild fruits, roots, and timber, and sometimes inedible materials. Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote his famous novel *Anandamath* on the backdrop of the terrible Bengal famine of 1770. He wrote that the famine destroyed the rural life of Bengal. During the famine, village life in rural Bengal was abandoned. In some villages, there were a lot of mud houses, but no dwellers of those houses were visible. Even the stone mansions of some rural elite classes also became deserted. The shops and stores in the village market were permanently closed. There were neither signs of a trader nor a customer. Even beggars vanished from the countryside because the famine destroyed the virtue of generosity among the wealthy. So, no one could help the beggars by offering alms. The traders lost their trade; the weavers stopped their weaving shuttles. Even the teachers shut down their schools because no pupils remained. The whole situation of rural social as well as psychological life became so terrible that the newborn babies also stopped crying. Usually, newborns express their cries as their only means of communication with their parents or caregivers. However, no one in the village houses could attend to the babies after hearing their cries. There were no people on the road to walk or travel, no one in the village pond to swim or bathe, and no one at the main door of the house to welcome new visitors or guests. There were also no signs of birds in the village trees and no grains in the agricultural field. Only the blood-sucking dogs and jackals used to roam at the

cremation ground. Because those grounds were full of dead human bodies, but no one could perform the last rites for them.

Not only the rural countryside but also the daily lifestyles of some popular urban centres, towns, and cities were severely damaged. W. W. Hunter (1868) wrote in his *Annals* that, during the famine of 1770, the streets of Calcutta were blocked entirely by malnourished people, who were either dying or already dead. The survivors were so feeble that they had lost their strength to carry the dead bodies of their near ones to the cremation ground or to the holy river of the Ganges. It became a very common sight in the daylight that jackals and vultures were eating human remains in the open streets of the city of Calcutta. A contemporary anonymous author reported that during the Bengal famine of 1770, the European colonisers stopped eating fish, pork, duck, or swan because they had been fed human remains. So, only the mutton had passed the test for the European appetite during that time (McLane, 2002). In some remote pockets of Bengal, starving people had been obliged to start cannibalism (eating dead bodies of the people) for their essential survival. From the accounts of James Mill and Warren Hastings, we have come to know that almost one crore people of Bengal and Bihar province perished among the total demography of three crore people ($\frac{1}{3}$ %). But in some hotbeds of famine-stricken areas of Bengal, almost half of the people perished (Mukhopadhyay, 2001).

Crop failure due to drought and insufficient rainfall was accompanied by extensive crop damage in some parts of the Midnapore district, attributed to insect damage. Mahisadal, Hijli, and Tamluk in the Midnapore district experienced significant insect-induced crop damage. The famine affected not only agricultural peasants but also every branch of labour. Bullock cart drivers and boatmen died in such large numbers that every means of transportation of salt in this district became shut down entirely for some time (Sinha, 1960). Therefore, salt production in Midnapore was affected during this scarcity. We obtained statistics on salt production from the accounts of the zamindar of Hijli. The account showed that in 1770 (production of the year 1769), two major salt contractors supplied 1,15,570 mds. of salt annually. However, in 1771 (production of 1770, the year of famine), the same contractors supplied only 43,951 mds. of salt (Sinha, 1960). Purnea district was the most severely affected by the famine. Ducarel, Supervisor of Purnea, had reported that the famine of 1770 had caused the deaths of almost two lakhs of people in that district alone. The famine continued for about twelve months with a degree of severity unparalleled in the History of India (Sen, 2010).

The primary cause of the devastating 1770 famine was the unsustainable governance of the colonial authority under the English East India Company. Even some contemporary observers blamed the monopolistic private trade, corruption, and illegal activities of officials of the English East India Company. To accomplish personal profit from private trade and other illegal activities, Robert Clive had assembled a society for trade in 1765. However, the society was abolished the following year at the instruction of the East India Company's Court of Directors. Despite this, the undercover society remained active in secret until 1768. Even after 1768, the Company's employees continued to maintain a monopoly in the salt, betelnut, and tobacco trades in Bengal, with the complicity of native agents and gomostas. In the year of famine (1770), the high-ranking officials and influential employees of the Company also took complete possession of the export-import business of food grains in Bengal. The court of directors of the East India Company failed to take any initiative to investigate such illegal trading activities done by its own officials. The court of directors acknowledged that their failure to stop these illegal activities had damaged the benevolent and compassionate image of the English East India Company among the people of India. In 1771, the court of directors officially blamed Reza Khan, the Naib Diwan of Bengal, for the 1770 famine. The allegations against Reza Khan were that he forcibly confiscated the Murshidabad-bound boats loaded with food grains. Moreover, he hoarded those grains by purchasing them at a very cheap rate of 30-25 seer per rupee. Then he sold them at an expensive rate of 3-4 seers per rupee and made a considerable profit. For his profitable grain business monopoly, millions of people in Bengal had lost their lives. Following those allegations, the official trials of Reza Khan started in 1772 under the instructions of the court of directors. However, the highly ranked, influential officials of the East India Company were secretly linked to Reza Khan in those illegal networking ventures. As a result, no evidence was found in support of the justification of the raised allegations against Reza Khan. The colonial administration failed to stop the unsustainable practices of its officials in the periphery of its governance system. That is why the unsustainable ventures of colonial officials were a crucial cause of the great famine of Bengal (1770). Due to the illegal grain-trading monopoly of company officials and their native agents, a large quantity of grain began to be stockpiled in warehouses. However, grain was in short supply in the open market due to this unsustainable hoarding. That is why the continuous price hikes in the open market for grains became commonplace, and ordinary people were unable to afford them for survival. This unsustainable network of hoarding and grain-trading monopolies, operated by company officials and their native agents, led to severe food scarcity in Bengal and, subsequently, to the devastating famine of 1770.

Another factor responsible for the great famine of 1770 was the Unsustainable Dual Governance introduced by the East India Company in Bengal. Following the subsequent victories at Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764), the

Company acquired the diwani rights over Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa from the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II in 1765. The Diwani rights granted to the Company included the right to revenue extraction from Bengal. However, the Company had no administrative responsibility for it. This kind of fragmented administration was termed dual governance. It was a completely masked system of administrative destruction. Under dual governance, administrative work was theoretically vested in the nawab. However, in practice, it was in the hands of the East India Company. The nawab had only civil administrative responsibility. The Company had the authority over revenue administration and defence. In Mughal or pre-colonial times, there is no historical evidence of a deliberate separation of civil administration from revenue administration. However, the Company adopted a dual-governance structure and lacked adequate accountability to protect the country's people. This unsustainable system was crucially responsible for the devastating famine of 1770 in Bengal. During the period of dual governance (1765 — 1772), the infrastructure of roads and river channels in Bengal began to decline. Consequently, the transportation and communication systems declined. The administration inadequately facilitated the distribution of foodgrains across the regions of Bengal. During the 1770 famine, the colonial authorities designated Bengal as a distinct food zone, separating it from Bihar through a special decree. The transfer of food grains between Bengal and Bihar has thus been outlawed. The identical ordinance was likewise implemented across other districts of Bengal. The transit of food grains inside Bengal was halted during the famine of 1770. Only the town of Murshidabad was excluded from this. The unsustainable constraints on grain transport enabled the senior executives of the East India Company and their local agents to maintain their monopoly in the grain market (Mukhopadhyay, 2001). The Company could have done everything necessary to support Bengal and prevent the suffering from worsening. Still, they chose to retain arrangements that allowed the private fortunes of their servants (the Court of Directors) to be remitted to England and to support the prospect of foreign trade for the benefit of the monopoly business (Bell, 2021).

Charles Grant asserts that the Company government stockpiled 60,000 maunds of rice for the military. Food grains were unsustainably stockpiled for the soldiers from Fort William in Calcutta to the cantonments of Rajmahal and Bhagalpur. The colonial government entirely disregarded the famine of the ordinary people of Bengal (Mukhopadhyay, 2001). Substantial quantities of rice were dispatched to the company's military units, camps, and naval forces across various regions of the Indian Subcontinent. Historian N.K. Sinha (1960) noted that colonial authorities mandated the delivery of large quantities of cereals, particularly rice, from famine-affected districts to the Army garrisons at Berhampur and Calcutta. The English East India Company favoured military supply despite the severe food shortages experienced by the civilian population.

The relief measures and revenue remission provided by the colonial authority were profoundly inadequate and inhumane. W. W. Hunter reported that for the 30 million inhabitants of Bengal in 1770, the colonial authority allocated merely 90,000 rupees for relief efforts. The financial aid was grossly insufficient relative to the population ratio in Bengal. W. W. Hunter demonstrated that revenue remission was only 5% in 1770. However, the following year saw a 10% increase, rendering the revenue remission a complete failure during the 1770 famine. In the earlier Mughal revenue administration, it was customary to remit revenue during periods of deficit or famine (Habib, 1963). However, during the 1770 famine, the Company authorities deviated from that pattern. This resulted in utterly unsustainable governance of the ravaged agriculture and beleaguered agricultural communities throughout the Bengal province.

Additionally, the colonial government provided agricultural loans (taqavi) at an interest rate of 12.5% in 1770 to assist peasants. However, the interest rate was excessively high, and the loan was inadequately allocated to the peasants. J. Rider, the supervisor of Nadia district, reported to the Murshidabad Council that the landlords in the district neglected to deliver the agricultural loan (taqavi) to farming communities (Mukhopadhyay, 2001). This phenomenon became prevalent across several districts of Bengal.

The famine exposed the unstable nature of colonial land revenue administration. To address this growing anxiety, the Permanent Settlement was implemented in 1793 by the then-Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis. The permanent settlements in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa sought to stabilise revenue by creating fixed land revenue, limiting flexibility during agricultural crises. It consolidated the Zamindars' (Landlords') power and undermined peasant security, introducing new forms of unsustainable governance.

Conclusion: The Great Bengal Famine of 1770 was not an unavoidable natural disaster but a colonial catastrophe stemming from unsustainable governance. Environmental stress acted as a catalyst; however, the rigidity of revenue extraction, dual governance established by colonial authorities, and the absence of sustainable welfare services transformed scarcity into widespread starvation and famine. By prioritising extraction over protection and profit over individuals, colonial governance undermined social resilience and worsened human suffering. Examining the famine from the perspective of unsustainable governance provides a historical analysis and enduring insights into governmental reliability, regulatory oversight, and food security. The 1770 tragedy exemplifies the inherent unsustainability and frequent catastrophes of colonial governance.

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“Government Renovation of Ganga Ghats in Varanasi: A Step Toward Sustainable Development”

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ABSTRACT:

The ghats of the Ganga in Varanasi are important because they are used for daily ritual activities like aarti, tourism, everyday tasks, and cultural activities. But over time, many ghats became untidy, broken, and poorly maintained. This has affected the environment, public hygiene and health, and the beauty of the riverfront. Due to this challenge, the government has recently taken steps to clean and renovate the ghats, making this topic more significant to study today.

This study surveys renovation initiatives undertaken at major ghats in Varanasi under programs such as the Namami Gange Mission and Smart City projects. The study uses secondary data collected from published research articles and regular newspaper reports that highlight development and challenges. This gathered information is reviewed to understand how the renovation was planned, carried out, and how it relates to sustainable development.

The findings show that refinement in sanitation facilities, recycling systems, riverfront cleaning mechanisms, and cultural restoration have positively influenced tourist movement and local usage patterns. However, inconsistent maintenance, lack of coordination among agencies, and limited local engagement slow the long-term effectiveness of these initiatives.

KEYWORDS:

Ganga Ghat, Namami Gange Mission, Public hygiene, Smart City Project, Varanasi.

INTRODUCTION:

Varanasi is one of the most ancient living cities in the world, with the River Ganga forming the heart of its arts and creativity and sacred identity. The ghats along the river serve as places for divine service, funeral rites, tourism, and daily activities. Despite their importance, many ghats faced severe problems such as dirtiness, damaged structures, poor sanitation, and uncontrolled waste due to rapid urbanisation and heavy daily life activity.

Over the past few years, river pollution and urban environmental degradation have appeared as major governance challenges in India. Realising this, the government launched several initiatives aimed at river rejuvenation and sustainable urban development. Renovation at the ghats of the Ganga in Varanasi has become a crucial part of these efforts. This paper studies how government renovation initiatives contribute to sustainable development and highlights the role of governance in managing sacred urban riverfronts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Prior research on the Ganga has primarily focused on water pollution, ecological degradation, and river basin management. Scholars have also investigated the policy framework of the Namami Gange Mission and its institutional mechanisms. Urban studies literature highlights the significance of riverfront development in achieving sustainable cities. However, limited research specifically links ghat renovation in Varanasi with sustainable development outcomes. Newspaper reports provide regular updates on renovation activities but lack systematic academic analysis. This paper attempts to bridge this gap.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To survey government renovation efforts at the Ghats of the Ganga in Varanasi.
- To study these efforts in relation to sustainable development.
- To understand governance mechanisms engaged in ghat renovation.
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METHODOLOGY:

The study is based entirely on secondary data. Government reports, official policy documents, scholarly journals, books, and newspaper articles about the Clean Ganga Mission and ghat renovation have all provided information. To comprehend governance strategies and sustainability results, the data has undergone descriptive analysis. There hasn't been a field survey.

GOVERNMENT RENOVATION EFFORTS AT THE GHATS OF GANGA:

1. Namami Gange Mission

The mission is about making our rivers cleaner by building sewage treatment plants. This mission also deals with drain interception and solid waste management. The people behind the mission want to teach the public about river pollution through public awareness campaigns. The mission is really focused on reducing river pollution. They want to do this in many ways, including the river pollution reduction through sewage treatment plants and public awareness campaigns about river pollution.

2. Smart City Mission

The people in charge have made the ghats a lot better. They have fixed the paths so they are easier to walk on. They have also added lights. This makes it safer for people to visit the ghats at night. The ghats now have public amenities. They have also put in surveillance systems. This means there are cameras to watch what is going on. All of these changes make the ghats a safer and more accessible place for everyone to visit. The ghats are now a place because of these improvements.

3. Heritage and Environmental Measures

Structural restoration of historic ghats, eco-friendly cremation systems, plastic restrictions during festivals, and riverfront beautification have been undertaken to balance development with cultural preservation.



Image 1: Organised Ganga Aarti at renovated ghats in Varanasi.
Source: Photograph by the research scholar.



Image 2: River-cleaning machinery along the Ganga in Varanasi.
Source: Photograph by the research scholar.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

The renovation efforts have enhanced sanitation, structural quality, and cleanliness at major ghats. These initiatives have improved the tourist experience and reduced visible pollution in several locations. From a sustainable development perspective, the renovation supports environmental protection, heritage preservation, and social well-being. However, challenges such as inconsistent maintenance, limited involvement of local communities, and coordination issues between agencies continue to affect long-term sustainability.

CONCLUSION:

Government renovation of the Ganga Ghats in Varanasi represents a significant governance initiative toward sustainable development. While significant changes have been made in infrastructure and sanitation, sustainable outcomes require continuous monitoring, effective coordination, and active public participation. The Varanasi case highlights the need for inclusive and adaptive governance in managing sacred urban riverfronts.

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**“GEOGRAPHIES OF MIGRATION AND POPULATION DYNAMICS WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NORTH EAST INDIA: A DISCUSSION”**

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ABSTRACT:

Migration is a fundamental human phenomenon driven by the search for improved living conditions and access to resources. It occurs in various forms: rural-to-rural, rural-to-urban, interstate, and international movements. Historically, human groups have crossed even formidable geographical barriers in pursuit of better opportunities. Contemporary human life is deeply shaped by socio-economic conditions, and spatial mobility — particularly migration — has acquired growing significance. Uneven distribution of population and natural resources, unequal utilisation of resources, and disparities in economic, social, and cultural development remain among the primary drivers of population movement.

In demographic studies, “mobility status” refers to the comparison between a person’s usual place of residence on Census Day and their usual residence at a previous point in time (one, five, or ten years earlier, or at birth). Individuals who show no change in residence are classified as non-movers. Mobility may also occur in occupational, social, or economic status without any change of residence. The North-East Indian states have witnessed continuous inflows of people from multiple directions — both intra-regional and international — since ancient times, largely drawn by the region’s abundant natural resources and economic prospects. The present paper examines these historical and contemporary migration patterns in brief.

Keywords: migration, mobility, population dynamics, North East India, economic factors,

INTRODUCTION:

Migration refers to the process through which individuals or groups move from one location to another, usually resulting in a shift in their place of residence. As defined in the *Multilingual Demographic Dictionary*, migration is a type of spatial or geographical movement that occurs between different locations and typically involves staying in the new place for a significant duration. From a sociological perspective, migration is more than mere physical movement; it entails the relocation of people from one social and cultural setting to another. This transition often requires individuals or groups to leave behind an existing social structure and adapt to a new social environment, involving changes in social relationships, cultural practices, and patterns of everyday life.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Migration constitutes the third major component of population change — alongside fertility and mortality. Unlike the latter two, which are biological processes (though socially influenced), migration is primarily a social phenomenon, shaped by individual decisions and responses to economic, social, demographic, and political forces.

The study of migration occupies a central place in population studies because it significantly affects:

- the size, growth rate, structure, and spatial distribution of populations
- the composition and growth of regional labour forces
- patterns of urbanisation and regional development

India has historically received successive waves of migrants from Central Asia, West Asia, and Southeast Asia. At the same time, large numbers of Indians have migrated abroad — particularly to the Middle East, Western Europe, North America, Australia, and East and Southeast Asia — in search of better economic opportunities. Migration thus serves as both an indicator and a driver of social change.

Forms of Migration

Migration may be classified in several ways:

- a) By duration
 - Long-term / permanent migration — a lasting or indefinite change of residence
 - Short-term / seasonal / periodic migration — temporary movement (e.g., agricultural labour during peak seasons, women returning to parental homes for childbirth)
- b) By volition : Voluntary migration
- c) Involuntary / forced migration (refugees, displaced persons)
- d) Distress migration
- e) Brain drain (migration of skilled professionals)

d) By spatial boundaries (Geographical migration)

- Internal migration (domestic migration)— within national borders (in-migration and out-migration)
- International migration — immigration and emigration across national boundaries

Characteristics of Migrants in India

Several important characteristics mark migration streams in India:

Age selectivity: Migration is strongly age-selective. Young adults (typically 15–35 years) are the most mobile group. Employment-related migration occurs predominantly in young adulthood, while female migration — largely associated with marriage — also peaks in this age range.

Chain migration: Migrants tend to move to places where earlier migrants from the same region have already settled. Kinship networks, relatives, and friends provide information, support, and job opportunities, creating self-reinforcing migration chains. In many cases, migrants from the same origin also cluster in similar occupations (e.g., workers from specific sub-regions of Kumaon in Jaipur hotels, or agricultural labourers from Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh in Punjab and Haryana).

Gender differences: Male migration is predominantly driven by employment, whereas female migration is overwhelmingly associated with marriage, followed by associational migration (moving with family members). Employment and education account for only a small proportion of female migration.

Factors Causing Migration

Although individuals usually feel a strong attachment to their place of birth, a large number of people still move away from their native regions. Migration is shaped by a combination of push and pull factors, which can broadly be classified into four main categories: economic, demographic, socio-cultural, and political.

Push factors

Factors that force people to leave their place of origin include:

poverty, declining agricultural productivity, unemployment and underemployment, depletion of natural resources, lack of basic infrastructure such as healthcare and educational facilities, occurrence of natural disasters, fragmentation of agricultural land and increasing pressure on limited cultivable areas, and the absence of alternative sources of income in rural regions.

Pull factors

Factors that attract migrants to a new destination include:

- Better employment opportunities
- Higher wages and regular work
- Improved working conditions

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- Better living amenities and quality of life
- Expansion of industry, commerce, and urban services
- Cultural and entertainment opportunities (especially in cities)

METHODOLOGY:

Migration can be assessed using two primary approaches:

- **Movement events** — documented through population registers that record individual relocations over time
- **Residential transitions** — calculated from census data by comparing an individual's place of residence at different time periods

Census records continue to serve as the most extensive and reliable source of internal migration information worldwide. In the Indian context, the method of collecting migration data has gradually developed and expanded. Prior to 1951, migration was identified at the district level. From 1961 onwards, each revenue village and urban locality began to be considered as a separate unit for measuring migration. Since 1971, census surveys have included information on both an individual's place of birth and their most recent place of residence. An individual is therefore categorized as a migrant if either their birthplace or their previous residence is different from the location where they are enumerated during the census.

.Migration in North East India:

Assam represents a unique confluence of peoples from the Indo-Gangetic plains and Tibeto-Burman groups descending through the Patkai hills and Himalayan foothills. The physical features of the Assamese people reflect a mixture of Aryan, Mongoloid, Dravidian, and Austric elements. The Ahoms (originally from the Shan community of Yunnan, China) played a decisive role in politically unifying the Brahmaputra valley and giving the region and its people the name "Assam / Assamese".

Over centuries, processes of Aryanisation influenced several indigenous communities (Kacharis, Lalungs, Mikirs, and others), eventually contributing to the formation of the Koch caste. By the 15th century, cultural integration was so advanced that Srimanta Sankardeva proudly identified himself as belonging to Bharatavarsha. During the colonial period, Bengali Muslims migrated from East Bengal and became part of the broader Assamese linguistic community.

Key observations about contemporary migration in North East India:

Interstate migration into Assam from other parts of India exceeds intra-regional interstate migration.

International migration constitutes about 2.5% of total migrants in the region, but reaches 17% in Tripura — significantly higher than interstate migration in that state.

While immigration has received considerable attention, out-migration from the region remains understudied. Manipur shows exceptionally high out-migration (three times higher than in-migration). Assam exhibits a relatively balanced inflow–outflow pattern when international migration is included — contrary to the widespread perception of overwhelming immigration. Most other states gain population mainly through internal migration; Tripura gains predominantly through international migration.

Summary and Conclusion:

Migration profoundly influences population composition, distribution, and socio-economic dynamics in both origin and destination areas. In North East India, migration has become particularly significant — generating both opportunities and anxieties among small ethnic communities concerned about being overwhelmed by large inflows.

The 2011 Census reveals:

- Relatively low intra-state mobility in most North East states compared to the national average (except Arunachal Pradesh)
- Dominance of inter-district migration within the region

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- Significant interstate migration in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Meghalaya
- Very high international migrant share in Tripura
- Female-dominated migration streams overall (though male migration dominates interstate flows from outside the region)

Major regions for migrants to North East India are:

- International origins (especially Bangladesh) — ~42%
- East India (Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha) — ~42%

Marriage remains the leading cause of migration nationally, whereas “moved with household” and work-related reasons predominate in migration to North East India.

Out-migration from the region is modest (about 2.2% of the population). Eastern Indian cities (especially Kolkata) are the most preferred destinations outside the region. The COVID-19 lockdown and reverse migration of 2020 (approximately 50% of interstate out-migrants returned) present both challenges and opportunities for harnessing the skills and experience of returnees.

The combined analysis of internal and international migration flows offers valuable insights for economic planning and political decision-making in North East India — an area that deserves continued scholarly attention.

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"KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS OF NURSE REGARDING ELECTRO CONVULSIVE THERAPY A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN GOVERNMENT DISTRICT HOSPITAL BILASPUR Chhattisgarh"

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Abstract

This sociological study explore nurse's Knowledge, attitude and ethical dilemmas regarding Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) in Government District Hospital Bilaspur setting A mixed method approach combined survey's data (n=80) and in depth interviews participants (n=50) with nurses From Government District Hospital Bilaspur. Finding several knowledge gape (40%) lacked capacity on ECT Procedures. ambivalent attitude 60% viewed ECT as effective but 30% expressed discomfort administering it, and ethical dilemmas (balancing patient autonomy, informed Consent, and Treatment efficacy.

Sociological influences like stigma, Power dormice and hospital policies shaped nurses perspective. The study highlights the need for targeted education. ethical training and policy reforms to support nurses in ECT case.

INTRODUCTION

Electro Convulsive Therapy procedure was 1st conducted in 1938 by Italian psychiatrist Ugo cerletti & luico binni. The standard technique for inducing controlled therapeutic seizure in human is ECT a safe & remarkable effective treatment that involves the application of an electrical stimualus to the scalp of patient under general anesthesia or musclerelaxants.

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is an essential treatment modality in Psychiatry that involves the application of electric current to the human brain for alleviating the symptoms of several mental disorders such as bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, and major depression. Despite its clinical efficacy, it is considered to be one of the most controversial and misunderstood procedures. The hindrances for pursuing the treatment are predominantly due to the pervasive fear of ECT and inaccurate portrayals by the media. Thus, the stigma attached to ECT is counterintuitive to its improved outcome, despite its clinical efficacy and safety. There are numerous reports of negative perspectives about ECT, This suggested poor standards in the conduct of the procedure, involving dissatisfaction in the ethical aspects such as obtaining informed consent and provision of practical and emotional support.

This can be achieved by providing educational efforts such as slides presentation. Such educational interventions provide individuals with a resource of information about ECT, there by allowing them to take an individual decision about the course of treatment and its need in the future. However, the efficacy of such an intervention has not been evaluated in detail among the indian population.

The present study aimed to assess the level of knowledge of Nurses toward ECT and to assess Knowledge, attitudde and ethical dilemmas of nurses regarding electro convulsive therapy a Sociology study on their knowledge to ward ECT among Nurses.

Need To Study:

Man is in search to knowledge science time immemorial. Knowledge is all that is know or information. While gathering knowledge about particular things, he develops attitude towards it simultaneously. Some Nurses and researches attempted to knowledge and attitude towards Electro Convulsive Therapy.

Problem Stattement :

"Knowledge attitude and ethical dilemmas of nurse regarding electro convulsive therapy A sociological study in Government District Hospital Bilaspur Chhattisgarh."

Objective –

1. to evaluate the depth accuracy of nurse knowledge base concerning electroconvulsive therapy.

2. To determine how this knowledge influence their clinical decision making preception of treatment effectiveness.
3. To explore nurse attitude towards ECT as a therapeutic option and how those attitude relate to their clinical experience.
4. To understand what moral conflict a rise for nurse when balancing patient autonomy informed consent and received benefits of ECT.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of Literature - Review of literature is broad, comprehensive, in-depth, systematic & critically review of scholarly publications, unpublished scholarly print materials, audiovisual materials & personal communication. Review of literature is the key step in nursing process, it refers to a systematic examination of publications relevant to the RESEARCH.

LITERATURE

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). The practice of electroconvulsive therapy: Recommendations for treatment, training, and privileging (3rd ed)

AMITAVA DAN, DUXBURY, et-al, 2014.

This papers tells We conducted knowledge and attitude regarding electroconvulsive therapy were assessed using Bengali version of electroconvulsive therapy knowledge and attitude questionnaire. between 100 clinically stable patient with mental illness and their help relatives. no significant difference was observed in knowledge and attitude of patients who had obtained their facts from Doctors (n=23) & from other source (n=77) relatives had obtained their information from doctors (n=27)

Were better informed than those who had obtain so from other sources (n=73).

ANDREW D REISNER, GREENHALGH, et-al, Dec, 2003.

This paper tells Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), with emphasis on the controversy concerning whether ECT causes brain damage. ECT does appear to be effective in the treatment of severe depression and possibly mania. The types of memory problems caused by ECT are discussed, and evidence suggests that most of these deficits are transitory. Although most evidence points toward modern ECT not causing brain damage, there are still some findings that raise questions about safety. Ethical issues involving this treatment's use, its availability to the public, and informed consent procedures are discussed.

ATLOE MEETER M, CHOI J, et-al,2013.

Conducted knowledge & attitude towards ECT among medical students, psychology students & the general public a likert type of questionnaire was administrator included question about the general principle and indication for ECT, source of knowledge and attitude towards ECT. The medical students were the most knowledge about ECT; as expected. The medical students also had a more positive attitude towards ECT than the other. Morepsychology students had negative attitude on same aspects than general public sample despite being more knowledgeable.

ELDIN, M DARVEESH] GROVERS, et-al, 2013.

Conducted assess the knowledge and attitude about electroconvulsive therapy among the caregivers of patient with psychiatric disorders. The study sample for 50 caregivers of patient; 286 were than men & 264 were women. In all 50-4% of the participants had not received information about electroconvulsive therapy. the main significant factors affecting this knowledge and attitude was the precious experience of their patients with electroconvulsive therapy.

JAMES BO, DURIEZ P, J CLIN, et-al, 2013.

Conducted cross sectional study of modified electroconvulsive therapy in Nigeria current status and psychiatric attitudes of psychiatrist and trainers. Most psychiatric facilities still makes use of the unmodified types of electroconvulsive therapy. Although half of the respondents considered their knowledge of electroconvulsive therapy inadequate, most 92.2% considered electroconvulsive therapy relevant in contemporary times and preferred than the modified format be used (73-7%).

V CHALLINER, L GLIFFITHS, et-al, June 2000.

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This Paper Tells Despite its continued use it remains a controversial treatment, with questions concerning its efficacy being raised not only by mental health professionals, but also service users themselves. The following article reviews the current literature on the administration and effectiveness of ECT, highlighting some of the main points of contention in the debate over its use. In providing a balanced review of the literature, this article aims to serve as an information source for nurses and other mental health professionals who may be involved in the administration of ECT and care of the patients receiving treatment.

Research Gap :

The present study address these gaps by employing a convergent mixed methods design a validated knowledge attitude design, a validated knowledge attitude questionnaire administered to a large sample of psychiatric nurse in District Hospital Bilaspur Chhattisgarh followed by in depth interviews that probe the ethical dilemmas they encounter by grounding the analysis in sociological theories of professional sociological theories of professional socioloization on and medical dominance. The research aims to provide announced understanding of how structured and cultural factors shape nurses knowledge attitude and ethical dilemmas regarding ECT.

"Methodology"

Mixed-method research is an approach that blends quantitative and qualitative technique in a single study collect numerical data (eg. – surveys staffs) and gather narative data (eg. interviews, observations) to understand the "Why" behind those patterns, by integrating both, you get a richer, more coomplete pictures of the research problem than either method cloud provide on its own.

Overall approach :-

Convergent (Paralled) mixed methods – collect quantitative survey and qualitative (interviews) data at roughly some time, then merge the two sets to get is question survey quantitative and is question how knowledge attitude and ethical dilemmas intersect.

Research questions :-

- a. Quantitative : - Levels of knowledge about ECT 1st question set.
- b. Qualitative :- Describe the ethical challenges they face when administering ECT and what socioculture factors shape those experience.
- c. Integration :- In what ways to quantitative patterns (eg. low knowledge scores) correspond with qualitative themes (eg. moral distness)

Research approach – Mixed method appraoch was used in this study.

Population of the study – Total 80 nurse of Government District Hospital Bilaspur Chhattisgarh

Actual sample size of the study – The accessible population was 50 nurses of Government District Hospital Bilaspur Chhattisgarh

Data Collection method – Mixed method

1. Survey (Quantitative)

Tool :- off line questionnaire backup to on staff nurses.

Section (a) Demographic eg – Previous knowledge, Age, Qualification, Habbit, Gender, Year of experience.

(b) Knowledge quiz – Multiple choice iems based on current ECT guideline.

(c) Attitude cale – 15 statement ruted

1. Strongly disagree.

2. Strongly agree

(d) Ethical dilemmas frequency – 15 common dilemmas

eg. Consent , Never , after

2. Semi structured Interviews (Qualitative)

Who – purpose of 30 respondents

10 high knowledge

10 low knowledge

10 Frequently dilemmas

Forrate :- 20-25 minutes face to face viw with consent.

Optional – Sit in on few ECT session to note work low through vedio teaching programm 10 slides.

Analysis and Interpretation

A complex interplay of sociology factors including institutional policies, sociaial norms and power dynamics. Despite gaps in knowledge and power dynamics. Despite gaps in knowledge and misconception, nurses strive to provide compassionate care, often navigating challenging ethical situvations. The study highlights the need for torgeted education and training programmes to address these gaps, promote epmtly and foster and culture at understanding ultimately enhancing patients centered care for those undergoing Electro Convulsive Therapy.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter deal with summary based on analysis & interpretation of data collection from the sample of the study. The purpose of the study was to assess the level of Knowledge , attitude and ethical dilemma sof nurse regarding electro convulsive therapy a sociology study. in Nurses of Government Hoospital Bilaspur Chhattisgarh regarding ECT. Before and after The 50 nurses were selected by using the purposive and snowball technique. The investigator first introduce herself to the civil surgen and principal of the Government Nursing College District Hospital Bilaspur Chhattisgarh.

Limitations:

This study is limited to 50 samples.

The study is limited to Government District Hospital

The study was limited to Nurses.

Recommendation: The finding of the study the following recommendation are made

The experimental study can be inadequate with control group.

The study can be replicated on larger samples, thare by findings can be generalized to a larger population.

Similar study can be done with use of other Teaching method - teaching aid.

A similar study can be conducted on hospital setting among the staff nurses to assess their knowledge & skill regarding Electro Convulsive Theraphy.

A similar study can be conducted on nursing College's tutors to assess their knowledge & improve their knowledge about Electro Convulsive Theraphy.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Analysis of the data: The data was collected from students before and after administering "Knowledge, attitude and ethical dilemmas of nurse's regarding electo convulsive therapy : sociology study in Government District Hospital Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh.

Section A - Discription of the demographic variable of the student nurses.

Section B - Analysis of the level of knowledge among Nurses of District Hospital Bilaspur Chhattisgarh.

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Section C - Effectiveness of video assisted teaching programme in improving the knowledge of Nurses of District Hospital Bilaspur Chhattisgarh.

Section D - Association between demographic variable and level of knowledge.

Section – A

Discription of the demographic variables of BSc Nursing 3rd year srudent

TABLE 01 : Distributioun of subject acording to age :

Variable	Age-group	Frequency	%
Age-group	20-27	5	
	27-35	5	
	33-40	30	
	40-47	10	

TABLE 02 : Distributioun according to educational background :

Variable	Qulaificaton	Frequency	%
Educational Background	GNM	15	
	B.Sc. Nursing	30	
	M.Sc. Nursing	5	

TABLE 03 : Distributioun of subject according to religion :

Variable	Religion	Frequency	%
Religion	Hindi	20	
	Muslim	0	
	christan	30	
	Other	0	

TABLE 04 : Distributioun according to present residence :

Variable	Residence	Frequency	%
Residenc	Govt. Quarter	10	
	Home	40	

TABLE 05 : Distributioun according to previous knowledge :

Variable	Previous Knowledge	Frequency	%
Previous Knowledge	Little bit	5	

	Inadequate	25	
	Adequate	20	

TABLE 06 : Distributiou according to their habits :

Variable	Qulaificaton	Frequency	%
Exercise	15	20	
User of Internet	20	66.66	
News Paper	15	13.33	

Level of Knowledge	Pre test		Post test	
	Frequency	Percentrage	Frequency	Percentrage
< 50% Poor	10	40%	00	00
50-75% Average	10	60%	03	10%
>75% Good	30	00	27	90%

In test 40%

Expected Outcome

To explore the Complex interplay between nurses health care settings. Nurses attitude towards Electro Convulsive Therapy are also influenced by personal values, clinical experience, and institutional Policies, leading to varyng degrees of comfort and confidence in caring for patients undergoing Electro Convulsive Therapy the study highlights the need for targeted education and Training Programs to address these gaps and Promote a Culture of empathy and understanding among health care professionals Identify gaps in nurses knowledge about Electro Convulsive Therapy indications benefits, and risks. Explone nurses decision making Processes and coping strategies for managing there dilemmas identify the role of Professional organizations education, and traning in influencing nurses Knowledge and attitude.

Conclusion

This chapter deal with the discussion of study. The aim of the study was to evaluate Knowledge , attitude and ethical dilemma sof nurse regarding elecro convulsive therapy a sociology study. in Nurses of Government

Hoaspital Bilaspur Chhattisgarh regarding Electro Convulsive Therapy (ECT). In order to achieve the objectives of the study, pre-experimental design one group pretest and post test design with evaluative approach, purposive, snowball sample technique was used to select the samples. The structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. The data collected among 50 Nurses in two stages; before and after administration of ECT.

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“Tattooing among the Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh: A sociological study of cultural, religious, and Ramayana contexts”

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Abstract

Tattoo design is an ancient and rich traditional art form of Chhattisgarh, particularly associated with the cultural identity of the Gond tribe. Since ancient times, the Gond community has been inking their bodies with tattoos, which are associated with beauty, social identity, religious beliefs, and important rites of passage. The symbols, lines, and patterns of tattoos reflect the deep influence of nature, deities, animals, birds, and folk beliefs. According to Ramayana folklore, Lord Rama passed through the Chhattisgarh region during his exile. The religious and cultural influences associated with this sacred land also influenced the tribal traditions here. It is believed that the tribal life, nature worship, and spiritual beliefs that developed during that period are reflected in the tattoo art of the Gond tribe. This study highlights the cultural, religious, and historical significance of the tattoo art prevalent among the Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh and attempts to understand its traditional values in the context of the Ramayana period. This research also emphasizes the need to preserve tattoo art as a valuable cultural heritage. It is believed that the tribal and local communities here have a deep faith in Lord Rama. Folklore and oral traditions recount that sometimes, temples/religious sites were damaged by anti-social elements or unknown individuals, causing emotional distress to devotees. This emotional outburst and unwavering devotion led some devotees to tattoo Shri Ram on their bodies, so that their devotion would remain with them permanently. In this region, tattooing has emerged not just as a traditional body ornament but as a powerful symbol of deep devotion, cultural resistance, and religious identity. Local communities with unwavering faith in Shri Ram have adopted tattooing as a permanent expression of devotion during times of socio-religious upheaval. Tattooing symbols related to Shri Ram on their bodies became a means of preserving their faith, cultural pride, and traditions. Thus, tattoo art transcended individual devotion and played a significant role in strengthening collective cultural consciousness and religious identity.

Topics: Tattoo art, Gond tribe, Chhattisgarh, cultural identity, religious faith, Ramayana context, Shri Ram devotion, folk tradition, invaluable cultural heritage.

Introduction

In Indian tribal culture, body adornment has been not only an expression of beauty but also a powerful medium of social identity, religious belief, and cultural continuity. Within these traditions, tattoo art holds a special place, considered an integral part of the ancient and rich cultural heritage of the Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh. Tattooing has been prevalent among the Gond community as permanent body markings that express a person's life cycle, social status, religious beliefs, and community identity. The lines, symbols, and motifs used in the tattoo art of the Chhattisgarh region are deeply connected to nature, wildlife, deities, and folk beliefs. This art not only reflects aesthetics but also reflects the tribal society's nature-based philosophy and spiritual consciousness. According to folklore from the Ramayana period, Lord Rama's exile is believed to be associated with this region, which is why the tribal traditions here show a distinct influence of Ram worship and religious beliefs. According to accounts in folklore and oral traditions, during times of religious upheaval or social instability, local and tribal communities adopted tattooing as a symbol of devotion and cultural resistance. Tattooing symbols related to Lord Rama became a means of enduring devotion, cultural pride, and religious identity. Thus, tattooing evolved beyond individual faith into a tradition that strengthened collective cultural consciousness and religious solidarity. The present study analyzes the cultural, religious, and historical dimensions of tattooing among the Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh and attempts to understand its traditional values in light of the Ramayana context. This research also highlights the need to preserve tattoo art as an important and invaluable cultural heritage. In Indian tribal culture, body decoration is not merely a means of aesthetic display, but a vibrant expression of social structure, religious beliefs, and cultural continuity. Tattoo art, particularly prevalent among the Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh, represents a vital dimension of this tradition. This art not only reflects individual aesthetics but also symbolizes community identity, traditional knowledge, and historical consciousness. In the Gond community, tattooing is associated with various rites of passage throughout the life cycle—birth, adolescence, marriage, and motherhood. For women in particular, tattooing is considered a symbol of social status and marital identity. In many places, the belief is prevalent that the tattoo remains with the soul even after death, thus serving as a spiritual bridge between the worldly and the afterlife. The lines, dots, triangles, circles, vines, sun, moon, animal, bird, and plant motifs used in tattoo art reflect the tribal people's nature-based worldview. Gond society, which has traditionally been deeply connected to forests and the environment, places nature at the center of its cultural expression. Therefore, tattooing is not merely an

artistic creation, but a cultural text that reflects the harmonious relationship between nature, religion, and social structure. According to Ramayana folklore, Lord Rama's exile is associated with the Chhattisgarh region. This cultural memory has deeply influenced local tribal traditions. Based on the stories narrated in folk memories, the belief has developed that this connection to this sacred land oriented the local religious consciousness, particularly towards the worship of Lord Rama. As a result, tattoo designs depicting Shri Ram's name, bow and arrow, or other mythological symbols became symbols of enduring faith and religious identity. During periods of social or religious instability, tattooing was also adopted as a means of cultural resistance. When religious sites or traditions were challenged by external forces, the inking of sacred symbols on the body became a powerful means of collective identity and protection of faith. Thus, tattoo art played a role in transforming individual devotion into collective cultural consciousness. In the contemporary context, the tattoo tradition is witnessing a gradual decline due to modernization, urbanization, and changes in the lifestyle of the new generation. Under the influence of modern tattoo culture, traditional symbols are being replaced by new designs, which threatens to dilute the original cultural meaning. Therefore, it is essential to ensure the preservation of this art through ethnographic documentation, audio-visual recording, and academic research. Finally, it can be said that among the Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh, tattooing is not merely a tradition of physical adornment, but a powerful expression of cultural continuity, religious consciousness, and social unity. This art reveals the multifaceted richness of Indian tribal heritage, and preserving it as a priceless cultural heritage is the need of the hour.

Research Methodology

This study will be qualitative and descriptive-analytical in nature. It will thoroughly analyze the cultural, religious, and historical aspects of tattoo art.

Objectives of the Study

To study the origin, form, and development of tattoo art prevalent among the Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh.

To analyze the cultural, social, and religious symbols embedded in tattoo designs.

To understand the influence of Ramayana-era folklore and folk beliefs related to Lord Rama on tattoo art.

To research the practice of tattooing in the Gond community.

Literature Review

Many scholars have extensively studied Indian tribal societies, their culture, art, religion, and folk traditions. Verrier Ajayan (2004) presented an in-depth analysis of the social structure, lifestyle, religious beliefs, and cultural characteristics of Indian tribal society in *Tribes of India*. Ajayan described tribal life as nature-based and self-reliant and emphasized the need to preserve their cultural uniqueness. K.S. The People of India project by Singh (1994) is an important document of a comprehensive anthropological survey of Indian tribes. It provides authentic details of the social structure, language, traditions, and cultural diversity of the tribes of Central India. Sushil Kumar (2015) analyzed tribal art forms, symbols, and aesthetics in *Indian Tribal Art and Culture*. He argued that tattooing, painting, and folk dance are not just art forms but also forms of social identity and spiritual expression. Ramnaresh Mishra (2010) describes regional folk traditions, festivals, and tribal beliefs in Chhattisgarh's folk culture. The cultural characteristics of the Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh are also mentioned. Rambachan Shital (2008) analyzes folk beliefs and the cultural influences of the Ramayana period in the Ramayana and Indian folk tradition. This makes it clear. The influence of the Ramayana tradition can be seen in folk art and religious symbols. Shivkumar Tiwari (2016) highlights the interrelationship between tribal society and folk art, stating that art is deeply intertwined with social structure and religious beliefs. B.K. Dev (2001) analyzed tribal religious beliefs, deities, and rituals in *Tribal Religion and Faith*, which helps understand the religious background of traditions like tattooing. Sudha Sharma's (2018) research article explains the cultural significance of tattoo art in tribal society. They have described it as a tradition linked to the identity, social status, and religious beliefs of the tribes. Mohanlal Patel (2020) has analyzed the religious beliefs and cultural practices of the Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh, making special mention of the tattoo tradition. Jawaharlal Nehru (2011), in his book *In Search of India*, acknowledged the diversity of Indian culture and the unique identity of tribal society. The Ministry of Culture, Government of India (2019) has recognized tribal arts and traditions as an important part of India's invaluable cultural heritage and national heritage. Expected Result

Detailed cultural and religious documentation of the tattoo art of the Gond tribe. A clear explanation of the connection of tattoo art with the Ramayana period. Academic and cultural suggestions for the preservation and promotion of tattoo art. Study it as a symbol of religious devotion, cultural identity, and social unity. Evaluate the role of tattoo art in the context of socio-religious conflict and cultural resistance. Underline the need to preserve and promote tattoo art as a precious cultural heritage. To study the relevance of the tattoo tradition in contemporary

times and the challenges associated with its preservation. A Medium of Cultural Identity – For the Gond tribe, tattooing is not merely a means of beauty, but also a symbol of community identity and social status.

Link to Religious Faith – The use of symbols related to gods and goddesses, nature, and especially Lord Rama in tattoo designs reflects religious devotion. Influence of the Ramayana Period – According to popular belief, memories related to Lord Rama's exile have influenced regional tribal traditions, which are reflected in tattoo art. A Symbol of Cultural Resistance – In times of social or religious upheaval, tattooing was adopted as a permanent symbol of devotion and expression of cultural pride. Invaluable Cultural Heritage – This tradition has been passed down orally from generation to generation, making it an important and invaluable cultural heritage. Impact of Modernization – Due to modern lifestyles, the attraction towards the tattoo tradition among youth appears to be diminishing.

2. Discussion (Discussion/Analysis)

The study clearly shows that tattooing is a mirror of the Gond community's philosophy of life, religious beliefs, and nature-based culture. The influence of folk beliefs associated with Shri Ram demonstrates the extent to which tribal culture has internalized mainstream religious traditions. The adoption of tattooing as a form of cultural resistance demonstrates that art is not merely aesthetic, but also a means of strengthening social unity and identity. The influence of modernity has further increased the need to preserve this tradition. If documentation and academic studies are not conducted, this heritage may gradually disappear. Therefore, this tradition must be protected through cultural awareness, educational research, workshops, and government conservation schemes.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that the art of tattooing prevalent among the Gond tribe of Chhattisgarh is not merely a tradition of physical adornment, but a powerful symbol of deep cultural consciousness, religious faith, and community identity. The symbols, lines, and shapes of tattoos reflect a synergy of nature, folk beliefs, deities, and life philosophies, reflecting the tribal society's nature-based way of life and spiritual outlook. The influence of folklore from the Ramayana period and folk beliefs related to Lord Shri Ram has given this tradition a special religious dimension. The tattooing of symbols related to Lord Rama by the Gond community during times of social or religious crisis is a symbol of their unwavering faith, cultural pride, and collective solidarity. Thus, tattooing has evolved beyond individualism and into a medium of cultural resistance and religious identity. Studies also indicate that modernization and changing lifestyles are currently leading to a decline in the tattoo tradition. Therefore, it is crucial to preserve and promote this invaluable cultural heritage. Concrete efforts should be made to preserve and promote this tradition through academic research, cultural documentation, and public awareness programs. Finally, it can be said that the tattoo art of the Gond tribe is a living symbol of cultural continuity, religious faith, and social unity, highlighting the richness and diversity of Indian tribal heritage.

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“Cultural sustainability by preserving Alwar’s heritage amongst social change”

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Abstract-Cultural sustainability refers to the societal ability to retain and preserve the heritage while adapting to ongoing changes. In the era of parametric architecture, often old buildings with lots of memories, lost spaces. Memories hold a major section in our history. They preserve thoughts. That is why historian R.H Collingwood said that history is the study of thoughts of people in the past. But what if the past is ignored? Can reality still be known?

This research paper examines cultural sustainability through the preservation of Alwar's rich heritage amidst rapid social change, with a specific focus on the marginalized Sikligar Sikh artisan community. The study explores how social, economic, and legal transformations have impacted traditional weapon-making communities in Alwar, Rajasthan, and proposes comprehensive strategies for preserving intangible cultural heritage. Drawing on UNESCO's framework for cultural sustainability and empirical evidence from Alwar's artisan communities, this paper demonstrates that preserving intangible heritage is essential for social inclusion, historical continuity, and cultural identity. The findings reveal that legal restrictions, economic pressures, and modernization have severely impacted traditional crafts, necessitating urgent intervention through documentation, skill upgradation, educational support, and policy reforms to ensure the survival of these communities and their invaluable cultural contributions.

Keywords- Cultural sustainability, marginalized , heritage, urbanization, legal transformations, intangible legacy, parametric architecture, Sikligar Sikhs & skill upgradation.

Scope & objective of research-

The scope of this research is to highlight the militaristic history, material culture, and socioeconomic aspect within a specific regional context. Also the importance and the work of the Sikligar Sikhs is highlighted in this research paper. It examines their enduring legacy of khalsa and the community’s prominence in late 16th century.

The research aims to focus on Sikligar Sikhs of Alwar, shedding light on their work and contribution in Alwar history and how they have been socially and culturally marginalized.

Research Questions-

This paper addresses the following key questions-

- 1)Who are Sikligar Sikhs and what are their historical origins?
- 2)What are their cultural traditions and practices?
- 3)What traditional occupations have characterized the Sikligar Sikh community?
- 4)What significance did the Sikligar Sikhs have in Alwar's social, political, and cultural history?
- 5)What is the current socio-economic and cultural state of the Sikligar Sikh community in Alwar?
- 6)What are the challenges they are facing in order to sustain?
- 7)How has modernization and urban change affected the present living conditions of Sikligar Sikhs?
- 8)How have the Sikligar Sikhs been forced to relocate due to their restricted living quarters and lack of essential amenities?
- 9)How cultural sustainability frameworks may help to conserve and restore the Sikligar Sikh heritage?
- 10)How do oral histories and communal recollections help to preserve a community's past?

Research Methodology-

The study will use a variety of methods from different fields, including art historical analysis, material culture study and museology.

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1) Oral History- The primary source will be seeking information about Sikligar Sikhs through oral history. The documentation of the ancestral place, migration patterns and their work tradition.

2) Socio-political history- This entails the examining of archival documentation about Sikligar Sikhs. Also to compare the Sikligars, searched on internet, listening to oral narratives of Sikligar Rajputs in Alwar will be a helpful source in preparing the roadmap of migration of the community.

3) Analyses of their polishing work of Sikligars in Lakshmanagarh, Alwar- A metallurgical and artistic study of the technique for polishing of the weapons will provide me with a valuable insight of the work of the Sikligar Sikhs.

4) Conceptualization of government policies related to marginalized community and their sustainability.

Introduction-

My research questions are framed as an enquiry that why Sikligar Sikhs who once held a significant position have become socially and culturally marginalized. Cultural sustainability represents the imperative to preserve traditions, skills, and heritage amidst the forces of modernization and social change. As UNESCO emphasizes, cultural heritage is not just monuments and collections of objects but encompasses traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants (UNESCO, n.d.). This living heritage is critical for maintaining cultural diversity in an increasingly globalized world, where homogenization threatens the unique identities of marginalized communities. Alwar, a historic city in Rajasthan, India, embodies this tension between preservation and progress.

Nestled in the Aravalli mountain range and recognized as one of Rajasthan's oldest cities, Alwar boasts a rich cultural heritage spanning millennia. The region features remarkable historic architecture including the Bala Quila Fort (circa 1200 CE), the City Palace (1791 CE) showcasing Indo-Islamic architectural fusion, and numerous temples and cenotaphs (Incredible India, n.d.). Beyond its tangible heritage, Alwar harbors diverse artisanal communities whose traditional skills and practices represent invaluable intangible cultural heritage. This paper focuses on the Sikligar Sikhs as a case study to examine the multifaceted impact of social, economic, and legal change on marginalized artisan communities. The Sikligar community, traditionally specialized in crafting and polishing weapons, represents a critical intersection of cultural heritage, economic vulnerability, and social marginalization. Their story illuminates broader challenges facing artisan communities across India and offers insights into sustainable approaches for cultural preservation in rapidly changing societies.

The Gilded Legacy of the Sikligar Sikhs: Origin & History

The word Sikligar means 'occupation relating to armour', or metal burnishing (ASI, 1998), and casting country made revolvers. The Sikligar Sikhs is a group of an indigenous community, who are weapon polishers by tradition. 'Sikligar' is said to derived from the word Saiqai, a persian word which means a "polisher." (Joshua Project) Many administrators of the British Raj, such as H. A. Rose, Denzil Ibbetson and William Crooke wrote books that referred to the blacksmith communities as *Lohars*, although in fact that term refers to a specific group of people and is not interchangeable. (Judge, Paramjit S.; Bal, Gurpreet (1996)

The Sikligar Sikhs trace their origins to Rajput communities in Rajasthan, particularly the Marwar region. According to historical accounts, they were originally Lohars (blacksmiths) who specialized in bladesmithing and developed expertise in manufacturing and polishing weapons (Wikipedia, 2025). The term Sikligar derives from the Persian word saiqal, meaning polisher, reflecting their hereditary duty of making and maintaining weapons (SikhiWiki, n.d.). The community's association with Sikhism began in the early 17th century during the period of Guru Hargobind (1606-1644), when they were recruited to manufacture arms for the Guru's military forces during the militarization of Sikhism (Grokikipedia, n.d.). It is likely that Griffith witnessed Sikh warriors as is evidenced in his description of Sikhs, the "capaciously large" turbans, wound with wire and war implements is almost uniquely unusual. (Madra Singh Amandeep, 2004) Sikligar Sikhs wear large turban and often classified as warrior class.

Historical records indicate that Guru Hargobind sent Bhai Jetha and Bhai Bidhi Chand to locate skilled artisans, and Bhai Kehar Singh Rajput was among the first to offer services, bringing fellow craftsmen who would produce weapons used by the Sixth and Tenth Gurus in battles against the Mughals and Pahari Rajas (SikhiWiki, n.d.). They are of fighter class which holds the position of kshatriya in varnashram but were called Sikhs as they followed Sikhism. It is not at first, under the direction of Guru Hargobind Singh Ji, they were involved in polishing weaponry, but eventually they obtained the abilities to manufacture weapons themselves. And from that day forward, they gained competence in armament making. Also scholarly & community sources tells us that the

polishers in punjab claim their migration from Rajasthan where they manufactured armories and served as weapon makers.

The community's association with Sikhism began in the early 17th century during the period of Guru Hargobind (1606-1644), when they were recruited to manufacture arms for the Guru's military forces during the militarization of Sikhism (Grokikipedia, n.d.). Historical records indicate that Guru Hargobind sent Bhai Jetha and Bhai Bidhi Chand to locate skilled artisans, and Bhai Kehar Singh Rajput was among the first to offer services, bringing fellow craftsmen who would produce weapons used by the Sixth and Tenth Gurus in battles against the Mughals and Pahari Rajas (SikhiWiki, n.d.). The title Sikligar was reportedly bestowed upon them by Guru Gobind Singh himself, recognizing their exceptional craftsmanship and valor. According to community lore, observing the shine of their weapons, the Guru himself named them Sikligar and after observing their valor, bestowed them with the title of his favorites (SikhiWiki, n.d.). Bhai Ram Singh was among the first Sikligars to be baptized into Sikhism and became a legendary figure who was martyred in Delhi alongside Banda Bahadur.

Following India's Partition in 1947, many Sikligar families migrated to various regions, including Alwar, Lakshmangarh, and surrounding areas in Rajasthan. The post-Partition settlement patterns established significant populations in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Delhi (SikhRI, 2014). This migration marked the beginning of profound changes to their traditional way of life, as they faced new economic and social challenges in their adopted regions.

Scholarly debates continue regarding the precise origins and historical trajectory of the Sikligar community. Some researchers trace their lineage to Kannauj, while others emphasize their Marwari roots. The complexity of their history reflects broader patterns of occupational specialization and religious conversion in medieval India. What remains undisputed is their critical contribution to Sikh military history during periods of intense conflict with Mughal and regional powers. The weapons they crafted were not merely tools but symbols of resistance and sovereignty, embodying the martial spirit of the Khalsa. This historical significance makes their current marginalization particularly poignant, as communities that once served as the armorers of Sikh sovereignty now struggle for basic recognition and survival.

Social and Economic Position-

Contemporary Sikligar communities in Alwar and surrounding regions face severe marginalization across multiple dimensions. The communities typically settle in hamlets on the outskirts of towns and villages, often living in thatched huts or basic dwellings with inadequate infrastructure (Wikipedia, 2025). In Alwar specifically, organizations like Sahaita have documented that Sikligar Sikhs are the most impoverished among Sikhs, having been squeezed out of the economy due to the modernization of armament (Sahaita, n.d.).

The marginalization encompasses several critical issues. First, basic amenities remain severely lacking. Many Sikligar settlements lack adequate housing, sanitation facilities, and access to quality education. Children often must travel considerable distances to attend school, and educational attainment remains low. Second, economic vulnerability has intensified with the loss of their traditional craft. As one article notes, time and tide have snatched from them their armory and ammunition making skill-set, reducing them to repairing drums, buckets, making locks and keys and other agricultural implements (The World Sikh News, 2017). Legal restrictions have played a devastating role in undermining traditional occupations. The Indian Arms Act, enacted in 1959 to consolidate and amend the law relating to arms and ammunition in order to curb illegal weapons, replaced the colonial-era Indian Arms Act of 1878 (Wikipedia, 2026). While the Act serves legitimate public safety objectives, it inadvertently criminalized the traditional livelihood of weapon-making communities. The Act requires licenses for manufacturing, selling, or possessing firearms and edged weapons, making it virtually impossible for Sikligar artisans to continue their ancestral profession legally (iPleaders, 2022).

The economic impact has been profound. According to SikhRI (2014), since the time of British colonization they have been marginalized and outcast. With the end of Khalsa Raj, the British worked to destroy the sovereign spirit of the Sikh nation. Weapon-makers of the Panth were naturally cast off and actively discriminated against. This historical discrimination continued post-independence, with communities facing ongoing prejudice and abuse from authorities.

Case studies from Alwar illustrate these challenges. Families like that of Harjeet Singh demonstrate the shift from ancestral crafts to modern occupations. His family, like many others, has transitioned from traditional weapon-making to alternative livelihoods such as welding, agricultural implement manufacturing, and menial labor. Children who once might have learned metalworking techniques from their fathers now aspire to education and employment outside their traditional craft. While this represents individual advancement, it simultaneously threatens the intergenerational transmission of specialized knowledge and skills that have been refined over centuries. The social invisibility of Sikligar communities compounds their economic struggles. Despite their

historical significance, they remain largely unknown even within mainstream Sikh society. Many Sikhs in India and globally are unfamiliar with the Sikligar community's history and contributions (The Langar Hall, 2012). This invisibility perpetuates a cycle of marginalization where lack of recognition leads to lack of support, which further deepens isolation. The community's nomadic heritage, while once an asset enabling them to serve diverse patrons, has become a liability in an era requiring permanent addresses for accessing government services, education, and economic opportunities. Settlements on urban peripheries lack basic infrastructure, leaving families without clean water, sanitation, or reliable electricity. These material deprivations are compounded by social discrimination, as communities face prejudice based on their traditional occupation and socioeconomic status.

Cultural Sustainability and Challenges-

The preservation of intangible heritage-including weapon-making techniques, oral histories, rituals, and festivals-is essential for maintaining cultural diversity and community identity. UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines intangible cultural heritage as practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (Wikipedia, 2026). For the Sikligar community, these practices are constantly recreated in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity.

Several interconnected challenges threaten the sustainability of Sikligar cultural heritage. Modernization has fundamentally altered the economic landscape, rendering traditional weapon-making obsolete. As Sahaita notes, the iron ore industry is practically obsolete, yet the potential of the Sikligar Sikhs is most certainly not (Sahaita, n.d.). This paradox highlights how economic transformation can destroy livelihoods while communities retain valuable knowledge and capabilities that could be redirected.

Declining interest among youth represents another critical challenge. Younger generations, witnessing their families' economic struggles and social marginalization, increasingly pursue education and employment opportunities outside their traditional craft. The World Sikh News (2017) observes, now with the young taking to education in a small but sure way, I foresee the disappearance of their traditional artisanship, if no major step to adopt and patronise the same is taken. While educational advancement is positive, it occurs at the expense of cultural transmission without deliberate preservation efforts. Economic pressures forcing occupational change have accelerated the loss of intergenerational knowledge transmission. Traditional craft knowledge, typically passed from master to apprentice through hands-on practice over many years, cannot survive when practitioners must abandon their craft for economic survival. This breaks the chain of intergenerational transmission that UNESCO identifies as crucial for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (AnthroMania, 2023).

Comparison with other artisan communities illuminates both shared challenges and potential solutions. The Gadiya Lohars, another nomadic ironworking community, face similar marginalization and economic displacement. However, communities that have successfully adapted their skills to modern markets-such as those producing agricultural implements or decorative metalwork-demonstrate pathways for cultural sustainability that maintain craft knowledge while ensuring economic viability. The role of legal frameworks in either enabling or constraining cultural preservation cannot be overstated. While the Arms Act serves legitimate security objectives, its broad prohibition on weapon manufacture fails to distinguish between commercial arms production for violent purposes and heritage craft preservation for cultural continuity. This legal blind spot effectively criminalizes an entire community's cultural heritage, forcing families to choose between maintaining illegal traditional practices or abandoning their identity. Other countries have navigated this tension more successfully by creating heritage exemptions that permit traditional craftsmen to produce ceremonial weapons under strict oversight. Such models could inform Indian policy reforms that balance security concerns with cultural preservation imperatives. The absence of such accommodations reflects a broader pattern where modernization policies inadequately consider impacts on marginalized communities whose livelihoods and identities depend on practices deemed obsolete or problematic by contemporary standards.

Strategies for Preservation-

Comprehensive cultural preservation requires multi-faceted approaches addressing documentation, economic sustainability, education, policy support, and community engagement. Research on heritage preservation demonstrates that successful safeguarding involves collaboration between local communities, government bodies, tourism operators, and cultural heritage organizations (Clasius Press, 2025). The complexity of preserving living heritage while supporting community development necessitates careful attention to power dynamics, ensuring that preservation efforts empower rather than exploit marginalized communities. Strategies must be designed with community participation at their core, recognizing that Sikligar artisans themselves are the primary stakeholders and knowledge holders whose voices must guide preservation initiatives.

Critical Perspectives on Sustainable Futures Society, Culture, And Governance

Documentation and Archiving-

The first priority is comprehensive documentation of craft techniques, oral histories, and cultural practices before they disappear. This should include high-quality video documentation of master craftsmen demonstrating traditional weapon-making techniques, detailed photographic records of tools, processes, and finished products, and systematic recording of oral histories capturing community narratives, family genealogies, and historical accounts. As Solimar International (2023) emphasizes, local artisans pass down their knowledge, skills, and craftsmanship from one generation to the next, making documentation critical for preserving this knowledge even when transmission pathways are disrupted.

Skill Upgradation and Adaptation-

Rather than attempting to revive illegal weapon-making, communities should be supported in adapting traditional metalworking skills to legal, market-friendly crafts. Sahaita's vocational training center in Alwar provides a model, offering training in everything from computer work to sewing (Sahaita, n.d.). This approach could be enhanced by developing specialized programs in decorative metalwork, traditional tool-making, architectural metalwork for heritage restoration, and artistic metal sculpture. Such adaptation maintains core metalworking skills while creating economically viable livelihoods.

Educational Support and Awareness-

Education serves dual purposes, first supporting community members' advancement while fostering broader appreciation for their heritage. Scholarship programs should enable Sikligar youth to pursue higher education without abandoning their cultural identity. Simultaneously, mainstream education should incorporate community history into local curricula, helping younger generations appreciate their heritage. As Anthro Mania (2023) notes, educational programs, workshops, seminars and cultural festivals can play a crucial role in fostering appreciation and understanding of intangible heritage.

Cultural Centers and Museums-

Establishing dedicated cultural centers in Alwar would provide spaces for craft demonstrations, exhibitions, and cultural programs. The Government Museum in Alwar already houses an impressive collection of weapons and metalwork, including 2270 armoury items showcasing the region's metalworking heritage (Wikipedia, 2023). This could be expanded to include living heritage demonstrations by Sikligar artisans, creating both cultural preservation and tourism opportunities. As research demonstrates, sustainable tourism can provide significant economic benefits to local communities while supporting heritage preservation (Clasius Press, 2025).

Government Policy Support-

Policy interventions are essential for addressing structural barriers. Recognition of Sikligars under Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories would provide access to affirmative action benefits. Craft promotion schemes should specifically target traditional metalworking communities, providing subsidies, marketing support, and access to raw materials. Financial aid programs should support both individual artisans and community-based cooperatives. Additionally, targeted amendments to the Arms Act could create exemptions for traditional ceremonial weapons produced by registered heritage craftsmen, enabling limited continuation of traditional practices for cultural rather than commercial purposes.

Youth Engagement and Cultural Pride-

Building cultural pride among younger generations is crucial for long-term sustainability. Programs should include hands-on workshops where youth learn traditional techniques, heritage camps combining cultural education with recreational activities, storytelling projects documenting and sharing community narratives, and mentorship programs connecting elders with youth. Research on intangible cultural heritage preservation emphasizes that when tourists are drawn to destinations because of their unique cultural heritage, it creates a market for traditional crafts which encourages local artisans and practitioners to continue their crafts (Clasius Press, 2025).

Conclusion-

The preservation of Alwar's heritage through the lens of marginalized communities like the Sikligar Sikhs reveals fundamental truths about cultural sustainability in rapidly changing societies. These communities embody centuries of specialized knowledge, craftsmanship, and cultural practices that connect contemporary India to its rich historical legacy. Yet they face existential threats from modernization, legal restrictions, and economic marginalization that, if unaddressed, will result in the irreversible loss of invaluable cultural heritage. This research demonstrates the profound interconnectedness of economic support, legal recognition, and cultural pride in

achieving cultural sustainability. Economic viability alone cannot preserve heritage if communities feel ashamed of their traditions. Legal recognition without economic opportunity leaves communities legally acknowledged but practically abandoned. Cultural pride without economic sustainability forces communities to choose between identity and survival. Only integrated approaches addressing all dimensions simultaneously can ensure genuine cultural sustainability. The strategies proposed—documentation, skill adaptation, educational support, cultural centers, policy reforms, and youth engagement—represent a comprehensive framework for preservation that respects both heritage and progress. They recognize that cultural sustainability does not mean freezing communities in time but rather supporting dynamic adaptation that maintains core cultural elements while enabling economic and social advancement.

As UNESCO emphasizes, heritage provides a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (Wikipedia, 2026). For communities like the Sikligar Sikhs, preserving intangible heritage ensures social inclusion by recognizing their contributions to Indian history and culture, maintains historical continuity by keeping alive centuries-old traditions and knowledge, and sustains cultural identity for future generations who deserve to inherit the richness of their ancestors' legacy. The case of Sikligar Sikhs in Alwar is not isolated but representative of challenges facing artisan communities across India and globally. Their story illuminates how modernization, while bringing undeniable benefits, can simultaneously destroy valuable cultural heritage unless deliberate preservation efforts accompany development. The urgency of action cannot be overstated. As *The World Sikh News* (2017) poignantly observes, the disappearance of traditional artisanship is foreseeable if no major step to adopt and patronise the same is taken. The time for such steps is now, before another generation passes and irreplaceable knowledge is lost forever.

Ultimately, preserving Alwar's heritage through supporting communities like the Sikligar Sikhs is not merely about maintaining the past. It is about ensuring that India's future remains connected to the rich cultural diversity that has characterized its civilization for millennia. It is about recognizing that human knowledge and creativity manifest in countless forms, from academic scholarship to artisanal craftsmanship, and that preserving this diversity makes society richer, more resilient, and more human. Cultural sustainability, therefore, is not a luxury but a necessity for any society that values its heritage and seeks to build a future worthy of that inheritance.

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“Land, Identity and Displacement: Historical Patterns of Tribal Land Alienation in Kerala”

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Abstract.

India has a long history of tribal struggle for protecting their land and culture since the period of British rule. The government is introducing development intervention for the welfare of its people by keeping the development agenda in mind. Still, mostly in such situations, the marginalized communities, especially the tribes and Dalit communities, are forced to pay the actual cost by sacrificing their land and resources. In this milieu, this paper attempts to review and explore the development issues faced by the tribal communities in India at the cost of various development projects like construction of dams, mining, irrigation, etc., and a special emphasis is given to the experiences from the state of Kerala. The Indian model of development results in large displacement of marginal communities and alienates resources from weaker sections to more privileged sections. The inadequacy of the government to frame a proper policy implementation and the so-called modern ‘development’ leads to the exclusion of a particular section of the society into more vulnerable conditions of deprivation and human rights violations. In this light, the development debate, which ultimately results in the deprivation of tribal communities in the form of loss of land and displacement, is been discussed here. It also examines Kerala's position on development-induced displacement, especially in tribal belts.

Key Words: Tribal communities, Development, Displacement, Marginalisation, Land, and people, Kerala.

Introduction

Tribes are considered the earliest settlers, and they were generally called ‘adivasis’ in the general indigenous concept. They usually live in forest areas, hilly regions, mountainous places, and deep valleys and are closely associated with forests and forest resources. According to the 2011 census, tribes in India constitute 8.2 percent of the total population of the country (GOI, 2011). Tribes have to be considered prominent among various ethnic categories, based on their geographical, linguistic, and cultural aspects. Their interaction with the outside world is comparatively less than other communities due to their particular patterns of socio-cultural living. Usually tribal communities follow a particular culture, which is entirely different from the non-tribals. The tribal communities in India are usually known by various names such as adivasis, aboriginals, and original inhabitants or indigenous people of India and each tribal community follows a common language and a common culture.

Through various development programmes and constitutional provisions, the central and the state government took many affirmative actions for the overall development of the tribal community. Even after continuous efforts, problems such as educational backwardness, land alienation, and health problems are still prevailing in tribal areas. It was realised that some group of tribals are still living in backward conditions compared to other tribal groups. Here among the whole tribal communities, certain groups are considered as particularly Vulnerable tribal groups. Particularly Vulnerable tribes are in a state of extreme poverty and subject to various forms of social exclusion and exploitation. The very low literacy level, the stagnant and diminishing population, and the pre-agricultural level of technology also act as criteria for identifying Particularly Vulnerable tribal groups. As per the calculation of the government of India, there are almost 75 Particularly Vulnerable locations in several parts of the country, which have been identified in 14 states and one union territory. They are most concentrated in the state of Madhya Pradesh, followed by Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra (Sharma, 2002).

Independent India promised to give equal opportunity to all her citizen by providing special protection to the weaker sections. In this context, Patwardhan (2005) argues that tribes have been further deprived in the process of national development. The use of land for several development activities such as construction of industries, mining, agriculture, factories etc. compelled the tribals to leave their land and go elsewhere. They were uprooted from their ancestral land, often forced to migrate to urban slums in search of employment or become landless labourers. While going through the history of various displacement stories, we can clearly say that these arguments have their importance in the national and regional contexts. Gutman points out (1994) between 1950 to 1990,

around 20 million people were displaced due to development projects in India alone, and in the same period around 30 million were displaced in China, of whom 10 million were displaced due to the construction of dams. In most of the cases, involuntary resettlement is the major issue.

Contextualising Tribal Resistance in Kerala

In Kerala the scheduled tribes constitute 1.10% of the total population. The total tribal population of Kerala is 364189(2001, census). The tribes in Kerala comprises of 3.21 lakhs of people, among these 22.2 per cent lives in forest areas (Murickan et.al, 2003:70).Majority of the tribal groups reside in the western part of the Western Ghats including the major tribes such as, Paniyans, Kurumans, Mala arayns, Kurichyars and Irulars. There are 36 tribal groups in Kerala (Kumar, 2010:78) and Paniya is the largest among them. There are five Particularly Vulnerable tribal groups (PTGs) namely, the Koraga, Cholanaykan, kurumbar, and Kadar. Among them, the Koraga tribes are mainly located in Kasaragod district and the cholnaykans are located in Nilambur valley of Malapuararam district, the Kurumbar are mainly located in Attapady area of Palakkad district and the Kattunaykans are spread in Wayanad, Malapuararam and Kozhikode district, and the remaining one, the Kadar communities are mainly inhabited in Thrissur and Palakkad districts. These PTVGs form only 5.3 percent of the total scheduled tribal population of the tribes, and their total population was estimated at 16678 in 1996-97.

Like many other tribal communities in India, the tribes in Kerala are also inhabited in forest and hilly areas and a majority of their livelihood activities are closely associated with river and forest resources. Kerala is a highly populated state, and land is considered one of the scarce resources. Kerala is predominantly an agricultural-based economy characterized by the highly distorted distribution of land. In Kerala, the land and forest have been vital sources of advisees' livelihood. Land is considered as the only tangible asset for them and therefore, they have an emotional attachment towards the land. Historically, the tribal communities and their land have been marginalized and alienated as a result of policies pushed by successive governments during the last five decades (Kumar 2010). The mainstream political parties and government have to turn a blind eye to the Adivasis' problems. Like other tribal people in India, the tribes in Kerala are also facing a lot of existential problems and are exploited and neglected by the government and other sections of society.

The acquisition of land in the name of development is happening in Kerala but at a diminishing rate. The scarce resources like land and water being exploited in the name of development projects are the major threat faced by the tribal people in Kerala. Against this kind of exploitation and for land restoration, struggles and resistance are common in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Kerala in recent times (Dixit 2006). In God's Own country, the mainstream society along with the political power trying to grab the resources of the marginalized sections especially the tribal communities. The "red-belt" state is indeed politically advanced, recently giving more attention to safeguarding the requirements and rights of the tribal community while acquiring land for development.

These irrigations and other development projects which constructed as the outcome of development agenda resulted the displacement of marginalised sections from their habitats, apart from this the experiences from the Plachimada struggle against the Coca Cola company by the Malasar and Iravalar tribal communities, The silent valley movement and the ongoing tribal struggle against the proposed Athirappilly hydroelectric projects are important among them. All the struggles that grew against the development interventions in Kerala are mainly focused on the environmental protection and the existence of the indigenous or local communities in that particular project areas. Various movements led by the adivasi communities are marked in the history of Kerala's environmental movements. Save Silent Valley Movement, Muthanga Land Reform Movement, Chaliyar River Agitation, Struggle against Industrial pollution in Eloor-Edayar region of Ernakulum district, Kathikudam Agitation against Nita Gelatin Company, and the ongoing struggle against proposed Athirappilly Hydroelectric project in Thrissur districts are the significant ones among them. As far as Kerala is concerned the movements, whether it be a political movement or an environment movement, gradually make a platform for discussion in the mainstream.

Along with the problem of alienation of land, tribes are facing threats to their cultural identity. The tribal culture and traditions are entirely different from the way of life of the non-tribal people who are ignorant about the culture and traditions practiced by the other people. The cultural genocide by the different religious groups on tribes is also common today. Mamata Dash and Sahu (2012) point out that cultural genocide is common in tribal areas. In cultural genocide, the outside people adopt the existing cultural practice of the tribal community and gradually take control over them, or in other words, the non-tribal try to impose their own culture and religious practices on tribes and propagate the divine of their religious beliefs over them (2012). The spread of the Jagannatha cult on tribes by the non-tribal in Orissa is an example of cultural genocide. This practice has a notable implication on tribal culture and lifestyle (Dash and Sahu, 2012). Precisely, the dominant religious power structures are trying to impose their culture and tradition on tribal people in a hegemonic sense.

Land Alienation as the Major Aspect of Dispossession

With the introduction of commercial orientation of land as a resource, there was a substantial increase in the pressure on the tribal land, introducing various development programmes and setting up various irrigation, power, industrial, and mining projects brought by the problem of displacement. Gutman (2006) describes that due to illiteracy and poverty, the tribes could not take advantage of the legal remedies. The grabbing of the tribal land, coupled with their exploitation by contractors and intermediaries, caused widespread unrest among tribals, which manifested a series of tribal revolts during the 19th century. The opening up of the tribal areas for development activities leads to an increased migrant population. The land acquisition for various private and public purposes has also increased (ibid.).

In India, only 25 per cent of the displaced by development projects have been rehabilitated which leaves a huge number of millions who have not been rehabilitated. Most of the tribal people never shared the benefits of the projects, which displaced them. For example, Machkunda dam in Orissa generates 729 MW of electricity annually, but the families who were displaced due to those projects are still living in darkness in the similar ways the schemes of development had replaced many tribal lives and seem to remain the cause of disposition in South East Asia. Sometimes, the displacements caused by large dams will lead to the transfer of resources from weaker sections of the society to the more privileged (Sainath, 1996).

Forced migration itself is a threat faced by the tribals due to displacement. Displacement forces the people to leave their original location and go elsewhere, which ultimately results in a kind of migration. Therefore, because of the development project, the tribal people face the threat of displacement. Even if there are adequate resettlement packages, it also ultimately leads to migration. The lack of basic civic amenities in the rehabilitated site, lack of employment opportunities, and poor living conditions also make life more deprived. The migration to urban areas in search of jobs makes the tribal people become slum dwellers. In most cases, original cultivators and forest dwellers have become wage labourers. For example, a large number of people displaced by the Ukai dam in Gujarat work in cities or on sugarcane farms as wage laborers (Patwardhan, 2005).

It has been pointed out that the vulnerable groups, especially the women and children, are the most affected due to displacement. In many tribal communities, women enjoy equal status with men. Due to displacement, the rehabilitation the women cannot enjoy their equal status. The compensation, whether it is monetary or non-monetary is always paid to the male member of the family. Similarly, the right to employment instead of loss of land should not be equally applicable in many cases. According to UN report³, the gender concerns for internally displaced women were primarily related to the protection and safeguarding the women and girls from rape, forced sexual slavery, abduction, etc. The displacements forced the women to assume more family and social responsibilities which was previously held by men. In normal cases, the women need to give more support to the elders and children within the family; it increases the burden over them. The loss of social support is yet another problem faced by the women after displacement.

Conclusion

Along with different state governments, the Ministry of Central Government followed different policies on resettlement and rehabilitation in the absence of a proper national resettlement and rehabilitation policy. Around the 1980s, World Bank issued its first resettlement and rehabilitation policy, which became operational in the 1990s. Subsequently, different states and agencies such as Orissa, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh have such resettlement legislation. Indian Forests Act of 1878 established absolute property rights of the state over forestland, and the Land Acquisition Act came into operation in 1894. These acts served the principle of 'Eminent domain,' giving supreme authority to the state to control and own all the property within the country's territory (Patwardhan, 2008:8-10). State governments also have the right to utilise their land for 'public purposes'. But, what is 'public' purpose is not yet defined. So, based on the power of this legislation, several state governments use their properties without giving adequate Resettlement & Rehabilitation plan.

It is noted that in recent years, unlike any other Indian state, the government of Kerala has given reasonable compensation and resettlement and rehabilitation facilities. Along with the considerable number of rehabilitation packages, they are giving importance to the livelihood measures as well as various projects to enhance the tribal cultural heritage. 'En ooru' project is the biggest example for that. Along with promoting development projects necessary for the overall well-being of the people, the question arises as to who is paying the actual costs that need to be considered. In this context, such discussions are relevant to current development discourses, and critiquing development issues opens more avenues for discussions on social exclusion and inclusive policies.

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“Geographies of Migration and Population Dynamics”

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Abstract

Migration is a central process shaping population dynamics across local, national, and global scales. The geographies of migration examine how spatial patterns, economic structures, environmental conditions, and political frameworks influence population movements and demographic change. This paper explores the interrelationship between migration and population dynamics, focusing on how employment opportunities, regional inequalities, urbanization, and policy regimes shape migration flows and population distribution. The study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach, drawing upon secondary data sources, scholarly literature, and demographic reports to examine both internal and international migration patterns. Particular attention is given to rural–urban migration, labor-driven mobility, and transnational migration, highlighting their implications for population growth, age structure, and workforce composition in both sending and receiving regions. The paper further discusses how migration contributes to uneven population development, urban concentration, and socio-economic transformation. By integrating geographical perspectives with demographic analysis, this study emphasizes the importance of spatial context in understanding migration processes. The findings suggest that migration is not merely a response to economic factors but is deeply embedded in geographical, social, and political environments. The paper concludes that effective population and migration policies must consider regional disparities, labor market dynamics, and spatial planning to address the challenges and opportunities arising from contemporary migration trends.

Keywords

Migration; Population Dynamics; Human Geography; Spatial Mobility; Labor Migration; Urbanization; Demographic Change; Regional Inequality; Transnational Migration; Rural–Urban Migration

Introduction

Migration is a fundamental demographic process that plays a crucial role in shaping population dynamics across different geographical scales. It involves the movement of people from one place to another, either temporarily or permanently, and is influenced by a complex interaction of economic, social, political, and environmental factors. From a geographical perspective, migration is not only about movement but also about space, place, and spatial inequalities, making it a central concern within human geography and population studies (Castles and Miller, 2009). The geographies of migration examine how spatial patterns of mobility intersect with demographic change, regional development, and labor markets, thereby transforming both origin and destination regions.

Population dynamics refer to changes in population size, structure, and distribution over time, shaped by fertility, mortality, and migration. Among these components, migration is considered the most volatile and spatially uneven, often responding rapidly to economic opportunities, conflicts, environmental stress, and policy interventions (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). Migration redistributes population across regions, alters age and sex composition, and influences urban growth, workforce availability, and social diversity. As such, understanding migration through a geographical lens is essential for explaining contemporary patterns of population change.

Theoretical explanations of migration have long emphasized the role of economic and spatial factors. Early work by Ravenstein (1885) highlighted the importance of distance, economic opportunity, and urban centers in shaping migration flows. Later, Lee’s (1966) push–pull framework further conceptualized migration as a result of factors operating at the place of origin, destination, intervening obstacles, and individual characteristics. These foundational theories continue to inform geographical analyses of migration, particularly in understanding rural–urban migration and regional labor mobility. In developing regions, migration is often driven by disparities in income, employment, and access to services, reinforcing uneven population distribution and regional inequality (Todaro, 1969).

In recent decades, globalization has intensified migration flows, leading to increased international and transnational mobility. Advances in transportation, communication technologies, and global labor markets have reshaped the spatial dimensions of migration, enabling sustained connections between migrants and their places of origin (Massey et al., 1993). These processes have significant implications for population dynamics, including demographic ageing in sending regions and population growth and diversification in receiving areas. Urbanization, in particular, has been closely linked with migration, as cities attract large numbers of migrants seeking employment and improved living conditions, resulting in rapid urban population growth and spatial concentration (UN-Habitat, 2022).

This paper examines the geographies of migration and population dynamics by analyzing how migration patterns influence demographic structures and spatial population distribution. It seeks to integrate geographical perspectives with demographic analysis to highlight the role of space, place, and regional context in shaping migration processes. By exploring different forms of migration—internal, international, and labor-driven—the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how migration reshapes population dynamics in an increasingly interconnected world.

Literature Review

1. Migration as a Geographical and Demographic Process

Migration has been a core subject in human geography and population studies because it directly affects population distribution, density, and regional development. Ravenstein's (1885) laws of migration established that economic motives, distance, and urban attraction play a key role in population movement. In the Indian context, migration reflects deep regional inequalities between states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Odisha (high out-migration) and states like Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat, and Karnataka (high in-migration). These movements reshape population composition at both origin and destination areas.

2. Push–Pull Factors and Rural–Urban Migration in India

Lee's (1966) push–pull theory explains migration through adverse conditions in rural areas (push factors) and attractive conditions in urban areas (pull factors). In India, push factors include agricultural distress, low rural wages, lack of employment, and inadequate education and healthcare facilities. Pull factors include better job opportunities, higher incomes, industrial growth, and access to modern amenities in cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad. Todaro (1969) emphasized that even the expectation of employment encourages migration, which explains continuous rural–urban population flow despite urban unemployment.

3. Urban Population Growth and Overpopulation in Indian Cities

Large-scale migration from rural and semi-urban areas has resulted in rapid population growth in Indian cities. Metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Delhi attract millions of migrants every year for employment in industries, construction, transport, domestic work, and the service sector. This has led to overpopulation, high population density, and the uncontrolled expansion of urban areas. As highlighted by UN-Habitat (2022), Indian cities face severe challenges such as traffic congestion, shortage of affordable housing, slum development, pressure on water supply, sanitation, healthcare, and transportation systems.

4. Migration, Employment, and Urban Unemployment

Neoclassical migration theory explains migration as a response to wage differences between rural and urban regions (Harris and Todaro, 1970). However, in India, the number of migrants often exceeds the availability of formal employment. This results in widespread unemployment and underemployment, especially among unskilled migrants. Many migrants are forced to work in the informal sector with low wages and job insecurity. Scholars argue that unemployment and poverty in overpopulated cities can contribute to social problems such as crime, theft, and illegal activities, particularly in urban slums and informal settlements (Castles and Miller, 2009).

5. Impact of Female Migration and Gender Imbalance in Rural India

Migration has significantly altered the gender composition of rural areas in India. Increasing numbers of young women migrate to cities for education, employment, and marriage. Urban areas offer better living standards, personal freedom, safety, and exposure to modern lifestyles. Many rural women prefer to marry men working in

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cities, leading to a shortage of women in villages. States like Haryana, Rajasthan, and parts of Uttar Pradesh experience gender imbalance, where rural men face difficulty in finding marriage partners. This imbalance affects family structures, social stability, and rural population dynamics (Skeldon, 2012).

6. Cultural Rigidity, Social Control, and Freedom-Driven Migration

Cultural and social factors are important drivers of migration. Rural Indian society is often characterized by rigid traditions, caste restrictions, and strong community control. Young people, especially educated youth and women, perceive villages as socially restrictive. Migration to cities or developed countries provides greater personal freedom, independence, and anonymity. Global exposure through media, education, and the internet has intensified aspirations for liberal lifestyles, encouraging migration toward metropolitan cities and foreign destinations (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014).

7. International Migration from India to Developed Countries

International migration from India is driven by economic opportunities, higher standards of living, and social freedom. Large numbers of Indians migrate to countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Gulf nations for employment and education. World-systems theory explains this movement as a result of global economic inequality, where labor flows from developing to developed regions (Wallerstein, 1974). While destination countries benefit from skilled and unskilled labor, sending regions in India often experience brain drain and labor shortages, affecting long-term population development (UNDESA, 2020).

8. Environmental Stress and Migration in Rural India

Environmental factors also contribute to migration in India. Drought-prone regions of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Bundelkhand experience seasonal and permanent migration due to water scarcity and declining agricultural productivity. Coastal regions face displacement due to cyclones and sea-level rise. Black et al. (2011) emphasize that environmental migration is not isolated but closely linked with poverty, unemployment, and lack of development. Such movements intensify population redistribution and increase pressure on urban centers.

9. Migration, Urbanization, and Population Redistribution

Migration is both a cause and consequence of urbanization in India. Rural–urban migration accelerates the growth of cities while depopulating villages. This leads to uneven regional development, where urban regions expand rapidly while rural areas lag behind. Skeldon (2012) highlights that effective urban planning, employment generation in rural areas, and balanced regional development are essential to manage migration-induced population change.

10. Summary of Literature and Research Direction

The reviewed literature clearly indicates that migration is a multidimensional phenomenon influencing population size, distribution, employment, gender composition, and social structures. In the Indian context, migration is shaped by economic inequality, cultural rigidity, gender aspirations, globalization, and environmental stress. While migration offers opportunities for individual advancement, it also creates serious challenges such as urban overpopulation, unemployment, rural depopulation, and social imbalance. Building upon these insights, the present study aims to examine migration through a geographical and demographic lens to understand its role in transforming population dynamics in India.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research design to examine the geographies of migration and population dynamics. A qualitative approach is appropriate for understanding the complex spatial, social, and demographic dimensions of migration, as it allows for the interpretation of patterns, processes, and relationships rather than focusing solely on numerical measurement (Creswell, 2014). The research is based on the analysis of secondary data, enabling a comprehensive examination of migration trends across different geographical contexts and time periods.

The primary sources of data include published academic literature, international organization reports, and demographic databases. Scholarly journal articles and books were reviewed to understand theoretical perspectives and empirical findings related to migration and population change. Reports and datasets from international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank were utilized to examine global and regional migration patterns and their demographic implications (United Nations Department of Economic and Social

Affairs, 2020; World Bank, 2021). These sources provide reliable and standardized data, making them suitable for comparative geographical analysis.

A systematic literature review technique was employed to identify relevant studies. Key search terms such as “migration,” “population dynamics,” “human geography,” and “spatial mobility” were used to locate peer-reviewed articles through academic databases. The selected literature was screened based on relevance, credibility, and publication date to ensure that both classical theories and contemporary debates were adequately represented (Snyder, 2019). This approach ensured a balanced integration of foundational migration theories with recent geographical and demographic research.

For analytical purposes, the study adopts a thematic analysis framework. Themes such as economic drivers of migration, rural–urban mobility, international labor migration, and demographic impacts were identified and analyzed across different geographical scales. Thematic analysis allows for the organization and interpretation of qualitative data in a systematic manner, facilitating the identification of recurring patterns and relationships within migration studies (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This method is particularly useful for examining how migration influences population distribution, age structure, and workforce composition.

The geographical scope of the study is global, with particular attention to migration patterns in developing regions, where population dynamics are most visibly affected by labor mobility and regional inequality. However, examples from developed countries are also included to highlight contrasts in demographic outcomes and policy responses. This comparative geographical approach enhances the analytical depth of the study by situating migration processes within diverse spatial and socio-economic contexts (Skeldon, 2012).

Despite its strengths, the methodology has certain limitations. The reliance on secondary data restricts the ability to capture individual migrant experiences and localized variations in migration behavior. Additionally, discrepancies in data availability and reporting standards across regions may affect comparability (Castles and Miller, 2009). Nevertheless, the use of multiple credible sources and established analytical frameworks strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings.

Overall, the methodological approach adopted in this study provides a robust framework for analyzing the geographies of migration and population dynamics, ensuring consistency with existing literature while allowing for a comprehensive and spatially informed interpretation of migration processes.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of existing literature and secondary data reveals that migration plays a decisive role in shaping population dynamics through its impact on population distribution, demographic structure, and regional development. The findings indicate that migration is not a uniform process but varies significantly across geographical contexts, influenced by economic opportunities, spatial inequalities, policy frameworks, and global interconnectedness. These factors collectively determine the scale, direction, and demographic consequences of population movement.

One of the key findings relates to the strong association between migration and uneven regional development. Migration flows are largely directed from economically marginalized and resource-poor regions toward areas with better employment opportunities and infrastructure. Rural–urban migration remains a dominant pattern, particularly in developing countries, where limited livelihood options in rural areas push populations toward cities (Todaro, 1969). This movement contributes to rapid urban population growth, altering population density and spatial distribution. While migration supports urban labor markets and economic expansion, it also intensifies pressure on housing, transportation, and public services, leading to challenges such as informal settlements and urban congestion (UN-Habitat, 2022).

Another significant finding is the demographic restructuring caused by migration. Migration is highly selective in nature, often involving young adults of working age. This selectivity results in changes in age and sex composition in both sending and receiving regions. Areas experiencing large-scale out-migration frequently face population ageing, labor shortages, and declining dependency ratios, whereas destination regions benefit from an expanded workforce and demographic rejuvenation (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). These demographic shifts have long-term implications for regional economic sustainability and social support systems.

International migration further illustrates the geographical complexity of population dynamics. The findings suggest that global labor demand and economic disparities between countries continue to drive cross-border migration. Developed economies increasingly rely on migrant labor to address workforce gaps in sectors such as healthcare, construction, and services, while developing countries experience the loss of skilled and semi-skilled

workers (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014). This phenomenon, often described as “brain drain,” affects population composition and development potential in source countries, though remittances sent by migrants can partially offset these losses by supporting household incomes and local economies (World Bank, 2021).

The discussion also highlights the role of migration networks and transnational connections in sustaining population mobility. Migration systems theory emphasizes that once migration streams are established, social networks reduce the costs and risks of movement, leading to sustained and self-perpetuating flows (Massey et al., 1993). These networks contribute to the formation of transnational populations, where migrants maintain strong social, economic, and cultural ties with their places of origin. Such dynamics blur traditional geographical boundaries and reshape population identities and spatial affiliations.

Environmental factors are increasingly influencing migration-related population change. The findings indicate that climate variability, natural disasters, and environmental degradation act as additional stressors that interact with economic and social conditions to influence migration decisions. Rather than causing migration independently, environmental factors often exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, leading to temporary or permanent displacement (Black et al., 2011). These movements have significant demographic implications, particularly in environmentally fragile regions where population pressure and resource scarcity are already high.

From a geographical perspective, the discussion underscores that migration should be understood as a spatially embedded process rather than a purely economic response. Population dynamics resulting from migration reflect broader patterns of inequality, governance, and spatial planning. Policies that fail to address regional disparities and urban infrastructure needs risk intensifying the negative consequences of migration, while well-coordinated migration and population policies can enhance economic development and demographic balance (Skeldon, 2012).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that migration is a powerful force shaping population dynamics across multiple scales. Its impacts are deeply uneven, producing both opportunities and challenges for regions involved in migration systems. A geographical approach is therefore essential for understanding how migration transforms population structures and spatial organization in an increasingly mobile world.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the geographies of migration and population dynamics by emphasizing the spatial dimensions of population movement and their demographic consequences. The analysis demonstrates that migration is a central force shaping population distribution, age structure, and regional development across local, national, and global scales. Rather than being a simple response to economic incentives, migration is embedded within broader geographical contexts that include spatial inequality, labor market structures, political frameworks, and environmental conditions.

The study highlights that internal migration, particularly rural–urban migration, continues to play a significant role in reshaping population dynamics in developing regions. Such movements contribute to urban population growth and economic transformation while simultaneously creating challenges related to infrastructure, housing, and service provision (UN-Habitat, 2022). At the same time, international migration reflects global disparities in development and labor demand, producing demographic benefits for destination regions and complex social and economic outcomes for sending areas (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014).

The findings further suggest that migration selectively involves younger, economically active populations, leading to demographic imbalances such as population ageing and labor shortages in regions experiencing sustained out-migration (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020). Transnational migration networks reinforce these patterns by sustaining long-term mobility and maintaining strong linkages between origin and destination regions (Massey et al., 1993). Additionally, environmental stressors increasingly interact with socio-economic vulnerabilities to influence migration decisions, further complicating population dynamics (Black et al., 2011).

From a geographical perspective, the study underscores the importance of viewing migration as a spatially structured process that both reflects and reinforces regional inequalities. Effective migration and population policies must therefore adopt an integrated approach that considers spatial planning, regional development, and demographic change. Addressing the challenges associated with migration requires coordinated efforts to reduce regional disparities, strengthen urban governance, and support balanced population distribution.

In conclusion, the geographies of migration offer critical insights into contemporary population dynamics by linking mobility with space, place, and demographic transformation. Understanding these relationships is essential

for policymakers, planners, and researchers seeking to respond to the opportunities and challenges posed by increasing human mobility in a rapidly changing world.

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“Sustainable Waste Management Through Women’s Leadership: The Success Story of Kerala’s Haritha Karma Sena”

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Abstract

Haritha Karma Sena (HKS) is a pioneering grassroots initiative in Kerala that integrates sustainable waste management with women’s empowerment through community participation and decentralised governance. Constituted mainly by women from Kudumbashree self-help groups, Haritha Karma Sena plays a crucial role in the collection, segregation, and responsible handling of non-biodegradable waste at the household level. This paper examines Haritha Karma Sena as a women-led model of sustainable development and analyses its contribution to environmental protection, livelihood generation, and social transformation. Using secondary data from government reports, academic literature, and policy documents, the study explores the evolution, structure, functioning, and impact of HKS across Kerala. The findings reveal that women’s leadership in waste management has improved household waste practices, enhanced public environmental awareness, strengthened decentralised governance, and created livelihood opportunities for women from marginalised backgrounds. At the same time, the study identifies challenges such as occupational health risks, infrastructural gaps, social stigma, and irregular income. Despite these limitations, Haritha Karma Sena emerges as a successful example of the Kerala Model of development, demonstrating how women-led, community-based initiatives can address complex environmental and social issues. The paper argues that strengthening institutional support and ensuring the welfare of women workers are essential for sustaining and replicating such models of inclusive and sustainable development.

Keywords: Haritha Karma Sena, Sustainable Waste Management, Women’s Empowerment, Community Participation, Decentralisation, Kerala Model

Introduction

Solid waste management has emerged as one of the most pressing environmental challenges confronting societies across the world. Rapid urbanisation, population growth, changing consumption patterns, and increased dependence on plastic and packaged goods have resulted in a substantial rise in the quantity and complexity of waste generated at the household level. In many developing regions, ineffective waste management systems have led to environmental pollution, health hazards, and social conflicts. Open dumping, burning of waste, and unscientific disposal practices contaminate soil and water sources and pose serious risks to public health.

Kerala presents a unique and paradoxical context in discussions on waste management. Despite its high literacy rates, strong public health indicators, and long-standing tradition of decentralised governance, the state has struggled with solid waste management for several decades. High population density, limited land availability, and widespread resistance to landfill-based disposal systems have made centralised waste management increasingly unsustainable. Incidents such as the closure of large dumping yards and strong public protests against waste treatment plants compelled the state to rethink its waste management strategies (Government of Kerala, 2017).

In response, Kerala gradually shifted towards decentralised waste management systems that emphasise source segregation, recycling, and community participation. Local Self-Governments (LSGs) were entrusted with the responsibility of managing waste at the grassroots level. Within this framework, Haritha Karma Sena emerged as a practical and people-centred solution to the state’s waste crisis. Introduced under the leadership of LSGs and implemented largely through Kudumbashree, Kerala’s poverty eradication and women’s empowerment mission, Haritha Karma Sena placed women at the forefront of waste management activities (Suchitwa Mission, 2019).

Haritha Karma Sena is not merely a workforce for waste collection. It represents a significant social intervention that integrates environmental governance with women’s empowerment. For many women, participation in HKS marked their first experience of paid work outside the household. Through regular interaction with households, local authorities, and the public, these women gained confidence, visibility, and social recognition. Simultaneously, their work contributed to cleaner surroundings, improved public health, and greater environmental awareness at the community level.

This paper examines Haritha Karma Sena as a women-led sustainable waste management initiative and analyses its role in promoting environmental sustainability, women's socio-economic empowerment, and community-based governance in Kerala.

Review of Literature

Literature on sustainable waste management emphasises decentralisation, source segregation, and community participation as critical components of environmentally sound waste systems. The World Bank (2012) highlights that effective solid waste management requires strong local institutions and active involvement of households in segregation and waste reduction. Centralised waste disposal methods are increasingly criticised for their environmental, economic, and social costs, particularly in densely populated regions.

In the Indian context, decentralised waste management gained policy importance following the Solid Waste Management Rules (2016), which mandate segregation at source and local-level processing of waste. Studies indicate that decentralised systems are more sustainable when they are supported by behavioural change, public cooperation, and local ownership (Narayanan, 2019). Community-based models are also found to be more adaptable to local needs and effective in overcoming resistance to waste facilities.

Women's empowerment is widely recognised as a key dimension of inclusive and sustainable development. Feminist development scholars argue that women's participation in paid work and public life enhances their decision-making power, self-confidence, and social status. In Kerala, Kudumbashree has emerged as a successful model of women's collective action, enabling economically marginalised women to access livelihoods, credit, and leadership roles (Kudumbashree Mission, 2020).

The role of women in environmental management has also received increasing attention. The United Nations Environment Programme (2018) notes that involving women in waste management initiatives not only improves environmental outcomes but also advances gender equality and social inclusion. Women, due to their close engagement with household-level practices, are seen as effective agents of change in promoting sustainable consumption and waste reduction.

Literature on the Kerala Model of development highlights decentralisation, social welfare, and community participation as its defining features (Isaac & Franke, 2002). Haritha Karma Sena aligns closely with this model by combining local governance, women's empowerment, and environmental sustainability. However, limited academic work has examined HKS as a comprehensive model integrating these dimensions. This study attempts to bridge this gap by analysing Haritha Karma Sena as a women-led, community-based waste management initiative.

Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design based primarily on secondary data. Data were collected from government policy documents, guidelines issued by Suchitwa Mission, reports published by Kudumbashree Mission, academic journal articles, books, and reports by international organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme.

Secondary data were analysed to understand the evolution, structure, and functioning of Haritha Karma Sena and its impact on women and household waste management practices. A thematic analysis approach was employed, focusing on key themes such as sustainable waste management, women's empowerment, community participation, and decentralised governance. This methodology is appropriate for examining Haritha Karma Sena as a development model and drawing insights relevant to social work and development studies.

Findings and Discussion

- Evolution and Institutional Structure of Haritha Karma Sena

Haritha Karma Sena emerged as part of Kerala's response to an escalating solid waste management crisis. Following the closure of large dumping sites and strong public opposition to landfill-based disposal systems, the state promoted decentralised waste management as a sustainable alternative (Government of Kerala, 2017). Local Self-Governments were entrusted with the responsibility of implementing waste management solutions tailored to local conditions.

Under this system, Haritha Karma Sena members are responsible for the door-to-door collection of non-biodegradable waste from households and commercial establishments. The collected waste is transported to Material Collection Facilities or Material Recovery Facilities for segregation and processing. Kudumbashree was

assigned the task of mobilising women for HKS due to its extensive grassroots network and experience in community-based initiatives (Suchitwa Mission, 2019).

Over time, Haritha Karma Sena evolved into a structured system with formal training programmes, uniforms, identity cards, and a user-fee mechanism. These institutional features contributed to the professionalisation of waste work and improved accountability within the system.

- Women's Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Security

One of the most significant contributions of Haritha Karma Sena is its role in creating livelihood opportunities for women from economically vulnerable backgrounds. Although the income generated through HKS is modest, it provides regular earnings and financial independence for many women. The income is often used to meet household expenses, support children's education, and contribute to savings, thereby reducing women's dependence on male family members (Kudumbashree Mission, 2020).

For many participants, HKS represents their first formal engagement with paid work outside the household. This economic participation enhances women's sense of self-worth and bargaining power within the family. From a social work perspective, such economic empowerment is crucial for strengthening women's agency and resilience.

Social Empowerment, Dignity of Labour, and Gender Roles

Beyond economic benefits, participation in Haritha Karma Sena has led to significant social empowerment. Regular interaction with households, local officials, and the public has increased women's confidence, communication skills, and visibility in the community. Uniforms and identity cards reinforce a sense of professional identity and dignity of labour.

Traditionally, waste work has been associated with social stigma and marginalisation. The involvement of organised women's groups and the recognition provided by Local Self-Governments have contributed to a gradual reduction in stigma associated with waste work. However, remnants of social prejudice continue to exist, highlighting the need for sustained public awareness and institutional support (UNEP, 2018).

- Impact on Household Waste Management Practices

Haritha Karma Sena has played a crucial role in transforming household waste management practices across Kerala. Continuous engagement with residents has increased awareness regarding waste segregation, recycling, and reduction of plastic use. The presence of a reliable collection system encourages households to comply with segregation norms and cooperate with waste management initiatives (Narayanan, 2019).

Several localities have reported visible improvements in cleanliness and a reduction in roadside dumping due to the consistent efforts of HKS members. The initiative has also supported state-level campaigns against single-use plastics, contributing to Kerala's broader environmental sustainability goals.

Strengthening Decentralised Governance and Community Participation

Haritha Karma Sena exemplifies the strengths of decentralised governance by linking Local Self-Governments, women's collectives, and households in a shared effort towards environmental management. The user-fee system and regular interaction between HKS members and residents foster a sense of shared responsibility and accountability.

This participatory approach aligns with the principles of the Kerala Model of development, which emphasises people's participation and local-level decision-making (Isaac & Franke, 2002). Haritha Karma Sena demonstrates how decentralisation can be effectively operationalised through women-led community initiatives.

- Challenges and Limitations

Despite its achievements, Haritha Karma Sena faces several challenges. Occupational health risks associated with waste handling, inadequate protective equipment, and limited access to health insurance remain significant concerns. Irregular payment of user fees and delays in remuneration affect income stability and worker morale.

Infrastructure-related issues, such as insufficient material recovery facilities and transportation constraints, also limit operational efficiency. While social stigma has reduced, it has not been entirely eliminated. Addressing these challenges requires stronger institutional support, timely payments, improved infrastructure, and continuous training to ensure the safety and well-being of women workers (Government of Kerala, 2019).

Conclusion

Haritha Karma Sena represents a successful integration of sustainable waste management, women's empowerment, and decentralised governance. By addressing waste management at the grassroots level, the initiative has significantly contributed to cleaner environments, improved public health, and better household waste practices across Kerala. The decentralised and community-based approach adopted by Haritha Karma Sena demonstrates the effectiveness of involving local institutions and women's collectives in environmental governance.

Beyond its environmental impact, Haritha Karma Sena has played a transformative role in the socio-economic empowerment of women. By providing livelihood opportunities, public visibility, and a sense of professional identity, the initiative has challenged traditional gender roles and enhanced the dignity of labour associated with waste management. Although issues such as occupational health risks, infrastructural constraints, and income insecurity persist, the overall outcomes highlight the strength and resilience of the model.

Importantly, Haritha Karma Sena can be considered one of the most effective and replicable models for other Indian states and developing countries seeking solutions to waste management challenges while simultaneously promoting women's empowerment. Its emphasis on decentralisation, community participation, and women-led implementation offers valuable lessons for designing inclusive and sustainable waste management systems in diverse socio-economic contexts.

Strengthening institutional support, ensuring occupational safety, timely remuneration, and improving infrastructure will be essential for sustaining and scaling up the initiative. Overall, the experience of Haritha Karma Sena clearly demonstrates that women-led, community-based approaches are not only viable but essential for achieving long-term environmental sustainability and inclusive development.

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“Gender-Inclusive Practices and Sustainable Knowledge Systems: Rethinking Search and Retrieval Algorithms”

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Abstract

Gender bias in search and retrieval algorithms has emerged as a critical concern across the social sciences as digital platforms increasingly mediate access to knowledge, visibility, and authority. Search engines, academic databases, and AI-driven discovery tools play a decisive role in shaping public discourse, scholarly recognition, and policy-relevant knowledge production. However, these systems frequently reproduce and amplify existing gender inequalities embedded in historical data, social norms, and institutional power structures. This conceptual article examines strategies for mitigating gender bias in search and retrieval algorithms from an interdisciplinary perspective. Drawing on insights from sociology, gender studies, critical data studies, and science and technology studies (STS), the paper argues that effective mitigation requires an integrated socio-technical approach that combines algorithmic interventions, representational reforms, and governance mechanisms. The study contributes to social science debates on digital inequality by framing algorithmic bias as a structural phenomenon with implications for knowledge justice, epistemic authority, and democratic participation.

Keywords

Gender bias, Search and retrieval algorithms, Digital inequality, Algorithmic governance

1. Introduction

Digital search and retrieval systems have become foundational infrastructures in contemporary social life. From academic search engines and policy databases to AI-powered conversational systems, algorithmic tools increasingly shape how knowledge is accessed, prioritised, and legitimised. These systems do not simply retrieve information; they actively participate in the social construction of relevance, expertise, and credibility. As a result, concerns regarding algorithmic bias, particularly gender bias, have gained prominence within the social sciences.

The Cambridge dictionary defines gender bias as an “unfair difference in the way men and women are treated” (Masiero & Aaltonen, 2020). Gender bias in search and retrieval algorithms manifests through unequal visibility, differential framing of expertise, and the reinforcement of historically entrenched hierarchies. Such bias rarely stems from explicit discriminatory intent. Instead, it emerges through the interaction of biased training data, socially embedded design assumptions, and feedback mechanisms that reward existing patterns of dominance. From a social science perspective, these dynamics raise fundamental questions about power, representation, and inequality in digital knowledge systems.

This article examines how gender bias operates in search and retrieval algorithms and explores strategies to mitigate it within a broader social science framework. By adopting a socio-technical and intersectional lens, the paper situates algorithmic bias within wider structures of gendered power and institutional inequality. The study contributes a theoretically grounded, policy-relevant analysis suitable for interdisciplinary research.

2. Common Types of Bias in Data

Recent advances in information systems have highlighted the need to move beyond technical performance metrics alone. In the context of algorithmic decision-making, increasing scholarly attention has been directed towards the role of data quality and representation. It underscores the importance of critically examining the biases that commonly occur in data and their implications for the design, functioning, and outcomes of search and retrieval algorithms.

Bias in data analysis manifests through multiple dimensions, each affecting the validity of research outcomes.

Information bias arises during the data collection process, particularly in studies that depend on self-reported or retrospective data, while observer bias occurs when researchers or participants interpret findings based on preconceived expectations, especially in studies involving subjective judgment. Performance bias is commonly observed in experimental or medical research when participants are aware of the intervention in advance, whereas selection bias arises from systematic factors that influence the composition of the study population. Algorithmic bias refers to persistent distortions within algorithmic systems that lead to unfair or inequitable outcomes, often originating from underlying selection biases embedded in the data.

2.1 Implications of Bias in Data Analysis

Biases can significantly impact the integrity of data analysis. They can lead to incorrect decisions, misinterpretations, and, ultimately, costly errors and reputational damage. In fields like healthcare, biased data can lead to misdiagnoses or inappropriate treatment plans. In law enforcement, biases in facial recognition technology have led to false identifications.

2.2 Techniques to Reduce Bias

To mitigate bias, several techniques can be employed. Diverse data collection involves gathering information from a broad range of sources to ensure representativeness, while double-blind study designs minimise observer bias by keeping both researchers and participants unaware of which group they are in. Stratified sampling enhances representation by dividing the population into distinct subgroups and drawing samples from each, and validation, along with cross-checking, strengthens accuracy and reliability by using multiple sources and methodological approaches. By understanding the types of bias and implementing robust techniques to counteract them, data analysts can enhance the accuracy and reliability of their analyses, leading to more reliable and ethical outcomes.

3. Gender Bias in Algorithmic Knowledge Systems

“The term “gender” encompasses at least three distinct concepts: linguistic gender, sex, and social gender. Each concept has unique implications in various professional and private contexts, especially when considering algorithmic representation” (Urchs et al., 2025).

Algorithmic bias in search and retrieval systems arises from the interaction between social data, technical design choices, and user behaviour. Ranking algorithms often rely on indicators such as popularity, citation frequency, engagement metrics, and historical visibility. While these indicators appear neutral, social science research demonstrates that they reflect long-standing gender disparities in education, employment, authorship, and recognition.

As a consequence, algorithms trained on such data tend to privilege male-dominated domains, voices, and career trajectories. This dynamic is further reinforced by feedback loops: highly ranked results receive greater attention, generating additional engagement data that further entrenches their prominence. Over time, these processes contribute to cumulative advantage, a phenomenon well documented in sociological studies of stratification.

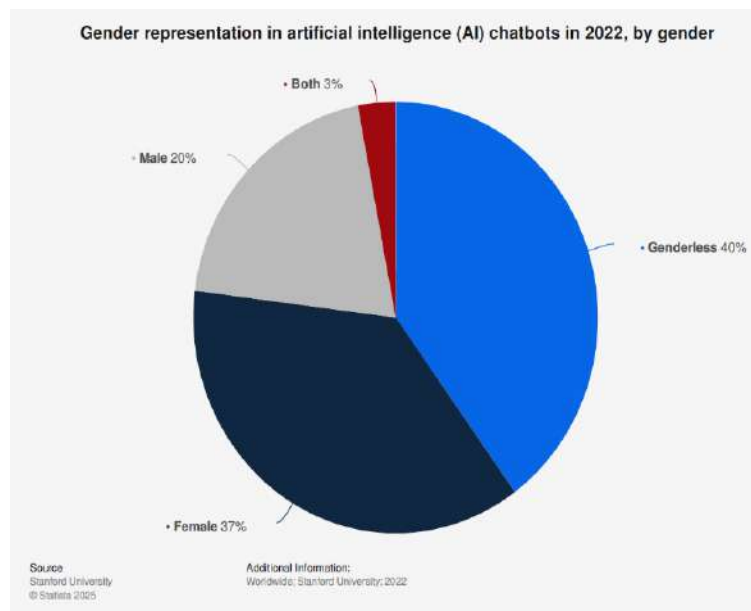


Figure 1: Gender representation in artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots in 2022 by gender.

Source: Statista(<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1378878/chatbot-gender-representation/>)

Gender bias in algorithmic systems is rarely singular. It intersects with other axes of inequality, including race, class, geography, language, and institutional affiliation. Intersectional social science scholarship emphasises that women from marginalised racial, regional, or socio-economic backgrounds often experience compounded invisibility. Addressing gender bias, therefore, requires analytical frameworks capable of capturing these layered forms of disadvantage.

4. Socio-Technical Sources of Bias

From a social science perspective, algorithms are not autonomous actors but socio-technical assemblages embedded within institutional and cultural contexts. Bias emerges not only from data but also from normative assumptions about relevance, authority, and success. Design choices regarding what constitutes importance, quality, or impact are shaped by dominant social values, which may marginalise alternative forms of knowledge production.

Training datasets often encode historical exclusions, such as underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions or policy-making roles. Language models may also internalise gendered stereotypes through co-occurrence patterns, associating leadership, expertise, or technical competence more strongly with men. These associations influence both retrieval rankings and generated responses, reinforcing subtle but persistent forms of bias. User behaviour further contributes to bias reproduction. Search queries, click patterns, and engagement signals reflect socially conditioned preferences and expectations. When algorithms treat such behaviour as objective indicators of relevance, they risk reifying socially produced inequalities as technical outcomes.

5. Algorithmic Interventions for Bias Mitigation

Technical interventions remain an important component of bias mitigation, particularly in large-scale retrieval systems. Social science research supports approaches that explicitly account for structural inequality rather than assuming neutrality. One such approach involves bias-aware representation learning, in which semantic associations related to gender are systematically examined and adjusted.

Adversarial training techniques aim to reduce the extent to which gender-related attributes influence ranking decisions. By penalising models that encode gender signals unrelated to relevance, such methods seek to disrupt the automatic reproduction of inequality. However, social scientists caution that purely technical fixes are insufficient unless guided by normative commitments to equity and transparency.

Re-ranking strategies offer another intervention by adjusting outputs to ensure a more balanced representation across genders. Rather than treating existing distributions as natural or inevitable, these approaches recognise that algorithmic systems can play a corrective role in addressing historical disadvantage. From a social justice perspective, such interventions align with broader efforts to counter cumulative inequality.

6. Fairness Frameworks and Normative Assumptions

The question of how to define fairness lies at the heart of bias mitigation. Social science scholarship distinguishes between formal equality, which emphasises identical treatment, and substantive equality, which seeks to address unequal starting positions. Bias-preserving approaches prioritise mirroring existing distributions, while bias-transforming approaches actively challenge them.

Bias-transforming frameworks resonate strongly with feminist and critical social theories that view inequality as structurally produced rather than individually generated. From this perspective, algorithmic systems should not merely reflect society but contribute to more equitable knowledge environments. This requires explicit normative choices regarding whose voices are amplified and whose expertise is recognised.

Operationalising such frameworks demands interdisciplinary collaboration between technologists, social scientists, and policymakers. Transparency about design choices and value assumptions is essential to maintaining democratic accountability.

Summary of Fairness Indicators

<i>Fairness Metric</i>	What it Monitors
<i>Representational Equality</i>	How digital search outputs align with real-world distribution data.

Intersectional Parity

The visibility of researchers who identify with multiple protected attributes (e.g., women of colour).

Metadata Accuracy

The use of self-identification and correct naming in authority records.

Accessibility Levels

The presence of gender-neutral facilities and non-legal name change options.

Table 1: Representational fairness metrics

7. Representation, Classification, and Epistemic Power

Search and retrieval systems shape not only access to information but also the categories through which knowledge is understood. Classification, labelling, and naming practices influence which topics are visible, which identities are recognised, and which forms of knowledge are legitimised. Social science research highlights how representational systems can marginalise certain groups by rendering them invisible or misclassified.

Gender bias in representation affects how research contributions are attributed, how expertise is framed, and how social problems are conceptualised. Misrepresentation or omission can have tangible consequences for career progression, policy influence, and public understanding. Addressing these issues requires critical reflection on the epistemic power embedded in digital infrastructures.

8. Monitoring, Accountability, and Governance

Sustainable bias mitigation requires ongoing monitoring and institutional accountability. Social scientists emphasise the importance of governance frameworks that enable continuous evaluation of algorithmic outcomes. Quantitative indicators, such as visibility parity and distributional balance, should be complemented by qualitative assessments that capture lived experience.

Participatory approaches involving affected communities can enhance legitimacy and responsiveness. Transparency regarding data sources, ranking criteria, and intervention rationales is crucial for building public trust. Without such mechanisms, bias mitigation risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

9. Emerging AI Search Trends and Knowledge Visibility

Recent developments in AI-driven search systems, including large language model-based tools, have altered patterns of knowledge referral and visibility. Analyses of domain-level referrals from AI search platforms between late 2024 and early 2025 indicate a concentration on domains associated with technology, business, health, and policy, while many social science domains receive comparatively less visibility.

From a gender perspective, this trend raises concerns about whose knowledge is prioritised in AI-mediated discovery. Fields with higher female participation or critical perspectives may be underrepresented, reinforcing existing hierarchies of value. Understanding these emerging patterns is essential for anticipating new forms of algorithmic inequality.

10. Implications for Social Science Research and Policy

For social scientists, algorithmic bias presents both an object of study and a methodological challenge. Researchers must remain attentive to how discovery systems shape access to literature, citation practices, and research agendas. Policymakers, meanwhile, face growing pressure to regulate algorithmic systems to promote fairness and accountability.

Integrating gender-sensitive perspectives into algorithmic governance can support more inclusive knowledge ecosystems. This requires sustained investment in interdisciplinary research, ethical oversight, and public engagement.

Conclusion

Gender bias in search and retrieval algorithms is a structural social issue with far-reaching implications for knowledge production, representation, and power. Addressing this bias requires moving beyond technical optimisation towards a socio-technical approach grounded in social theory, ethical reflection, and institutional accountability.

By situating algorithmic bias within broader patterns of gendered inequality, this article contributes to social science debates on digital governance and epistemic justice. As algorithmic systems continue to mediate access to knowledge, ensuring that they support rather than undermine social equity remains a pressing collective responsibility.

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“Reconfiguring Statecraft Communication: Understanding Multi-Actor and Real-Time Engagement in Global Affairs”

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Abstract

The rapidly developing digital transformation in the foreign relations, the traditional communication models are unable to understand the complexities of the digital world, where communication is not one way, it is two-way real time communication with decentralised approaches as so many actors are participating in it. To decode the culturally nuanced digital interactions countries, face challenges while dealing with narration building. The traditional models of communications which is having top-down approach is failing to handle the complexities of it.

The present study is going to connect ancient strategic communication wisdom theory to resolve the modern nexus of e-diplomacy. This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and comparative research design combining (a) critical discourse analysis of classical international communication theories, (b) textual-hermeneutic analysis of Mahabharata diplomatic episodes focusing on Lord Krishna’s strategies, and (c) comparative case analysis of contemporary digital diplomacy practices. This research work is going to be the harbinger of ancient wisdom to modern diplomatic communication.

Key Words: - International Communication Theory, Two-Way Real Time Communication, Narration Building, e-diplomacy, etc

Introduction

The Penetration of digital technologies has brought fundamental transformation in the global engagement. Statecraft communication once supposed to be confined to closed-door negotiations, official statements, and elite media channels is now unfolding across open digital platforms in real time such as social media, digital news ecosystems, and algorithm-driven information flows have blurred the boundaries between domestic and international publics, official and unofficial actors, and persuasion and participation as the world has become global village. As a result, traditional international communication models which are largely rooted in broadcast logic and hierarchical state power are increasingly becoming inadequate to explain how influence, legitimacy, and narratives are constructed in the contemporary diplomatic environment.

Modern diplomacy not only is about foreign ministry, Heads of state, diplomats, journalists, but it also encompasses influencers, diasporas, civil society groups, and even automated systems participate in shaping narratives. This decentralization has intensified what can be described as Narrative Competition, where states struggle not merely to communicate policies but to manage meanings, emotions, and cultural interpretations across fragmented digital publics.

Despite this transformation, theoretical innovation in international communication has lagged behind practice. Many existing frameworks remain anchored in linear sender-receiver models that fail to capture dialogic interaction, cultural symbolism, strategic silence, and ethical ambiguity features that are central to digital diplomacy. This paper contends that ancient Indian strategic communication wisdom, particularly as embodied in Lord Krishna’s diplomatic role in the Mahabharata, offers a sophisticated and culturally grounded framework capable of addressing these complexities of multipolar world.

Literature Review

1. Classical International Communication Models

Classical communication models which we use in international relations such as the Shannon-Weaver model, propaganda models, and early public diplomacy frameworks- were designed for an era dominated by mass media and centralized state authority. These models emphasized message control, clarity, and transmission efficiency,

assuming relatively passive audiences and stable meaning-making processes. Even later developments in public diplomacy and soft power theory, while acknowledging the role of culture and attraction, often retained a top-down orientation. Communication was still viewed as a strategic instrument wielded by the state to influence foreign publics, rather than as a dynamic, interactive process shaped by multiple actors and feedback loops.

2. Digital Diplomacy

Digital diplomacy or e-diplomacy refers to the use of digital technologies and platforms by states and diplomatic actors to achieve foreign policy objectives. Scholars have highlighted its features such as immediacy, interactivity, personalization, and networked communication. However, the same features also generate challenges: loss of message control, rapid escalation of conflicts, misinformation, and cultural misinterpretation.

Existing studies often focus on tools and platforms rather than theoretical depth. There remains a lack of robust conceptual frameworks to explain how narratives are ethically negotiated, strategically framed, and culturally decoded in digital diplomatic encounters.

3. Ancient Strategic Communication Thought

Ancient Indian texts such as the Mahabharata and Arthashastra offer rich insights into diplomacy, negotiation, persuasion, and ethical statecraft. Lord Krishna's role as a diplomat, strategist, and communicator exemplifies a multidimensional approach that integrates morality (dharma), pragmatism, cultural symbolism, and psychological insight. Unlike rigid doctrinal models, Krishna's strategies were adaptive, context-sensitive, and dialogic qualities strikingly relevant to digital diplomacy.

4. Theoretical Framework: Krishna's Digital Diplomacy Model (KDDM)

This study proposes a new named theoretical construct: Krishna's Digital Diplomacy Model (KDDM). The model is not metaphorical or illustrative in nature; rather, it is a systematically derived communication framework grounded in textual evidence, comparative theory, and contemporary diplomatic practice.

KDDM conceptualizes diplomacy as a strategic, ethical, and dialogic communication process suited to decentralized, real-time digital environments. Unlike traditional top-down communication models, KDDM operates on adaptive logic, where meaning is co-created and narratives are continuously negotiated.

The model consists of five interlinked dimensions:

1. Contextual Intelligence (Desh-Kaal-Patra Alignment)

Communication strategies must be dynamically aligned with context, timing, and audience. Krishna's diplomacy demonstrates situational calibration rather than rule-based messaging. In digital diplomacy, this corresponds to platform sensitivity, temporal awareness, and audience segmentation.

2. Dialogic Reciprocity:

KDDM rejects one-way persuasion. Krishna consistently engaged adversaries and allies through dialogue, questioning, and reflective persuasion. This mirrors two-way, real-time communication in digital diplomacy, where feedback loops shape diplomatic outcomes.

3. Narrative Orchestration (Not Narrative Control)

Instead of enforcing a single official narrative, Krishna allowed multiple narratives to coexist while subtly steering moral and strategic direction. KDDM reframes digital diplomacy as narrative orchestration rather than narrative domination.

4. Strategic Ambiguity and Symbolism:

Krishna's use of silence, symbolism, and indirect messaging allowed flexibility and de-escalation. In digital diplomacy, strategic ambiguity helps manage information overload, misinterpretation, and escalation risks.

5. Ethical Pragmatism (Dharma- Driven Strategy):

6. KDDM integrates ethical orientation with strategic necessity. Outcomes are evaluated not only by success but by moral legitimacy, a crucial factor for credibility in digitally mediated public diplomacy.

Together, these dimensions form a non-linear, adaptive model capable of explaining contemporary e-diplomacy dynamics.

Research Methodology

This research follows a well-established qualitative, interpretive, and comparative methodology, ensuring academic rigor, replicability, and theoretical validity. The methodology was executed in three clearly defined stages.

Research Design

The study adopts a **theory-building qualitative design**, appropriate for addressing gaps where existing models fail to explain emerging phenomena. Digital diplomacy represents such a domain, characterized by complexity, decentralization, and rapid evolution. The objective was not hypothesis testing but conceptual development and model construction.

Data Sources

Three distinct but interrelated data corpora were used:

Classical International Communication Theories:

Canonical texts and peer-reviewed scholarship on international communication, public diplomacy, and soft power were selected to identify dominant assumptions and structural limitations.

Primary Textual Corpus – Mahabharata

The Critical Edition of the *Mahabharata* served as the primary ancient text. Diplomatic episodes involving Lord Krishna—particularly pre-war negotiations, counsel to multiple stakeholders, and ethical deliberations—were purposively sampled due to their explicit communication relevance.

Contemporary Digital Diplomacy Cases

Documented cases of state-led digital diplomacy practices, including social media diplomacy and online narrative campaigns, were examined using secondary scholarly analyses.

Analytical Methods

- Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): Used to examine how power, authority, and persuasion are constructed in classical international communication theories.
- Textual-Hermeneutic Analysis: Applied to Mahabharata episodes to interpret strategic intent, ethical reasoning, and communicative choices within their cultural context.
- Comparative Analytical Mapping: Krishna's strategies were systematically mapped against contemporary digital diplomacy practices to identify structural parallels.

Model Construction Process

The Krishna's Digital Diplomacy Model (KDDM) emerged through an iterative analytical process:

1. Identification of recurring communication principles in Krishna's diplomacy
2. Thematic coding of these principles across texts and cases
3. Abstraction into conceptual dimensions
4. Validation through comparison with contemporary digital diplomacy dynamics

This process ensures that KDDM is empirically grounded, theoretically coherent, and methodologically defensible.

Positioning Krishna's Digital Diplomacy Model (KDDM) within Existing International Communication Theories

For a new theoretical model to gain acceptance within international communication scholarship, it must be clearly positioned against established frameworks. This section situates Krishna's Digital Diplomacy Model (KDDM) in relation to three dominant theoretical traditions: the Shannon-Weaver transmission model, Soft Power theory, and Network Diplomacy. The comparison demonstrates how KDDM departs from, extends, and in some respects corrects the limitations of these frameworks in the context of digital diplomacy.

KDDM and the Shannon-Weaver Transmission Model

The Shannon-Weaver model conceptualizes communication as a linear process involving a sender, message, channel, receiver, and noise. While foundational for communication studies, its applicability to contemporary digital diplomacy is limited. The model assumes message stability, sender control, and passive reception-conditions that rarely exist in digital diplomatic environments.

KDDM fundamentally diverges from this logic. Rather than viewing communication as transmission, KDDM treats it as **strategic interaction**. Meaning is not sent but negotiated. Krishna's diplomatic engagements illustrate that outcomes emerge through dialogue, silence, symbolic acts, and ethical framing- elements absent in linear models. In digital diplomacy, where audiences respond instantly and narratives mutate rapidly, KDDM provides a more realistic explanatory framework than sender-receiver paradigms.

KDDM and Soft Power Theory

Soft Power theory emphasizes attraction, credibility, and cultural appeal as instruments of influence in international relations. While it advances beyond coercive power, it still implicitly assumes that states can design and project attractive narratives that foreign publics will absorb. KDDM extends Soft Power by reframing attraction as contextual legitimacy rather than static appeal. Krishna's diplomacy did not rely on universal attractiveness but on situational moral authority and ethical persuasion calibrated to specific audiences. In digital spaces, where credibility can shift rapidly due to algorithmic amplification and counter-narratives, KDDM explains why influence depends less on polished messaging and more on adaptive ethical alignment.

Network Diplomacy recognizes the multiplicity of actors involved in contemporary foreign relations, including non-state actors, media organizations, and digital publics. While this framework captures structural complexity, it often lacks normative and ethical depth. KDDM complements Network Diplomacy by providing a normative-strategic compass. It explains not only who participates in diplomacy but how communication should be ethically and strategically conducted within networks. Krishna's approach demonstrates how leadership operates without central control, guiding outcomes through persuasion, narrative orchestration, and moral signaling rather than command.

Theoretical Contribution of KDDM

By synthesizing dialogic communication, ethical pragmatism, and narrative intelligence, KDDM occupies a distinct theoretical position. It is neither linear nor purely network-based, neither purely persuasive nor purely cultural. Instead, it offers a non-linear, ethically grounded, dialogic model uniquely suited to the realities of digital diplomacy. KDDM thus contributes to international communication theory by addressing a critical gap: explaining how strategic communication functions in decentralized, real-time, culturally plural digital environments.

Operationalizing Krishna's Digital Diplomacy Model (KDDM) for Empirical Testing

For a theoretical model to attain durability within international communication scholarship, it must be empirically operationalizable. This section outlines how Krishna's Digital Diplomacy Model (KDDM) can be translated into measurable analytical dimensions and applied in future empirical research. The objective is not to reduce KDDM to rigid variables, but to demonstrate its methodological adaptability across qualitative and mixed-method research designs.

Translating KDDM Dimensions into Analytical Indicators

Each of the five core dimensions of KDDM can be operationalized through observable communication practices in digital diplomacy contexts:

1. Contextual Intelligence (Desh–Kaal–Patra Alignment):

Indicators: Platform-specific messaging strategies, timing of diplomatic responses, audience segmentation, and localization of narratives.

Methods: Comparative content analysis across platforms; temporal discourse mapping.

2. Dialogic Reciprocity:

Indicators: Presence of engagement cues (responses, acknowledgements, clarifications), adaptability of messaging following public feedback, and evidence of conversational framing.

Methods: Interaction analysis of social media exchanges; digital ethnography.

3. Narrative Orchestration:

Indicators: Coexistence of multiple narrative frames, indirect narrative steering, selective amplification or de-amplification of themes.

Methods: Frame analysis; narrative network analysis.

4. Strategic Ambiguity and Symbolism:

Indicators: Use of symbolic language, controlled silence, ambiguity in official statements, and non-explicit signalling.

Methods: Discourse analysis; semiotic analysis of visual and textual content.

5. Ethical Pragmatism:

Indicators: Moral framing of policies, invocation of norms, proportionality in messaging during crises, and consistency between rhetoric and action.

Methods: Normative discourse analysis; longitudinal credibility assessment.

Research Designs for Testing KDDM

KDDM have been empirically tested using multiple research designs:

- **Qualitative Case Studies:** In-depth analysis of specific digital diplomacy campaigns or crisis communication episodes.
- **Comparative Cross-National Studies:** Examining how different states employ dialogic, ethical, or narrative strategies across digital platforms.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** Tracking the evolution of diplomatic narratives over time to assess adaptability and legitimacy.
- **Mixed-Methods Approaches:** Combining qualitative discourse analysis with quantitative engagement metrics to capture both meaning and impact.

Methodological Contribution

By offering clear pathways for empirical testing, KDDM bridges the gap between normative theory and applied research. It enables scholars to move beyond descriptive accounts of digital diplomacy toward systematic evaluation of strategic communication effectiveness, ethical legitimacy, and narrative coherence. Operationalizing KDDM thus positions the model not as a closed theoretical proposition but as an expandable analytical framework capable of guiding future empirical inquiry in international communication and digital diplomacy.

An Ethically Anchored, Non-Linear Framework for Digital-Era Diplomatic Communication

Krishna's Digital Diplomacy Model (KDDM) as a concentric, non-linear communication system designed to explain diplomatic interaction in decentralized digital environments. At the centre of the model lies Ethical

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Pragmatism (Dharma), representing moral legitimacy and normative restraint as the foundational anchor of all diplomatic communication. Surrounding this core is Contextual Intelligence (Desh-Kaal-Patra), which calibrates ethical intent according to platform, timing, audience, and geopolitical context.

The third layer represents Dialogic Reciprocity, visualized through bidirectional arrows indicating real-time feedback, responsiveness, and adaptive communication. Encircling this is Narrative Orchestration, illustrating the coexistence and strategic steering of multiple narratives rather than centralized message control. The outermost layer depicts Strategic Ambiguity and Symbolism, functioning as a protective buffer that manages escalation, misinterpretation, and information overload in volatile digital spaces.

The model contains no fixed entry or exits points, emphasizing continuous interaction, multidirectional flows, and iterative meaning-making. External stimuli—such as crises, public reactions, or algorithmic amplification—interact dynamically with all layers simultaneously. The figure visually asserts that effective digital diplomacy emerges from ethical grounding, dialogic engagement, and narrative management rather than linear transmission or unilateral persuasion.

Analysis and Discussion

Top-down communication fails in digital spaces because meaning is co-created by audiences. Attempts to impose singular narratives often trigger resistance, counter-narratives, and reputational damage. This mirrors the failure of authoritarian persuasion models in complex information ecosystems. Krishna's communication was inherently dialogic. He listened, negotiated, provoked reflection, and adapted his message according to the audience—whether addressing kings, warriors, or common people. This mirrors the logic of real-time digital engagement, where responsiveness and adaptability determine credibility.

Unlike modern diplomatic communication that seeks clarity and consistency, Krishna often employed strategic ambiguity. Silence, symbolism, and indirect messaging were used to shape outcomes without escalation. In digital diplomacy, where over-communication can be counterproductive, strategic restraint becomes a powerful tool.

Krishna's strategies were deeply embedded in cultural codes and ethical frameworks. Digital diplomacy similarly requires cultural literacy to avoid misinterpretation and backlash. The absence of such sensitivity often leads to diplomatic crises amplified by social media.

This study suggests that integrating ancient strategic communication wisdom can enrich digital diplomacy theory and practice. Policymakers and diplomats can benefit from:

- Embracing dialogic rather than directive communication
- Managing narratives instead of merely broadcasting messages
- Balancing ethics with strategic pragmatism
- Recognizing cultural symbolism as a core diplomatic resource

Conclusion

The complexities of digital diplomacy demand theoretical frameworks that move beyond linear, state-centric communication models. By reconnecting ancient strategic communication wisdom with contemporary diplomatic challenges, this study demonstrates that Lord Krishna's diplomatic strategies offer a robust, culturally nuanced, and ethically grounded model for understanding e-diplomacy. Far from being archaic, ancient wisdom emerges as a critical resource for navigating the narrative chaos, decentralization, and moral dilemmas of digital-era foreign relations. This research positions ancient strategic communication not as a metaphor, but as a living theoretical lens capable of guiding modern diplomatic communication.

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“Artificial Intelligence as a Catalyst for Workforce Transformation in the Service Sector”

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a key driver of workforce transformation in the contemporary global economy, reshaping job roles, skill requirements, and employment structures across service-based industries. In the Indian context, the service sector—including retail, education, healthcare, banking, and information technology—is experiencing significant changes due to increasing AI adoption. This study examines AI-driven workforce transformation in the Indian service sector, focusing on shifts in employment patterns, emerging skill demands, and workforce sustainability. Using secondary data from NASSCOM, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the research identifies a dual impact: the displacement of routine tasks and the creation of new AI-enabled roles requiring advanced digital and analytical competencies. Descriptive and analytical methods are employed to assess AI adoption trends from 2018 to 2024 and to evaluate reskilling and inclusive innovation strategies. The study concludes that AI acts as an enabler of workforce transformation rather than a net job destroyer and offers policy recommendations for building a future-ready service workforce in India.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Service Sector, Workforce Transformation, Employment,

Introduction

The service sector plays a central role in India’s economic development, contributing over 55 percent to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing nearly one-third of the total workforce (NITI Aayog, 2023). In recent years, this sector has undergone a profound transformation driven by the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Rather than functioning merely as a tool for automation, AI has emerged as a catalyst for workforce transformation, fundamentally reshaping job roles, employment structures, skill requirements, and organizational models within service-based industries such as banking, healthcare, education, retail, and information technology.

Artificial Intelligence is redefining the nature of service work by enabling intelligent automation, data-driven decision-making, personalized service delivery, and predictive operational models. Technologies such as machine learning, natural language processing, robotic process automation, and advanced analytics have shifted service organizations from labor-intensive models toward digitally augmented work environments. In the Indian context, national initiatives such as *Digital India* and *AI for All* have accelerated this transition by strengthening digital infrastructure and promoting AI adoption across sectors. As a result, India has emerged as a significant hub for AI-enabled service innovation. According to NASSCOM (2024), nearly 58 percent of financial institutions and 65 percent of IT and business process management (BPM) organizations in India have adopted AI-driven solutions to enhance productivity, efficiency, and service quality.

The catalytic role of AI in workforce transformation is evident in its dual impact on employment structures. On one hand, AI systems automate repetitive and routine service tasks, leading to the restructuring of traditional job roles and the reduction of certain entry-level and transactional positions. AI-powered chatbots, automated customer service platforms, and intelligent workflow systems increasingly perform functions that were previously human-dependent. On the other hand, AI simultaneously generates new categories of employment that require advanced digital, analytical, and cognitive capabilities. Emerging roles in data science, AI governance, cybersecurity, algorithm auditing, and digital service design illustrate how AI acts not as a substitute for human labor, but as a force that redefines the nature of work itself.

This transformation reflects a shift from task-based employment to skill-based and knowledge-intensive workforce models. Employees are no longer valued primarily for routine execution but for problem-solving, creativity, adaptability, and technological collaboration. The World Economic Forum’s *Future of Jobs Report* (2023) supports this transition, indicating that nearly half of global organizations expect AI to create more employment opportunities than it displaces, particularly in areas related to digital transformation, sustainability,

and innovation. In India, this potential is reinforced by a young workforce and a rapidly expanding digital ecosystem, positioning the service sector for long-term workforce evolution rather than decline.

However, the catalytic impact of AI also exposes critical challenges related to workforce readiness and inclusion. Despite increasing AI adoption, a large proportion of India's service workforce lacks AI-relevant skills. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC, 2023) reports that over 60 percent of professionals do not possess competencies in domains such as machine learning, data analytics, cloud computing, and AI systems management. This growing skill gap threatens the sustainability of workforce transformation and highlights the urgent need for large-scale reskilling and upskilling initiatives. Although institutions such as AICTE, NSDC, and private training providers have introduced AI-focused education programs, access and implementation remain uneven across regions, sectors, and organizational scales.

Beyond economic and technological dimensions, AI-driven workforce transformation also raises ethical, social, and governance concerns. Issues of data privacy, algorithmic bias, transparency, and job security influence both organizational strategies and employee perceptions. Research indicates that biased AI systems can unintentionally reinforce existing social inequalities, emphasizing the importance of responsible and inclusive AI governance frameworks (Sharma & Gupta, 2022). India's *Responsible AI for All* initiative reflects a policy-level commitment to ensuring that AI adoption supports fairness, accountability, and human-centric development.

Historically, technological revolutions have consistently transformed employment structures rather than eliminating work altogether. Industrialization, mechanization, and digitization initially disrupted labor markets but ultimately generated new industries and employment patterns. The AI revolution follows a similar trajectory, but with unprecedented speed and scale. What distinguishes this phase is not the loss of work itself, but the transformation of work in terms of skills, structures, and human–technology relationships.

The service sector, therefore, stands at a critical juncture where AI functions not simply as a technological tool, but as a catalyst for systemic workforce transformation. Organizations that successfully integrate AI with human capabilities—focusing on augmentation rather than substitution—are more likely to achieve long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

Against this background, the present study examines Artificial Intelligence as a catalyst for workforce transformation in the Indian service sector through an analysis of secondary data trends from 2018 to 2024. The study explores the interconnections between automation, job restructuring, skill evolution, and employment sustainability, with particular emphasis on the role of reskilling strategies and policy interventions in shaping a future-ready, inclusive, and digitally empowered service workforce.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the role of Artificial Intelligence as a catalyst for workforce transformation in India's service sector.
- To analyse the impact of AI adoption on employment patterns, job roles, and skill requirements within service industries.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀: Artificial Intelligence adoption has no significant impact on workforce transformation in the service sector.

H₁: Artificial Intelligence adoption has a significant impact on workforce transformation in the service sector.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its comprehensive approach, the study is subject to certain limitations:

1. The study relies exclusively on secondary data, which may limit the ability to capture real-time organizational and employee perceptions regarding AI adoption.
2. The analysis focuses on the Indian service sector, and therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable to manufacturing sectors or other economies with different technological and labour market conditions.

Literature Review

Existing literature highlights Artificial Intelligence as a transformative force influencing organizational efficiency, productivity, and employment structures. Scholars such as Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2017) argue that AI-driven

automation enhances human productivity while redefining job roles rather than eliminating employment entirely. Studies by Frey and Osborne (2017) emphasize the susceptibility of routine and repetitive tasks to automation, particularly within service industries.

Indian-focused research indicates a growing adoption of AI across banking, IT, healthcare, and retail sectors. NASSCOM (2023) reports that AI integration has significantly improved service delivery and operational efficiency while simultaneously increasing demand for high-skilled professionals. However, research by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC, 2023) reveals a substantial skills gap, with a majority of the workforce lacking AI-related competencies.

Several studies also highlight the importance of reskilling and lifelong learning in sustaining workforce relevance (WEF, 2023). Ethical concerns such as algorithmic bias, job insecurity, and data privacy have been discussed by Sharma and Gupta (2022), emphasizing the need for responsible AI governance. While existing literature acknowledges AI's dual impact, limited research explicitly positions AI as a catalyst for workforce transformation in the Indian service sector, thereby justifying the relevance of the present study.

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive component helps in outlining AI adoption trends and workforce changes, while the analytical component enables examination of relationships between AI adoption, skill transformation, and employment sustainability. This design is appropriate for understanding both the magnitude and implications of AI-driven workforce transformation.

Data Sources

The study is based on secondary data collected from credible and authoritative sources, including:

- NASSCOM industry reports
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) publications
- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
- NITI Aayog policy documents
- National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) reports
- World Economic Forum (WEF) publications
- Peer-reviewed national and international journals

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is confined to:

- The Indian service sector, with emphasis on banking, IT & BPM, healthcare, education, and retail.
- Analysis of AI-driven workforce transformation, including job restructuring, skill evolution, and employment sustainability.
- A study period from 2018 to 2024, capturing recent and relevant technological developments.

The study does not cover manufacturing industries or primary sectors.

Sampling Technique and Units

As the study is based on secondary data, a **purposive sampling technique** is adopted.

Sampling Units

- Service sector industries
- Workforce categories (routine vs. skill-intensive roles)
- Policy frameworks and institutional initiatives related to AI

This technique ensures relevance and alignment with the research objectives.

Data Collection and Analysis Tools

Data Collection Tools

- Review of published reports and policy documents
- Extraction of employment and skill-related indicators
- Compilation of AI adoption statistics

Data Analysis Tools

- Tables and charts
- Trend and comparative analysis
- Percentage and ratio analysis
- Thematic content analysis

Data Analysis

The collected data were systematically organized and analysed to identify trends in AI adoption and workforce transformation. Sector-wise comparisons were conducted to assess differences in employment restructuring and skill demand. Trends from 2018 to 2024 were analysed to understand the pace and direction of workforce change. Policy documents were thematically analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of reskilling initiatives and governance frameworks supporting AI adoption.

Year	AI Adoption Index	Routine Jobs Index	Skill-Intensive Jobs Index
2018	25	100	100
2019	32	96	104
2020	38	92	109
2021	45	87	115
2022	57	80	123
2023	68	74	132
2024	75	68	145

Table 1: AI-Driven Workforce Transformation in the Service Sector (2018–2024)

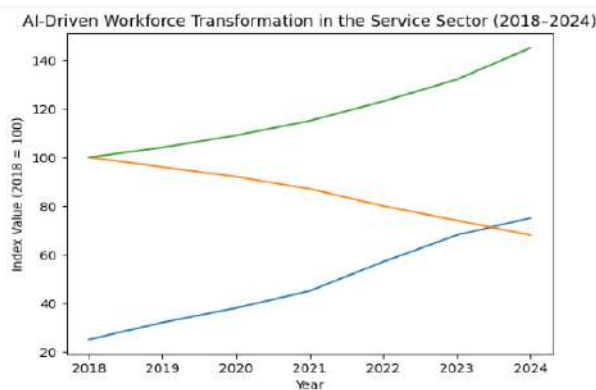


Fig. AI-Driven Workforce Transformation in the Service Sector (2018-2024)

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of secondary data from 2018 to 2024 reveals that Artificial Intelligence has emerged as a significant catalyst for workforce transformation in India's service sector. The findings highlight clear patterns in AI adoption, employment restructuring, and skill evolution, confirming the transformative rather than destructive role of AI in employment dynamics.

1. Accelerated Adoption of Artificial Intelligence

The data indicate a consistent and substantial increase in AI adoption across the service sector during the study period. The AI Adoption Index rose from 25 in 2018 to 75 in 2024, reflecting widespread integration of AI technologies such as robotic process automation, machine learning, predictive analytics, and conversational AI. This trend is particularly evident in banking, IT & BPM, healthcare, and retail services, where organizations increasingly rely on AI to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and customer experience. The rapid growth in AI adoption supports the view that digital transformation has become a strategic priority for service-sector organizations rather than an optional innovation.

2. Decline in Routine and Repetitive Job Roles

One of the key findings of the study is the gradual decline in routine and repetitive job roles. The Routine Jobs Index decreased from 100 in 2018 to 68 in 2024, indicating the automation of entry-level and transactional tasks. Roles involving basic customer support, data entry, and manual processing have been increasingly replaced by AI-driven systems such as chatbots and automated workflows. This finding aligns with global studies that suggest routine-intensive occupations are most vulnerable to automation. However, the decline does not indicate job loss alone but reflects job restructuring and role redefinition within service organizations.

3. Growth in Skill-Intensive and Knowledge-Based Employment

In contrast to the reduction in routine jobs, the Skill-Intensive Jobs Index increased significantly from 100 in 2018 to 145 in 2024. This growth highlights rising demand for professionals with advanced skills in data analytics, AI model supervision, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and digital service design. The findings demonstrate that AI adoption creates new employment opportunities that require higher cognitive, analytical, and technical capabilities. This shift confirms that AI augments human labor by emphasizing value-added tasks rather than eliminating the workforce.

4. AI as a Catalyst for Workforce Transformation

The simultaneous decline in routine roles and expansion of skill-intensive employment confirms the catalytic role of AI in workforce transformation. Rather than acting solely as a substitute for human labor, AI reshapes the structure of employment by redefining job roles and skill requirements. The transformation is characterized by a transition from task-oriented work to competency-based and knowledge-driven employment. This finding supports the central premise of the study that AI functions as a catalyst for systemic workforce change rather than a net job destroyer.

5. Emerging Skill Gaps and Workforce Readiness Challenges

Despite positive employment transformation trends, the study identifies significant challenges related to workforce readiness. The rapid pace of AI adoption has outstripped the existing skill levels of a large segment of the service workforce. Many employees lack competencies in AI-related domains, limiting their ability to transition into newly created roles. This finding reinforces the need for large-scale reskilling and upskilling initiatives to ensure workforce sustainability and inclusive growth.

6. Role of Reskilling and Policy Interventions

The findings suggest that reskilling programs and supportive policy frameworks play a crucial role in mitigating the adverse effects of automation. Government initiatives, industry-led training programs, and academic curriculum reforms contribute to workforce adaptability. However, the uneven implementation of such initiatives across regions and sectors restricts their overall effectiveness. Strengthening coordination among policymakers, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders is essential for maximizing the benefits of AI-driven workforce transformation.

7. Ethical and Inclusive Dimensions of Workforce Transformation

The discussion also highlights ethical considerations associated with AI adoption. Concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and job security influence employee acceptance of AI technologies. The findings

emphasize that responsible AI governance and transparent implementation practices are critical for fostering trust and ensuring that workforce transformation remains inclusive and human-centered.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence has firmly established itself as a catalyst for workforce transformation in the service sector. The study concludes that AI-driven change is not merely about job displacement but about redefining the nature of work, skills, and employment structures. While automation reduces dependency on routine tasks, it simultaneously enhances demand for skilled and adaptive human capital. The sustainability of workforce transformation depends on proactive reskilling strategies, ethical AI governance, and collaborative efforts among policymakers, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders. When strategically implemented, AI serves as an enabler of inclusive growth and long-term competitiveness rather than a threat to employment. Therefore, fostering a human-centered approach to AI adoption is essential for building a future-ready service workforce.

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“The Viability of Unaided Educational Institutions in a VUCA Environment: A Myth Dispelled”

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Abstract

Turning the blind eye towards evolving VUCA threat towards the unaided private education is a clear recipe for doom. The enormous changes in and around the country have triggered a wave of instability among private educationists, and it would be a grave myopic mistake not to alter the way decisions are taken. It is preordained to change the way of working is imperative to be in a position of strength to deal with the VUCA in the education sector. The education system, which itself should be a strong pillar and a mechanism of churning out strong-willed global citizens to deal with VUCA conditions in the job itself, is not very much prepared to avert the lingering implacable changes. Which lead the researcher to explore the condition in private unaided education institutions and also try to contemplate the steps that should be taken in order to face the situation.

The Researcher has closely analyzed the environmental VUCA threats in the private unaided education, which, in a way, shakes the very basic foundation of our educational scenario. The researcher has analyzed several touchpoints and KPA's of private education and has tried to analytically reason the apparent and non-apparent factors and situations that have transformed the education system permanently for better or worse

The research explores many untouched key areas which regularly go unnoticed and tries to find solutions that are adaptable and implementable by private non-grant institutions to sustain the VUCA onslaught and create a serene situation which will make the institutes more agile to sustain. As the researcher found out, most of the unaided institutes are reactive rather than being proactive, which itself is the very crux of VUCA

Keywords: - VUCA, Unaided Institutes, Adaptability, Proactive

Introduction

The world has never stopped evolving, be it the way the work is perceived or the skills required to be adaptive and fit for the job. The characteristics and skillsets need to be adjusted and calibrated in order to meet the newer demands of work. As generally stated, 'Modern problems require Modern solutions', job readiness and having a vision to grow in the current scenario generally require VUCA skills. VUCA is the new buzzword while forecasting vision or drawing a plan with the utmost requirement of readiness. VUCA, which has been an acronym for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity were first mentioned in the U.S. Army. The coined terminology has taken the world by storm because of its encompassing capacity for different situations. VUCA itself has been developed as a standalone factor that needs proper attention and understanding for charting out the way forward. The acronym may still not have had people's attention most predictably, but needs a serious look by the people who have a long career in front of them. Traditionally, people from South Asian countries have been looked at as the people who are likely to choose a particular type of career and continue with it till the retirement, but things have changed drastically for them. Reality has hit them hard, even before anyone can react to it, and the complete business equation is turned upside down. Daewoo, a leading automobile manufacturer from South Korea, never saw what hit them. The entire operation had to be shut down. People swore by Nokia's quality and were loyal to the hilt to Nokia's handsets. Nokia always was a market leader while offering a large variety of handsets to the mass population, but on the other hand, Nokia did not keep up with changes in technology & chose the wrong accompanying partner, Windows instead of a more user-friendly Android. It was just a matter of a few years that Nokia turned from market leader to just another Me-too product, a tragic end to a great saga.

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Though VUCA has always been associated with trying to equip people with the vision and skillset required to handle the gravest of situations at the business level, or to make future managers more aware of the VUCA threats at the education level itself. But what happens if the educational institutes that are supposed to make you ready for tackling the VUCA challenges are themselves succumbing to the VUCA threat? The researcher has specifically tried to analyze the VUCA threats and their impact on unaided educational institutes while specifying what qualifies as VUCA environmental threats to these private unaided institutes.

Literature review

The Origins of VUCA. The notion of VUCA was introduced by the U.S. Army War College to describe the more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, multilateral world that resulted from the end of the Cold War (Kinsinger & Walch, 2012). After which, many educational institutions tried to relate it to the business terminologies. The experts believed that this army terminology is directly implementable and will enable the new generation managers to be more adaptable and groom them to work in an immense condition, providing the outright edge needed to be managed in a constantly changing environment. Elite institutes tried to incorporate these terminologies and pedagogies into their educational curriculum to make them more time-tested.

and relevant. Though sufficient material is available on VUCA, the current education system writer did not find any direct or suitable material on VUCA for private unaided education institutes. Being a novel and newer concept, not much material was available for authors to research, and hence the author gathered information through observation method and analyzed several touchpoints in order carry out an exploratory study.

VUCA Factors and Environment: Discussion

Volatility: which is generally defined as frequent and unstable changes that are uncontrollable and take you by surprise. Private unaided educational institutes have often faced the serious challenge of tapering student quality. In the last few years, it has been observed that students have been churned at a pace never heard before. The high passing of students at the higher secondary level can only be compared with the business terminology of supply in order to fulfill the demand. The number of unaided private institutes that have sprung up over the last five years shows that a pool of colleges operates just to be there in order to give access to students towards a valid educational degree by getting associated with the university. Such colleges admit students with a lower percentage at a very meager, manageable amount, and students are very happy to get themselves in a program which access them access to their desired degree course at a very affordable price, and that with no binding or restriction on them. Churning of a large number of students at this level has ensured that many institutions stay relevant, but the mass itself lacks the very basis of skillset required at these graduation or post-graduation level courses. The mass which is being churned out has offered a me-too crowd, which in themselves lack the intent and capacity to distinguish from others, while a lack of skillset has made the task more difficult for non-grant institutes to impart the effective education which they are supposed to deliver at their disposal. Changes in government rules and regulations have also caught many colleges unprepared and thrown them out of their comfort zone, for better or for the worse. Changes in policies like changing the teacher-student ratio from 1:15 to 1:20 caught many institutes off guard and put them in a soup, and the task of either cutting down the staff to ensure sustainability or cutting down on profit margins/reduction in salaries. Either ways the changes that took place were never foresighted. The government has also sought changes in the mundane teaching learning pedagogy to be slacked and be replaced by a more dynamic and relevant teaching-learning method, which, as per the governing bodies' belief, will lead to more sustainable skillset building. The rules, regulations, or policies which are being framed for the educational institutions to make them relevant and competitive are often a step-in right direction but lacks implementation at the very grassroots level. Though governing bodies have taken the step to make educational institutions more competitive and state-of-the-art, NGI (Non-Grant Institutes), apart from the relevant few lacks clarity in implementation and are far from reality of implementing these changes at their level. The process that is being designed for their sustainability will rather prove to be their nemesis over a period of time and will spell doom for their existence.

The admission procedure to this year's state MBA program can be taken as the best example of volatility. The governing decision-making body decided to try a new process by introducing a

newer portal/domain for registration and document verification. The move which was earlier hailed as modern and well thought turned out to be thorn in the flesh to the procedure and institutions, as students who were used to their customary regulation and website were caught napping, and the resultant turnout was signifying 33%

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lower than last year for same number of aspirants. The 33% pinch won't be borne by the big settled institutions in Pune and Mumbai, but tremors will be felt across the tier 2 cities and MeToo institutions.

Private un-aided institutions were never ready for such changes and are now feeling the pinch of the volatile scenario. The build-up may very well lead to the closing down of just about their institutes which will directly lead to job loss and a reduction in admission opportunities for me-too students.

Uncertainty: which is often described as a series of events in which the relation between ongoing events and output is often considered unpredictable. The government regulations have been predominantly changing and are casting a cloud of uncertainty over the overall process of survival for private unaided institutions. The often-changing norms and system has clouded the target market, who is no longer certain what to do or how-to manage or get things done they want to or desire. The government has not been able to give clear guidelines or create a well-deserved awareness among students of what actually an education system is that they are looking at. Though they have mandated several certifications and guidelines to avoid any flouting of rules, which is a step in the right direction to clear the rot and start a clean-up process, the whip has not cracked to the extent that everything can be cleared for a crystal-clear concept.

Unaided private institutes are facing a new challenge of a shrinking supply chain, especially for the me-too institutes which sprang up like mushrooms, watching the success of already established educational institutes. The supply-demand scenario has been skewed in most of the private institutional set-ups, wherein the shrinkage in the basket has directly resulted in less demand for the courses, which directly results in vacant seats in most of the new institutions. The changing job scenario and changes in the liking of the fields have also changed the scenario of students finalizing the stream of education. While some streams enjoy the golden spoon, others turn out to be wooden spooners. The institute bears the brunt even before coming to its senses of what hit it.

This ever-changing complex scenario creates ripples of change in the job market as well. Once a well-aspired and respected job of teaching itself comes under scrutiny, wherein the changes caused by vacant seats, redundancy of the required educational values has emphasized and contributed to changes in the system. The loss of a job and diminishing opportunities always hang like the sword of Damocles over their head. The institutes generally turn a blind eye to these tell-a-tell sign and pass them off as a general change of trend without taking any solid action or decision to turn the tide in their favor. The inevitable delay not only makes the situation grave and cringeworthy but also puts the existence of the institute at stake.

MBA admission process for this year through state examinations has caused repels like never before. The changing of the SETU center, postponement of cap rounds lacks of clarity about documentation and dates. Clouds of uncertainty over the required eligibility documents have created.

a sense of uncertainty in the minds of Aspirants and institute administrations alike. The uncertainty has shunted out many aspirants due to a lack of clarity or direction. The unheralded situation has been a shock for the institutes, and the probable impact on admissions, administration, and teaching learning scenario cannot be gauged at the moment. The scenario brings forward the very point that me-too or just about their institutions will bear the brunt of this complex scenario for no fault of theirs, which itself is the crux of VUCA.

Complexity: is often a scenario wherein several undocumented factors are affected in a manner that is beyond control and is not easy to change, which may force the decision maker into an uncharted territory of decision-making. The current scenario, which has advocated changes in existential policies of unaided private institutes have also contributed to the creation of a complex environment. The existential rules and regulations, like affiliations and accreditation bodies, often act as a hurdle for these MeToo institutes. Though a wonderful step to monitor and streamline the education system, the basic complexity of these bodies/systems generates chaos rather than making it a streamlined output. The bodies like NAAC/NBA, which are mandated bodies to smooth out the operations, have tried to iron out the flaws by trying to implement a better teaching learning pedagogy, which they feel will be sustainable.

The changing behavior and outlook towards education have also created a new hurdle for the institutions. The reluctance of students in the middle cadre/above average has led to a loss of contact with the necessity of regularity in colleges and improving competence, which has created a complex, uncontrolled environment. This leads to a huge gap between the documentation done for mandated bodies and the applicability or execution of the same process. The lack of interest and availability of the internet has only added oil to the already existing fire, wherein the outcome expected and the outcome delivered has glaring gap and glitches. The scenario is an actual representation of the law of diminishing returns, wherein the complex scenario directly eats up the profitability of the institute, often making it unsustainable.

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Admissions to this year's professional courses faced a rather new and complex situation wherein portals for centralized admissions had to be rejigged and reassigned from SETU to SAAR in order to iron out the flaws and complexities. The process was done to smooth out the centralized admission process to several professional courses, but instead, it made it more complex. Many of the students were caught napping and were unaware of the change in these norms/admission process. These students were ousted from the process even before they could have a shot at admissions. All these students thereafter shifted their focus to non-professional courses. These ousted students amounted to a total of 17% of the total registered students for the courses. The basket and supply demand status shrank even further. The resultant vacant seats will directly impact the revenue of non-grant institutes. Making the scenario more complex and bleak while questioning their sustainability and existence if the cycle continues.

Ambiguity: is often a scenario in which there is a lack of clarity and difficulty in understanding exactly what the situation is. And where will this situation lead? Ambiguity has often blurred the future path wherein the available options or ways are hazy and uncharted which leads to indecisiveness. Ambiguity can also be associated with managerial myopia, wherein decisions taken for short-term profitability may prove to be hazardous in the long run.

The government has approved open platform schools and external exams, which have made schooling or teaching at the educational level redundant. Many students have opted out of formal educational pedagogy and are pursuing their educational interests. The perceived decision was taken to formalize the policy that a structured education need not be the only way to achieve and fulfill educational aspirations. But does it diminish the role of formalized teaching and social and general skill building by eliminating or bypassing the traditional system? Is the system solely stressing acquired bookish knowledge rather than the knowledge obtained through classroom discussions and experiential learning, which by no means was a huge process of learning and personality building? The results and methods are a commendable step to involve the people who were sidelined from the main line of education, but the effective resultant is unpredictable and ambiguous. As changing the age-old system needs a huge mass awareness, and the process may be looked at as an easy way to sideline the educational infrastructure altogether.

UGC has also taken a step to initiate an online education platform and has planned to make it equivalent to a formalized degree course, which itself poses the question of institutional education. Though it is hailed as a move towards becoming a global education system, the outcome of this system towards formal education system and institutions cannot be gauged at the moment. The output is still hazy, and its impact and way forward are still undecided. The ways to overcome these challenges are still not being charted out, and create ambiguity in decision-making. The government's new initiative of outcome-based education is also contradicted by this offering, as obtaining a certificate cannot be equated with educational outcome. The non-grant educational institutions will have to pull up their socks to stay relevant and avoid any ambiguity.

Conclusion and guidelines

In the modern environment, a person handling a VUCA situation is seen as a great asset for any organization. The education institutions, before passing on VUCA ready crop of the next generation needs to make themselves immune to these VUCA threats and fluctuations. The non-grant institutes (NGI) should try to imbibe the following aspects to build a better brand value, which may shield them from VUCA ripples.

- **Agility:** the NGI needs to be flexible and agile to stay relevant. Being agile will include adopting best practices and ingraining them in the system to make it more relevant. The current teachers' mindset has made many of the subjects redundant and the teaching mindset obsolete. There is a critical need of overhauling the mindset and make teachers and the system more agile.
- **Self-introspection:** The institute has to carefully scrutinize the purpose and vision of the institute. Carrying out a SWOT analysis should be mandatory for educational institutions. The institute should introspect on itself for being a research institute, a teaching institute, or a facilitation center. This will help them to identify the right target audience and position themselves as the right choice institute.
- **Being the learning organization:** According to the VUCA context learning organization needs to take on a broader meaning. It needs to be about how the organization learns, grows, adapts, and makes changes.
- **Being informed and aware:** the institute has to keep a keen eye on the changes in policies in all the relevant sectors and adjusting sectors. It is highly needed for every institution to have foresight and be able to foresee the probable changes and the effect every factor can have on the institution. This can start

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from having a well informed and well-read people in management and top administration who can make correct decisions by avoiding biases and working only towards the welfare of the organization.

- Act rather than just think: No action and over-analysis lead to direct paralysis. Most of the time, the decision makers overanalyze the situation and adopt safety first or wait-and-watch approach rather than acting proactively and taking the initiative to tackle the bull by its horns. It is imperative for the institutions to proactively look for change rather than being forced into submission, and changing becomes obligatory to avoid being redundant.
- Taking calculated risks/experimentations: NGI needs to take calculated risks and experiment to stay relevant. Experimentation is the key for institutes to be able to move ahead of the curve. Taking initiative or avoiding the regularly beaten path is the key to sustenance.
- Embracing the technology: AI and VR are here to stay. Institutions need to make education livelier, outcome-based, and interactive learning. The stress should be more on experiential learning rather than just the old established methods. ICT tools usage can no longer be considered embracing the technology.
- Structural change: there is a need to overhaul the educational structure with immediate effect. The current brand of education doesn't suffice to fulfill the modern requirement, which drives the experiential learning seeking crowd away. The essential changes in curriculum will not only help to change educational perspective but also make it more relevant and cutting-edge to be more sustainable.
- Self-Branding and positive word of mouth: Word of mouth is probable best and cheapest form of advertisement available. Students who walk out of the institute will be the ambassadors. Institutes need to work on them to make them a brand of their own. In times of crisis, it is essential to make yourself different in order to sustain for a longer duration.
- Breaking the monotony: institutes need to try to work on uncharted territory and break the monotony. Breaking the monotony enables people to be more flexible

and more adaptable to learning new things. The institutes should try to use newer methods to improve student engagement, which will lead to a more positive image.

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“School Social Work as an Instrument of Social Resilience and Community Empowerment: A Conceptual Exploration in the Context of Kerala”

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Abstract

Kerala has seen a steady institutionalization of school social work over the past decade, integrating trained social workers into government, aided, and private educational systems. Although the initiative is relatively young, it has begun to influence school environments, student well-being, family engagement, and community linkages. This conceptual paper examines how school social work in Kerala contributes to the broader agenda of building social resilience and strengthening community empowerment. Drawing on literature in resilience studies, community development, and educational social work, the paper proposes that school social workers serve as bridge-builders who link micro-level student support with broader meso- and macro-level processes. The discussion highlights emerging practices, systemic advantages, gaps, and future possibilities, particularly regarding sustainable community networks and school-community collaboration. The conceptual model developed here provides a basis for understanding school social work as a key mechanism for promoting adaptive capacities, social cohesion, and participatory governance within local communities.

Keywords: school social work, Kerala, social resilience, community empowerment, sustainable development, student well-being

Introduction

Across the world, schools are increasingly recognized not only as academic spaces but as hubs of social development and child protection. In Kerala, this perspective has gained momentum with the structured introduction of school social workers in several districts. Their role extends beyond individual counselling; they intervene on issues ranging from attendance challenges and emotional well-being to family-school communication and community outreach.

At the same time, the state’s broader developmental discourse is shifting toward themes such as social resilience, community empowerment, and sustainable future governance. These concepts have grown in relevance as communities face pressures such as economic transitions, shifting family structures, digital risks, and mental-health vulnerabilities among children and adolescents.

Despite the growing importance of school social work in Kerala, its connection to resilience-building and community empowerment has not been sufficiently theorized. This paper therefore attempts to fill that gap by offering a conceptual synthesis. It argues that school social work, when strategically embedded and adequately supported, functions as a frontline system that strengthens community capacities, supports intergenerational well-being, and reinforces participatory governance structures.

Theoretical Foundations

1. Social Resilience

Social resilience is broadly understood as a community’s capacity to withstand disruptions, adapt to changes, and reorganize itself without losing core functions. Scholars such as Norris et al. (2008) describe resilience as a process grounded in social resources, collective efficacy, and adaptive functioning. In the context of children, resilience is strongly linked to the presence of supportive adults, the availability of responsive services, and environments that foster emotional security.

Schools are central to these processes because they offer consistent structure, peer networks, and adult guidance. However, the presence of a trained professional—specifically a school social worker—creates a formal mechanism for identifying vulnerabilities early and strengthening protective factors.

2. Community Empowerment

Community empowerment involves processes through which individuals and groups gain control over decisions affecting their lives. Rappaport (1987) and Perkins & Zimmerman (1995) emphasize that empowerment is both psychological (self-efficacy, confidence) and structural (access to resources, participation in decision-making).

In Kerala's social context—where literacy levels are high, local self-government institutions are active, and community organizations such as PTAs, Kudumbashree units, and youth clubs are widely present—schools can serve as strategic platforms for empowerment. School social workers can mobilize these community assets by fostering dialogue, participation, and collective problem-solving.

3. School Social Work Frameworks

School social work internationally draws on ecological systems theory, the strengths perspective, trauma-informed practice, and community schools models. In Kerala, although the profession is still developing a unified framework, practices often reflect a mix of casework, group work, community liaison functions, and preventive interventions.

This paper integrates these frameworks to conceptualize how school social workers enhance resilience and empowerment at different systemic levels.

Kerala's School Social Work Landscape

Kerala's adoption of school social work has been partly driven by the rising visibility of mental-health concerns, family-related stress, migration effects, and technology-related vulnerabilities among students. Various government initiatives have indirectly supported the role—for example, programs on adolescent health, gender awareness, anti-drug campaigns, and child-protection protocols. NGOs, diocesan agencies, and private educational groups also contribute substantially to employing trained social workers in schools.

Despite the expanding presence of social workers, statewide policy integration is still evolving. There is significant variation in job descriptions, workloads, reporting structures, and collaboration with teachers. Yet, several emerging strengths are noteworthy:

- increased professional intervention in student crises
- improved coordination with child-protection systems
- enhanced communication with families
- stronger community participation in addressing chronic absenteeism or behavioural issues
- gradual institutional acceptance of social work as part of school governance

These developments form the foundation for positioning school social work as a mechanism for resilience-building and community empowerment.

Linking School Social Work to Social Resilience

1. Early Identification and Intervention

Social resilience is strengthened when vulnerabilities are recognized early. School social workers routinely identify issues such as emotional distress, learning difficulties, peer conflicts, substance-use risks, or domestic challenges. Their interventions prevent these concerns from escalating, thereby safeguarding the stability of both children and families.

2. Supporting Adaptive Capacities

School social workers teach coping skills, emotional regulation strategies, and problem-solving approaches. For students, these capacities translate into better adaptability in times of personal or community stress.

3 Strengthening Social Networks

Resilience research shows that social connectedness is a major protective factor. School social workers promote peer support, mediate conflicts, and ensure communication between school and family—all of which reinforce relational networks critical to resilience.

4 Building Institutional Resilience

Schools themselves become more resilient when they have systems for managing crises, responding to child-protection concerns, and collaborating with external agencies. Social workers play a pivotal role in institutionalizing these systems.

School Social Work and Community Empowerment

The idea of empowerment has long been central to social work practice. In school contexts, empowerment does not emerge through isolated programs; it develops when students, families, and community networks gain voice, knowledge, and confidence to address issues collectively. Kerala's socio-cultural environment—characterized by strong neighborhood identities, active local governance, and high levels of community organization—creates a conducive setting for such empowerment processes. School social workers often act as intermediaries who activate these social resources.

1. Enhancing Family Engagement

One of the most consistent observations in Kerala's school social work practice is the improvement in how families interact with the education system. Many parents, particularly from marginalized or economically stressed households, face difficulties in navigating school expectations or responding to academic concerns. School social workers help interpret school policies, mediate disagreements, and provide guidance on supporting children at home. This reduces anxiety and increases parents' willingness to participate in school activities. When families feel competent and informed, they become partners in problem-solving rather than passive recipients of services.

2. Facilitating Community Partnerships

Kerala's local self-government institutions (panchayats, municipalities, and corporations) often run programs related to health, child rights, anti-drug campaigns, gender equality, and adolescent development. School social workers play a crucial role in connecting schools with these local initiatives. For example, they coordinate with health workers for awareness sessions, link vulnerable families to welfare schemes, and facilitate referrals to mental-health services. These collaborations gradually create a shared responsibility for children's well-being, strengthening local communities' capacity to respond to social issues.

3. Mobilizing Collective Action

Community empowerment is not only about access to resources; it is also about fostering collective responsibility. Several schools in Kerala have used social work-led interventions to mobilize community action on chronic absenteeism, substance-use concerns, neighborhood safety, and environmental issues. By bringing together teachers, parents, student leaders, and local organizations, school social workers help communities recognize problems as shared challenges that require cooperative solutions. These initiatives cultivate a sense of collective efficacy—an important psychological component of community empowerment.

4. Supporting Marginalized Groups

Empowerment is particularly critical for children from marginalized caste groups, migrant families, coastal communities, and families affected by alcohol abuse or poverty. School social workers help these groups access services, assert their rights, and participate in school-level committees. The process may be gradual, but over time it contributes to breaking cycles of exclusion and allowing families to exercise agency over educational decisions.

A Conceptual Model: School Social Work as a Catalyst of Resilience and Empowerment

Drawing from the preceding analysis, this paper proposes a conceptual model positioning school social work as a catalyst across multiple systemic layers. The model illustrates how the school social worker strengthens resilience and empowerment through interlinked pathways:

1. Micro-Level: Individual and Family Support

At the micro level, school social workers provide counseling, psycho-education, behavioral interventions, and family guidance. These functions improve students' coping capacities, enhance positive parenting, and reduce risk factors. Micro-level interventions form the foundation upon which broader community resilience is built.

2. Meso-Level: School Climate and Peer Networks

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The meso level concerns the relational environment within schools. Social workers promote inclusive practices, coordinate peer support programs, encourage constructive discipline approaches, and help staff respond to emotional or behavioral challenges. These actions strengthen the social fabric of the school, contributing to a more supportive and resilient institutional culture.

3. Exo-Level: Community Linkages and Service Coordination

At the exo level, school social workers collaborate with local government agencies, child protection systems, NGOs, and welfare departments. These linkages enable comprehensive support for families experiencing stress, thereby enhancing the community's overall capacity to adapt to social risks.

4. Macro-Level: Governance, Policy, and Child Rights

The macro level involves policy frameworks, resource allocation, and child-rights mechanisms. School social workers contribute to these larger systems by providing data on emerging student issues, advocating for mental-health resource allocation, and supporting the implementation of state-level child protection laws. In Kerala, where decentralized governance is strong, school social workers have significant potential to influence local policy discussions.

5. Sustained Outcomes

These multilevel interactions lead to sustained outcomes such as:

- increased student resilience and well-being
- improved family functioning
- stronger community participation
- effective referral and protection systems
- healthier school climates
- expanded community capacity to respond to social

disruptions

Viewed together, the model suggests that school social work is not merely a support service within educational institutions—it is a bridge linking education, community development, and local governance.

Implications for Governance and Policy

Kerala's commitment to decentralized planning and local participatory governance provides fertile ground for scaling school social work as a core public service. Some policy implications include the following:

1. Integrating School Social Work into State Policy

A formal policy framework would ensure clarity in job roles, caseloads, supervision structures, and training standards. This is essential for ensuring equitable distribution of services across districts rather than relying on isolated institutional initiatives.

2. Strengthening Interdepartmental Coordination

Since issues faced by students often span education, health, social justice, and child protection sectors, interdepartmental collaboration is crucial. School social workers can contribute significantly to coordination between these sectors, particularly when formal structures encourage regular communication.

3. Building Capacity Through Training

Continued skill development in areas such as trauma-informed practice, crisis intervention, digital safety, and community mobilization can enhance the effectiveness of school social workers. Training should also emphasize documentation, systemic advocacy, and interdisciplinary teamwork.

4. Recognizing Social Work Within School Governance

School governance bodies such as PTAs, school management committees, and panchayat education standing committees can formally include school social workers in decision-making processes. Their insights into student and family dynamics offer valuable perspectives for planning welfare, safety, and developmental initiatives.

5. Scaling a Community Schools Approach

Kerala is well-positioned to adapt elements of the “community schools” model, in which schools serve as centres for health, social services, and community engagement. School social workers are central to operationalizing such a model, given their training in coordination, outreach, and systems thinking.

Discussion

The conceptual analysis presented in this paper suggests that the role of school social workers in Kerala extends far beyond individual-level support. Their presence contributes to strengthening protective environments, building intersectoral networks, and mobilizing community action. These functions align strongly with the state’s long-standing emphasis on social development, participatory governance, and collective responsibility.

At the same time, the full potential of school social work is not yet realized. The absence of unified policy, inconsistent supervision structures, and the lack of professional autonomy in some settings limit the systemic impact that social workers can achieve. Addressing these challenges will require collaborative action by government departments, academic institutions, professional associations, and schools themselves.

Kerala’s unique social environment—marked by high literacy, strong civil society organizations, and active local governance—offers an opportunity to develop a contextually grounded model of school social work that could serve as a reference point for other Indian states. By positioning school social work as a key mechanism for community resilience and empowerment, Kerala can contribute meaningfully to national and global discussions on sustainable educational ecosystems.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper argues that school social work in Kerala plays a strategic role in strengthening both social resilience and community empowerment. As communities confront rapid social, technological, and economic changes, the need for integrated school-based social services becomes increasingly urgent. School social workers, with their training in psychosocial intervention and community engagement, are uniquely placed to bridge gaps between students, families, schools, and communities.

Future steps should include formal policy integration, expansion of training opportunities, systematic data collection, and the adoption of a community schools approach. These actions will help institutionalize school social work within Kerala’s educational system and maximize its contribution to a sustainable and equitable future.

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“Uncorking Nagpur's Essence: Exploring the Orange Wine Tourism Potential in Nagpur District”

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Abstract

Nagpur District, globally recognized for its distinctive oranges, holds untapped potential for developing a unique niche within India’s emerging wine tourism landscape through **orange wine tourism**. Titled “*Uncorking Nagpur’s Essence: Exploring the Orange Wine Tourism Potential in Nagpur District*,” this study explores the feasibility of integrating citrus-based viticulture, agro-processing, and experiential tourism to create a sustainable, culturally rooted tourism model. The research examines how orange wine production can diversify the local agricultural economy, enhance farmer incomes, and position Nagpur as an innovative destination beyond conventional agro-tourism.

Adopting an **interdisciplinary approach**, the study draws insights from tourism and hospitality management, viticulture and agricultural sciences, marketing and branding strategies, public policy and governance, environmental sustainability, rural sociology, and cultural anthropology. It assesses existing infrastructure, climatic suitability, value-chain readiness, regulatory frameworks, and community participation while identifying opportunities for farm-to-glass experiences, wine trails, festivals, and heritage-linked tourism narratives.

The study argues that orange wine tourism can act as a catalyst for **rural development**, employment generation, and destination branding, while promoting sustainable farming practices and conservation-oriented tourism. It also highlights challenges such as regulatory constraints, limited awareness, skill gaps, and the need for institutional support. By proposing a strategic roadmap involving public-private partnerships, local entrepreneurship, and policy alignment, the paper contributes to tourism planning literature and offers practical insights for policymakers and stakeholders seeking inclusive and sustainable regional development. Ultimately, the research positions orange wine tourism as a novel pathway to “uncork” Nagpur’s agricultural, cultural, and economic essence on a national and global platform.

KEY WORDS-: Orange Wine Tourism; Agro-Tourism; Nagpur District; Citrus-Based Viticulture; Experiential Tourism; Rural Development; Sustainable Tourism; Destination Branding; Agricultural Value Chain; Public-Private Partnerships

Introduction:

Nestled in the heart of central India, Nagpur stands as a beacon of cultural richness, historical significance, and agricultural abundance. Renowned for its luscious oranges that paint the landscape in hues of citrus, Nagpur’s connection to viticulture runs deep, offering a unique blend of tradition and innovation. In recent years, amidst this tapestry of orange groves and rolling vineyards, a new facet of tourism has emerged – orange wine tourism. This introduction serves as a gateway to explore the untapped potential of Nagpur’s orange wine tourism industry. It delves into the historical roots of Nagpur’s viticulture heritage, tracing back to a time when orange orchards graced the land and vineyards began to flourish alongside them. It highlights the symbiotic relationship between the region’s fertile soil, conducive climate, and the expertise of local winemakers, laying the foundation for the burgeoning orange wine tourism sector.

Origin of the Research Problem:

The genesis of the research problem, "Uncorking Nagpur's Essence: Exploring the Orange Wine Tourism Potential in Nagpur District," stems from a confluence of factors reflecting the evolving dynamics of tourism, agriculture, and cultural preservation in Nagpur.



Fig 1.1 Origin of the Research Problem

Interdisciplinary Relevance:



Fig 1.2 Interdisciplinary Relevance

Review of Literature:

Studies focusing on viticulture practices, grape varieties, and winemaking techniques specific to Central India contribute valuable insights into the region's viticulture potential and its suitability for orange wine production. Literature exploring the cultural and historical significance of oranges in Central India, including Nagpur, offers insights into the symbolic importance of citrus fruits in local traditions, festivals, and cuisine, which can be leveraged to enhance the tourism experience. Examination of case studies of successful wine tourism destinations

in India and around the world provides valuable lessons and best practices for destination management, marketing strategies, and visitor experience enhancement in Central India. Research on sustainable viticulture practices, environmental conservation, and eco-friendly winemaking methods offers guidance on integrating sustainability principles into the development of orange wine tourism initiatives in Central India. Studies highlighting community-based tourism initiatives, rural development programs, and stakeholder engagement strategies provide insights into fostering inclusive growth, community empowerment, and cultural preservation within the context of wine tourism in Central India.

International Status:

The international status of exploring the orange wine tourism potential in Central India, particularly in Nagpur and its surrounding regions, holds significance within the broader context of global wine tourism trends and destination development strategies. Understanding the international status of orange wine tourism in Central India involves examining several key aspects:

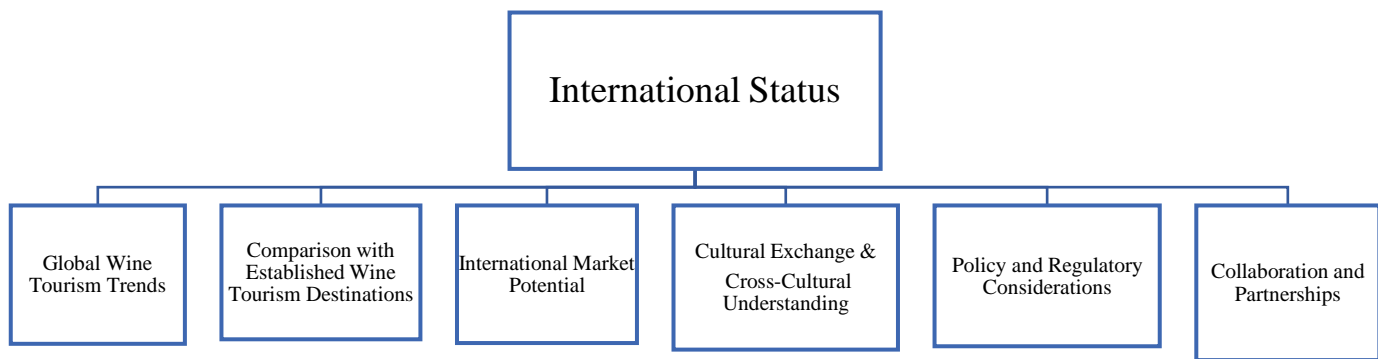


Fig 1.3 International Status

National Status

Understanding the national status of orange wine tourism in Central India involves examining several key aspects:

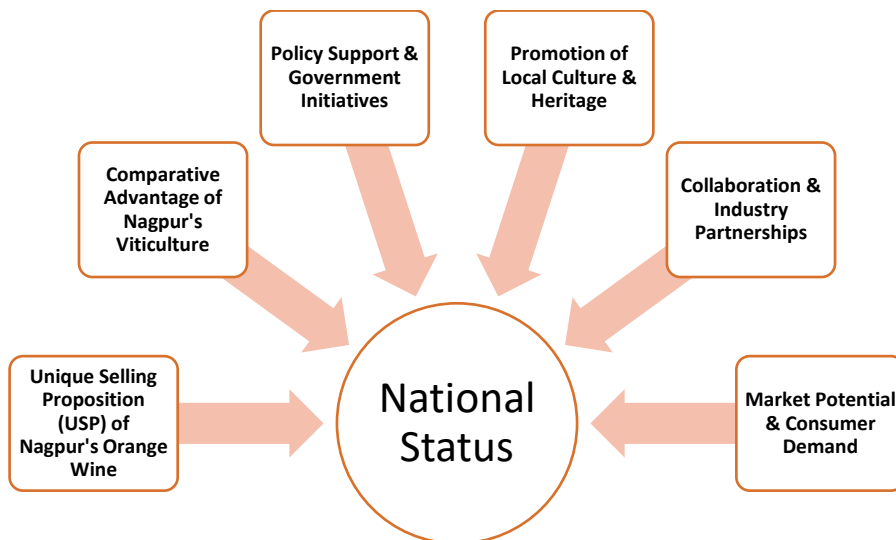


Fig 1.4 National Status

Preliminary Work:

Before delving into the exploration of Nagpur's orange wine tourism potential, conducting preliminary work is essential to lay the groundwork for the research endeavor. This preliminary work involves several key steps:

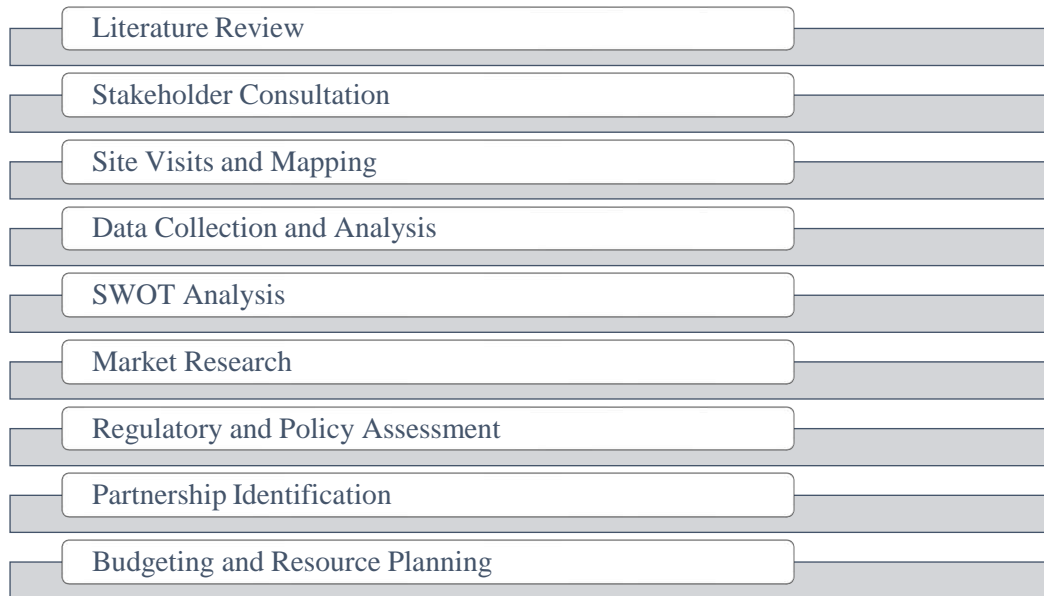


Fig 1.5 Preliminary Work Done So Far

Aim of the Research Project:

The aim of this research project is to comprehensively explore and unlock the untapped potential of orange wine tourism in Nagpur District, leveraging its unique viticulture heritage, cultural richness, and natural beauty.

The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

To Investigate the viticulture landscape of Nagpur District, including the cultivation of oranges and grapevines, to assess the region's potential for orange wine production.

To Identify and evaluate existing and potential orange wine tourism offerings in Nagpur District, including vineyard tours, wine tastings, culinary experiences, cultural events, and eco-tourism activities.

To Conduct market research to understand the demand for orange wine tourism experiences among domestic and international travelers. Identify visitor preferences, motivations, and behaviors related to wine tourism in Nagpur District.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to catalyze the development of orange wine tourism in Nagpur District and unlock a new dimension of tourism that capitalizes on the region's unique viticulture heritage, cultural richness, and natural assets. The study holds several key implications and benefits:

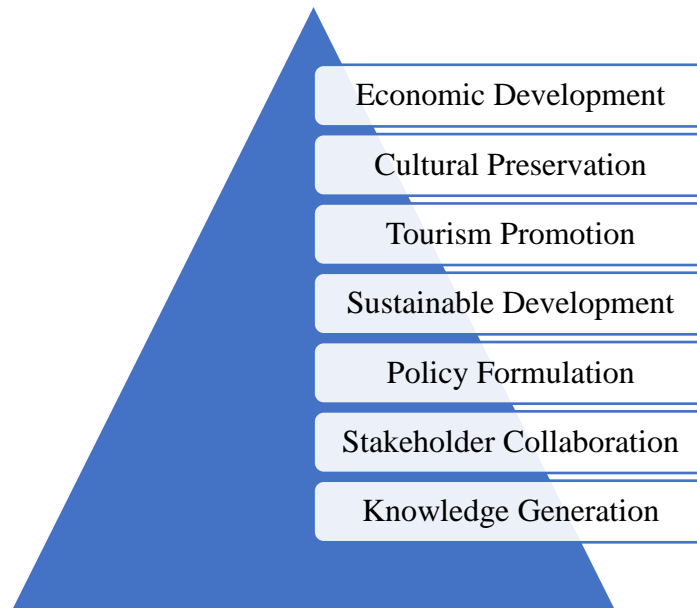


Fig 1.6: Significance of the Study

Research Questions

1. What is the current awareness and perception of orange wine among tourists visiting Nagpur District?
2. What are the key factors influencing tourists' decision to engage in wine tourism activities in Nagpur District?
3. How does the availability and accessibility of orange wine-related attractions and facilities impact tourists' overall experience in Nagpur District?
4. What are the potential economic benefits of developing orange wine tourism in Nagpur District for local communities and businesses?
5. What are the unique cultural and gastronomic experiences associated with orange wine tourism in Nagpur District, and how do they contribute to tourists' satisfaction?

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between the availability and accessibility of orange wine-related attractions and tourists' overall satisfaction with their wine tourism experience in the Nagpur district. H1: There is a significant relationship between the availability and accessibility of orange wine-related attractions and tourists' overall satisfaction with their wine tourism experience in Nagpur district.

H0: The development of orange wine tourism in Nagpur District does not significantly contribute to the economic growth and sustainability of local communities and businesses. H1: The development of orange wine tourism in Nagpur District significantly contributes to the economic growth and sustainability of local communities and businesses.

Research Methodology

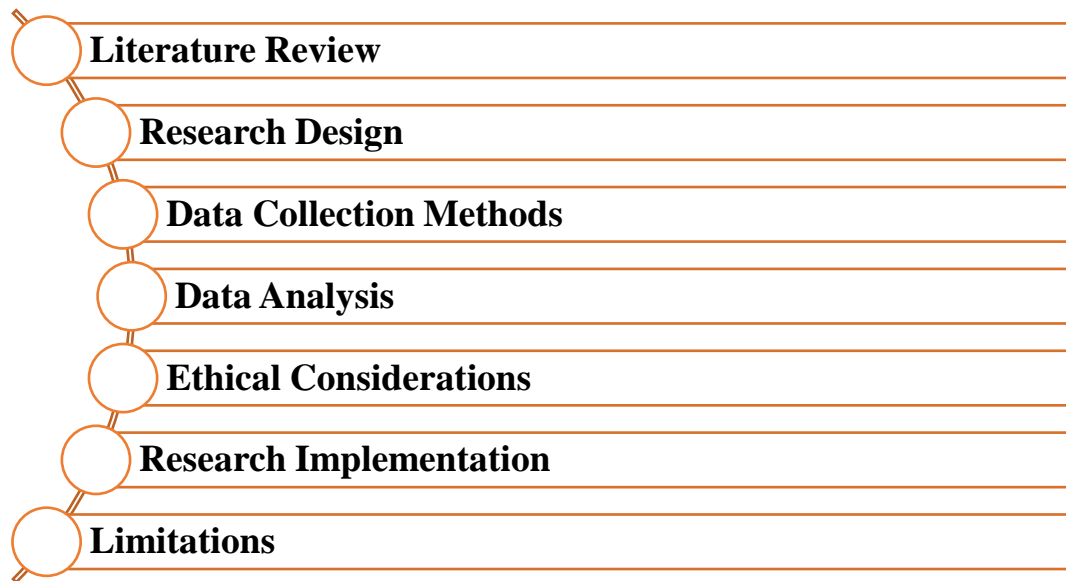


Fig 1.7: Type of the Study

Nature of Study

- Applied Research.
- Exploratory Research
- Descriptive Research

Type of Methodology

- Comprehensive Exploration
- Data Analysis
- SPSS

National Importance:-

There are several contributions to knowledge and national importance:

1. **Economic Development**
2. **Cultural Preservation**
3. **Sustainable Development**
4. **Promotion of Local Products**
5. **Knowledge Generation**

Breakdown of the timeline for the project

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<p>1.PreparatoryPhase (1 months)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define research objectives and scope. • Review relevant literature on wine tourism, orange wine production, and tourism potential in Nagpur District. • Develop research questions and hypotheses. • Obtain necessary approvals and permissions for the study.
<p>2. 2.Research Design and Planning (1 month):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the research methodology (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods). • Design data collection tools such as surveys, interview guides, and observation protocols. • Identify and recruit participants (tourists, local stakeholders, winemakers, etc.). • Finalize sampling strategy and sample size determination.
<p>3. 3. Data Collection (2-3 months):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct surveys, interviews, and observations with tourists and stakeholders in Nagpur District. • Collect data on tourists' perceptions, preferences, and behaviours related to orange wine tourism. • Gather information on orange wine production, local wineries, and tourism infrastructure.
<p>4. 4. Data Analysis (2-3 months):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribe and code qualitative data (interviews, observations). • Analyse quantitative data using appropriate statistical techniques. • Interpret findings to address research questions and hypotheses. • Identify key themes, patterns, and relationships in the data.
<p>5. 5. Report Writing (1 month):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile research findings, analysis, and interpretations into a comprehensive report. • Structure the report with clear sections, including introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions. • Ensure coherence, clarity, and consistency in writing. • Include tables, figures, and citations to support arguments and findings.

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<p>6. 6.Review and Revision (2 weeks):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the draft report for accuracy, completeness, and alignment with research objectives. • Incorporate feedback from supervisors, peers, or reviewers. • Revise sections as necessary to improve clarity and coherence.
<p>7. Finalization and Presentation (2 weeks):</p> <p>8.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize the report, addressing any remaining comments or revisions. • Prepare a presentation summarizing the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations. • Present the research findings to relevant stakeholders, such as local authorities, tourism organizations, and winemakers in Nagpur District.
<p>9. Publication and Dissemination (ongoing):</p> <p>10.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit the research report to academic journals for publication. • Present findings at conferences, workshops, or seminars. • Share results with local communities, policymakers, and industry stakeholders through reports, presentations, and media outreach.

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"ASSAMESE BHAKTI LITERATURE AND THE MAKING OF AN INCLUSIVE ASSAM"

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ABSTRACT:

The medieval Assam was a land of mighty rivers and enchanting hills. But Assamese society was divided. It was marked by intense social disparities and divisions. Srimanta Sankardeva (1449–1568), a giant among contemporary men, was born into this fragmented world. He and his devoted followers began a gentle revolution; they revolutionised minds of the people. They did it not through force but through spreading the cult of Bhakti, through poetry, song, drama and storytelling. The Bhakti philosophy of Sankardeva was based on a simple, profound idea: It taught that the divine can be reached not by birth or ritual but through pure devotion—bhakti. This principle is at the core of the rich tradition of Assamese Vaishnavite literature. Sankardeva preached that loving devotion to Lord Krishna is above all else and this went into softening of the rigid boundaries of caste as well as sectarian belief. He brought the spiritual life closer to the everyday hearth, creating works that spoke to everyone, no matter their background.

This paper explores how the philosophy of bhakti naturally grew into a vision of social harmony. By exploring the emotional depth of these timeless works, we discover how they awakened an ethical consciousness—a quiet invitation to recognize the divine in one another and to build a community through love and compassion. The profound wisdom enshrined in the sacred texts continues to guide the people of Assam even today offering insights into preserving the invaluable cultural heritage of Assam through mutual respect and the spirit of inclusiveness.

Keywords: Bhakti philosophy, Assamese Vaishnavism, social harmony, Srimanta Sankardeva, cultural sustainability, ethical living, spiritual equality

Keywords

Srimanta Sankardev, Neo-Vaishnavism, Ekasarana-Nama-Dharma, Bhakti Movement, Assamese Culture, Social Reform, Spiritual Equality

INTRODUCTION:

Medieval Assam was a land of deep contradictions. Sharp caste lines cut through society, religious life had become burdened with expensive rituals and fear of angry deities, and different sects often stood in hostility toward one another. For most people—especially those without wealth or high birth—genuine spiritual experience felt out of reach. Religion, instead of offering comfort, frequently deepened inequality and suffering.

It was in this setting that Srimanta Sankardev appeared—not merely as another saint, but as someone who dreamed of an entirely different kind of society, one held together by ethics, devotion, and shared humanity. His path of Ekasarana-Nama-Dharma—single-hearted devotion to Krishna—quietly but firmly challenged the old order. It replaced fear with love, exclusion with embrace, complexity with beautiful simplicity.

Maheswar Neog describes the social and religious situation Sankardev confronted:

“The Assamese society of the time was characterised by caste rigidity, meaningless ritualism, animal sacrifice and social inequalities of various kinds.” (Neog 1985, p. 112)

What makes Sankardev’s Neo-Vaishnavism remarkable is that it touched life at many levels at once: it was a spiritual way, a powerful social healing, and at the same time a cultural awakening. By setting aside caste prejudice and ritual gatekeeping, he invited the overlooked and the forgotten to stand at the very centre of sacred life. By choosing the language and artistic expressions people already knew and loved, he brought spirituality out of distant books and into living voices, hearts, and gatherings.

This paper tries to look at Sankardev’s Neo-Vaishnavism as a long, conscious effort to build both spiritual equality and cultural wholeness—and to understand why that effort still matters so deeply to Assam today.

EKASARANA-NAMA-DHARMA: VAISHNAVA FAITH PREACHED BY SANKARDEV

At the centre of everything Sankardev taught was Ekasarana—complete, loving refuge in one Supreme Lord—and Nama, the constant, heartfelt remembrance of God’s name. He set aside idol worship, animal sacrifice, and complicated rites, teaching instead that nothing is more powerful than genuine devotion expressed through song, humility, and ethical conduct.

Deeply rooted in the Bhagavata Purana, his message was nevertheless very much his own: simple enough for anyone to follow, strict in its ethical demand, and uncompromising in its rejection of intermediaries. God, he insisted, is not far away or reserved for the learned and wealthy. He is present whenever people gather in sincerity to call His name together.

Birinchi Kumar Barua explains the core of this devotion in these words:

“Sankardeva’s religion was based on the principle of Bhakti or devotion... He preached a simple and easy path of salvation through the chanting of the holy name of God.” (Barua 1960, p. 45)

Satyendranath Sarma sheds light on this in his own inimitable way:

“The Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement initiated by the saint-poet Sankaradeva... brought about a complete transformation in the religious and cultural life of the people of Assam.” (Sarma 1966, p. 1)

In his Kirtana-Ghosha, Sankardev beautifully captures this spirit of inclusive, compassionate devotion, urging people to see the divine everywhere:

“Samaste bhutate dekhibeka Nārāyana”

(One should see Lord Narayana in all beings.) (Kirtana-Ghosha, verse - 382)

This vision of universal presence naturally fostered love and kindness toward every creature.

SPIRITUAL EQUALITY IN PRACTICE

Perhaps the most courageous part of Sankardev’s work was his insistence that every soul stands equal before God. Caste, birth, gender, wealth—none of these could make one person closer to the divine than another. He welcomed kings and sweepers, Brahmins and so-called “low-castes,” men and women into the same congregation. His closest companion, Madhavdev, came from a very humble background—a living sign of the movement’s spirit.

Sankardev’s own teaching on equality is clear and direct:

“Nahi bhakatiya jati-ajati vicara”

(There is no sense of caste differences in bhakti.) (Kirtana-Ghosha)

As quoted and discussed by Maheswar Neog, the eminent Sankardev of Assam:

“Jāti-varṇa-kula-maryādā nāhi bhaktiḥ kāraṇa / Bhaktiḥ śuddha karaye jīva sarva kāraṇa”

(There is no cause of devotion in caste, class, family or status; devotion alone purifies the soul in every way.) (Neog 1985, p. 248)

In the *Namghar*, people sat on the same floor, without rank or hierarchy, singing the same songs, offering the same prayers. Birinchi Kumar Barua describes the social significance of this institution:

“The Namghar became the centre of village life... It helped in fostering a sense of equality and brotherhood among the people.” (Barua 1960, p. 107)

Through quiet, consistent moral teaching he also tried to heal social wounds—greed, anger, cruelty, pride—asking people to choose kindness and self-control instead.

Madhavdev, in his Naam Ghosa, echoes and deepens this call to equality and pure devotion, declaring that all are equal parts of the divine:

“We are no members of the four castes nor followers of the four āśramas.” (Naam Ghosa, v. 670 approx.)

This radical inclusiveness flowed from the same compassionate heart that saw Narayana in every being.

SANKARDEV : A LIVING LEGACY

Sankardev left Assam more than a set of teachings; he left a way of being together. The values of harmony, dignity for all, and pride in one's own language and art still echo strongly in Assamese life. Even now, Namghars remain warm centres of community. Borgeets still move listeners to tears. Sattriya dance continues to grow in beauty and recognition. In an age when division and cultural loss trouble so many societies, Sankardev's vision—of spirituality that unites rather than divides, and of culture that remains open yet deeply rooted—feels not just historical, but urgently alive.

Satyendranath Sarma emphasises the lasting role of the institutions founded by Sankardev in this way:

“The Satras have been the chief custodians of the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite faith and culture... They have preserved the literary, musical and dramatic traditions initiated by Sankaradeva.” (Sarma 1966, p. 150)

CONCLUSION :

Srimanta Sankardev's Neo-Vaishnavism was never only about religion in the narrow sense. It was an invitation to live more humanely: to treat one another as equals, to seek God through love rather than fear, to express the highest truths through the beauty of our own language, music, and dance. More than five centuries later, he remains a quiet but powerful presence in Assam's heart—reminding us that spiritual depth and social compassion need never be separated, and that a culture stays strong when it stays true to its most inclusive and creative possibilities.

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Sankardev. Kirtana-Ghosha.

(verse - 382 – “Samaste bhutate dekhibeka Nārāyana” – seeing Narayana in all beings; also commonly cited for “Nahi bhakatiya jati-ajati vicara” and passages emphasising love, compassion, and ethical outlook toward all creatures)

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“Social Resilience as Ethical Reconstruction: Ambedkar’s Constitutional Fraternity and Vivekananda’s Spiritual Humanism in Community Empowerment”

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Abstract

The modern Indian social environment is characterized by a deteriorated social resilience that manifests itself in the increasing inequality, social disintegration, loss of credibility in the population, and breakdown of the social fabric. This paper uses the paradigm of ethical reconstruction to approach this crisis and propose that policy or institutional mechanisms alone can never be used to maintain resilience. It compares the issues of constitutional fraternity and social democracy in the conception of B. R. Ambedkar and spiritual humanism in the conception of Swami Vivekananda based on the service-oriented social ethics. The paper argues that long-term community empowerment necessitates a mixture of institutional morality: law, rights, equality, and ethical-spiritual change based on human dignity, solidarity, and service using a qualitative, interpretative approach to studying the problem, based on close reading of philosophical and political texts. The research has benefited the current discussion about social resilience, constitutionalism, and community empowerment in India.

Keywords

Social Resilience; Ethical Reconstruction; Constitutional Fraternity; Spiritual Humanism; Community Empowerment

1. Introduction

The concept of social resilience is being increasingly mentioned in policy and governance discourses to refer to the ability of society to endure shocks, respond to crises, and revert to its normal state. But when narrowed down to the expandability, the very notion becomes dangerously concealed into its heightened moral and ethical aspects. Consistent fragmentation of the society and increasing inequalities, lack of trust in the government and the destruction of the social bonds among the civilians implies that the crisis of resilience is not merely institutional or economic, but rather it is aimed at the ethical core. Social resilience thus should be apprehended as an issue of how societies can maintain dignity, solidarity, mutual responsibility in conditions of challenging conditions and diversity in a world despite stress and diversity.

Modern strategies of community empowerment in India have been significantly based on technocratic solutions - development with the focus on targeted welfare aid, decentralised governance procedures and use of data in community development. As much as they are required, they are usually not enough in combating structural exclusion and moral disintegration. Policy-based models are more likely to focus on efficiency and outcomes more than relationships, moral agency, and collective social interest, which has a weak long-term effect on social cohesion.

Ethical reconstruction is presented in this paper as a normative remedy to these constraints. Values, social relationships and moral agency are robust elements of ethical reconstruction that build resilience. It lays emphasis on community management and rather reforms communities on moral basis by using egalitarian, dignified, and accountable principles. In this context, it is the paper that introduces the concept of B. R. Ambedkar and Swami Vivekananda as complementary and not opposing mindsets in the endeavor of social regeneration.

The focus of constitutional morality and fraternity by Ambedkar makes social strength lie in ethical life of democratic organizations, which is why the existence of political democracy cannot exist without social democracy, which is based on equality and mutual respect (Ambedkar, 1949). Vivekananda incorporates, in his turn, the spiritual humanism approach to resilience by promoting service (*sevā*), human dignity, and inner transformation as the foundations of the uplift of the mass (Vivekananda, 1897). These views taken altogether serve as the integrated vision that is characterized by both institutional safeguards and moral motives.

Two broad research aims were discussed in the paper: what role does constitutional fraternity and spiritual humanism play in promoting social resilience and how can both frameworks be used in combination to contribute to the present model of community empowerment? The paper has been structured in such a way that it outlines a

review of literature being relevant, a discussion of methodology, the comparison of Ambedkar and Vivekananda and conclusive reflection on whether the two can be applicable in the role of ethical reconstruction in India today.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social resilience and community empowerment

In sociology and political science, social resilience is generally understood as the ability of communities to endure and bounce back on stress caused by a community and social relations, institutions and shared resources (Adger, 2000; Norris et al., 2008). This literature predicts the use of social capital, networks and trust to facilitate coordination of action particularly when there is uncertainty (Putnam, 2000). Nevertheless, the main constraint is that there is a tendency, especially in work facing policy, to see resilience as a feature of functioning systems (service delivery, decentralisation, capacity-building) rather than an issue of ethical life: how communities manage to uphold dignity, reciprocity and mutual obligation as inequality and polarisation deepen. In dominant development and governance systems, the quantification of empowerment tends to be in terms of outputs (level of participation, institutionalization of any scheme, institutional performance), but overlooks the moral infrastructure underlying participatory signification; that of recognition, equity and solidarity. New research on social relations as adaptive social infrastructures has already started to rectify this with demonstrations that resilience is not a matter of institutional design, but relies on the quality of social ties (Hall and Lamont, 2013). Meanwhile, existing literature on moral economy and confiding social cooperation proposes the idea that long-term empowerment should be supported by normative commitment that will limit domination and allow shared responsibility, particularly among unequal societies (Putnam, 2000; Hall and Lamont, 2013).

2.2 Ambedkar in contemporary political theory

The contribution of Ambedkar to modern political theory has been sought more and more through the three themes: constitutional morality and fraternity in a broader sense of social democracy. According to scholarship, constitutionalism should not be understood as a part of barely legal minimalism but as an ethical practice: as Congenializing democratic dispositions that ensure liberty and equality are impulses that are not specifically forced or empty (Chakrabarty, 2018). In this curve, fraternity appears as a democratic requirement which assures dignity of individuals and the stability of plural societies, specifically to the hierarchies based on grades, like caste (Begari, 2021). More recent interpretations also maintain that the social democracy that Ambedkar envisioned is a lifestyle that is based on liberty, equality, and fraternity, thus taking institutions to social relationships daily (Mahanand, 2021). Nonetheless, one point of blankness still exists: fraternity is a piece of the rhetorical ideal but it is not theorised as a resilience-building process, a practical ethical capability that maintains trust and cooperation and non-domination in stressful communities.

2.3 Vivekananda and spiritual humanism

Vivekananda interpretations generally tend to focus on spiritual humanism, service ethics (sevā) as well as social spirituality where human dignity is connected with uplift of the masses. The scholarly literature has also examined the Vivekananda ethical programme pursuing inner change as a cause of social action and service as a form of moral practice and not charity (Beckerlegge, 2007). Meanwhile, the critical studies warn that it is easy to conflate Vivekananda into the past humanism with later attempts to construct religions as national-religion which see both point of convergence and contradiction in later attempts to exploit his legacy towards ends of their own (Beckerlegge, 2006). The main paradigm gap relevant to this paper is that Vivekananda participates inadequately in discussion of institutional empowerment, and social resilience debates, with constitutionalism, rights and governance as forecasts. This generates an analytic dichotomy of an ethical-spiritual and an institutional approach - the very gap in the current paper which is bridged by reconstruction of ethics.

3. Methodology

This research paper uses a qualitative, interpretive and comparative approach, based on the normative political theory. Instead of trying to test hypotheses by using empirical measurements, the paper attempts at analysing the social resilience and community empowerment conceptions and how these notions rely on the ethical thoughts. The main approach will be the textual analysis, in which close, contextual reading of certain texts by B. R. Ambedkar and Swami Vivekananda will be considered. To Ambedkar the analysis relies on his constitutional interventions and social writings that are articulating constitutional morality, fraternity as well as social democracy. Study to Vivekananda involves his speeches and philosophical intercessions that are more detailed about spiritual humanism, service (seva) and spiritual ethical bases of social uplift.

The comparative design here is conception rather than the biographical or historical ones. The paper is not intended to re-construct intellectual lineages and place the thinkers in their historical contexts exhaustively. Instead, it

perceives their thoughts as normative resources that can shed some light on modern issues of the governance, social trust, and life in the community. This method permits having the analysis abstract out of context without decontextualising meaning on the basis of the ethical rationale and the political implication of key concepts.

The methodology is a normative political theory practice that analyses ideas as ethical set ups that direct institutional design, civic behaviour and collective responsibility. This comparison is well-grounded on two points. In the first place, it is not reductionist, as it does not tend to place Ambedkar and Vivekananda as ideological opposites, i.e. legal and spiritual or institutional and moral. Second, it allows conducting a syntactic analysis that combines the moral, spiritual, and institutional aspects of social resilience. With the introduction of constitutional fraternity and spiritual humanism into dialogue, the paper creates an account of ethical reconstruction that will be applicable to the modern discussion on community empowerment in India.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Ambedkar's constitutional fraternity as ethical infrastructure

The political vision of Ambedkar has fraternity as the least cared of but an essential part of democracy. Whereas freedom and equality can be enshrined in the constitution, fraternity is the moral system that facilitates the application of these ideals in social life. Without social democracy, which implies a way of associating living, based on mutual respect and mutual moral commitments, political democracy cannot possibly exist (Ambedkar, 1949). In this respect, fraternity is not an emotive adjunction to rights but the situation where rights can gain their meaning constructively.

The connection of the equality and the social trust is the point of this argument. Social equality which is not accompanied by social recognition does not bring trust among citizens who are characterized by established hierarchies. Ambedkar narrows this gap by focusing on fraternity on the basis that he demands that they be accorded equal recognition as the moral counterpart of rights. Rights guarantee security; fraternity compensation. They both nurture trust that is required in cooperation and collective action of many communities (Chakrabarty, 2018). It is especially relevant to those societies that are organized in terms of caste so that legal equality as such cannot destroy inequalities of grade, built in the ordinary social relationship.

Fraternity is considered to be a kind of resistance to caste hierarchy and social exclusion as well. Drawing on caste as a moral necessity that has to be exterminated, Ambedkar expresses fraternity as an anti-hierarchical moral that questions the social distance and dominance (Begari, 2021). This resistance becomes critical in terms of resiliency: the community shattered with stigmatization and marginalization cannot have the ethical glue needed to handle social and economic shock. The fact that Ambedkar insisted on the constitutional morality the development of democratic habits which did not constitute the authority and did the other order respects the difference hence becomes a way of keeping the community resilient (Mahanand, 2021). Constitutional morality interconnects the institutions with ethical behaviour such that governance promotes dignity and solidarity instead of administering conformity.

4.2 Vivekananda's spiritual humanism and moral agency

Vivekananda takes a rather different but complimentary ethical register to social empowerment. His spiritual humanism puts human dignity at the pivotal point of social transformation by insisting that human empowerment should first start with the acknowledgement of the divine within each of them (Vivekananda, 1897). Vivekananda is not just instrumental about empowerment in terms of capacity building as opposed to moral agency, which involves the ability of individuals to act morally towards others.

The central idea in this direction is the service (*sevā*) which Vivekananda presents as an ethical action not as charity. Service does not encompass the act of benevolence by some as it is not a form of ethical relation that is based on equality and mutual humanity (Beckerlegge, 2007). This difference is essential to social resilience: the models of charity have the potential to reproduce the dependency, in contrast, the service-based ethics have the reciprocity and a shared sense of responsibility. Placing the service in spiritual humanism, Vivekananda associates social action with moral self-discipline as an opponent of paternalism and moral stagnation.

Also, the inner transformation is a requirement, highlighted by Vivekananda as the precondition of the uplift of the group. According to him social reform cannot be maintained unless it is followed up with ethical self-cultivation which restrains egoism, fear, and prejudice. This does not mean that anyone should withdraw to institutions; on the contrary, it demands that institutions receive life out of morally constituted citizens. As a result, community is not understood as an administrative unit directed by policy but as an ethical living being comprised of relationships of care, responsibility and purpose those linked to community (Beckerlegge, 2006). This moral-motivation and common meaning, which lie in such a conception, deepens resilience.

4.3 Ethical reconstruction and social resilience

Together, read, Ambedkar and Vivekananda are providing a system of moral renovations which combines institutional and moral aspects of social resilience. The institutional basis of defence against domination and marginalization of individuals is given by Ambedkar, and the rights, the equality before the law, and constitutional morality are the means of guaranteeing these terms. Vivekananda, gives moral drive, human dignity, service, and inner transformation which is human moral and service driven social collaboration and social responsibility. Both frameworks cannot work independently. Bureaucratisation in institutions, moral exhortation without institutions is unethically committed; an institution which lacks moral commitment is liable to abstraction.

The idea of ethical reconstruction formulated here posits that building social bonds, restoring trust and dignity, and building participatory and inclusive communities that can act collectively when the stress occurred can help in ethical reconstruction. The implications of this synthesis on community empowerment efforts nowadays are quite clear. Constitutional decentralisation in Panchayati Raj, for example, demands parallel development of ethics of fraternity and service lest it is captured by elites and it excludes society. The civil society movements must take advantage of both necessity to incorporate rights-based advocacy and those practices that develop solidarity and recognition of each other. On the same note, the durability of grassroots development programmes will be achieved when material interventions are incorporated in ethical relations that promote trust and engagement.

Comprehensively, the evidence shows that social resilience in India cannot be narrowed down to governance ability and policy formulation. It needs an ethical reconstruction, which ties constitutional fraternity and spiritual humanism into a communal empowerment project.

5. Conclusion

This paper has argued that social resilience in India could not be sufficiently comprehended and preserved without ethical rebuilding. Current ideological trends which have amounted resilience to institutional capacity or adaptive governance ignore the fact that moral foundation facilitates communities to sustain resilience amidst inequality, diversity, and social strains. The resilience is both an institutional and an ethical realization as the study shows by introducing the constitutional thinking of Ambedkar to the spiritual humanism of Vivekananda.

The one-to-one comparison brings to result two important things. To start with, fraternity absent humanism is threatened with bureaucratisation. In the disconnection between the constitutional rights and principles of equality and constitutional rights and the everyday moral commitments, the democratic institutions can obtain formal adherence and cannot foster trust, solidarity, and belonging. Second, humanism that is not supported in the constitution runs the risk of moral abstraction. Ethical pleas based on service and inner transformation, when not pegged on legal equality and legal protection, are open to exclusion and asymmetry of power. Ambedkar and Vivekananda have provided a moderate model where the constitutional and spiritual moral have an equal support to each other when read concurrently.

This synthesis is also applicable to the current issues of democratic governance as the loss of trust endangers participatory systems; inclusive development, where empowerment is usually procedural and not substantive, and social justice projects, where both rights and ethical commitments must be sustained to dignity and solidarity. Future studies can put into practice a systematic study of the way ethical-resilience models work and apply this to urban populations, digital communities and plural societies where transgressive forms of fragmentation require new ethical adaptation.

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“Role of Digital Media Communication for Social Change”

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Digital media communication has become a key driver of social change since it is altering how individuals interact, mobilize, and communicate about social issues. This paper investigates how digital media platforms support civic engagement, awareness-raising, and group action in modern society. It investigates the ways in which social media, online campaigns, and user-generated material help to elevate underrepresented perspectives, influence public opinion, and foster advocacy for causes like public health, social justice, environmental sustainability, and democratic engagement. The study emphasizes the advantages and disadvantages of digital media as a tool for social transformation using a qualitative analytical methodology backed by chosen examples.

Even though digital media speeds up the dissemination of information and improves participatory communication, issues like false information, unequal access, and moral dilemmas still limit its usefulness. The study makes the case that, with the help of digital literacy, ethical communication techniques, and suitable legal frameworks, digital media communication can be beneficial in bringing about inclusive and long-lasting social change.

The study highlights the importance of digital media communication in bringing positive social change.

Keywords: Digital media communication, Social change, Social media, Civic engagement, Participatory communication; Digital activism.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital media has significantly transformed the nature of communication and its influence on society. Digital media communication, encompassing social networking platforms, online news portals, blogs, video-sharing sites, and mobile-based applications, has altered how individuals access information, express opinions, and participate in social processes. Unlike traditional mass media, digital media enables interactive, participatory, and multidirectional communication, allowing users not only to consume content but also to create and disseminate messages on a large scale (Castells, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This transformation has positioned digital media as a critical catalyst for social change in contemporary societies.

Digital media communication plays an important role in raising awareness about social issues, shaping public discourse, and mobilizing collective action. Scholars have noted that digital platforms facilitate the rapid circulation of information and enable networked forms of activism that can influence social attitudes and behaviors (Shirky, 2011; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Social movements related to democracy, gender equality, environmental protection, public health, and human rights increasingly rely on digital media to organize campaigns, coordinate protests, and engage citizens beyond traditional institutional frameworks (Loader & Mercea, 2012). Through tools such as hashtags, viral videos, and online communities, digital media communication has expanded the scope and speed of social mobilization.

At the same time, the role of digital media in social change is complex and multifaceted. While digital communication offers opportunities for empowerment and inclusion, it also presents challenges such as misinformation, echo chambers, digital surveillance, and unequal access to technology (Fuchs, 2017; Couldry & Mejias, 2019). The digital divide continues to limit the participation of certain social groups, thereby affecting the extent to which digital media can function as an inclusive agent of social transformation (van Dijk, 2020). Consequently, the impact of digital media communication on social change is shaped not only by technological affordances but also by social, cultural, and political contexts.

In this context, examining the role of digital media communication for social change has become an important area of academic inquiry. Understanding how digital media influences awareness, attitudes, and collective action can provide valuable insights for policymakers, media practitioners, and civil society organizations. This study aims to analyze the role of digital media communication in facilitating social change by exploring its functions in information dissemination, public engagement, and social mobilization. By situating digital media within broader communication and social change theories, the paper seeks to contribute to existing literature on media, society, and development in the digital age.

REVIEW of LITERATURE

1. Political and Civic Participation (APA in-text)

Digital media has transformed political participation by enabling individualized and networked forms of engagement that operate outside traditional party or organizational structures. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) conceptualize this shift as *connective action*, where digital platforms allow personalized content sharing to substitute for collective identities. Empirical research demonstrates that social media increases political awareness and participation, particularly among youth, while also reshaping agenda-setting and campaign communication (Loader & Mercea, 2012; Theocharis et al., 2015).

2. Social Movements and Collective Action

Scholars argue that social media accelerates mobilization by reducing coordination costs and facilitating rapid diffusion of protest information (Castells, 2015). However, research also cautions that digitally enabled movements often struggle to sustain long-term collective action without offline organizational structures (Leong et al., 2020). Studies of contemporary movements reveal a transition from hierarchical leadership to decentralized, network-based activism mediated through platforms (Gerbaudo, 2017).

3. Cultural and Identity Transformation

Social media has become a central site for identity construction, cultural expression, and community formation. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) highlight how user-generated content enables self-presentation and symbolic interaction at scale. Research further indicates that digital platforms facilitate the visibility of marginalized identities while simultaneously embedding users within commercial and algorithmic attention economies (Abidin, 2016; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

4. Information Consumption, News, and Misinformation

The rise of social media has disrupted traditional news ecosystems by weakening journalistic gatekeeping and amplifying user-generated content. While this transformation has increased access to information, it has also facilitated the rapid spread of misinformation (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Lazer et al. (2018) demonstrate that algorithmic amplification and social sharing dynamics contribute significantly to the diffusion of false information, raising concerns about democratic discourse and public trust.

5. Social Relationships and Communication Patterns

Social media has reconfigured interpersonal communication by enabling the maintenance of both strong and weak social ties across spatial boundaries. Research shows that platforms support social connectivity and emotional support, particularly during crises (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). However, scholars also identify negative outcomes, including social comparison, anxiety, and reduced face-to-face interaction, which complicate the social benefits of digital communication (van Dijk, 2020)

6. Economic and Work-Related Changes (Creator and Gig Economy)

The emergence of the creator economy represents a significant social change driven by social media platforms. Freberg et al. (2011) show that influencers function as opinion leaders who shape consumer attitudes and cultural norms. Subsequent studies emphasize the precarious nature of platform-based labor, where visibility, monetization, and algorithmic control determine economic success (Abidin, 2016; Fuchs, 2017).

7. Education and Knowledge Sharing

Social media platforms increasingly function as informal learning environments that support peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and identity development. Greenhow and Robelia (2009) argue that online social networks facilitate participatory learning beyond formal educational institutions. Later research confirms that social media enhances access to educational content while simultaneously raising concerns about information quality and digital literacy (Tess, 2013).

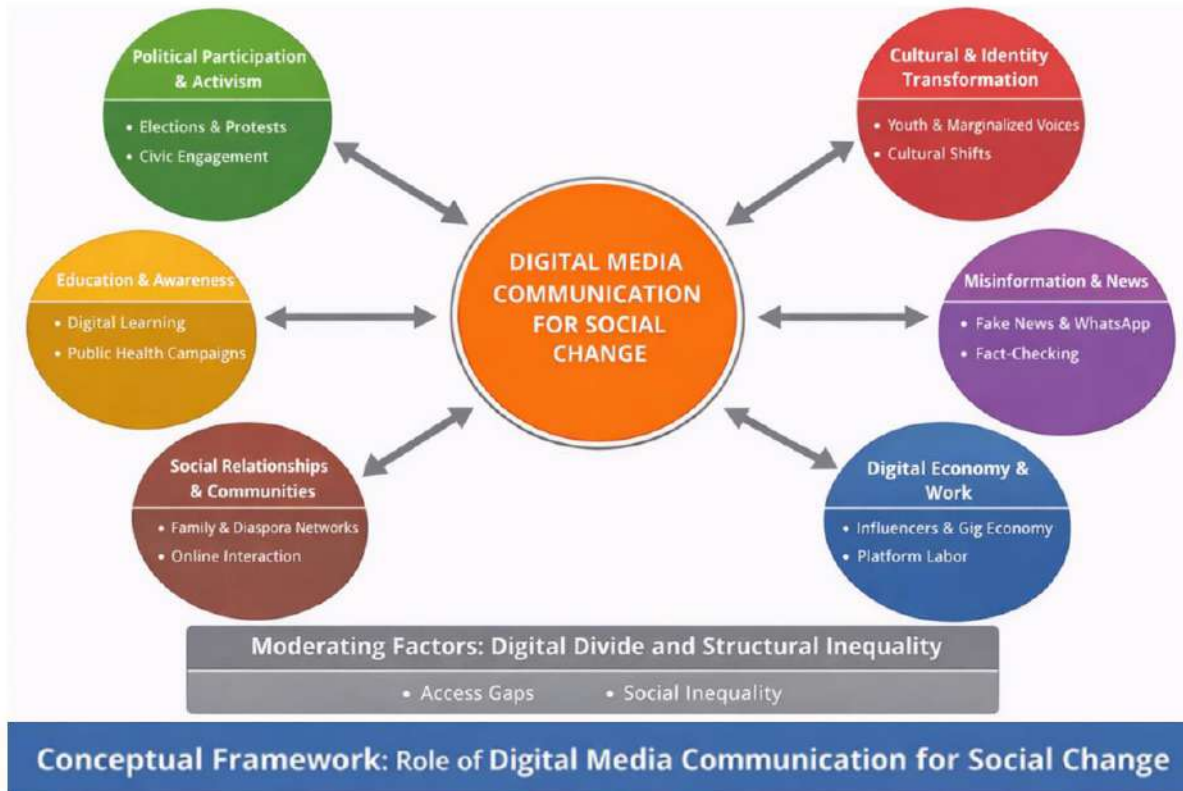
8. Social Inequality and the Digital Divide

Despite its transformative potential, social media reproduces existing social inequalities through differential access, skills, and usage patterns. Van Dijk (2020) conceptualizes the digital divide as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing access, competencies, and outcomes. Empirical studies indicate that marginalized

populations benefit less from digital media for social change due to structural and algorithmic constraints (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the review of existing literature, a conceptual framework is proposed to examine the role of digital media communication in social change. The framework outlines the major domains through which digital media influences social processes and situates these relationships within broader structural conditions.



The conceptual framework presents digital media communication as a central and enabling force in the process of social change. Digital media communication refers to the interactive, networked, and participatory communication practices facilitated through social networking platforms, digital news media, messaging applications, and user-generated content environments. These platforms enable rapid information exchange, public interaction, and collective meaning-making, thereby influencing various dimensions of social life.

At the core of the framework is **Digital Media Communication for Social Change**, which signifies the role of digital platforms in shaping awareness, attitudes, behaviors, and social practices. The framework conceptualizes social change as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by digital communication across several interconnected domains rather than as a linear or singular outcome.

Surrounding the central construct are six key domains of social change. **Political Participation and Activism** reflects the role of digital media in expanding civic engagement, political expression, and participation in public discourse. Digital platforms facilitate access to political information and provide spaces for dialogue, mobilization, and collective action.

Cultural and Identity Transformation represents the ways in which digital media enables self-expression, identity negotiation, and cultural visibility. Through participatory content creation and online communities, individuals and groups articulate cultural meanings and challenge dominant narratives, contributing to shifts in social norms and values.

Misinformation and News highlights the transformation of information ecosystems in the digital age. Digital media alters news production and consumption patterns by enabling citizen journalism and real-time information sharing. At the same time, it raises concerns regarding misinformation, credibility, and the need for fact-checking and media literacy.

Critical Perspectives on Sustainable Futures Society, Culture, And Governance

Digital Economy and Work captures the economic dimension of social change associated with digital media communication. Social media platforms facilitate new forms of economic activity, including digital entrepreneurship, influencer-based marketing, and platform-mediated labor. This domain also acknowledges emerging challenges such as income instability, algorithmic governance, and unequal access to digital opportunities.

Social Relationships and Communities focuses on changes in interpersonal communication and community formation. Digital media reshapes social interaction by enabling continuous connectivity, maintaining family and community networks, and supporting transnational relationships, while also redefining norms of social interaction and emotional engagement.

Education and Awareness represents the role of digital media as a tool for learning and knowledge dissemination. Digital platforms support informal education, public awareness campaigns, and access to informational resources, contributing to individual empowerment and collective learning processes.

At the base of the framework, **Moderating Factors: Digital Divide and Structural Inequality** are presented as contextual conditions that influence how digital media communication contributes to social change. Variations in access to digital technologies, levels of digital literacy, socio-economic status, and structural inequalities shape the extent to which individuals and communities can engage with and benefit from digital media. These factors do not function as direct outcomes but as underlying constraints that condition the impact of digital communication across all domains.

Overall, the conceptual framework emphasizes that digital media communication plays a transformative role in contemporary social change while operating within broader structural and social contexts. It provides a holistic understanding of how digital communication practices intersect with political, cultural, economic, relational, and educational dimensions of society.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopts a **qualitative research design** to explore the role of digital media communication in facilitating social change. A qualitative approach is appropriate for examining complex social processes, meanings, and experiences associated with digital media use. This design enables an in-depth understanding of how individuals and groups interpret, negotiate, and experience social change within digitally mediated environments.

Research Approach

The study is grounded in an interpretive research approach, which emphasizes understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of participants. Digital media communication and social change are viewed as socially constructed processes shaped by context, interaction, and lived experience. This approach allows the researcher to capture nuanced narratives and contextual factors that cannot be adequately examined through quantitative methods.

Limitations of the Study

The study relies on participants' self-reported experiences, which may be influenced by recall bias or social desirability. Additionally, findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable, though they offer valuable insights into the processes and meanings associated with digital media communication and social change.

FINDINGS

The qualitative analysis reveals that digital media communication plays a significant yet uneven role in shaping processes of social change. Participants' accounts highlight multiple domains in which digital media influences social life, while also pointing to contextual constraints that limit its transformative potential.

Awareness and Information Access

Participants identified digital media as a primary source of information and social awareness. Digital platforms enabled rapid access to news, public discussions, and social issues that were previously less visible. However, concerns regarding misinformation and content credibility were frequently raised, indicating that increased access to information is accompanied by heightened uncertainty and the need for critical evaluation.

Civic Engagement and Political Expression

Digital media was perceived as expanding opportunities for civic engagement and political expression. Participants described using platforms to express opinions, engage in discussions, and follow political developments. While these practices enhanced visibility and voice, engagement was often described as symbolic, with limited translation into sustained collective action or offline participation.

Cultural Expression and Identity

The findings show that digital media provides spaces for cultural expression and identity negotiation. Participants reported greater freedom to articulate personal and social identities and to connect with like-minded communities. At the same time, identity expression was shaped by platform norms, audience reactions, and fear of online backlash, suggesting that digital spaces simultaneously enable and constrain cultural change.

Social Relationships and Community Interaction

Digital media has reconfigured social relationships by enabling continuous connectivity with family, friends, and communities. Participants emphasized the convenience of maintaining relationships across distances. However, concerns were expressed regarding reduced face-to-face interaction and the perceived superficiality of some online connections, indicating a shift rather than a replacement of traditional social interaction.

Informal Learning and Awareness

Participants frequently used digital media for informal learning, skill development, and awareness creation. Digital platforms were viewed as accessible tools for self-education beyond formal institutions. Nonetheless, disparities in digital skills and access limited the extent to which all users could benefit equally from these learning opportunities.

Economic Opportunities and Digital Labor

Digital media facilitated new economic opportunities through online promotion, content creation, and platform-based work. While some participants reported positive experiences related to visibility and income generation, others highlighted economic insecurity, algorithmic dependence, and unstable earnings, underscoring the precarious nature of digital labor.

Digital Divide and Structural Inequality

Across all themes, digital divide and structural inequality emerged as critical contextual factors. Participants with greater access and digital literacy experienced more benefits, whereas those with limited resources faced significant constraints. This finding indicates that the social impact of digital media communication is mediated by existing inequalities.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the role of digital media communication in facilitating social change by examining users' experiences across multiple social domains. The findings indicate that digital media has become a central communicative space through which awareness, civic expression, cultural identity, learning, economic activity, and social relationships are increasingly shaped. Digital platforms enable rapid information dissemination, expand opportunities for participation, and provide spaces for identity expression and informal learning, thereby contributing to contemporary processes of social change.

At the same time, the study highlights the uneven and conditional nature of digital media-driven social transformation. While digital communication enhances visibility and voice, its impact is constrained by misinformation, symbolic forms of engagement, economic precarity associated with platform-based work, and unequal access to digital resources. These findings suggest that digital media does not operate as an independent driver of social change but functions within broader structural and socio-economic contexts that shape outcomes.

By foregrounding users' lived experiences, this study contributes to existing literature by offering a multidimensional and context-sensitive understanding of digital media communication and social change. The conceptual framework developed provides an integrative lens for examining how digital media intersects with political, cultural, social, educational, and economic domains. Future research may extend.

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“Reimagining Sustainable Futures: Generative AI as a Catalyst for Narrative-Driven Climate Action and Psychological Transformation in Urban Communities”

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Abstract

Indian cities face serious sustainability issues, such as rising heatwaves, extreme flooding, and resource depletion. This research argues that the use of generative artificial intelligence through storytelling can be an effective way to raise awareness of climate action and increase psychological engagement with communities. This research combines existing literature on narrative persuasion, climate communication, and AI-based storytelling. It further analyses narratives generated by AI, which describe potential climate change scenarios to explore their characteristics, themes, and adaptability to cultural contexts. Two narratives generated by ChatGPT, set in Indian urban contexts focusing on monsoon risks, illustrate that AI-based narratives can incorporate local cultural factors, such as festivals and community gardens, with the positive themes of hope and innovation to encourage engagement. The results show that these narratives express hope and empowerment, which can reduce eco-anxiety, while supporting the scientific fact that human activity is a major contributor to climate change. However, these narratives often disregard important structural aspects, such as climate justice. This research also explores the use of narrative elements, such as character building and emotional expression, to promote collective efficacy and potentially trigger behavioural change. In general, the results highlight the unique role of generative AI in developing narratives that are culturally and psychologically significant. The final section argues that AI-based storytelling can improve the discourse on sustainable futures in urban Indian communities.

Keywords: Generative AI, Climate Communication, Narrative Persuasion, Urban Sustainability, Psychological Resilience, India.

Introduction

Indian cities are at the frontlines of the climate crisis. Rapid urbanisation and dense populations make them vulnerable to heatwaves, floods, and air pollution, which threaten both physical health and mental well-being. Recent analysis highlights climate-related anxiety, depression, and PTSD in Indian urban populations, underscoring the psychological toll of environmental stress. For city dwellers to support and sustain climate action, communication strategies must do more than present facts; they must emotionally engage and empower citizens.

Narrative and storytelling have emerged as promising approaches in this regard. Studies find that humans naturally process information as stories, and narratives enhance information retention, understanding, and motivation. Bloomfield and Manktelow (2021) note that storytelling elements in climate reports can make scientific content more accessible and relatable. Other research shows that narratives (e.g., personal anecdotes, fictional scenarios) increase audience trust and willingness to act on climate messages. These narrative effects suggest that framing climate issues as compelling stories—rather than cold data—could foster public engagement and psychological resilience.

Meanwhile, generative artificial intelligence is rapidly advancing the creative toolkit. In India, adoption of AI is surging: nearly 64% of Indians report using AI resources, twice the global average. Language models like GPT-4 can produce coherent, contextually tailored text, including fictional narratives. This raises the possibility of generating large numbers of climate-related stories that resonate with diverse urban audiences. Yet there is little research on using generative AI specifically for climate communication. Sommer and von Querfurth (2024) found that ChatGPT tends to generate optimistic climate-change stories aligned with mainstream science, but their work was general, not India-specific. The question remains: can generative AI craft climate futures narratives that effectively speak to Indian urban communities and inspire action?

This paper addresses that question through qualitative analysis. We instruct an AI model to generate short stories about climate futures in Indian cities and then analyse those stories in depth. Our goal is to understand how AI narratives may frame climate issues, what emotional and cultural content they contain, and how they might influence public perception. Grounded in theories of climate communication, media framing, and environmental psychology, we examine whether AI-driven storytelling can transform climate discourse by embedding hope, local identity, and actionable vision in urban contexts. By highlighting examples and drawing on recent findings, we argue that generative AI can be a catalyst for narrative-driven climate engagement in India's cities.

Literature Review

Narratives in Climate Communication: A substantial literature in science communication supports the use of storytelling. People process complex information more naturally through narratives, and stories can shape beliefs and actions. For example, Bloomfield and Manktelow (2021) find that storytelling elements in climate reports improve public understanding and retention. Other studies show that personal anecdotes and fictional scenarios in environmental messaging increase audience engagement and motivation to act. In general, narratives create emotional resonance and character-driven empathy that factual accounts often lack.

AI-Generated Climate Narratives: Advanced language models enable new forms of climate storytelling. Preliminary analyses indicate that AI can produce coherent climate-change stories. Sommer and von Querfurth (2024) systematically examined ChatGPT's generated climate stories and found they consistently frame climate change as human-caused and emphasize technological solutions. The narrative tone is broadly optimistic, but the AI stories downplay social dimensions like equity and justice. This suggests that AI-driven narratives may reproduce dominant framings (modernization, tech-centric solutions) while missing alternative viewpoints. Nonetheless, generative AI holds the potential to mass-produce tailored narratives if guided properly.

Urban and Cultural Context in India: Effective climate narratives must resonate with their audience's cultural context. In India, much media climate discourse has historically been distant and Western-centric. However, local voices are now reshaping the story. Youth from smaller Indian cities are creating climate content in native languages about local issues, from cleaned lakes to home gardens. In short, they are "helping turn climate awareness into climate participation." As Saigal (2023) notes, "narratives on climate change must focus on people at the forefront of this crisis... communities themselves are best suited to create and drive narratives that reflect their realities." These examples highlight the power of culturally grounded stories to engage urban Indians.

Psychological Framing: Climate change impacts both ecosystems and human minds. Urban Indians already experience heightened anxiety and stress related to climate disasters. Without hope-based framing, climate communications risk fueling eco-anxiety. Scholars argue that integrating mental health into climate messaging is crucial: Mishra et al. (2025) highlight that centering well-being and community connection is key to climate resilience and societal transformation. In practice, narratives that integrate community strength, co-benefits (like cleaner air and jobs), and proactive solutions can foster psychological resilience. This aligns with evidence that hopeful, solution-oriented communication increases motivation more than doom-laden warnings.

Media Framing and Engagement: Narrative framing affects public engagement. For instance, van Eck and van der Meer (2025) found that climate experts using personal, emotionally expressive storytelling did not lose credibility and actually increased audience engagement. This supports the idea that effective communication can combine factual authority with narrative warmth. In India's urban media, blending respected scientific voices with local storytelling could be an effective strategy to mobilise citizens.

Methodology

This study employs qualitative textual analysis of AI-generated narratives and cultural framing. We used OpenAI's GPT-4 (via ChatGPT) to generate sample stories based on prompts about climate futures in Indian urban settings. For instance, we asked the model to "imagine climate adaptation in an Indian neighbourhood" and "write a short fictional narrative about a future monsoon morning in a sustainable Indian city (circa 2040)." The resulting stories (each roughly 200 words) are treated as data.

We then conducted close readings of these narratives. Using principles from literary analysis, we identified each story's structure (characters, setting, plot, and resolution), themes (e.g., resilience, technology, and community), tone, and cultural elements (references to language, traditions, and rituals). Additionally, we used framing analysis from media studies: we examined how each story frames climate issues (e.g., as a threat, opportunity, or communal challenge) and which solutions or emotions are emphasised. Throughout, we paid special attention to cultural resonance, noting where the AI included specifically Indian references (festivals like Diwali, local foods like chai, native flora, etc.).

No human subjects were involved, so institutional review was not needed. The narratives themselves were entirely machine-generated and are cited here as examples rather than as human-authored content. Our methodological approach draws on previous applications of narrative analysis in climate communication research (e.g., Bloomfield and Manktelow 2021) but adapts it to analyse AI output as text. By focusing on the qualitative attributes of the stories, we aim to illustrate potential opportunities and pitfalls of AI-driven storytelling for climate action in India.

Findings and Discussion

AI-Generated Narrative Example 1:

“Deep in 2040, morning light split through the curtains as the first monsoon of rain tapped on the roof of the Sharma family’s apartment in New Indrapur. Twelve-year-old Aanya sipped hot masala chai while gazing at the vibrant mural of past festivals – Diwali lamps and Holi colours – painted by her grandmother on the balcony wall. Outside, the city gleamed with green terraces and solar panels covering rooftops; electric buses hummed along tree-lined avenues.

Each day, Aanya and her mother, Meera, checked the smart solar lanterns and the rooftop garden’s soil. Today, dark clouds gathered, but the street was quiet. Volunteers had planted banyan and neem saplings on each block, and neighbours had turned an abandoned lot into a monsoon wetland garden. Across the courtyard, Mr Rao, a retired teacher, played his flute as children danced around him, each note a blessing for the season’s bounty.

As the silent monorail crossed the sky above, Aanya thought of her grandparents, who once feared floods. Now, she felt hopeful. Through sustainable change, the city had become a living tapestry of tradition and innovation, and in every solar panel and sapling she saw resilience blooming with the monsoon rains.”

This story features an intimate family scene rooted in Indian urban life, blending traditional culture and sustainable technology. Structurally, it follows a simple narrative arc: the calm before the storm (monsoon rain) introduces tension, which is alleviated by community preparedness and innovation. Its emotional tone shifts from quiet anticipation to pride and hope by the end. Key themes include intergenerational continuity (the grandmother’s festive mural), communal cooperation (neighbourhood gardens and tree planting), and synergy between tradition and innovation (festivals and solar panels coexisting). By portraying climate action as a family and community affair, the story fosters a sense of agency: the child protagonist internalises pride (“she felt hopeful”) and resilience. The narrative also educates about adaptation measures (rainwater gardens, solar lanterns) without a didactic tone. These elements mirror recommended communication strategies: telling local, solution-focused stories to empower audiences. The use of sensory details (flute music, chai, mural colours) and cultural references (Diwali, Holi) makes the content vivid and relatable, which may increase engagement and retention.

AI-Generated Narrative Example 2:

“In 2035, the sun was high and merciless over the Ganesh Colony of South City. Ten-year-old Aarav wiped sweat from his brow as he carried water from the community tank to the vegetable garden beside his home. The rains were late this year, and climate change had made the monsoons unpredictable in India.

Yet, Aarav was not disheartened. His neighbours had banded together to adjust. Narrow lanes were shaded by neem and banyan trees planted by volunteers, and rooftop water tanks had become all around. Today, Aarav helped cover the hydroponic garden—built with recycled pipes and solar panels—with waterproof cloths, preparing for the cloudburst predicted by a weather app on his father’s phone. He hurried to put on rubber boots.

By evening, heavy clouds formed. Raindrops drummed on the roofs. Aarav watched floodwater run safely through new storm drains into underground reservoirs. In the pitter-patter, neighbours gathered in the courtyard to share stories and chai under the tin roof. The solar panels on each roof had powered the nearby clinic all day and now kept a fan running in the community hall. Aarav smiled, seeing how even this humble corner had become a model of resilience. In every rain-drenched leaf and solar cell, he saw hope for a future where his city could thrive despite the changing climate.”

This second narrative depicts more acute hardship (drought and heat) and community adaptation. It opens with an evocative image of a “merciless” sun in a low-income neighbourhood, immediately establishing stakes. The structure again introduces conflict (heat and drought), resolved through collective action (volunteers planting trees, shared gardens, and other infrastructure). The emotional arc moves from strain to relief and communal pride. Themes include community solidarity, Indigenous knowledge (use of local neem for shade), and techno-social solutions (solar panels used to support a clinic and hydroponic gardens). Notably, local action and technology are entwined; the narrative portrays technology as a tool among many rather than as a panacea. Using narrative framing, the climate crisis is portrayed as something that can be resolved locally rather than by outside heroes. The conclusion clearly expresses hope: Aarav “saw hope for a future where his city could thrive.” It employs the empowerment narrative, aligning with van Eck and van der Meer’s findings that emotionally resonant stories enhance engagement.

Comparative Insights: Both stories share features that research identifies as effective: relatable protagonists (children and families), vivid cultural imagery, and transformation through collective action. They avoid defeatist tones, instead highlighting adaptability, success and social bonds. This aligns with evidence that hopeful, solution-focused frames encourage participation. The narratives also embed factual climate knowledge (monsoon variability, renewable energy) seamlessly into daily life. Importantly, cultural resonance is high: references to chai, festivals, local flora and monuments make the abstract concept of climate change feel immediate and familiar. According to Saigal (2023), these are "narratives by the community, for the community," utilising regional language and symbols. An urban Indian reader might identify with elements of these tales (e.g., rooftop water tanks, courtyard gatherings), increasing personal relevance.

In sum, the AI narratives exemplify how generative storytelling can blend scientific themes with a social fabric that could potentially shift mindsets. They serve as prototypes: with refined prompts, AI could produce many variants for different urban audiences (in multiple languages or focusing on different climate events). Combined with emerging evidence that narrative enjoyment can lead to pro-environmental attitudes, these findings imply that generative AI has untapped potential to scale inspiring climate communication in urban India.

While our analysis highlights the potential of generative artificial intelligence in narrative climate communication, notable gaps remain. Initially, this study did not empirically test audience responses; we still do not know how actual Indian urban residents would emotionally or behaviourally react to these AI-generated stories. To determine whether such narratives actually boost engagement or motivate action, experimental or field research is required. Second, we did not explore the full diversity of India's populations. Subsequent research ought to explore narratives across various regional languages and diverse demographics (e.g., women, lower-income residents) to promote inclusivity. Third, as noted, the AI narratives currently omit some critical frames (like justice and power dynamics). Research must address how to integrate such themes into AI storytelling, perhaps through improved prompting or hybrid human-AI collaboration. Finally, the ethical and equity implications of using generative AI in public communication merit deeper inquiry. These gaps suggest a rich agenda for further research on AI-enabled climate storytelling in India.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that generative AI can craft compelling climate-future narratives tailored to India's urban context. The analysed examples show how an AI model like ChatGPT can weave together local culture (festivals, foods, community life) and sustainable scenarios to create emotionally engaging stories. Such narratives align with communication strategies that emphasise hope, agency, and co-benefits of climate action. By reframing climate change in human terms, AI storytelling may help transform urban audiences' psychological engagement with sustainability.

However, we emphasise that responsible use of this tool is essential. AI models tend to reproduce the biases of their training data, as found by Sommer and von Querfurth (2024), so careful prompt design is needed to include diverse perspectives and justice-oriented frames. Collaboration between AI and human experts could overcome these limitations.

Overall, generative AI storytelling offers a novel and scalable approach to climate communication. With the increasing public awareness of AI in India, incorporating AI narratives into educational, media, or community initiatives could engage a broader audience. Future efforts should refine and test these narrative tools. With deliberate framing, AI-driven narratives can catalyse the "societal transformation" required for a sustainable urban future in India.

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“ASSAMESE LITERATURE AND INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL LIFE”

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ABSTRACT:

The Assamese literature owes a great deal to Indian Philosophy. Indian philosophical systems, particularly Vaishnavism and Vedanta, underpin ethical frameworks that shape social life in Assam still today. The Neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam was spearheaded by Srimanta Sankardev (1449–1568). The Ekasarana Dharma of Sankardeva is philosophically rooted in the Bhagavata Purana and its monistic interpretations. It advocates one-pointed devotion (bhakti) to Krishna, rejection of ritualism and caste distinctions, and principles of equality, compassion, and righteous association.

The present study is based on a textual analysis of seminal works such as the Kirtana-Ghoshā, Ankiā Naat, and Borgeet. It also takes account the contributions from disciples like Madhavdev (Naam Ghosa) and Bhattadeva (Katha Bhagavata). The study elucidates how these texts embed ethical ideals from Indian Philosophy to promote social cohesion, non-violence, truth and selfless service. These elements manifest in societal institutions like Sattras (monastic centers), which facilitated cultural revival, education, and communal harmony, transcending social divisions.

The study highlights the enduring role of literature in cultivating ethically resilient communities, offering insights for modern sociocultural discourse.

Key words: Assamese Literature, Bharatiya Darshan, Neo-Vaishnavism, Sankardev, Ethical Social Harmony, Sattras, Ekasharana, Dharma

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The study covers the formative phase of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement (15th–17th centuries), concentrating on Srimanta Sankardev (1449–1568) and the first two generations of his disciples (Madhavdev, Bhattadev, and immediate followers). Later Sattra developments and modern interpretations are excluded. Thematically, the research focuses exclusively on the ethical dimensions of Sankardev’s literature and philosophy—particularly social equality, compassion (dayā), non-violence (ahimsā), truthfulness, selfless service (sevā), and righteous association (satsaṅga)—and their roots in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and related Indian philosophical traditions. Aesthetic, linguistic, musical, and dramatic aspects are discussed only when they directly support ethical teachings. The role of Sattra and Namghar institutions is considered solely as channels for disseminating these ethical ideals. Broader sociological studies of contemporary Sattras or comparative analyses with other bhakti movements (e.g., Chaitanya, Kabir, Varkari) are beyond the scope. Geographically, the study centres on Assam, with only brief reference to limited medieval influence in adjacent areas. In essence, the research examines how Sankardev’s literature articulated and institutionalised an ethical vision for social life, rather than offering a comprehensive history, linguistic study, or wide-ranging comparative work.

METHOD OF STUDY:

This study employs a textual-interpretive approach based on close reading (sāhitya-vimarśa), a long-established method in Assamese literary scholarship.

The primary method is hermeneutic analysis of key texts in Middle Assamese, with particular attention to their ethical concepts, doctrinal content, and social implications. The selected texts are:

- Srimanta Sankardev’s Kīrtana-Ghoṣā, selected Ankiyā Nāt, and Borgeet
- Madhavdev’s Nāma-Ghoṣā
- Bhattadev’s Kathā-Bhāgavata

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These texts were examined in their original language (using standard critical editions) alongside major commentaries and translations. Ethical motifs are traced to their philosophical sources in classical Indian thought, especially the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The analysis is qualitative and text-centred; no quantitative or field-based methods are used.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Scholarship on Srimanta Sankardev and the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement in Assam is both rich and long-established. Early twentieth-century works laid the groundwork for understanding the movement as a major cultural and religious force. Among these, Banikanta Kakati's linguistic and literary studies (*Assamese: Its Formation and Development*, 1941) were pioneering in demonstrating how Vaiṣṇava literature decisively shaped modern Assamese language and expression.

The post-independence period saw the emergence of more systematic historical and philosophical treatments. Birinchi Kumar Barua's *Sankaradeva: Vaisnava Saint of Assam* (1960) remains one of the most influential English-language studies. It combines biographical detail with careful analysis of Sankardev's ethical teachings, especially his radical egalitarianism and emphasis on devotion over ritual.

Maheswar Neog's *Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Assam: Śaṅkaradeva and His Times* (1985) is widely regarded as the most comprehensive historical account available. Neog's work is distinguished by its meticulous use of primary sources and inscriptions, and by its attention to the social and political conditions that enabled the movement's spread.

Satyendranath Sarma's *The Neo-Vaiṣṇavite Movement and the Satra Institution of Assam* (1966) was the first major study to treat the Sattra system not merely as a religious institution but as a central organ of social organization and cultural continuity in Assam. His analysis of the Sattra's role in education, art, and community life has shaped much subsequent research.

Suniti Kumar Chatterji's lectures (*The Place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India*, 1970) placed the Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement in a wider civilizational perspective, emphasizing its integrative power in a multi-ethnic region.

More recent scholarship has explored thematic dimensions such as ecological sensitivity, gender inclusivity, and the movement's relevance to contemporary social issues. Several doctoral dissertations and seminar papers produced in Assam's universities have also examined specific texts (especially the *Kīrtana-Ghoṣā* and *Nāma-Ghoṣā*) from ethical and philosophical angles.

The present study builds on this body of work while attempting a more focused examination of the ethical concepts that link Sankardev's literature to classical Indian philosophy and their continued significance for social life.

INTRODUCTION:

Few regional literatures in India illustrate the transformative power of philosophical ideas as vividly as Assamese literature does through the work of Srimanta Sankardev and his followers. The Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement he initiated was never merely devotional; it was simultaneously a profound ethical and social intervention. In an age marked by rigid caste observances, ritual complexity, and social fragmentation, Sankardev offered a path that made spiritual life accessible to all while insisting that genuine devotion must express itself in just and compassionate relations with others.

His *Ekasarana Dharma* took as its scriptural cornerstone the *Bhagavata Purana*, which he both translated and creatively re-presented in Assamese. Through this lens he articulated a vision that blended the non-dualistic insights of Vedānta with the warm, relational emphasis of Vaiṣṇava bhakti. The result was a religious imagination that refused to separate personal salvation from the wellbeing of the community.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

Sankardev regarded the *Bhagavata Purana* as containing the very essence of Vedānta suited to the present age. He rendered substantial portions of it—eight of the twelve skandhas—into a language the common people could understand and feel. The *Purana*'s teaching that Krishna is the supreme reality, both transcendent and immanent,

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resonated deeply with his conviction that true devotion requires neither elaborate Vedic rites nor specialised philosophical training. Bhakti alone, expressed through constant remembrance of the divine Name, was sufficient.

This stance carried far-reaching social implications. By presenting devotion as open to everyone—regardless of birth, learning, or gender—Sankardev directly challenged the hierarchical worldview of medieval Assamese society. Maheswar Neog has rightly observed that this democratising impulse was one of the most striking features of the movement, allowing it to draw followers from widely different social locations into a shared ethical and spiritual space.

ETHICAL TEACHINGS IN SANKARDEV'S MAJOR WORKS

The Kirtana-Ghosha remains the most comprehensive statement of Sankardev's thought. Across its narrative songs and doctrinal verses, one finds a consistent refusal to allow social rank to interfere with spiritual worth. One of the best-known lines declares:

নাই ভকতিত জাতি অজাতি বিচাৰ

(There is no consideration of caste or outcaste in true devotion)

Birinchi Kumar Barua explains the radical egalitarianism embedded here: the devotee who truly sees Hari everywhere learns to look upon the Brahmin and the Chandala, the giver and the thief, with an equal eye.

Another recurring theme is the recognition of Narayana's presence in every being:

সমস্তে ভূতে দেখিবেক নাৰায়ণ

(One should behold Narayana in all creatures)

This perception naturally gives rise to compassion and non-violence; it becomes impossible to harm what one recognises as divine. Sankardev also repeatedly reminds his listeners of the rarity and value of human birth, urging them not to squander it:

দুৰ্লভ মানুষ্য জন্ম নকৰা বিফল

চিন্তা মনে মাধৱৰ চৰণ কমল

(Do not make this rare human birth fruitless; fix your mind on Madhava's lotus feet)

Through the Ankia Naats and the Borgeets he carried these teachings into the performative realm, making ethical reflection accessible even to those who could not read. The plays and songs did not merely instruct; they moved hearts and shaped moral sensibilities through beauty and participation.

THE DISCIPLES AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE MOVEMENT

Madhavdev, the most gifted of Sankardev's disciples, deepened and systematised many of these ideas in the Naam Ghosa. He insists that life without the divine Name is no life at all:

হৰি নাম বিনা জীৱন নাই আৰ

(There is no real life without Hari's Name)

Like his guru, he explicitly rejects caste and ashrama distinctions:

আমি চাৰি বৰ্ণৰ নহওঁ, চাৰি আশ্ৰমৰো নহওঁ

(We belong neither to the four castes nor to the four stages of life)

Bhattadeva's prose Katha Bhagavata, meanwhile, made the Purana's ethical teachings available in clear, expository Assamese, further strengthening the movement's intellectual and moral foundations.

THE SATTRA AS AN ETHICAL AND SOCIAL INSTITUTION

The Sattra institutions that emerged from this tradition were far more than monastic centres. They became focal points of community life where people of different backgrounds met regularly for nama-sankirtana, learning, artistic creation, and mutual support. As Satyendranath Sarma has noted, the Sattras gave concrete social expression to the ideals Sankardev preached.

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Namghars and Bhaona performances extended these values into village society, while the Sattras themselves often served as refuges during times of political instability and natural calamity. In doing so, they helped weave a fabric of communal harmony that could withstand ethnic and economic tensions.

CONCLUSION:

The literature produced by Sankardev and his followers is remarkable not only for its artistic power but for its sustained moral seriousness. By rooting itself in the most inclusive strands of Indian philosophy, it offered a vision of human dignity and social responsibility that refused to remain abstract. These teachings—of seeing the divine in every person, of serving without expectation, of cultivating truth and compassion—remain urgently relevant in a time when social divisions and ethical confusion are once again on the rise.

For those of us who live and teach in Assam today, the message of Sankardev is neither distant history nor frozen doctrine. It continues to speak, quietly but insistently, about the kind of community we might yet become.

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“Prakriti and Purusha: A Samkhya Perspective on Resolving the Man-Nature Conflict and Engineering a Sattvic Future”

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Abstract

The global environmental crisis is frequently framed as a failure of policy or a shortage of "green" technology. However, this paper argues that the crisis is rooted in a deeper ontological error: a fundamental misunderstanding of the human relationship with the material world. Drawing upon the Samkhya school of Indian philosophy, specifically the dualism of Purusha (pure consciousness) and Prakriti (primordial nature), this study explores a framework for a socio-ecological transition. By diagnosing modern industrial decay through the lens of the three Gunas (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas), I argue that the "Man-Nature conflict" is the logical result of Rajasic overextension and Tamasic ignorance. Through qualitative hermeneutic analysis, the paper proposes a "Sattvic Engineering" model—a shift from extractive anthropocentrism to a consciousness-led governance that treats nature as a partner rather than a resource.

Keywords: Samkhya Philosophy, Sustainability Transition, Gunas, Environmental Governance, Prakriti, Deep Ecology, Socio-Ecological Systems.

1. Introduction: The Ghost in the Machine

Modern sustainability discourse is currently paralyzed by what we might call a "Cartesian hangover." For centuries, Western thought has operated on a rigid separation of mind and matter, viewing the natural world as a soulless, mechanical warehouse waiting to be inventoried and exploited. This reductionist worldview has birthed a persistent conflict: we view economic growth and ecological health as two predators fighting over the same territory.

To find a way out, we must look back to the Samkhya system, one of India's most ancient and systematic metaphysical structures. Unlike the "de-souled" nature of the Enlightenment era, Samkhya offers a "Dynamic Dualism." It suggests that while consciousness and matter are distinct, they are engaged in an eternal, evolutionary dance. The current environmental collapse is not just a technical "bug" in the system; it is a sign that the dancers have lost their rhythm. By re-aligning human governance with Samkhya's metaphysical laws, we can engineer a transition from our current state of "managed decay" toward a Sattvic (harmonious) future.

2. Ontological Foundations: The Observer and the Observed

At the heart of the Samkhya Karika lies the interplay between two eternal principles:

Purusha (The Silent Witness): This is the principle of pure consciousness. It does not "do" anything; it simply is. It is the light that allows us to perceive reality. In the context of the environment, Purusha represents our human capacity for ethical reflection and the "witnessing" of our impact on the world.

Prakriti (Primordial Nature): This is the creative, material force of the universe. Prakriti is the soil, the stars, the internet, and even our own physical bodies. It is vibrant, active, and endlessly multifaceted.

The Ego as a Pollutant

The "conflict" between man and nature arises from Avidya (ignorance), specifically when the Purusha becomes entangled in Prakriti through the Ahankara (the Ego). In our modern era, we have identified ourselves entirely with our Ahankara—our desires, our consumption, and our need for dominance. We have forgotten that we are the "witness" and have instead become "the consumer." This creates an anthropocentric delusion: the belief that nature is an "other" to be conquered. When we treat the earth as an external object, we fail to realize that we are essentially attacking our own biological foundation.

3. The Mechanics of Change: The Triadic Guna Framework

Prakriti is not a static background; it is driven by three fundamental forces, or Gunas. This triadic framework provides a far more sophisticated diagnostic tool for environmental policy than simple GDP metrics:

Guna	Human/ Psychological State	Macro-Environmental Manifestation
Sattva	Clarity, Balance, Wisdom	Circular economies, renewable energy, biomimicry
Rajas	Agitation, Greed, Frenetic Action	"Take-Make-Waste" systems, hyper-consumerism, Urban Sprawl
Tamas	Inertia, Ignorance, Decay	Pollution, toxic waste, climate change denial, Apathy.

Our current global governance is trapped in a destructive Rajasic-Tamasic feedback loop. We use Rajasic energy—frenetic, unthinking industrial activity driven by greed—to extract resources, which inevitably results in Tamasic outcomes: ecological dead zones, poisoned oceans, and a thick "darkness" of atmospheric carbon. "Sattvic Engineering" is the deliberate attempt to break this cycle by elevating harmony and clarity as the primary goals of human ingenuity.

4. Deep Ecology: When Philosophy Becomes Biology

The Samkhya perspective finds a modern kin in Arne Næss's "Deep Ecology." Næss argued that all living beings have intrinsic value, independent of their usefulness to human beings. While Deep Ecology provides the moral "why," Samkhya provides the metaphysical "how."

By understanding that our bodies, our food, and our atmosphere are all expressions of the same Prakriti, the "Man-Nature" conflict is revealed as a form of collective self-harm. When we pollute a river, we are not just damaging a "resource"; we are wounding a part of the universal body that sustains us. Expanding our Purusha (consciousness) means expanding our "circle of care" until it encompasses the entire material ecosystem.

5. Engineering a Sattvic Future: From Extraction to Equilibrium

To "engineer" a Sattvic future, we must stop trying to "manage" nature and start managing our own equilibrium. This requires a structural overhaul of our most basic institutions.

The Sattvic Economy: Beyond the Myth of Infinite Growth

A Sattvic economy replaces the Rajasic obsession with infinite growth with the principle of Santosa (contentment). This isn't about poverty; it's about "enoughness."

Regenerative Design: We must move toward industries that mimic the circularity of Prakriti. In nature, there is no such thing as "waste"—the output of one process is the input for another.

Energy Transition: Fossil fuels are inherently Tamasic; they are literally the "dark" remains of the past that cloud our present atmosphere. Sattvic energy—solar, wind, and tidal—utilizes the living, flowing forces of nature without depleting its essence.

Dharmic Governance and the Rights of Nature

Our legal systems must shift toward "Dharmic" frameworks—laws that uphold the natural order (Rta).

Legal Personhood: Granting legal rights to rivers, forests, and mountains (as seen in landmark cases in New Zealand and India) is a practical application of Samkhya. It recognizes Prakriti as a living, active force rather than an inert pile of raw materials.

Sattvic Technology (Biomimicry): Engineering should not be an act of imposing human will upon the earth, but an act of Biomimicry. We should use Prakriti as our ultimate consultant, designing buildings that breathe like leaves and transportation systems that flow like water.

6. Discussion: The Cultural Revolution of Consciousness

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Transitioning to a Sattvic future is not merely a technical challenge; it is a profound internal revolution. Modern institutions are built on Rajasic competition—the idea that I must win for you to lose. Breaking this cycle requires a two-fold shift:

Ahimsa in Industry: We must strive to minimize the "violent" footprint of our production cycles. This involves a radical transparency in supply chains, ensuring that our comfort in one part of the world does not cause Tamasic suffering in another.

Witness-Centric Consumption: We must decouple "happiness" from "possession." This is a psychological shift where we observe our desires (Purusha witnessing Prakriti) rather than being enslaved by them.

As the Samkhya Karika suggests, Prakriti serves the soul until the soul achieves a state of clarity and liberation. If we continue to consume nature blindly and egoically, we remain bound to the consequences of our own ignorance.

7. Conclusion: The Ontological Alignment

A "Sustainable Future" is not a destination we reach by checking off a list of technological benchmarks. It is a state of being. By viewing the environmental crisis through the lens of Purusha and Prakriti, we realize that the conflict between "Man" and "Nature" is actually an internal conflict within the human heart.

Resolving the climate crisis requires us to graduate from an extractive, Rajasic mindset to a balanced, Sattvic governance. We must stop seeing the earth as a stage for our ego and start seeing it as the sacred ground of our evolution. Only when we treat Prakriti as a partner in our journey can we engineer a future that is not just ecologically resilient, but spiritually fulfilling.

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“Sohrai Art of Jharkhand: Matrilineal Heritage Empowering Contemporary Fashion”

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Abstract

Sohrai art, a mural tradition practised by tribal women in Jharkhand, is increasingly threatened by modernisation, migration, and the decline of traditional mud houses. At the same time, its integration into contemporary fashion presents opportunities for cultural preservation and women's economic empowerment. This study examines how fashion can ethically and sustainably preserve Sohrai's cultural essence while strengthening the matrilineal legacy of Adivasi women artisans. Using ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, product analysis, and thematic content analysis, the research explores cultural transmission, commercialisation pathways, and design translation practices

The findings reveal that Sohrai's transition from mud walls to textiles and fashion platforms serves both as a survival strategy and as a negotiation of authenticity and livelihood. While adaptation into garments and accessories has transformed unpaid ritual labour into income-generating creative work, it also introduces tensions related to standardisation, material compromise, and symbolic integrity. The study concludes that sustainable integration of Sohrai into fashion requires culturally informed design practices, equitable collaboration models, and community-led governance to balance innovation with authenticity.

Keywords:

Sohrai Art, Jharkhand, Women Empowerment, Matrilineal Heritage, Cultural Sustainability, Indigenous Fashion, Ethical Design

Introduction

Sohrai art is a vibrant mural tradition rooted in the tribal communities of Jharkhand and serves as a profound symbol of matrilineal creativity and cultural resilience. Originating from agricultural rituals and fertility celebrations, this indigenous art form—nurtured and sustained primarily by women—represents a rich tapestry of ancestral wisdom, spiritual symbolism, and ecological balance. Handed down from mothers to daughters, Sohrai is more than an artistic expression; it is a living cultural legacy that reinforces feminine agency within tribal society.

Traditionally painted on the earthen walls of village homes in regions such as Hazaribagh, Sohrai art is deeply embedded in the rural and agrarian life of local communities. The term "Sohrai" is derived from the Mundari word meaning "to lash with a stick," symbolizing the intimate tribal bond with cattle and nature. The motifs used in Sohrai paintings express reverence for animals, agriculture, and natural cycles, encapsulating the cultural ethos of indigenous communities.

In recent years, Sohrai art has undergone a significant transformation, transcending its traditional spatial boundaries to find expression in contemporary fashion and modern material culture. Designers and artisans are increasingly reinterpreting Sohrai motifs on textiles, garments, and accessories, integrating tribal aesthetics into broader fashion narratives. This shift has opened new avenues for cultural visibility and economic empowerment for women artisans, while simultaneously raising questions related to authenticity, ethical adaptation, and cultural preservation.

Literature Review

Sohrai has been associated with harvest rituals and fertility ceremonies in Santhal and other tribal communities (Bara, 2022; Kerketta, 2024). The art uses natural pigments: black soils symbolizing the womb, white earth as purity, red lines for fertility, and black lines for spiritual balance—an embodied cosmology reflected in mural motifs of animals, flora, and mythological symbols (Bara, 2022; Srivastava, 2021).

Multiple sources highlight that Sohrai knowledge is transferred from mother to daughter through apprenticeship embedded in domestic rituals and oral storytelling (Bhat & Pavana, 2023; Kerketta, 2024). Its matrilineal tone underpins not only artistic technique but social identity and women's cultural agency (Srivastava, 2021). Advocates like Padma Shri Bulu Imam have been instrumental in bringing Sohrai to national and international attention—linking it to ancient rock art in ISKO and promoting training and market linkages (Marandi, 2022; Nitnaware, 2022). The GI recognition of Sohrai-Khovar in 2020 represents a legal milestone for provenance and protection (Kumari, 2023).

Recent shifts include translating mural designs into textiles and products (Shivani, 2023; Kumar, 2025). While such transitions provide income, literature warns about risks of decontextualization, exploitation, loss of ritual meaning, and appropriation—raising questions about who controls motifs, how profits are distributed, and whether authenticity can be preserved in market forms (Kumar, 2024; Das & Rai, 2025).

From Ritual Walls to Global Platforms

Gustav Imam is a curator and conservationist dedicated to advancing Jharkhand's indigenous art, carrying forward the legacy of his father, Padmashri Bulu Imam. A leading advocate of Sohrai art, he has promoted it on the global stage, including serving as India's curator at the National Gallery of Canada. His work focuses on preserving, documenting, and contemporizing this tribal painting tradition.

Together with his brother Justin, Gustav has helped take Sohrai art beyond its traditional mud-wall murals, adapting it to modern formats such as clothing, greeting cards, and canvas paintings.

1. Preservation Through Medium Transition

Gustav Imam explained that Sohrai art was traditionally practiced on the mud walls of tribal homes. With the gradual decline of mud housing structures, the survival of the art form became uncertain. In response, the art was first transferred onto paper as a preservation strategy. Paper enabled portability, documentation, and exhibition, allowing the art to reach audiences beyond village contexts.

Initially, Sohrai was positioned as *fine art* rather than craft. Exhibitions—both national and international—were the primary mode of dissemination. Between 1995 and 2001, multiple exhibitions were organized to establish Sohrai within formal art circuits. Documentation through publications such as *Harvest Icons* further institutionalized the art form. According to Imam, these early efforts laid the foundation for transforming Sohrai from a localized ritual practice into a recognized cultural movement.

He emphasized that contemporary research on Sohrai must move beyond aesthetic appreciation and address livelihood concerns—particularly how village women artists benefit economically and what cultural elements may be compromised in the process of expansion.

2. Matrilineal Continuity and Prehistoric Lineage

The Imam highlighted the continuity between prehistoric rock art in the Hazaribagh region and contemporary Sohrai painting. While acknowledging archaeological developments across the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, he stressed that the critical connection lies not merely in symbols but in *artistic agency*—specifically, who created the art.

He suggested that prehistoric rock art traditions may have been shaped by women, drawing parallels with indigenous matriarchal societies where women held spiritual authority. In present-day Sohrai practice, women remain the primary creators, painting walls during harvest festivals and ritual occasions. This continuity positions Sohrai within a long-standing matrilineal cultural lineage.

Imam further explained that agricultural settlement led to the annual harvest celebrations that evolved into Sohrai. Ritual painting moved from caves to domestic mud houses, particularly decorating marital and harvest spaces. Thus, Sohrai embodies a transition from sacred prehistoric sites to lived domestic environments, maintaining its ritual and feminine character across time.

3. Cultural Meaning and Symbolic Integrity

Imam underscored that Sohrai motifs are not decorative but symbolic. Animals such as peacocks, deer, goats, fish, and owls are selected due to their ecological and spiritual significance within the community. Motifs reflect lived relationships with the environment rather than arbitrary design choices.

He cautioned that adapting Sohrai into textiles, embroidery, or contemporary materials requires a deep understanding of its symbolism. Exceeding traditional color palettes and meanings risks superficial representation. He emphasized that GI (Geographical Indication) certification is crucial for protecting authenticity and ensuring that indigenous communities benefit from the art's commercialization. According to Imam, technical skill alone does not constitute authenticity. Cultural literacy—knowledge of ritual context, symbolism, and history—is essential for meaningful adaptation into contemporary fashion.

3. Livelihood Models and Women's Empowerment

A significant aspect of Imam's intervention has been the establishment of the Tribal Women Artists' Cooperative under INTACH in 1992. The cooperative model divides proceeds from sales into three components: direct payment to women artists, a welfare fund, and organizational sustainability.

What began with approximately 40 women has expanded to thousands across generations. Many women now operate micro-enterprises, participate in exhibitions, and engage in fair-based markets. This shift represents a transformation of ritual artistic labor into recognized economic activity. However, Imam noted structural challenges: limited tourism in Jharkhand, pricing pressures compared to more commercially detailed crafts, and market expectations that prioritize intricacy over expressive spontaneity. He emphasized that Sohrai's value lies in its spirit and flow rather than mechanical perfection.

4. Threats of Commercialization

The Imam identified commercialization as both an opportunity and a threat. While market expansion supports livelihoods, mass production and superficial replication erode cultural depth. When Sohrai is reproduced purely for economic gain, detached from ritual meaning, it risks becoming an empty stylistic imitation.

He stressed that ethical marketing should prioritize storytelling, limited production, and community recognition rather than scale. Although GI status offers legal protection, enforcement mechanisms remain weak, and designers often appropriate motifs without ensuring reciprocal benefit to the community.

According to Imam, the art will continue to survive in village contexts; however, its representation in the marketplace requires careful quality control and culturally informed engagement.

5. Message to Designers and Policymakers

Bullu Imam (a leading advocate of Sohrai art) advised future designers, researchers, and policymakers to engage deeply with community elders, historical sites, and traditional practitioners before adapting the art. He emphasized shared responsibility: while government support is important, cultural sustainment ultimately depends on collective community commitment. He concluded that safeguarding Sohrai requires balancing rights and responsibilities, authenticity and innovation, and economic development and cultural respect.

Designer–Practitioner Perspectives on Sohrai Art in Contemporary Fashion

The interview with Adam Imam (son of Justin Imam), a Sohrai artist-designer and practitioner, offers critical insights into how traditional mural art is being translated into contemporary fashion while negotiating issues of preservation, livelihood, and cultural integrity. Imam's practice reflects a response to structural changes within tribal life, particularly the decline of mud houses—the original canvas for Sohrai murals. As modernization reduced opportunities for wall painting, the continuity of Sohrai as a living tradition became increasingly precarious. The adaptation of Sohrai motifs into textiles, garments, and accessories thus emerged primarily as a preservation strategy rather than a purely commercial initiative.

The Imam emphasized that traditional wall painting provided no economic return to women artisans, as it functioned within domestic and ritual contexts. Channelizing Sohrai into sarees, jute bags, tote bags, and small products enabled access to new markets and created alternative livelihood opportunities. This shift repositioned Sohrai from unpaid cultural labour to income-generating creative work, integrating the art into contemporary craft and fashion economies.

Collaborations with craft collectives, brands, and cultural institutions played a pivotal role in this transition. Partnerships with textile organizations helped artists understand market demands, design composition, and fabric suitability. Through such collaborations, women artisans were introduced to new tools, including fabric pens, finer brushes, and textile-specific techniques, expanding their technical capabilities beyond wall painting. These institutional interfaces acted as mediators between traditional artistic knowledge and contemporary design systems.

However, translating Sohrai from walls to wearable formats posed significant technical and creative challenges. The Imam noted that wall paintings were traditionally executed intuitively and at a large scale, guided by generational memory rather than predefined designs. Textile applications, by contrast, required miniaturization, precision, and repetition of motifs—particularly in products like sarees, where visual uniformity is essential. This demand for standardization altered the spontaneous nature of Sohrai practice and necessitated retraining, sometimes reducing artisans' engagement due to increased labour intensity.

Material constraints further complicated the adaptation process. Natural earth pigments traditionally used in Sohrai were found to be unsuitable for washable textiles, prompting the adoption of synthetic colours. The Imam identified this as a significant compromise, as synthetic pigments affected both the aesthetic authenticity and tactile qualities of fabrics, often making garments stiffer and less fluid. Additionally, the shift from large wall brushes to fine textile tools increased time investment, reinforcing tensions between artistic expression and production efficiency.

Despite these challenges, conscious efforts were made to preserve Sohrai's cultural essence. The Imam stressed careful selection of motifs to prevent the inappropriate use of sacred or culturally significant imagery on wearable or disposable products. Instead, non-sacred elements such as birds, floral forms, and nature-inspired motifs were prioritized. Narrative traditions—particularly themes of matrilineal knowledge transfer from mother to daughter—were retained within textile designs, ensuring continuity with the ritual origins of Sohrai.

The interview also revealed gaps in formal mechanisms for cultural governance. While recognition and visibility for artists have increased through exhibitions, workshops, and award platforms, structured systems for compensation, intellectual property protection, or prevention of cultural appropriation remain limited. Artistic practice within the community remains open, mainly relying on ethical awareness rather than regulation.

The Imam viewed commercialization as a double-edged process. At the same time, it enables economic sustainability. It ensures the survival of Sohrai beyond disappearing architectural contexts, excessive reproduction, and the risk of commodification, which diminishes its uniqueness and cultural value. Looking ahead, he expressed optimism about Sohrai's future in contemporary fashion, contingent upon the development of natural dyes, ethical collaboration models, and sustained involvement of traditionally trained women artisans.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative ethnographic approach to examine the transition of Sohrai art from ritual mural practice to contemporary fashion. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with founder-promoters, designer-practitioners, and women artisans in Jharkhand to understand cultural transmission, livelihood shifts, and design adaptation processes. Participant observation was conducted during mural-making and textile application practices to document technique, symbolism, and gender roles. Product analysis of garments and accessories incorporating Sohrai motifs was undertaken to assess design translation, material changes, and symbolic retention. Secondary sources, including archival publications and policy documents, were reviewed for historical and institutional context. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify key themes related to matrilineal continuity, commercialization pathways, authenticity, and women's economic empowerment.

FINDINGS/DISCUSSIONS

The findings reveal that the transformation of Sohrai art from mud walls to contemporary fashion platforms represents both a strategy of cultural survival and a complex negotiation of authenticity, livelihood, and matrilineal continuity. Traditionally practiced by tribal women on the mud walls of homes during harvest festivals, Sohrai was embedded within ritual, ecology, and domestic space. However, with the decline of mud housing due to modernization, the primary canvas for this art began to disappear. The initial transfer of Sohrai onto paper and its exhibition within formal art circuits marked a critical intervention that repositioned the tradition from a localized ritual practice to a recognized cultural expression. This shift institutionalized Sohrai within national and international art spaces, laying the foundation for its later integration into contemporary fashion.

The adaptation of Sohrai into textiles, sarees, and accessories emerged primarily as a preservation and livelihood strategy. Wall painting, although culturally significant, did not generate direct economic return for women artists. By translating motifs into wearable formats, practitioners created alternative income streams and expanded market access. This shift transformed unpaid domestic cultural labor into recognized creative work within craft and fashion economies. Cooperative models and collaborations with craft collectives and textile brands facilitated this transition by introducing women artisans to new tools, materials, and design techniques suited to fabric-based production. These collaborations functioned as mediating spaces between indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary design practices, enabling skill expansion while retaining core visual identities.

At the same time, the findings highlight significant tensions in the translation process. Traditional Sohrai painting is intuitive, large-scale, and guided by generational memory rather than standardized repetition. Textile adaptation, however, demands miniaturization, precision, and uniformity—particularly in garments such as sarees where motifs must be repeated consistently. This requirement alters the spontaneous flow characteristic of mural practice and increases labor intensity, sometimes affecting artisans' engagement. Material constraints further complicate adaptation. Natural earth pigments central to Sohrai's aesthetic and ecological identity are unsuitable for washable textiles, necessitating the use of synthetic dyes. This shift compromises tactile authenticity and sustainability, revealing a gap between traditional ecological knowledge and current fashion production systems.

Despite these challenges, efforts have been made to preserve symbolic integrity. Sohrai motifs are not merely decorative but embody ecological relationships and spiritual meanings, often reflecting matrilineal transmission of knowledge from mother to daughter. Careful selection of motifs for fashion products—prioritizing birds and floral forms while avoiding sacred imagery—demonstrates conscious cultural negotiation. The retention of narrative elements in textile storytelling suggests that matrilineal heritage remains embedded in contemporary formats.

However, the research also identifies structural limitations in governance and protection mechanisms. While artists receive increased recognition through exhibitions, workshops, and public platforms, formal systems ensuring intellectual property rights, fair compensation, and protection against appropriation remain underdeveloped. Commercialization presents a dual dynamic: it provides economic empowerment and ensures survival beyond disappearing architectural contexts, yet risks reducing Sohrai to repetitive stylistic replication detached from ritual meaning. The findings suggest that Sohrai's future sustainability in contemporary fashion depends on balancing innovation with authenticity, strengthening community-led participation, developing sustainable dyeing solutions, and establishing ethical collaboration frameworks.

Overall, the integration of Sohrai into contemporary fashion demonstrates that matrilineal heritage can function as a dynamic force within modern creative economies. When guided by cultural literacy, equitable partnerships, and community-centered models, fashion can serve not merely as a market mechanism but as a platform for safeguarding indigenous identity and empowering Adivasi women artisans.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the integration of Sohrai art into contemporary fashion represents not merely an aesthetic adaptation but a strategic intervention for cultural preservation and women's empowerment. The transition from mud walls to paper, exhibitions, and eventually textiles illustrates a dynamic evolution driven by the need to sustain a matrilineal heritage amid modernisation and architectural change. While early institutional efforts established Sohrai within formal art circuits, its translation into fashion has expanded livelihood opportunities for Adivasi women, transforming ritual-based artistic labor into recognised economic participation. However, this transition also introduces tensions between authenticity and commercialisation, spontaneity and standardisation, and natural ecological practices and industrial production methods. The findings underscore that ethical collaboration, cultural literacy, GI protection, cooperative economic models, and sustainable material

innovation are essential to maintaining symbolic integrity and community ownership. Ultimately, the future of Sohrai in contemporary fashion depends on balancing innovation with responsibility—ensuring that fashion serves as a platform for safeguarding matrilineal knowledge, strengthening indigenous agency, and sustaining cultural identity rather than reducing it to commodified surface design.

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‘AI-Enabled Low-Carbon Strategies for Resilient and Sustainable Urban Ecosystems’

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Abstract

In the frontier of accelerating climate change and rapid urbanization, AI-driven low-carbon strategies emerge as one of the transformative pathways for building a resilient and sustainable urban ecosystem. This present review explores the role of various artificial intelligence tools such as machine learning, digital twins, intelligent sensing networks, and predictive optimization, which contribute to reducing the carbon footprint in domains like energy systems, mobility, buildings, waste management, and urban planning. Furthermore, by combining real-time data analytics with adaptive decision-making, the efficiency of AI-supported systems can be enhanced, and a potential reduction in the emission profile can be achieved. It also helps to optimize the circular resource flows and enables climate-responsive infrastructures. Therefore, in this study, the synergistic role of AI in fostering resilience through early warning systems, climate risk forecasting, and adaptive urban governance frameworks has been explored. In addition to this, it also helps to identify the associated challenges related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and technological readiness. Hence, inclusive deployment of AI also helps in maintaining socio-economic equity. Overall, this work describes AI-enabled low-carbon strategies, which enable a robust foundation for creating smarter, greener, and more resilient urban infrastructure, leading towards a sustainable ecosystem and net-zero urban futures.

Keywords: *Low-Carbon Strategies, Urban Ecosystem, Sustainability, Artificial Intelligence, Climate Change.*

1. Introduction

Urbanization contributes to significant energy consumption globally [1]. As a rough approximation, by 2050, around 68% of the world population is going to shift towards urban areas. In addition to the energy consumption, rapid growth of urbanization also causes a significant amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, especially from various industrial and transportation sectors, which creates severe environmental impact [2]. Besides, extreme weather events such as heatwaves, flooding, and air pollution also cause severe climate impacts. Hence, to address the issue of sustainability and mitigate climate change, international frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement highlight the need for innovative strategies that help to reduce the carbon footprint in the environment while enhancing system resilience [3]. Hence, the achievement of sustainable urban ecosystems requires integrated solutions that decrease emissions and strengthen resilience against climate impacts. In this context, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), deep learning (DL), and intelligent optimization are widely used for real-time analysis, predictive modeling, etc. [4]. Furthermore, integrated sensor networks with advanced IoT infrastructure enhance the system resilience many fold. They offer an unprecedented pathway for an adaptive, low-carbon future. Besides, AI-enabled low-carbon strategies give a transformative approach for the development of resilient and sustainable urban ecosystems. These strategies are used to optimize energy consumption in buildings and to manage intelligent transportation systems [5]. It also helps to improve waste management efficiency, which leads to a circular economy [6]. Therefore, AI can act as an effective tool in case of real-time monitoring and adaptive management of urban resources to ensure environmental sustainability through data-driven decisions [7]. The aim of this review study is to explore the current landscape of AI-enabled low-carbon strategies across urban ecosystems to develop a resilient low-carbon future. The associated challenges and future opportunities of these AI-enabled technologies are also explored in detail.

2. Foundations of Sustainability and Resilience

2.1 Urban Sustainability and Resilience

Urban sustainability and resilience mainly depend on environmental adaptability, economic vitality, and social equity. In a broader sense, resilience talks about the system's capacity to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from extreme climate conditions. Whereas sustainability focuses on mitigating various urban needs like energy, mobility, housing, etc. while minimizing ecological footprints and optimizing the available resources. Hence, through the integration of various mitigation strategies by using AI-enabled low-carbon strategies along with various adaptation objectives for optimizing the urban ecosystem, a carbon-neutral urban infrastructure can be

developed [8]. This approach also improves system efficiency and decision-making capabilities. For this purpose, artificial intelligence makes use of real-time sensing, predictive analytics, and machine learning methods to model complex urban systems. This technique is also used to identify emissions hotspots and, hence, manage adaptive responses across various sectors like energy, transport, waste, water, and land-use systems. Therefore, a transition towards low-carbon strategies is not only technologically efficient but also environmentally regenerative and provides resilience to future uncertainties [9].

2.2 AI-enabled low-carbon strategies

In order to develop a resilient and sustainable urban ecosystem, AI-enabled low-carbon strategies play a pivotal role [10]. For this purpose, technologies like machine learning (ML), deep learning (DL), reinforcement learning (RL), natural language processing (NLP), and predictive analytics are used to analyze the big dataset generated from various sources like sensors, satellites, IoT devices, etc. By using these strategies, predictive modeling of energy demand, emission profile, and climate risks can also be done, which gives a fair forecast about upcoming natural calamities so that real-time resource optimization can be done in real time [11]. On the other hand, urban resilience could be further enhanced by incorporating AI-driven decision support systems, enabling responses to extreme events, infrastructure failures, and environmental stresses. The reduction in environmental carbon footprint through implementing multi-objective optimization algorithms is also being practiced. Furthermore, system transparency and governance can be further enhanced through ethical AI frameworks, which ensure policy-relevant low-carbon transitions. Another aspect of AI-enabled low-carbon strategies lies in the deployment of efficient renewable energy systems, which includes systems thinking and sustainability science [12]. Although the main focus is to minimize environmental carbon footprint, reduction of climate-induced shocks along with reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is also taken care of. These strategies are further supported by principles of low-carbon transitions and circular economy, which ensure resource efficiency and ecosystem regeneration.

3. AI-Enabled Energy Management

3.1 Smart Grids Optimization

AI algorithms play a crucial role in optimizing grid operations through forecasting energy demand and balancing supply-demand in real time. It develops a cornerstone of AI-enabled low-carbon strategies for resilient and sustainable urban ecosystems. Additionally, intelligent energy systems leverage AI to enhance grid flexibility and reliability through forecasting energy demand [13]. The load balancing may be optimized by using machine learning, deep learning, real-time data analytics, etc. Therefore, greater resilience can be achieved via three major pathways: load sharing, integration of renewable energy systems, and reinforcement of demand response. AI further drives demand-response programs through adjusting consumption patterns of buildings, industries, and electric vehicles based on real-time data analytics generated from various sectors like user behavior and grid conditions [14]. This approach helps to reduce energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, AI-enabled smart grids and demand-response systems drive towards a low-carbon future, which enhances energy security and fosters flexible urban energy ecosystems.

3.2 AI for Energy Optimization in Green Buildings

As buildings represent a significant amount of urban energy use, AI-driven building energy management systems (BEMS) help to optimize urban energy systems through reducing energy consumption [15]. Therefore, in order to make accurate predictions of energy demand in building management systems, integration of tools like machine learning, deep learning, etc. is used to fetch real-time data from smart meters and IoT sensors. Furthermore, the occupancy patterns and thermal behavior of buildings can also be predicted through these tools. This approach also helps in adaptive control of heating, ventilation, air conditioning, lighting, and renewable energy integration, which minimizes energy waste without compromising the occupant comfort [16]. Hence, improved energy efficiency and lowering operational costs lead to a resilient energy ecosystem. So AI-enabled building energy optimization helps to develop a resilient urban ecosystem by aligning energy efficiency goals with decarbonization strategies.

3.3 AI for Microgrids and Distributed Generation

As a part of low-carbon strategies, artificial intelligence (AI) provides efficient management of microgrids and distributed energy generation systems through proper coordination of distributed energy resources (DERs), storage systems, and load priorities for developing a resilient and sustainable urban ecosystem. In this system, AI supports coordination of diverse energy sources such as rooftop solar, wind, energy storage, and electric vehicles within urban microgrids to mitigate energy demand and to minimize transmission losses [17]. The system efficiency can be further enhanced by implementing various renewable energy systems. Hence, system reliability can be increased manifold, especially during peak load hours or in case of extreme weather conditions, by forecasting factors like load demand, renewable generation, grid disturbances, etc. In addition to this, a decentralized decision-making process can be practiced for enabling microgrids to operate autonomously or in grid-connected modes, which ensures energy security [18]. Hence, on a whole, AI-integrated microgrids and distributed generation systems contribute significantly towards building a low-carbon urban ecosystem.

4. AI-Enabled Sustainable Urban Mobility

4.1 Traffic Flow Optimization

Urban mobility contributes a large share of transportation emissions. The transportation system is further improved by implementing AI for optimized traffic control [19]. Machine learning models make use of real-time traffic data to predict the traffic congestion and optimize signal timings. Hence, a significant reduction in traffic load can be achieved through the application of smart technologies. It indirectly helps to reduce the travel time and CO₂ emissions. For this purpose, data integration is done, which is generated from sources like IoT sensors, GPS-enabled vehicles, mobile devices, intelligent transport infrastructure, etc. Through predictive analysis, activities like dynamic traffic congestion control, adaptive route guidance, and real-time congestion management can be done very effectively [20]. Furthermore, AI-driven traffic management prioritizes public transport, which encourages a shift towards a low-carbon future. Besides, by enabling rapid response to disruptions caused by accidents or extreme weather events, system robustness can be enhanced manifold. Therefore, collectively AI-enabled intelligent traffic prediction and management systems ensure an efficient transportation system and help to develop a climate-resilient, low-carbon urban ecosystem.

4.2 Electric and Autonomous Vehicles (EVs/AVs)

Urban mobility has been particularly improved by introducing the electric vehicles (EVs) and autonomous vehicles (AVs), which are enabled with AI navigation to reduce the energy consumption and travel time [21]. The application of AI technologies in the routing for EV fleets enables optimized battery use and intelligent charging management. For this purpose, real-time data, machine learning, and advanced sensing to optimize traffic flow conditions are considered. It also gives a direction of shifting towards a low-carbon future by reducing the dependency on fossil fuels. Furthermore, effective urban traffic planning by coordinating vehicles with intelligent infrastructure, such as smart traffic signals and connected road networks, also enhances safety and increases system resilience [22]. Hence, AI-enabled electric and autonomous mobility systems drive toward a resilient, low-carbon ecosystem.

4.3 Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS)

AI enables sustainable urban mobility through Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS), which confirms the transformation towards a low-carbon urban ecosystem. Particularly in MaaS, transport modes like public transit, shared mobility, electric vehicles, etc. are integrated into a unified digital platform in order to ensure seamless trip planning, booking, and payment [23]. For this purpose, real-time data analytics, machine learning, and predictive modeling are brought into the picture to optimize route selection, which leads to reducing congestion, energy consumption, and greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, it also encourages the utilization of shared and public transport over private car ownership, which has a direct impact on the reduction of carbon footprints in the environment [24]. Additionally, disruptions caused by extreme weather events, infrastructure failures, or demand fluctuations are taken well care of through the use of AI-enabled MaaS systems. Hence, AI-enabled MaaS systems play a pivotal role in advancing sustainable urban mobility.

5. AI for Carbon Reduction

5.1 Design Optimization of buildings and constructions

The optimization of building layouts and materials for energy performance can be effectively done through using artificial intelligence (AI). In this approach, the carbon footprint in the construction sector can be reduced

manifoldly. Further through integration of machine learning algorithms with Building Information Modeling (BIM) and parametric design tools, various design alternatives can be explored in early planning stages to reduce embodied and operational carbon [25, 26]. Factors like local climate data, energy demand patterns, and life-cycle assessment metrics are used to optimize building orientation and material selection. Here, AI-driven generative design ensures selection of low-carbon materials along with efficient structural layouts for reduced energy consumption without compromising the occupant comfort and safety [27]. Another advantage of using predictive models is predicting long-term performance under future climate scenarios, which ensures resilience under extreme weather conditions and resource scarcity. Moreover, through data-driven, performance-oriented design decisions, AI can optimize the system performance by making a significant reduction in the emission profile.

5.2 AI in Predictive Maintenance

In order to develop a resilient and sustainable urban ecosystem, AI-driven predictive maintenance has emerged as a useful tool that results in a significant reduction in the emission profile in buildings and the construction sector [28]. The performance monitoring of critical assets such as HVAC systems, elevators, structural components, etc. can be effectively done by collating data from various sources, like sensors and building management systems. The malfunctioning of equipment or equipment inefficiency can be detected beforehand, which helps timely maintenance to avoid energy losses and unplanned failures. This strategy also helps to extend the lifespan of building components and reduces the demand for carbon-intensive replacement materials. Additionally, AI-enabled predictive maintenance ensures optimized energy use, thereby lowering electricity and fuel consumption and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

6. AI for Urban Air Quality and Environmental Monitoring

6.1 Real-Time Sensing

The prediction of urban air quality by AI algorithms is extensively used, which can fetch data from air quality sensors and remote sensing by using techniques like real-time sensing and intelligent analytics [29]. For this purpose, high-resolution data can be captured by AI through integrating dense networks of IoT-based sensors, satellite observations, and mobile monitoring platforms regarding the emission profile of various pollutants like PM_{2.5}, NO_x, SO₂, ozone, etc. [30]. These captured datasets are further utilized by machine learning algorithms to identify pollution hotspots and to forecast short-term air quality trends. In comparison to the traditional methods available for the detection of the potential sources of emission, the abovementioned approach can identify the emission sources with more precision. Hence, an AI-powered environmental sensing technique develops a good interaction between urban activities, policy interventions, and environmental outcomes, which drives toward a low-carbon urban ecosystem.

6.2 Urban Heat Island Mitigation

Artificial intelligence (AI) does environmental monitoring in order to mitigate the urban heat island (UHI) effect by using AI-enabled low-carbon strategies for resilient and sustainable urban ecosystems [31]. Here, high-resolution spatiotemporal mapping of air pollutants, surface temperatures, and heat stress hotspots across various sectors is done by extracting data from satellite imagery, ground-based sensors, Internet of Things (IoT) networks, etc. On the other hand, interactions between parameters like land use, traffic emissions, building density, and microclimatic conditions can be well predicted by using machine learning algorithms. This technique helps the urban people to have a fair idea about UHI intensity under various extreme climate conditions [32].

7. AI in urban planning and land use optimization

The energy efficiency can be enhanced by developing an AI-supported sustainable urban design by identifying patterns of land use. For example, integrating GIS with ML helps to provide optimal locations for green infrastructure and mixed use development [33]. In addition to this, AI techniques are also used to simulate outcomes of planning decisions on emissions and quality of life.

8. AI in Waste Management and Circular Economy

8.1 Automated Sorting and Recycling

The efficient waste management in urban infrastructure can be achieved through AI-driven automated sorting and recycling techniques, which reduce the carbon footprints of landfills [34]. In this regard, efficient sorting of

waste materials can be done by using various soft computing tools like machine learning and robotics to identify, classify, and separate diverse waste streams, including plastics, metals, papers, etc. The adaptive optimization of the sorting process can be carried out by using various AI algorithms, which mainly work on real-time datasets [35]. The recovery of useful materials from waste streams can also be improved by using AI algorithms in advanced waste management systems, ensuring high operational efficiency in material recovery. AI-supported automated sorting systems also reduce the energy consumption and save manual labor. It also reduces landfill dependency, enabling closed-loop material flows aligned with circular economy principles. Moreover, AI-enabled waste systems provide a future plan of actions for the urban planning system. Hence, an AI-powered automated sorting system ensures urban resilience by transforming waste into a resource, reducing environmental burdens, and supporting sustainable, low-carbon circular city transitions.

8.2 Predictive Collection Routing

Artificial intelligence optimizes the route for the waste collection system, which leads to saving traffic time and enables effective waste management. Implementation of strategies like smart bins with sensors and real-time data on waste generation patterns provides a low-carbon urban ecosystem [36]. By using AI systems, waste fill levels can be accurately predicted, and it can also optimize the collection schedules. Optimizing the collection route leads to a reduction of unnecessary fuel consumption, hence resulting in reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Besides, the operational efficiency can also be enhanced through the predictive routing method, which introduces low-emission vehicles. In addition to this, timely waste disposal techniques, especially during peak load hours, reduce potential health risks and improve service reliability [37]. Therefore, from the point of view of a circular urban ecosystem, AI-enabled routing supports better segregation, recycling, and recovery of resources by aligning collection strategies with material flows.

8.3 Circular Economy Decision Support

Artificial intelligence (AI), along with material flow analysis and lifecycle assessment, plays a crucial role in the development of low-carbon circular economy principles by using data-driven decision support systems [38, 39]. In this system, various data have been collected from smart bins, IoT sensors, satellite imagery, and municipal databases to optimize waste collection routes and to reduce fuel consumption. Hence, by aligning operational efficiency with long-term circularity goals, AI-enabled waste management systems strengthen urban resilience and reduce environmental burdens.

9. Integrated Urban Planning and Governance

9.1 Digital Twins and Simulation

Urban digital twins, along with integrated urban planning and governance, make use of artificial intelligence to simulate scenarios for energy use and emissions. Moreover, data-rich virtual replicas of cities can also be made using AI technologies [40]. It helps the urban policy planners to simulate complex urban systems under different climate conditions. It also helps the governments to assess the policy trade-offs and to optimize the investments.

9.2 Participatory Platforms

The possible citizen feedback from various urban ecosystems can be collected with the help of AI-powered platforms, which can further be used to optimize participatory planning processes, creating inclusive and responsive urban strategies [41].

9.3 Policy and Regulation

The comparison of available data with emissions standards can be done by using AI technologies. It is also used in monitoring compliance with and informing dynamic policy frameworks such as congestion pricing or emissions trading systems [42].

10. Challenges and Limitations

Despite various advantages, there are several challenges and limitations associated with the implementation of AI-driven technologies. They can be classified as follows:

10.1 Data Privacy and Security

AI depends on high-quality urban data, although many cities face gaps, inconsistencies, or privacy concerns around data sharing [43].

10.2 Equity and Access

AI-enabled technologies must be able to avoid exacerbating social inequities. Algorithms should be transparent and designed to serve diverse populations [44].

10.3 Ethical and Governance Risks

Accountability, data sovereignty, and algorithmic transparency require robust governance to mitigate risks [45].

10.4 Technical and Institutional Barriers

Technical difficulties arise while implementing AI into legacy infrastructure and ensuring interoperability across sectors. Moreover, institutional capacity and governance frameworks must evolve to support AI adoption responsibly [46].

11. Future Directions

11.1 AI for building interpretability

Development of transparent models that support interpretability helps to build trust among policymakers and citizens [47].

11.2 AI in Cross-Sectoral Integration

Therefore, research should emphasize developing integrative models that can link energy, transport, water, and land use [48].

11.3 AI for climate adaptation

Along with mitigation of various climate goals, AI can enhance adaptive capacity, such as flood forecasting, heatwave early warning systems, and resilient infrastructure optimization [49].

12. Conclusion

Therefore, it can be concluded that AI holds transformative potential to catalyze the low-carbon transitions and advance resilient, sustainable urban ecosystems. The efficiency across sectors like energy, transportation, buildings, waste, and governance can be enhanced manyfolds by implementing AI enabled low carbon strategies. It can further enhance predictive capacity, and participatory decision-making process of urban ecosystem. However, there are some technological and social barrier regarding the implementation of Ai enabled technologies. In the present review the AI enabled low carbon strategies to build sustainable urban ecosystem has been discussed in details. The review also focuses on various associated challenges during implementation of these strategies. It also highlights the future directives and innovations involved in the successful implementation of AI enabled technologies.

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“Collaboration is the New Capital: The Peer Leadership in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems”

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Abstract

In contemporary organizational, educational, and social landscapes, the rise of peer leadership represents a transformative shift in how influence, responsibility, and collaboration are distributed across teams and communities. Unlike traditional hierarchical models that concentrate power in the hands of a few, peer leadership embraces a decentralized structure that empowers individuals at all levels to take initiative, lead by example, and contribute to collective success. This approach is grounded in principles of equality, shared responsibility, mutual respect, and trust, enabling more inclusive and dynamic environments where diverse voices are heard, valued, and acted upon. The growing importance of peer leadership stems from its capacity to foster engagement, innovation, and resilience, particularly in contexts that require adaptability, agility, and continuous learning. At the core of peer leadership lies the belief that leadership is not a title or position but a behaviour and a mindset that can be exhibited by anyone.

Keywords: Collaboration, New Capital, Peer, Leadership, Entrepreneurial

The Rise of Peer Leadership

In contemporary organizational, educational, and social landscapes, the rise of peer leadership represents a transformative shift in how influence, responsibility, and collaboration are distributed across teams and communities. Unlike traditional hierarchical models that concentrate power in the hands of a few, peer leadership embraces a decentralized structure that empowers individuals at all levels to take initiative, lead by example, and contribute to collective success. This approach is grounded in principles of equality, shared responsibility, mutual respect, and trust, enabling more inclusive and dynamic environments where diverse voices are heard, valued, and acted upon. The growing importance of peer leadership stems from its capacity to foster engagement, innovation, and resilience, particularly in contexts that require adaptability, agility, and continuous learning. At the core of peer leadership lies the belief that leadership is not a title or position but a behavior and a mindset that can be exhibited by anyone. In this model, influence is earned through credibility, competence, and interpersonal relationships rather than formal authority. As a result, peer leaders are often individuals who demonstrate emotional intelligence, collaborative spirit, and a strong sense of purpose. They serve as role models who inspire others through their actions, motivate peers to achieve shared goals, and facilitate a culture of support and accountability. This democratization of leadership enables more people to step up, contribute their unique strengths, and drive positive change within their spheres of influence. In educational settings, peer leadership has become increasingly significant in promoting student agency, fostering a sense of belonging, and enhancing academic and social outcomes. Programs that cultivate peer mentors, peer tutors, and student ambassadors are shown to improve retention rates, academic performance, and emotional well-being among students. These peer leaders not only provide relatable guidance and support but also serve as conduits for feedback, advocacy, and community building. By empowering students to take active roles in shaping their learning environments, educational institutions foster a more engaged and resilient student body equipped to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

Similarly, in the workplace, peer leadership plays a critical role in cultivating collaborative cultures and high-performing teams. As organizations flatten their hierarchies and embrace cross-functional collaboration, peer leaders become essential in bridging gaps, resolving conflicts, and facilitating knowledge sharing. They act as champions of change, encouraging experimentation, continuous improvement, and peer-to-peer learning. Their ability to influence without authority enables smoother adaptation to new technologies, processes, and organizational shifts. Furthermore, the presence of strong peer leaders enhances employee morale, psychological safety, and retention, as individuals feel more supported, recognized, and connected to their colleagues. The importance of peer leadership is also evident in community organizations and social movements, where grassroots

leadership and collective action are fundamental to driving impact. Peer leaders often emerge organically within these settings, mobilizing others through shared experiences, cultural relevance, and authentic relationships. Whether advocating for social justice, public health, or environmental sustainability, peer leaders amplify marginalized voices, challenge systemic barriers, and foster community empowerment. Their proximity to the issues and their peers enables them to build trust, cultivate solidarity, and drive meaningful, lasting change from within. One of the key strengths of peer leadership is its capacity to cultivate inclusive environments.

Empowering Entrepreneurs through Peer Networks: Peer networks benefits.

In the ever-evolving and often unpredictable landscape of entrepreneurship, peer networks have emerged as a powerful force for empowerment, collaboration, and growth. Entrepreneurs, particularly those navigating the early stages of business development or operating in uncertain markets, frequently face isolation, limited resources, and high-stakes decision-making. In this context, peer networks provide a vital support system that fosters mutual learning, emotional resilience, access to opportunities, and the exchange of practical insights. The collective intelligence and shared experiences within these networks are crucial in helping entrepreneurs overcome challenges, refine their strategies, and accelerate their ventures' success. By facilitating relationships among individuals with similar goals, challenges, and ambitions, peer networks serve as incubators of innovation and resilience, driving economic and social progress in diverse sectors and communities. (Abbasi M. H. et al. 2011) One of the most significant advantages of peer networks for entrepreneurs is the opportunity for experiential learning. Unlike traditional mentorship or formal education, peer networks thrive on horizontal knowledge sharing, where members contribute equally and benefit reciprocally. Entrepreneurs can discuss common pain points, share lessons learned from failures, and exchange strategies that have worked in similar contexts. This collaborative learning environment allows entrepreneurs to avoid costly mistakes, adapt successful practices, and gain real-world insights that are often more applicable than theoretical knowledge. Moreover, learning from peers who are "in the trenches" lends credibility and relatability to the advice received, strengthening trust and applicability.

Beyond knowledge sharing, peer networks offer critical emotional and psychological support. The entrepreneurial journey is often marked by stress, uncertainty, and self-doubt. Being part of a community that understands these emotional highs and lows can help entrepreneurs maintain motivation, confidence, and perspective. Peer networks provide a safe space to express vulnerability, seek encouragement, and celebrate milestones—both big and small. This camaraderie fosters emotional resilience and mental well-being, which are essential to sustaining long-term entrepreneurial endeavors. Knowing that others are navigating similar journeys can reduce feelings of isolation and increase the sense of belonging and shared purpose. (Abbasi M. H. et al. 2011) Peer networks also serve as invaluable sources of accountability. By engaging with a group of like-minded entrepreneurs, individuals are more likely to set goals, track progress, and remain committed to their plans. Regular check-ins, collaborative problem-solving sessions, and progress-sharing forums create a culture of responsibility and forward momentum. This accountability is especially important for solo entrepreneurs and founders of small ventures who may not have formal structures or supervisors to keep them on track. Peer networks help fill this gap, providing the nudge and encouragement needed to stay focused, adapt to changes, and persevere through setbacks. Access to opportunities is another compelling benefit of peer networks. These communities often serve as conduits to valuable resources such as funding, talent, partnerships, and market access. Entrepreneurs within the network can refer each other to investors, recommend trusted service providers, or collaborate on joint ventures. Peer networks can open doors that may otherwise remain closed, especially for underrepresented or marginalized entrepreneurs who lack access to traditional business ecosystems. By leveraging the collective reach and credibility of the network, entrepreneurs can amplify their visibility, expand their influence, and accelerate their growth trajectories.

Access to Mentorship and Guidance: Mentorship importance.

In today's fast-paced, highly competitive, and complex professional environments, access to mentorship and guidance stands as a vital component of personal, academic, and professional development. Mentorship serves as a bridge between experience and potential, connecting seasoned professionals or individuals with substantial knowledge to those at earlier stages of their journey. (Ardianti R. et al. 2018) Whether in education, entrepreneurship, corporate sectors, science, creative industries, or social activism, mentorship plays an irreplaceable role in fostering growth, building confidence, and transferring valuable knowledge. The presence of a mentor can be the difference between success and stagnation, clarity and confusion, or resilience and burnout. As societies evolve toward more collaborative and learning-focused ecosystems, the importance of mentorship and structured guidance becomes increasingly pronounced—not only as a support mechanism but as a cornerstone of empowerment and transformation. At its essence, mentorship is a relationship rooted in trust, mutual respect, and shared goals. It enables mentees to learn from the lived experiences of their mentors—bypassing years of trial

and error—by gaining direct insights, tailored advice, and emotional support. Unlike generalized instruction, mentorship offers personalized attention to an individual's unique challenges, aspirations, and context. This individualized approach accelerates learning and development, allowing mentees to navigate uncertainty with greater confidence and capability. (Ardianti R. et al. 2018) Mentors act as sounding boards, offering constructive feedback, guidance on decision-making, and strategies for overcoming obstacles. This dynamic empowers individuals to identify blind spots, seize opportunities, and make informed choices.

In the realm of education, mentorship is instrumental in shaping academic achievement, motivation, and long-term career aspirations. Students with mentors often demonstrate higher levels of engagement, persistence, and self-efficacy. (Arora M. et al. 2022) Mentors—whether teachers, alumni, or older peers—can demystify academic expectations, provide study strategies, support transitions between educational levels, and inspire through their own success stories. For first-generation students or those from marginalized backgrounds, mentorship can be particularly transformative, offering role models who validate their experiences and guide them through systems that may otherwise feel inaccessible or intimidating. Educational mentorship fosters a growth mindset, instills discipline, and cultivates resilience—all essential traits for lifelong success. In the professional world, mentorship is a critical driver of career advancement and skill development. Entry-level employees, aspiring leaders, and career changers alike benefit from the wisdom and networks of experienced professionals who can help them set goals, navigate organizational culture, and build essential soft and hard skills. (Arora M. et al. 2022) Mentorship helps demystify workplace politics, identify pathways to promotion, and align personal values with career objectives. Moreover, mentors often serve as advocates and sponsors, introducing mentees to influential stakeholders, recommending them for opportunities, or providing letters of reference. These forms of social capital are invaluable in propelling individuals forward, particularly in competitive industries where connections can significantly influence success.

Networking Opportunities and Collaborations: Networking benefits.

In an increasingly interconnected and dynamic world, the importance of networking and collaboration cannot be overstated. These two intertwined elements serve as critical enablers of individual, organizational, and societal progress. Whether in the realm of business, education, research, arts, public policy, or community development, effective networking and strategic collaborations foster knowledge sharing, resource optimization, innovation, and resilience. (Chib S. et al. 2025) Networking opens doors to new opportunities, while collaborations amplify impact by uniting diverse strengths and capabilities toward common goals. Together, they form the foundation of vibrant ecosystems in which ideas flourish, partnerships thrive, and collective growth becomes attainable. At the heart of networking lies the principle of connection. Through networking, individuals build relationships that extend beyond transactional exchanges, nurturing bonds based on mutual trust, shared interests, and long-term value creation. These connections often provide access to mentorship, job opportunities, funding, market insights, and a broader understanding of industry trends. Networking empowers individuals to stay informed, relevant, and competitive in their fields. For professionals and entrepreneurs alike, a well-maintained network serves as a living resource—ready to offer guidance, support, and collaboration when needed. One of the most immediate benefits of networking is the expansion of opportunities. Attending industry events, conferences, webinars, workshops, and social gatherings enables individuals to meet new contacts who may become clients, partners, mentors, or even lifelong collaborators. These interactions can spark business deals, collaborative research, creative partnerships, or career transitions. (Chib S. et al. 2025) In many industries, "who you know" plays a significant role in advancement, and networking ensures that individuals remain visible and accessible in relevant circles. A single meaningful connection can change the trajectory of a career or catalyze the success of a project.

Networking also fosters the exchange of knowledge and best practices. When individuals from diverse backgrounds, industries, or disciplines come together, they bring unique experiences and perspectives to the table. (Elliott C. et al. 2020) These exchanges enrich understanding, challenge assumptions, and inspire new ways of thinking. Through discussions with peers, thought leaders, and domain experts, individuals gain access to emerging ideas, problem-solving strategies, and practical insights that may not be readily available through formal education or isolated work environments. This form of peer learning encourages continuous professional development and equips individuals with the adaptive skills necessary for success in a fast-changing world. Collaboration, a natural extension of effective networking, takes these benefits even further by enabling the co-creation of value. Collaborations unite people and organizations to achieve shared objectives that would be difficult or impossible to accomplish alone. (Elliott C. et al. 2020) Whether it involves interdisciplinary research, public-private partnerships, co-branded marketing campaigns, open-source technology development, or social innovation projects, collaboration harnesses collective intelligence and distributed resources. By leveraging complementary skills, diverse perspectives, and shared infrastructure, collaborators can create synergistic outcomes that transcend individual contributions. In the business sector, collaborations are a driving force behind innovation, market expansion, and strategic growth. Companies increasingly partner with startups, universities,

NGOs, and even competitors to develop new products, enter emerging markets, and address complex challenges. For entrepreneurs and small business owners, collaboration with larger entities or fellow entrepreneurs can unlock access to capital, technical expertise, distribution channels, and customer bases. These strategic alliances accelerate innovation cycles, reduce costs, and enhance competitiveness. Moreover, collaborative approaches encourage a culture of openness and experimentation, where calculated risks and bold ideas are more likely to thrive.

Shared Learning and Knowledge Exchange: Shared learning importance.

In an increasingly interconnected and rapidly evolving world, the importance of shared learning and knowledge exchange has never been more pronounced. (Falck O. et al. 2012) As the pace of technological advancements, societal changes, and global challenges accelerates, the need for collaborative learning environments, the exchange of insights, and the sharing of expertise becomes essential to navigating complexity and driving progress. Whether in academia, business, social innovation, healthcare, or community development, shared learning allows individuals, organizations, and societies to collectively advance by leveraging diverse perspectives, experiences, and resources. This collaborative approach transcends individual limitations, enabling both personal and collective growth, fostering resilience, and building a foundation for sustainable innovation. Shared learning is not merely about the transfer of knowledge, but the creation of a dynamic, interactive ecosystem where everyone involved actively contributes to the development of solutions, ideas, and practices. At its core, shared learning is rooted in the idea that knowledge is not a static commodity but a living, evolving process that thrives in collaborative settings. (Falck O. et al. 2012) It reflects the belief that the best solutions arise not from isolated effort, but from the collective wisdom and diverse insights of a community. Shared learning involves individuals, groups, or organizations coming together to teach, learn, and co-create solutions that address common challenges. This exchange of knowledge allows for a more holistic, multidimensional approach to problem-solving and decision-making, where ideas are tested, refined, and adapted based on feedback from multiple sources.

One of the most significant benefits of shared learning is the acceleration of innovation. When individuals from diverse backgrounds, industries, or disciplines come together to exchange knowledge and insights, they can generate novel ideas and solutions that would not emerge in a siloed environment. (Farr J. V. et al. 2009) This cross-pollination of ideas fosters creativity, encourages out-of-the-box thinking, and sparks breakthroughs in various fields. For example, the integration of knowledge from various scientific disciplines has led to the development of technologies such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy solutions, and medical treatments. In the business world, companies that foster a culture of shared learning are more likely to innovate rapidly, adapt to market changes, and stay ahead of competitors. This innovation is fueled by the understanding that diverse perspectives enrich problem-solving and generate more robust, scalable, and sustainable solutions. In education, shared learning has proven to be an effective way to enhance the learning experience and improve outcomes. Traditional education systems often focus on top-down teaching, where information is transmitted from instructors to students. (Farr J. V. et al. 2009) However, shared learning shifts the focus to a more interactive, collaborative process, where students and teachers learn from one another in a dynamic, reciprocal environment. Peer learning, group projects, discussions, and collaborative problem-solving enable students to deepen their understanding by engaging with their peers, discussing ideas, and challenging assumptions. This approach encourages critical thinking, enhances communication skills, and promotes active engagement with the material. By fostering a collaborative learning environment, educational institutions prepare students for the real-world challenges they will face in the workplace, where teamwork and shared knowledge are key to success.

Strong Communication and Interpersonal Skills: Communication skills importance.

In a world where collaboration, adaptability, and human connection are increasingly critical to success across all domains, the importance of strong communication and interpersonal skills cannot be overstated. These skills serve as the foundation for effective human interaction, enabling individuals to express ideas clearly, build relationships, resolve conflicts, and inspire others. (Goethner M. et al. 2012) Whether in personal relationships, education, the workplace, public service, or community engagement, the ability to communicate effectively and relate to others with empathy and respect is indispensable. In today's interconnected global environment, where diverse teams work across borders and cultures, strong communication and interpersonal competencies have become vital not only for individual success but also for organizational excellence and societal cohesion. At its essence, communication is the process of sharing information, ideas, and emotions through spoken or written language, body language, gestures, and other non-verbal cues. Interpersonal skills, closely related to communication, encompass the behaviors and competencies that support meaningful social interaction—such as active listening, emotional intelligence, empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Together, these skills form the backbone of effective relationships in both personal and professional settings. Strong communicators are not only able to convey their thoughts with clarity and confidence but are also capable of engaging others, understanding diverse

perspectives, and building consensus. In the professional sphere, communication skills are consistently ranked among the most valuable and sought-after qualities by employers across industries. Whether in leadership, customer service, sales, education, healthcare, or technical fields, the ability to articulate ideas, negotiate effectively, and collaborate with colleagues is central to achieving goals. (Goethner M. et al. 2012) Strong communication enhances workplace efficiency, reduces misunderstandings, fosters teamwork, and improves employee morale. Leaders who communicate with transparency, authenticity, and inspiration are more likely to earn trust, align teams with organizational objectives, and motivate people toward a shared vision. Conversely, poor communication can lead to confusion, decreased productivity, employee disengagement, and even financial loss due to errors and misaligned expectations.

One of the most fundamental components of strong communication is active listening. While speaking effectively is important, communication is a two-way process that also requires attentiveness, presence, and receptivity to others. (Harrison C. et al. 2018) Active listening involves more than hearing words—it requires full attention to the speaker, an openness to their perspective, and the ability to respond thoughtfully. In professional environments, active listening builds rapport, promotes mutual understanding, and helps individuals feel valued and respected. It is particularly crucial in leadership roles, where understanding team members' needs, concerns, and feedback directly influences morale and performance. In an age where digital communication has become ubiquitous, strong interpersonal communication remains equally essential. While emails, messaging apps, and video conferencing have improved access and efficiency, they also present new challenges, such as misinterpretation of tone, lack of emotional nuance, and reduced non-verbal cues. Individuals with strong communication skills adapt effectively to different communication mediums, using appropriate tone, language, and structure to ensure clarity and build trust. (Harrison C. et al. 2016) Moreover, they understand when in-person communication is necessary—such as during sensitive conversations, conflict resolution, or high-stakes negotiations—and are equipped to navigate these interactions with tact and professionalism. (Harrison C. et al. 2018) Interpersonal skills are also key to effective teamwork and collaboration. In diverse teams, where members may vary in culture, background, experience, or communication style, interpersonal acumen allows individuals to bridge gaps, find common ground, and foster a culture of inclusivity and respect. Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is particularly powerful in building psychological safety—a workplace environment in which people feel safe to take risks, voice opinions, and be themselves. (Harrison C. et al. 2016) This emotional connection enhances team cohesion, supports creativity, and drives collective problem-solving.

Emotional Intelligence and Empathy: Emotional intelligence benefits.

In the contemporary landscape of interpersonal dynamics, organizational leadership, education, and global connectivity, emotional intelligence (EI) and empathy have emerged as critical competencies that define effective communication, meaningful relationships, and long-term success. (Henley A. et al. 2017) Emotional intelligence, often referred to as EQ (emotional quotient), encompasses the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and influence one's own emotions and the emotions of others. Empathy, as a core component of EI, involves the capacity to sense and share the feelings of another, to place oneself in someone else's emotional state, and to respond with compassion and insight. As cognitive intelligence (IQ) and technical expertise alone are no longer sufficient in navigating the complexities of the modern world, emotional intelligence and empathy have become indispensable for personal fulfillment, professional excellence, and societal well-being. Emotional intelligence is typically broken down into five key domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Each of these dimensions plays a vital role in how individuals perceive themselves and interact with others. Self-awareness enables individuals to understand their own emotional triggers and biases, helping them to respond rather than react. Self-regulation helps in managing stress, controlling impulses, and adapting to changing circumstances with composure. (Henley A. et al. 2017) Motivation drives individuals to pursue goals with resilience and optimism. Empathy enhances the ability to connect with others, while social skills facilitate communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and relationship management. Together, these facets of emotional intelligence provide a framework for cultivating healthier, more productive, and emotionally balanced lives.

One of the most profound benefits of emotional intelligence lies in its impact on personal well-being and mental health. Individuals with high EI are more capable of recognizing and addressing their own emotional needs. They are better equipped to manage negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, and frustration, and more adept at maintaining a positive outlook in challenging circumstances. (Hubballi R. B. et al. 2025) This emotional regulation reduces the risk of chronic stress, depression, and burnout, and fosters a greater sense of self-efficacy and life satisfaction. By cultivating self-awareness and emotional control, individuals develop inner resilience and a balanced mindset, which are essential for navigating personal and professional hardships. In the professional sphere, emotional intelligence has been recognized as a cornerstone of effective leadership and team performance. Leaders who exhibit high emotional intelligence are better at inspiring trust, motivating employees, and managing organizational change. They are attuned to the emotional climate of their teams, capable of recognizing early signs

of disengagement or conflict, and skilled in addressing these issues constructively. Such leaders are not only better decision-makers but also more inclusive, adaptable, and respected by their peers and subordinates. Emotional intelligence enables them to build cohesive teams, resolve interpersonal tensions, and create work environments that are psychologically safe and conducive to creativity and innovation. (Hubballi R. B. et al. 2025) Empathy, as a fundamental component of emotional intelligence, is particularly powerful in building authentic relationships and fostering collaboration.

Visionary Thinking and Strategic Insight: Visionary thinking importance.

In an increasingly complex, fast-paced, and interconnected world, the importance of visionary thinking and strategic insight has never been more critical. These twin pillars of forward-looking leadership are essential for navigating uncertainty, driving innovation, and fostering sustainable progress across every sector—from business and governance to education, science, and social enterprise. (Huxtable-Thomas L. A. et al. 2016) Visionary thinking refers to the ability to see beyond the present and imagine bold possibilities for the future, while strategic insight involves the practical understanding and planning required to turn those visions into actionable and achievable outcomes. Together, they empower individuals, organizations, and societies to not only adapt to change but to shape it. At its core, visionary thinking is about imagining a better future and identifying transformative opportunities that others may overlook. (Huxtable-Thomas L. A. et al. 2016) Visionary leaders do not merely react to trends—they anticipate them. They are guided by purpose, fueled by creativity, and unafraid to challenge the status quo. They possess the intellectual courage to dream big and the emotional resilience to pursue those dreams through periods of ambiguity and resistance. Visionaries like Elon Musk, Nelson Mandela, Marie Curie, Steve Jobs, and Malala Yousafzai changed the course of history by imagining possibilities that once seemed impossible and by inspiring others to share in their belief. Visionary thinking begins with a mindset—a deep-seated belief in progress, potential, and the capacity to drive meaningful change. It demands curiosity, imagination, and a willingness to question conventional boundaries. Visionaries scan the horizon for emerging trends, nascent technologies, and evolving social dynamics. They connect the dots across disciplines, cultures, and industries, seeing patterns and relationships where others see complexity or chaos.

This panoramic perspective allows them to envision systems-level change rather than narrow, incremental improvements. As such, visionary thinking is a catalyst for breakthroughs in science, technology, education, healthcare, climate action, and beyond. However, visionary thinking on its own is not enough. Without strategic insight, visions remain abstract, idealistic, or out of reach. (Huxtable-Thomas L. et al. 2017) Strategic insight is the critical complement to visionary imagination—it grounds big ideas in real-world knowledge, clear priorities, and practical roadmaps. Strategic thinkers are adept at analysis, foresight, planning, and execution. They understand the terrain—competitive forces, stakeholder dynamics, regulatory landscapes, resource constraints, and implementation challenges. They weigh risks against opportunities, identify leverage points, and build adaptive strategies that evolve in response to changing conditions. While visionary thinking opens the door to the future, strategic insight ensures we walk through it with clarity, confidence, and coordination. In the realm of business, the combination of visionary thinking and strategic insight differentiates market leaders from followers. (Huxtable-Thomas L. et al. 2017) Visionary entrepreneurs spot unmet needs, reimagine customer experiences, and harness emerging technologies before their competitors. But what sets enduring companies apart is their ability to pair this vision with strategic execution—aligning teams, resources, operations, and culture to deliver consistent value. Leaders like Jeff Bezos at Amazon or Satya Nadella at Microsoft did not merely envision growth; they strategically orchestrated it over time through deliberate planning, continuous learning, and strong execution frameworks. Strategic insight helps organizations prioritize goals, monitor key performance indicators (KPIs), and pivot when necessary—ensuring that vision translates into tangible impact.

Fostering Innovation and Creativity: Innovation importance.

In a rapidly evolving global landscape marked by technological disruption, shifting economic paradigms, and growing societal challenges, the importance of fostering innovation and creativity cannot be overstated. Innovation—the process of translating novel ideas into impactful solutions—and creativity—the capacity to generate original, valuable, and imaginative concepts—are the cornerstones of progress in the 21st century. (Kaur M. et al. 2025) These twin forces drive transformative change across industries, empower individuals and organizations to solve complex problems, and catalyze societal advancement. Whether in business, education, healthcare, governance, science, or the arts, fostering innovation and creativity is essential for resilience, adaptability, competitiveness, and sustainable development. At its heart, innovation begins with creativity. Creativity provides the raw material—ideas, perspectives, and possibilities—from which innovations are built. It is the ability to think outside the box, to connect unrelated concepts, and to reimagine the ordinary. It fuels breakthroughs in design, technology, literature, entrepreneurship, and every field that demands fresh thinking. When nurtured in an environment that values curiosity, experimentation, and diversity of thought, creativity becomes the catalyst for innovation—the conversion of those imaginative ideas into products, processes, or

systems that improve lives, solve problems, or create value. In the business world, innovation is the lifeblood of competitive advantage. (Kaur M. et al. 2025) Companies that embrace innovation are better equipped to anticipate consumer needs, develop new offerings, and respond to changing market conditions. Iconic brands like Apple, Google, Amazon, and Tesla are lauded not only for their technological prowess but for their culture of relentless innovation. They invest heavily in research and development, empower employees to experiment, and embrace a mindset of continuous improvement. Innovation drives product differentiation, customer satisfaction, and long-term profitability. Businesses that neglect innovation risk stagnation, irrelevance, and obsolescence in a dynamic global marketplace.



Figure 1. Major Differences Between Entrepreneurship and Leadership

Creativity and innovation are also key to organizational agility—the ability to pivot in response to disruption or crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, forced organizations to innovate at unprecedented speed. Companies reimaged supply chains, developed digital tools, redesigned customer experiences, and adopted remote work technologies to stay operational. Educational institutions created online learning models overnight, while healthcare providers developed telemedicine solutions and accelerated vaccine research through innovative collaborations. (Klofsten M. et al. 2019) These responses underscore how innovation is not merely a luxury in times of stability but a necessity in times of disruption. Moreover, fostering innovation enhances problem-solving capabilities. As global challenges such as climate change, inequality, food insecurity, and public health crises grow more complex, traditional solutions often fall short. Innovation enables the development of new models, from green technologies and sustainable agriculture to inclusive finance and AI-driven healthcare. Social innovation—an emerging branch of innovation focused on societal impact—empowers communities, nonprofits, and governments to co-create solutions that address the root causes of systemic issues. Initiatives such as microfinance, open-source platforms, circular economies, and community-based health interventions exemplify how innovative thinking can yield scalable and sustainable solutions. Innovation and creativity also play a transformative role in education. (Klofsten M. et al. 2019) Schools, colleges, and universities are increasingly tasked with preparing students not just for existing careers, but for a future marked by continuous change.

Building and Sustaining Entrepreneurial Communities: Community building benefits.

In today's dynamic economic landscape, entrepreneurial communities have emerged as vital ecosystems that nurture innovation, economic growth, and social cohesion. Building and sustaining such communities is essential not only for individual entrepreneurs but for the collective prosperity of regions and nations. (Kotte K. R. et al. 2025) Entrepreneurial communities—comprised of startups, small businesses, investors, mentors, educational institutions, government agencies, and support organizations—create a fertile environment where ideas can flourish, resources can be pooled, and collaborations can thrive. These communities foster a culture of creativity, risk-taking, and resilience, providing the social infrastructure needed for entrepreneurs to overcome challenges, scale their ventures, and generate meaningful impact. At the core of entrepreneurial communities is the principle of connection. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, these communities facilitate the exchange of knowledge, skills, and experiences that would otherwise remain siloed. Entrepreneurs gain access to mentorship, technical expertise, financial capital, and markets, significantly increasing their chances of success. The presence of like-minded peers offers emotional support and motivation, helping individuals navigate the inevitable uncertainties and setbacks inherent in entrepreneurial journeys. Through networking events, workshops, incubators, accelerators, and informal gatherings, entrepreneurial communities create spaces where collaboration and trust

can develop organically. The economic benefits of building and sustaining entrepreneurial communities are profound. (Kotte K. R. et al. 2025) Startups and small businesses are key drivers of job creation, innovation, and economic diversification.

Beyond economic gains, entrepreneurial communities contribute significantly to social inclusion and empowerment. By democratizing access to resources and networks, they lower barriers for underrepresented groups such as women, minorities, and youth to participate in economic activities. (Kotturi Y. et al. 2024) Inclusive entrepreneurial communities promote diversity of thought and experience, which enriches innovation and enhances problem-solving capacity. Social entrepreneurship, which often emerges from these ecosystems, addresses pressing societal challenges such as poverty, education, health, and environmental sustainability. In this way, entrepreneurial communities become catalysts not only for economic value but for social transformation. One of the most critical aspects of sustaining entrepreneurial communities is the cultivation of a supportive culture. This culture encourages experimentation, tolerates failure as a learning process, and values continuous learning and adaptation. Celebrating entrepreneurial successes while openly discussing failures fosters psychological safety and resilience among members. Community leaders and influencers play an instrumental role in modeling positive attitudes, setting ethical standards, and championing collaboration over competition. When the culture prioritizes openness, inclusivity, and shared purpose, it attracts diverse participants and builds a strong sense of belonging. Educational institutions—ranging from primary schools to universities and vocational centers—are pivotal in building the human capital that sustains entrepreneurial communities. Entrepreneurship education equips individuals with the skills, mindset, and confidence to innovate and create ventures. (Kotturi Y. et al. 2024) Universities serve as hubs for research, technology transfer, and talent development, often partnering with industry and government to accelerate innovation.

Mentorship and Support for Startups: Mentorship importance.

In the challenging and often uncertain journey of launching and scaling startups, mentorship and support emerge as pivotal factors that significantly influence entrepreneurial success. Startups operate in environments characterized by high risk, resource constraints, rapidly changing markets, and intense competition. (Kunnathully K. et al. 2025) In such conditions, mentorship provides essential guidance, wisdom, and encouragement, helping entrepreneurs navigate complexities, avoid common pitfalls, and accelerate growth. Effective mentorship—rooted in experience, trust, and personalized engagement—serves as a catalyst that transforms raw ideas into viable businesses, empowering founders to realize their visions and maximize their impact. Mentorship offers startups a wealth of benefits, beginning with the transfer of knowledge and expertise. Experienced mentors bring a deep understanding of business fundamentals, industry trends, operational challenges, and strategic decision-making. They help startups refine business models, validate assumptions, develop marketing strategies, and optimize financial management. This guidance is invaluable in preventing costly mistakes that novice entrepreneurs might otherwise make, especially when founders face unfamiliar regulatory environments, complex technologies, or emerging market conditions. Mentors' insights into what has worked—and what has not—in similar ventures provide practical roadmaps that increase the likelihood of success. Beyond technical advice, mentorship supports startups emotionally and psychologically. Entrepreneurship is a demanding journey marked by uncertainty, stress, and frequent setbacks. Many founders experience feelings of isolation, self-doubt, and burnout. (Kunnathully K. et al. 2025) Mentors offer a sounding board for ideas and concerns, providing reassurance, motivation, and constructive feedback. This relationship helps entrepreneurs maintain confidence, resilience, and focus, which are critical traits for navigating the highs and lows of startup life. The mentor's encouragement can inspire perseverance during difficult phases and provide perspective that sustains long-term commitment.

Mentorship also facilitates access to networks and resources. Startups often struggle to connect with investors, customers, suppliers, and partners who can provide funding, market opportunities, or operational support. (Kutzhanova N. et al. 2009) Mentors typically have extensive professional networks and can introduce founders to potential collaborators, clients, or capital sources. These introductions can open doors that startups would find difficult to access on their own, accelerating business development and scaling opportunities. Additionally, mentors may help startups understand the landscape of accelerators, incubators, government programs, and industry associations that offer further resources and support. The role of mentorship extends to fostering entrepreneurial skills and leadership development. Startups require founders to wear multiple hats, often managing product development, sales, finance, team building, and customer relations simultaneously. Mentors guide entrepreneurs in prioritizing tasks, delegating responsibilities, and developing managerial competencies. They help founders hone communication skills, negotiate deals, and navigate organizational growth challenges. (Kutzhanova N. et al. 2009) This personalized coaching supports the evolution of founders into effective leaders who can inspire teams, manage crises, and create adaptive, innovative cultures within their startups. Mentorship also plays a crucial role in enhancing startup innovation and strategic thinking. Mentors challenge entrepreneurs to think critically, question assumptions, and explore alternative approaches.

Overcoming Challenges and Obstacles: Challenge overcoming importance.

In the dynamic and unpredictable journey of personal growth, entrepreneurship, leadership, and innovation, the ability to overcome challenges and obstacles stands as a defining factor for success and resilience. (Leitch C. M. et al. 2013) Life and professional endeavors are inherently fraught with setbacks, uncertainties, and barriers that test determination, adaptability, and problem-solving capabilities. Rather than being impediments, these challenges provide critical opportunities for learning, growth, and transformation. Developing the capacity to confront and surmount difficulties is essential not only for achieving goals but for building character, fostering innovation, and sustaining long-term progress across diverse fields and contexts. Challenges arise in myriad forms—financial constraints, market competition, technological disruptions, regulatory hurdles, resource limitations, interpersonal conflicts, and unforeseen crises such as economic downturns or pandemics. For entrepreneurs and startups, obstacles might include securing funding, finding customers, developing products, or scaling operations. For individuals, challenges may involve personal setbacks, skill gaps, or external circumstances beyond control. Leaders face the complexity of managing teams, navigating organizational change, and responding to stakeholder demands. In every scenario, the ability to identify, analyze, and strategically address obstacles distinguishes those who succeed from those who falter. (Leitch C. M. et al. 2013) The importance of overcoming challenges begins with mindset. A growth mindset—the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort and learning—empowers individuals to view obstacles as opportunities rather than threats.

Overcoming obstacles also sharpens critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Each challenge requires careful assessment, strategic planning, and adaptive execution. Entrepreneurs, for example, must pivot business models in response to market feedback or technological changes. (Lenz A. K. et al. 2025) Leaders must mediate conflicts and adjust strategies to shifting organizational priorities. Problem-solving under adversity demands creativity, flexibility, and collaboration, often leading to innovative solutions that might not have emerged under easier circumstances. These experiences enrich expertise and prepare individuals and organizations to handle future uncertainties more effectively. Moreover, the process of overcoming challenges builds confidence and self-efficacy. Successfully navigating obstacles reinforces belief in one's capabilities and decision-making skills. This enhanced confidence creates a positive feedback loop, encouraging individuals to take on new challenges with greater assurance. For teams and organizations, collective problem-solving fosters trust, strengthens relationships, and improves cohesion. Shared experiences of overcoming hardship build a culture of resilience and mutual support that can sustain performance during crises. In the context of innovation, overcoming obstacles is often inseparable from creative breakthroughs. (Lenz A. K. et al. 2025) Many of history's greatest inventions and discoveries resulted from persistent efforts to solve seemingly insurmountable problems. Innovators experiment, fail, learn, and iterate, leveraging obstacles as stepping stones to advancement. For example, the development of the light bulb by Thomas Edison involved thousands of failed attempts before success. This iterative resilience drives technological progress and societal advancement. Embracing failure and obstacles as integral to the innovation process fosters an experimental mindset crucial for breakthroughs.

Leveraging Technology for Peer Leadership: Technology benefits.

In the modern era, technology has become an indispensable enabler of peer leadership, transforming how individuals connect, collaborate, and influence within communities and organizations. (Malik N. et al. 2025) Peer leadership—where influence is shared among equals rather than imposed through hierarchical authority—thrives on communication, trust, and shared purpose. Technology amplifies these elements by providing innovative tools and platforms that facilitate interaction, knowledge exchange, decision-making, and collective action at unprecedented scale and speed. Leveraging technology for peer leadership offers myriad benefits that enhance inclusivity, efficiency, learning, and impact, making it a cornerstone of contemporary leadership practices across sectors and contexts. One of the most significant benefits of technology in peer leadership is the facilitation of seamless communication and connectivity. Digital platforms, social media, messaging apps, video conferencing, and collaboration tools enable peer leaders to engage with diverse groups regardless of geographic boundaries or time zones. These technologies break down traditional barriers to participation, allowing voices from remote, marginalized, or underrepresented communities to be heard and valued. Instant messaging and real-time collaboration tools such as Slack, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and WhatsApp create dynamic spaces where peer leaders can coordinate initiatives, share updates, and make collective decisions efficiently. This connectivity nurtures stronger relationships, fosters mutual support, and accelerates response times to emerging challenges. (Malik N. et al. 2025) Technology also democratizes access to information, a critical foundation for effective peer leadership.

It fosters an informed and empowered membership capable of contributing meaningfully to discussions, problem-solving, and innovation. (Mehta V. et al. 2025) Furthermore, digital platforms facilitate the curation and dissemination of community-specific knowledge, preserving institutional memory and supporting ongoing

learning cycles. Collaboration technologies play a pivotal role in enabling distributed peer leadership. Cloud-based document sharing, project management software like Trello or Asana, and collaborative design tools such as Miro allow multiple peer leaders to co-create plans, track progress, and manage resources transparently. These tools support distributed decision-making processes by making workflows visible and accessible to all members, thereby reinforcing accountability and shared ownership. The ability to collaborate asynchronously also accommodates different schedules and working styles, increasing participation and inclusiveness. This collaborative infrastructure enhances the capacity of peer leadership groups to mobilize collective intelligence and coordinate complex initiatives effectively. (Mehta V. et al. 2025) Moreover, technology supports the scalability of peer leadership efforts. Social networking platforms, forums, and community apps enable peer leaders to expand their reach rapidly, connecting with broader audiences and forming new partnerships. Viral content, live streaming, and online campaigns magnify the impact of peer-led movements, awareness efforts, and advocacy initiatives. For example, grassroots social movements have harnessed technology to organize protests, crowdsource funding, and influence policy on a global scale. The scalability afforded by technology empowers peer leaders to amplify their voice and impact far beyond their immediate networks.

Measuring Success and Impact: Success measurement importance.

Measuring success and impact is a critical component of any endeavor—whether in business, social initiatives, education, healthcare, or community development. (Nwachukwu C. et al. 2017) It enables organizations, leaders, and individuals to understand the effectiveness of their actions, make informed decisions, optimize resource allocation, and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders. Without systematic measurement, success remains ambiguous, goals become unattainable, and opportunities for learning and improvement are lost. The importance of measuring success and impact extends beyond mere evaluation; it shapes strategy, fosters transparency, motivates stakeholders, and drives sustainable growth and meaningful change. (Tingey L. et al. 2020) At its core, measuring success involves defining clear, relevant, and achievable goals aligned with the mission and vision of the effort. Success metrics translate abstract aspirations into concrete indicators that can be monitored and assessed. These metrics provide benchmarks to gauge progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and adjust approaches in real-time. Whether measuring financial performance, social outcomes, educational attainment, or environmental benefits, setting appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) ensures focus and clarity. (Nwachukwu C. et al. 2017) This clarity aligns teams and stakeholders around shared objectives, reducing ambiguity and enhancing collective commitment. Impact measurement takes the concept further by examining the broader, long-term effects of actions on individuals, communities, or systems. It addresses questions about the change generated and its significance—such as improved quality of life, behavioral shifts, economic empowerment, or environmental sustainability. Impact assessment considers both intended and unintended consequences, positive and negative, providing a comprehensive picture of value creation. (Tingey L. et al. 2020).

One of the primary benefits of measuring success and impact is enhanced accountability. Stakeholders—including funders, beneficiaries, partners, and regulators—demand transparency regarding the use of resources and the outcomes achieved. Rigorous measurement demonstrates stewardship and builds trust, which is essential for securing ongoing support and collaboration. Accountability mechanisms motivate organizations to adhere to ethical standards, strive for excellence, and fulfill commitments. Furthermore, transparent reporting of success and impact cultivates legitimacy and reinforces positive reputations, which are valuable intangible assets. Measurement also plays a strategic role in driving continuous improvement. (Omeihe I. et al. 2023) By collecting and analyzing data, organizations gain insights into what works, what does not, and why. (Sutrisno S. et al. 2024) This evidence-based approach informs decision-making, enabling the refinement of programs, products, or services to better meet needs and objectives. Iterative learning through measurement fosters innovation by encouraging experimentation, testing hypotheses, and scaling effective practices. It helps avoid resource wastage on ineffective approaches and ensures efforts remain aligned with evolving contexts and stakeholder expectations. In entrepreneurial and business contexts, success measurement is vital for assessing financial viability, market fit, customer satisfaction, and operational efficiency. (Sutrisno S. et al. 2024) Metrics such as revenue growth, profit margins, customer acquisition cost, churn rate, and return on investment provide quantifiable indicators of performance. Startups, for example, use these metrics to attract investors, guide scaling strategies, and benchmark against competitors. Businesses that embed impact measurement into their models also assess social and environmental metrics—known as double or triple bottom line accounting—to balance profit with purpose. (Omeihe I. et al. 2023) This integrated measurement aligns with growing consumer and investor demand for corporate responsibility and sustainability.

Emerging Trends in Peer Leadership: Emerging trends overview.

Peer leadership, a form of leadership that emphasizes influence, collaboration, and shared responsibility among equals, has undergone significant evolution in recent years. (Pazaitis A. et al. 2017) As organizations, communities, and societies become more interconnected and complex, traditional hierarchical leadership models

have increasingly given way to peer leadership approaches that prioritize empowerment, inclusivity, and collective intelligence. Emerging trends in peer leadership reflect the shifting dynamics of work, technology, culture, and social organization, offering new opportunities and challenges for individuals and groups seeking to lead effectively without formal authority. Understanding these trends is essential for practitioners, scholars, and organizations aiming to harness the full potential of peer leadership in today's rapidly changing environments. One prominent trend in peer leadership is the widespread integration of digital technologies that facilitate decentralized collaboration and communication. Advances in social media platforms, collaboration tools, and virtual meeting technologies have revolutionized how peer leaders connect with and mobilize their communities. (Pazaitis A. et al. 2017) Platforms like Slack, Discord, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom allow peer leaders to transcend geographical and temporal boundaries, enabling real-time interaction and asynchronous collaboration among diverse groups. This digital connectivity supports distributed leadership models where decision-making and influence are shared widely rather than concentrated in a few individuals. (Shashank G. et al. 2025) It also facilitates the rapid dissemination of ideas and mobilization of collective action, fostering more agile and responsive leadership networks.

Another emerging trend is the growing emphasis on inclusivity and diversity within peer leadership structures. (Platzek B. P. et al. 2020) Contemporary peer leadership recognizes that diverse perspectives, experiences, and identities enrich decision-making and innovation. There is increasing awareness of the need to create leadership opportunities for underrepresented groups, including women, minorities, youth, and persons with disabilities. Peer leadership environments are becoming more intentional about fostering equity by dismantling systemic barriers and cultivating inclusive cultures that encourage authentic participation. This shift is driven by social justice movements, organizational commitments to diversity, and research highlighting the positive impact of diverse leadership on outcomes. (Shashank G. et al. 2025) Consequently, peer leadership is evolving into a more socially conscious and equitable practice. The rise of collaborative and participatory decision-making processes marks another important trend. Peer leadership increasingly moves away from top-down directives toward consensus-building, co-creation, and shared accountability. (Platzek B. P. et al. 2020) Techniques such as deliberative dialogue, collective intelligence platforms, and sociocratic governance models enable groups to harness the wisdom of the crowd while balancing diverse viewpoints and interests. This trend reflects a broader societal shift towards democratization and empowerment, where stakeholders seek to have meaningful input and ownership over decisions affecting them. Collaborative decision-making not only improves the quality and acceptance of outcomes but also strengthens relational trust and community cohesion among peers.

The Role of Peer Leadership in Shaping Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: Ecosystem shaping importance.

Entrepreneurial ecosystems represent the dynamic and interconnected networks of individuals, organizations, resources, and cultural elements that collectively foster the creation, growth, and sustainability of new ventures. In these ecosystems, peer leadership plays a vital and often underappreciated role in shaping the environment, influencing behaviors, and catalyzing innovation and collaboration. (Portyanko S. et al. 2023) Unlike traditional top-down leadership, peer leadership operates through influence, shared values, and mutual support among entrepreneurs and stakeholders who engage as equals. Its importance in shaping entrepreneurial ecosystems lies in its capacity to build trust, facilitate knowledge exchange, mobilize resources, and nurture a culture of resilience and creativity—elements essential for thriving entrepreneurship. (Sengupta S. et al. 2018) One of the primary ways peer leadership shapes entrepreneurial ecosystems is by fostering trust and social capital among ecosystem actors. Trust forms the foundation for collaboration, risk-taking, and information sharing, all of which are critical for entrepreneurship. (Sengupta S. et al. 2018) Peer leaders, often entrepreneurs themselves or respected members within the community, act as connectors who bridge gaps between individuals, organizations, and sectors. (Portyanko S. et al. 2023) Their credibility and relational influence encourage openness and cooperation, reducing transactional frictions and enabling fluid exchange of ideas, feedback, and resources.

Knowledge exchange is another critical dimension where peer leadership significantly shapes entrepreneurial ecosystems. Entrepreneurs frequently face information asymmetries and uncertainties related to market conditions, technology, customer preferences, and regulatory frameworks. Peer leaders facilitate learning by sharing experiential insights, best practices, and cautionary tales derived from their own journeys. (Sakthivel M. et al. 2025) Through peer mentoring, workshops, informal meetups, and online forums, they create platforms for collective learning and continuous improvement. (Portyanko S. et al. 2023) This shared knowledge enhances the capabilities of ecosystem participants, reducing the learning curve and increasing the chances of startup success. Moreover, peer leadership fosters a culture of openness where failures are viewed as learning opportunities rather than stigmatized setbacks, encouraging experimentation and innovation. Resource mobilization is a crucial function of peer leadership in entrepreneurial ecosystems. (Sakthivel M. et al. 2025) Access to capital, talent, mentorship, and markets often determines the trajectory of startups. Peer leaders leverage their networks to connect entrepreneurs with investors, skilled professionals, service providers, and potential customers. These

connections not only facilitate resource acquisition but also provide validation and legitimacy for nascent ventures. (Portyanko S. et al. 2023) Peer-led initiatives such as angel investor networks, co-working spaces, incubators, and accelerators often emerge from the collective efforts of entrepreneurial peers, creating supportive infrastructure that lowers barriers to entry. By championing resource sharing and collective problem-solving, peer leadership enhances the efficiency and inclusiveness of the ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

Empowering entrepreneurs through peer leadership is an essential and transformative approach that has reshaped how individuals, communities, and economies foster innovation, resilience, and sustainable growth. As entrepreneurship continues to be a driving force for economic development, job creation, and societal progress globally, the role of peer leadership in nurturing entrepreneurial potential cannot be overstated. Unlike traditional hierarchical leadership models, peer leadership harnesses the collective strengths, shared experiences, and mutual support of entrepreneurs and ecosystem stakeholders, enabling empowerment that is authentic, inclusive, and impactful. This conclusion synthesizes the multifaceted importance of peer leadership in empowering entrepreneurs and underscores the necessity of embracing, cultivating, and investing in peer leadership practices as a catalyst for entrepreneurial success and broader systemic transformation. One of the most profound ways peer leadership empowers entrepreneurs is by creating environments of trust, support, and collaboration. Entrepreneurship is inherently uncertain, complex, and fraught with risk, making social and emotional support indispensable for navigating its challenges. Peer leaders, who often emerge from the entrepreneurial community itself, understand these challenges intimately and offer guidance, encouragement, and practical advice rooted in lived experience. Through peer networks, entrepreneurs gain access to mentorship, resources, and a sense of belonging that combats isolation and fosters confidence. This relational empowerment strengthens entrepreneurs' psychological resilience, motivating them to persist, innovate, and adapt in the face of setbacks.

Knowledge sharing and collective learning are central pillars of peer leadership that empower entrepreneurs to accelerate their growth and increase their chances of success. Peer leaders facilitate the exchange of insights, market intelligence, best practices, and cautionary lessons that help entrepreneurs avoid common pitfalls and seize opportunities more effectively. This shared knowledge ecosystem creates a dynamic learning environment where continuous improvement is not only encouraged but embedded in the culture. The democratization of knowledge through peer leadership bridges information asymmetries that can otherwise hinder entrepreneurial progress, particularly for those with limited access to formal education or professional networks. As a result, entrepreneurs become better equipped to make informed decisions, innovate, and scale their ventures. Peer leadership also plays a critical role in fostering inclusivity and diversity within entrepreneurial ecosystems, which is vital for equitable empowerment and systemic impact. By championing underrepresented entrepreneurs—including women, minorities, youth, and marginalized communities—peer leaders help dismantle barriers and create pathways for broader participation. This inclusivity enriches entrepreneurial ecosystems with diverse perspectives, ideas, and solutions that drive creativity and relevance. Empowerment through peer leadership thus transcends individual success to contribute to social equity and economic justice, ensuring that the benefits of entrepreneurship are more widely distributed across society. Resource mobilization facilitated by peer leadership is another key element in empowering entrepreneurs. Access to capital, talent, mentorship, markets, and technology often determines entrepreneurial trajectories. Peer leaders leverage their networks to connect entrepreneurs with these critical resources, lowering barriers and enhancing opportunities.

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“Media and Communication strategies for social change”

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Abstract

Media and communication strategies play a pivotal role in driving social change by fostering dialogue, empowering communities and challenging norms. Communication for social change involves Participatory Processes where communities use media to define needs, engage in dialogue and take collective action for sustainable development. In the digital age, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for social change, influencing public opinion and mobilizing action on a global scale. From grassroots movements to large scale campaigns, social platforms have enabled voices to be heard and communities to unite for common causes. Communicating with people is central to creating social change and defending human rights. The media can be a conduit for that communication allowing us to reach broad stakeholders and communities. Successful campaigns such as “**Dove’s Real beauty**” and “**Black Lives Matter**”, demonstrate how media amplifies marginalized voices and influences policy.

Media, on a day-to-day basis, continues to evolve by adopting new approaches to connect individuals across diverse communities. It serves as a crucial medium for maintaining contact with societies and communities that may not be directly experiencing the harsh realities of the present scenario. Furthermore, media enables the dissemination of information about social, cultural, and technological changes that have occurred or are currently taking place, particularly through the influence of social media.

Key words- Participatory processes, Social change, Global scale, human rights, Stakeholders, Marginalized voices, Present scenario.

Introduction

Social change is deeply interconnected to communication. Since historical period, we have checked the way the people have been sharing the information, constructing the meaning, and mobilizing collectively has shaped struggles for justice and law, development, and human rights. In today’s time, media and communication strategies have become pivotal mechanisms through which the sustainable transformation of the society is imagined, talked, and pursued. From community radio initiatives in rural regions to global social media campaigns, communication serves not only to inform but to empower, connect, and activate communities.

Communication for Social Change (CSC) moves beyond top-down information dissemination and instead emphasizes participatory processes where communities identify their own needs, engage in dialogue, and take collective action (Servaes, 2008). In this framework, media acts as a platform for raising the voice in favour rather than merely sharing the messages. By enabling dialogue and amplifying marginalized perspectives, communication can challenge dominant narratives, question power structures, and support inclusive development.

The digital age has significantly expanded the reach and impact of communication strategies for social change. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and you tube as well allow each and every individual and groups to share the information, to organize, document injustices, and influence the public on a global scale. Movements such as **Black Lives Matter** demonstrate how digital communication can mobilize millions, reshape policy debates, and challenge systemic discrimination (Freelon, McIlwain and Clark, 2018). At the same time, corporate campaigns like **Dove’s Real Beauty** initiative reveal how media campaigns can influence the social perceptions about identity, self-worth, and gender, manifesting the role of compunction in shaping the cultural norms (Johnston and Taylor, 2008).

Media also acts as a bridge between communities that directly experience social challenges and those who do not. Through news, storytelling, documentaries, and digital advocacy, media allows distant audiences to engage emotionally and intellectually with issues such as poverty, climate change, gender inequality, and human rights violations. In doing so, it helps construct shared understandings of the “present scenario” and creates opportunities for solidarity and action.

This paper explores how media and communication strategies contribute to social change through participatory processes, digital engagement, and advocacy. It reviews theoretical foundations, examines existing research, outlines methodological approaches, and discusses key findings regarding the transformative potential and limitations of media-driven social change.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Foundations of Communication for Social Change

Early models of transmitting the information were largely linear and top-down in nature, while the models used in modern paradigm are seen as where the information dissemination is one way, often observed as the information is passed from the experts to the passive audience with the assumptions that they are being exposed to the modern ideas and information. It is assumed that it would naturally lead to social and economic progress (Lerner, 1958). However, this approach was widely criticized for ignoring local knowledge, cultural contexts, and community agency (Servaes, 2008).

In contrast, participatory communication models always stresses dialogue, horizontal exchange, and collective problem-solving (Freire, 1970). Paulo Freire's concept of *conscientization* highlights how communication can help individuals critically understand their social conditions and become active agents of change.

Communication, in this sense, is not merely about transmitting messages but about fostering critical awareness and empowerment (Freire, 1970). Through dialogue and reflection, marginalized communities are even empowered and favored to question dominant structures and take collective action toward sustainable social transformation. In this perspective, communication is not merely the transmission of messages but a dynamic and interactive process that fosters critical consciousness and social empowerment.

Servaes (2008) further developed participatory communication for development, arguing that sustainable social change emerges when communities are directly involved in identifying issues and designing solutions. Media tools such as community radio, participatory video, local theatre, and newspapers have been widely used globally to facilitate dialogue, encourage collective decision making, and strengthen community ownership of development initiatives, grassroots engagement and social transformation (Tuftte and Mefalopulos, 2009).

2. Media as a Platform for Marginalized Voices

One of the most significant roles of media in bringing the change in the society is to amplify those voices which are often excluded from mainstream discourse. Historically, alternative and community media have provided crucial platforms for marginalized populations, including indigenous communities, women, youth, and other socially disadvantaged groups (Downing, 2001). These media spaces challenge dominant narratives and offer counter-hegemonic perspectives (Couldry, 2012).

The emergence of digital media has further expanded these opportunities by enabling marginalized groups to bypass traditional institutional gatekeepers. With the rise of digital media, many things are being tolerated in the name of the social change. Hashtag activism, citizen journalism, and online storytelling allow individuals to share lived experiences, mobilize support, and demand accountability (Jackson, Bailey and Foucault Welles, 2020). For example, the #MeToo movement used social media to expose systemic sexual harassment and shift global conversations about gender and power (Jackson, Bailey and Foucault Welles, 2020).

3. Digital Media and Networked Social Movements

Digital communication technologies have significantly transformed both the scale and the speed of social mobilization. Castells (2012) describes contemporary movements as "networked social movements," where online and offline activism intersect. Social media enables rapid information sharing, emotional engagement, and decentralized organization (Shirky, 2011).

Shirky (2011) contends that social media lowers the cost of collective action, making it easier for individuals to coordinate around shared causes. This has been evident in movements such as the Arab Spring, climate strikes, and Black Lives Matter, where digital platforms played a key role in mobilization and visibility (Howard and Hussain, 2013; Freelon, McIlwain and Clark, 2018).

However, scholars also caution that digital activism can be uneven and shaped by existing inequalities. Access to technology, digital literacy, and algorithmic biases affect whose voices are amplified and whose are marginalized (Couldry, 2012).

4. Media Campaigns and Social Norm Change

Communication strategies are often used deliberately in campaigns to influence attitudes and behaviours. This strategy is always used to transform the data orally. This strategy makes the society understand the public behaviour and attitude more impactfully. Social marketing and advocacy campaigns use media strategically to promote public health, gender equality, and environmental sustainability (Tufté and Mefalopulos, 2009). Successful campaigns often combine emotional storytelling, relatable imagery, and participatory engagement (Olesen, 2015).

Dove's *Real Beauty* campaign, for instance, challenged narrow beauty standards by featuring diverse women and promoting self-esteem and self-love and beauty. While primarily a marketing campaign, it contributed to broader conversations about body image and media representation (Johnston and Taylor, 2008). Such campaigns illustrate how media narratives can reshape social norms, though they also raise questions about commercialization and authenticity (Couldry, 2012).

5. Media, Human rights, and Advocacy

Media occupies a central position in human rights advocacy by facilitating the documentation of abuses, disseminating information to global audiences, and exerting pressure on policymakers and institutions (Cottle, 2009). Through mechanisms such as investigative journalism, documentary filmmaking, and the circulation of digital evidence across social media platforms, media institutions and activists have played a critical role in exposing violations, raising awareness, and shaping international public opinion (Olesen, 2015).

Communication strategies within the field of human rights advocacy typically integrate traditional media outreach with digital activism, narrative storytelling, and public engagement initiatives. By humanizing abstract issues and creating emotional connections, media can mobilize empathy and action (Cottle, 2009; Olesen, 2015). Consequently, communication functions as both an informational and transformative tool within broader human rights movements..

Methodology

This research paper includes the qualitative data, case studies, and thematic analysis. The methodology includes a review of scholarly literature on communication for social change, participatory media, and digital activism (Servaes, 2008; Castells, 2012). Moreover, the selected case studies such as the *Black Lives Matter* movement and Dove's *Real Beauty* campaign were analysed to understand how media communicates through these real life practices in the society (Freelon, McIlwain and Clark, 2018; Johnston and Taylor, 2008).

This method allows for a comprehensive and impactful understanding of how media and communication strategies contribute to social change across different contexts and scales.

Findings and Discussions

1. Participatory process for the sustainable and strong society

A significant and on-role finding in the literature is the participatory communication which leads to the more sustainable and locally relevant social change. When communities are actively engaged and involved in disseminating and producing media through platforms such as community radio, participatory video—they gain ownership over both the process and outcomes (Servaes, 2008; Tufté and Mefalopulos, 2009). This fosters empowerment, strengthens local capacities, and ensures that communication addresses real needs rather than externally defined agendas (Freire, 1970).

Participatory processes also build social cohesion by encouraging dialogue, mutual learning, and collective problem-solving (Servaes, 2008). Through inclusive communication different communities are able to negotiate, spread the news, articulate common goals, and reinforce collective identity and agency.

2. Digital media expands reach not replacing ground action

Digital platforms have dramatically stretched and helped in the sustainable reach of social change through media communication. Movements like Black Lives Matter explains how hashtags, viral videos, and online storytelling can raise global awareness and influence political discourse (Freelon, McIlwain and Clark, 2018). Social media

helps in rapid mobilization, connects dispersed communities, and creates visibility for issues often ignored by mainstream media (Castells, 2012).

However, research shows that online engagement is most effective when linked to offline action. Protests, community organizing, and policy advocacy remain essential for structural change (Castells, 2012; Howard and Hussain, 2013). Digital communication amplifies activism but does not replace traditional forms of collective action.

3. Media Narratives shape Social norms and identities

Media representations take a significant part in shaping how people understand themselves and others. The ways in which media helps people portray bodies, lifestyles, and social roles. Campaigns like Dove's *Real Beauty* show that alternative representations can challenge dominant norms and promote more inclusive beauty standards while promoting more diverse ideals (Johnston and Taylor, 2008). By presenting diverse bodies and stories, such campaigns contribute to broader cultural shifts (Couldry, 2012).

Similarly, social movements use media storytelling to humanize issues and reframe public debates. Personal testimonies and emotional narratives make abstract problems relatable and urgent. Through the use of personal testimonies, visual documentation, and emotionally resonant narratives, movements are able to transform abstract structural problems into relatable human experiences (Olesen, 2015).

4. Amplification of Marginalized Voices

Media strategies for social change often succeed when they prioritize marginalized voices. Digital platforms have enabled communities historically excluded from mainstream media to share their experiences directly (Jackson, Bailey and Foucault Welles, 2020). This can disrupt dominant narratives and promote more democratic communication.

Nevertheless, structural inequalities continue to shape patterns of visibility and influence within digital spaces. Access to technological resources, disparities in digital literacy, and the operation of algorithmic systems significantly affect whose content is amplified and whose remains marginalized. Algorithm-driven visibility mechanisms may inadvertently reproduce existing social and economic power imbalances, thereby limiting the transformative potential of digital communication. Consequently, while media platforms provide expanded opportunities for inclusion and representation, they do not inherently ensure equity or democratic participation. Sustained critical engagement with issues of access, power, and regulation remains essential for achieving meaningful social change.

5. Media playing as a Bridge between communities

Media plays a significant mediating role in connecting individuals and communities who are geographically or socially distant from particular social issues with those who directly experience them. Through formats such as documentary films, investigative news reporting, and digital storytelling initiatives, media platforms facilitate the circulation of information, narratives, and visual evidence across local, national, and transnational contexts (Cottle, 2009). These communicative processes contribute not only to the dissemination of knowledge but also to the cultivation of empathy and moral engagement among broader publics. By rendering distant suffering visible and intelligible, media can transform isolated experiences into matters of shared public concern. Such heightened awareness may foster transnational solidarity, stimulate advocacy efforts, and encourage resource mobilization in support of affected communities (Olesen, 2015).

Within the domain of human rights advocacy, media exposure assumes particular significance. Public dissemination of documented abuses—whether through investigative journalism, photographic evidence, or first-person testimonies—can exert considerable pressure on governments, institutions, and international organizations to acknowledge and address injustices (Cottle, 2009). Visual documentation and personal narratives often possess substantial emotional and symbolic power, shaping public opinion and influencing agenda-setting processes. By framing human rights violations as urgent moral and political issues, media can contribute to accountability mechanisms and catalyze policy responses. Consequently, media functions not merely as a channel of information but as an active agent in the construction of global awareness and the pursuit of justice.

6. Challenges and Limitations

Despite its considerable transformative potential, media-driven social change initiatives encounter a range of structural and operational challenges. The proliferation of misinformation and the intensification of ideological polarization can erode public trust and distort deliberative public discourse (Couldry, 2012). In addition, commercial actors may appropriate social justice narratives for branding or promotional purposes without

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engaging with the underlying structural inequalities, thereby diluting the substantive goals of social change (Johnston and Taylor, 2008). Persistent digital divides further constrain participation, as unequal access to technological infrastructure and connectivity limits the ability of certain communities to engage fully in mediated communication processes (Servaes, 2008). Moreover, practices of digital surveillance and political repression may expose activists and participants to risk, potentially discouraging civic engagement and collective action (Howard and Hussain, 2013).

Taken together, these limitations underscore the importance of developing communication strategies that are ethically grounded, inclusive in participation, and sensitive to social, cultural, and political contexts.

Conclusion

Media and communication strategies occupy a central position within contemporary processes of social change. Participatory communication approaches enable communities to articulate their own needs, engage in critical dialogue, and undertake collective action aimed at addressing locally identified concerns (Servaes, 2008). By fostering inclusive and dialogic spaces, such approaches strengthen community agency and enhance the sustainability of social transformation efforts. Simultaneously, digital platforms have significantly expanded opportunities for mobilization, transnational visibility, and the formation of global solidarities, thereby reshaping the dynamics of collective action in the digital era (Castells, 2012). Alongside these developments, traditional and alternative media continue to perform essential functions in investigative reporting, narrative framing, and advocacy, contributing to public awareness and policy engagement (Cottle, 2009).

Illustrative examples such as the Black Lives Matter movement and Dove's *Real Beauty* campaign demonstrate the multifaceted ways in which media can amplify marginalized voices, challenge dominant cultural norms, and influence broader public and policy discourse (Freelon, McIlwain and Clark, 2018; Johnston and Taylor, 2008). These cases highlight the capacity of mediated communication to shape symbolic representations and stimulate critical conversations about race, gender, and social justice. However, communication alone is insufficient to produce structural transformation. Sustainable social change requires the integration of media strategies with grassroots organizing, institutional reform, and sustained civic participation (Freire, 1970). Media, therefore, functions most effectively as a complementary mechanism within broader socio-political movements.

Ultimately, communication for social change achieves its greatest impact when it is participatory in design, inclusive in representation, and grounded in local socio-cultural realities. By facilitating dialogue, fostering critical consciousness, and contesting dominant narratives, media can act as a catalyst for the advancement of more just, democratic, and equitable societies (Servaes, 2008; Couldry, 2012).

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“Community Narratives And Environmental Justice In Indian Cinema: A Case Study Of *Peepli Live* And *Koan Kitne Pani Mein*”

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Abstract:

Indian cinema has frequently served as a potent platform for expressing underrepresented voices and social realities. Environmental injustice is one of its topics. Through a case study of the films *Peepli Live* (2010) and *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein* (2015), this essay investigates the representation of environmental justice and community narratives in Indian cinema. Both films critically examine the political economy of development and media interference while focusing on rural communities impacted by natural catastrophes like drought, water scarcity, and agrarian misery. *Peepli Live* addresses systemic injustices ingrained in neoliberal governance and state policies, as well as the monetization of farmers' suffering. *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein*, on the other hand, uses comedy to examine water as a contested resource, exposing the ways in which historical injustices, feudal power systems, and caste hierarchies influence access to natural resources. This study contends that these films subvert prevailing development discourses and re-center subaltern perspectives by examining narrative structure, character depiction, symbolism, and cinematic methods. In order to show how popular film may function as a platform for social critique, awareness, and resistance in modern India, the study places these cinematic storylines within the larger context of environmental justice.

Key words: Indian cinema; Environmental justice; Community narratives; Water scarcity; Agrarian crisis; Rural India; Caste and ecology; Development discourse

Introduction:

Cinema is one of the most important artistic mediums in the world . Films may inspire, educate, entertain, and challenge discussion because of their emotional impact and broad appeal. Modern film, especially in India, is increasingly being used as a means to raise awareness on important topics which are related to society. Movies have often historically been linked with enjoyment. These days, films are essential for educating viewers and influencing public opinion on anything from political corruption and mental health to gender inequity and environmental damage. Films are used as a persuasive tool for raising awareness. Addressing the socioeconomic, environmental, and psychological issues. Cinema become a platform nowadays for portraying the lives and struggles of marginalized communities, including Dalits, Adivasis, women, and other socially disadvantaged people.(Chawla,2025)

Environmental Justice Theory argues that environmental problems (pollution, displacement, water scarcity, climate change) do not affect all people equally. Marginalized communities such as farmers, tribal groups, urban poor, and lower castes often bear the maximum environmental burden while receiving the least benefits of development. Environmental justice in cinema focuses on who bears the cost of development and who benefits from it. Through storytelling, memory, satire, and realism, films expose the uneven impact of development projects on rural communities, farmers, and the urban poor. (Agarwal, pp119-154)

Development projects such as dams, irrigation schemes, industrial expansion, and urbanization have mainly led to forced displacement, loss of livelihoods, and environmental degradation. Cinema represents these processes not merely as economic transitions but as human tragedies rooted in structural inequality. The post development theory also talks about this . It says that dominant growth-oriented development models by exposing how large-scale projects undermine local livelihoods, cultural practices, and sustainable ways of living, while privileging state and elite interests. This cinema plays a main role in showing the sufferings and circumstances of poor people .

The chosen films for this paper which are *peepli live* (2010) and *kaun kitne pani me* (2015) also talks about these types of issues. These movies are not made for entertainment purposes. They are made for showing the mirror of Indian society, especially to the poor and depressed classes. How they suffered and migrated due to development projects like irrigation management and dam construction, building construction. They are made for educating youths and spreading awareness about environmental injustice.

Case study:

Kaun kitne Pani Me :



Source: ndtv

2015 saw the release of Nila Madhab's film *Kaun Kitne Pani Mein*. This film is produced by One Time Foundation. In order to depict societal drama, the director incorporated dark humor and political satire in her film. The water problem, caste system, authority, and social justice are central to the film's plot. The two Odisha villages of Upri and Bairi are at the center of the narrative. The Bairi people are from a lower caste. They are highly skilled and engaged in manual labor. The higher caste comprises the Upri people. They don't put in much effort. It demonstrates unequivocally the caste prejudice that permeates society. The movie emphasizes the value of conserving water and sheds light on the best ways to do it for the benefit of coming generations. Because of certain careless water usage habits, for the past three decades, the village of Upri has been dealing with the problems of water scarcity, drought, and migration. In one particular scene, dakshina—an offering to the priest—is depicted as water. The movie emphasizes the fact that without water, no infrastructure development or economic growth is possible through scenes like foreign investors refusing to sign the deal, banks refusing loans, and builders rejecting the projects.

Important messages are conveyed in the film, such as the universal need for water regardless of discrimination. The importance of water to the villagers is reflected in a number of dialogues throughout the film, such as "Money is of no value if water is not there," "there is no luck without water," and "King is one who has access to water." In the movie, it is shown that the water becomes a political issue as the two villages mostly fight with each other. Making the audience aware of the value of water is the main takeaway from this film. All living things need water, and without it, life has no purpose. Therefore, we must use water wisely to avoid harming future generations.

All things considered, *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein* makes a substantial addition to the field of Indian eco-political film studies. They have their roots in social and political processes that change identity, governance, and community relations. For studies based on post-development theory and environmental justice in the context of modern Indian cinema, the film is therefore a useful case study. This film is also related to subaltern studies.

Peepli Live :

Anusha Rizvi directed and Amir Khan Production House produced the 2010 film *Peepli Live*. Farmer suicides and the agrarian crisis are the main themes of this film. To illustrate its message, the movie employed dark humor and sarcasm. By highlighting the intricate interactions between rural distress, state policy, media sensationalism, and political opportunism, it tackles the problem of farmer suicides in India. Natha and Budhia, two impoverished farmers, are the main characters of the story. Due to unpaid loans, these two could lose their land.



Source: Bollywood Hungama

Budhia mockingly advises Natha to end her life in order for the family to be compensated by the government. A local journalist misunderstood it. He believes they are preparing a suicide. The word gets around quickly. Natha became a national spectacle as a result of this news. The area began to be overrun with media outlets. Government officials rushed to control public perception rather than deal with the real agrarian issues, and politicians began trying to take advantage of the situation for their own electoral advantage.

Nathana's true pain is disregarded as the circus grows stronger, turning him from a human being to a symbol. Tragically, the video ends with the realization that systemic problems including poverty, debt, and policy failure have not been addressed despite widespread attention. *Peepli Live* is ultimately a devastating indictment of modern Indian democracy. It demonstrates how, in contemporary democracies, rural hardship is prioritized as a spectacle rather than a policy issue. Through humor and reality, the film reveals how farmers' lives are entangled with political inequity, media exploitation, and environmental vulnerability. Knowledge of communal narratives, environmental suffering, and social injustice in contemporary India requires a knowledge of this film as a cinematic text.

Literature Review:

One important field of research in environmental studies is the connection between Indian film and environmental justice. By transforming problems like resource shortages, drought, and climate change into real human experiences, academics contend that visual culture is essential in influencing how the general public perceives ecological catastrophes. Research on environmental justice highlights how marginalized groups, especially farmers, lower-caste groups, and rural communities, are disproportionately impacted by these kinds of environmental issues. Scholars that focus primarily on Indian development trends emphasize how neoliberal economic policies, little state assistance, and unequal property ownership exacerbate ecological deterioration,

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droughts, and water shortages. Filmmakers have examined these institutional injustices as the backdrop for their works. Eco-critical methods in film studies examine how the environment is portrayed in movies as an active force influencing societal connections rather than just as a background. The capacity of Indian cinema, in particular, to highlight inconsistencies in the narrative surrounding development and to criticize political apathy has been studied.

Films such as *Peepli Live* (2010) have been discussed by scholars as cultural texts that reveal the intersection of environmental crisis, media commodification, and agrarian despair. The portrayal of drought and farmer suicides is interpreted as a critique of Government's failure. Farmer suicides is major issue in present days.

In a similar vein, *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein* has been discussed in scholarly discourse on caste and water politics. Many people interpret this movie as a hypothetical metaphor of upcoming environmental disputes. Academics point out that the movie links historical caste-based exclusion with water scarcity. It implies that current socioeconomic hierarchies are reproduced by environmental disasters. The focus on inherited inequality and collective memory is consistent with subaltern studies. Recovering marginalized voices and experiences is its main goal.

Despite increased scholarship on environmental concerns in Indian cinema, much of the existing material approaches films in isolation or favors policy analysis above narrative portrayal. Comparative studies that highlight community narratives as crucial to environmental justice rhetoric are scarce. This study extends previous research by examining *Peepli Live* and *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein* to show how Indian film constructs environmental justice through satire, collective memory, and grassroots views.

Methodology:

This study uses qualitative and interpretative research approaches to investigate the representation of community narratives and environmental justice in Indian cinema. It adopts a case study approach. It concentrates on the films *Peepli Live* and *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein*, which deal with drought, water scarcity, rural suffering, and social inequity. These films were chosen because they focus on underprivileged rural populations and use humor to heavily criticize mainstream development and governance narratives.

The films themselves serve as primary data. They contain narrative structure, language, character depictions, and visual symbols relating to environmental injustice. Secondary sources include scholarly publications and essays about environmental justice, ecocriticism, Indian film, and subaltern studies. They offer theoretical support.

The approach uses environmental justice theory and eco-critical film analysis to better understand unequal ecological impacts and the importance of community voices. Key scenes are carefully analyzed. Despite being limited to two Hindi films and qualitative research, this methodology enables a concentrated knowledge of how Indian cinema articulates environmental justice and community narrative through storytelling.

Findings :

According to the study, *Peepli Live* and *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein* show environmental challenges as social injustices. Both videos demonstrate how drought and water scarcity disproportionately affect vulnerable rural populations as a result of political negligence, unequal resource distribution, and historical social structures. Another major finding from this study is that community experiences are central to environmental justice narratives. Environmental pain is portrayed as a collective experience. On the other hand, satire is utilized as a critical tool to expose government failures, media insensitivity, and misguided development paradigms. Overall, the films demonstrate that environmental injustice in Indian cinema is inextricably linked to socioeconomic inequity and community resistance.

Movie	Year	Environmental issue Related	Social issue Related	Key Message
Koun kitne pani me	2015	Water shortage	Caste Discrimination, honour killing, role	Judicious use of water. Considering

			of caste in migration	water to be important for economic growth. Importance of water for all life
Peepli live	2010	Agrarian crisis, farmer suicides	Developmental inequality, political opportunism, marginalisation of rural voices	rural suffering in India is systematically ignored until it becomes a media spectacle

Figure 1: description of two movies

Conclusion:

This study looked at community narratives and environmental justice in Indian cinema using the films *Peepli Live* and *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein* as examples. Both films use humor and realism to highlight environmental disasters. They depict agricultural suffering and water scarcity. These are not isolated ecological issues; they are profoundly rooted in social, political, and economic processes. These cinematic texts, which address rural communities, question prevailing development narratives. They are referring to subaltern voices.

Peepli Live depicts environmental misery via the viewpoint of agricultural debt and suicide. It explains how drought, policy failure, and media sensationalism combine to depoliticize rural misery. The community's living experiences are frequently overlooked by political opportunism and media spectacle. In contrast, *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein* depicts water scarcity as a site of power negotiation, where control over resources allows for the reversal of caste hierarchies. The film explains how environmental justice is linked to issues of access, authority, and social equity.

In the end, these films create community narratives that challenge simplistic depictions of rural India that highlight agency, contestation, and inequity. They demonstrate that environmental justice in India encompasses not only ecological sustainability but also social dignity and political representation. They discussed equitable resource distribution. As cultural texts, *Peepli Live* and *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein* make significant contributions to eco-critical and subaltern discourse by demonstrating how cinema can serve as a critical medium for exposing environmental injustice and elevating disadvantaged community voices in contemporary India.

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“Analysing Governance Gaps, Climate Stress, and the Promise of Minilateralism in addressing Water Security in the Indo-Pacific region”

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Abstract

The political and strategic landscape in the Indo-Pacific region is undergoing significant changes, accompanied by the rise of non-traditional security challenges, mainly climate change, and water insecurity. The region has severe freshwater scarcity despite being surrounded by the Pacific and Indian Oceans, making water security one of its most pressing sustainability challenges. Floods, extreme weather, and natural disasters have made this situation worse due to climate change, and regional cooperation on water security is still hampered by transboundary river disputes. The region's ability to realise a sustainable future is threatened by the lack of cooperative and flexible governing frameworks. The paper explores the region's water security from the perspectives of governance and climate vulnerability, emphasising how institutional arrangements affect cooperation, management, and access to shared water resources. In order to solve water security issues more successfully than conventional multilateral frameworks, the study also investigates the possibilities of minilateralism as a substitute or supplementary governance strategy. In order to examine this, the study uses the Ganga Brahmaputra as a case study for the BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal) framework, examining how it promotes cooperative water governance, data sharing, and regional coordination. The paper argues that minilateral arrangements can contribute to sustainable water governance in the Indo-Pacific and while doing so the paper highlights the importance of cooperative governance as a prerequisite for achieving sustainable and resilient futures in the region. For this purpose, the paper will use different governmental data as the primary sources and different papers, articles, books, newspapers, thesis etc. as the secondary source.

Key words

Water security, Indo-pacific, minilateralism, BBIN, SDG 6, water governance.

Introduction

The most valuable natural resource is water. Land makes up 30% of the planet's surface, while water makes up 70%. However, the ocean's saltwater makes up 97% of the water supply on Earth, with freshwater making up only 3%. Just 0.3% of the world's water is found in rivers and lakes. The water resource is valuable not so much because it is readily available as because it is used and managed effectively. In addition to being essential for human survival and the ecosystem, water is also vital to agriculture, drinking, sanitation, industrial growth, electricity production, transportation, environmental preservation, and regional peace and security (Brown & Lall, 2006). The Indo-Pacific region is facing challenges of water security because of rapid population growth, accelerated urbanisation, and expanding economic activities and most importantly due to climate change, which impacts regional water supplies, shifting precipitation patterns and worsening floods, storms and drought. Many areas in the region face the problem of water stress as rivers and groundwater aquifers bump against the limits of their renewable capacity. They have significantly increased pressure on this finite and unevenly distributed resource. Consequently, the challenge of water security today is less about absolute availability and more about inefficient utilisation, inadequate governance, and climate-induced variability, underscoring the urgent need for improved water management frameworks. This paper aims to investigate how the Indo-Pacific region's water security issues are changing, especially in the context of the region's growing environmental vulnerability and climate change. It examines the institutional limitations and structural governance gaps that hinder efficient water management and cross-border collaboration across shared river basins. With a particular focus on the Ganga-Brahmaputra river basin, particular attention is provided to the effects of climate stress and transboundary river disputes on regional water security. The study also analyses minilateralism's potential as a supplementary or alternative governance framework that can overcome the drawbacks of traditional bilateral and multilateral systems. In this context, the impact of the Bangladesh–Bhutan–India–Nepal (BBIN) sub-regional effort is evaluated in order to determine how well it supports climate adaptation plans, improves data-sharing capabilities, and fosters cooperative water governance. The study concludes by examining the degree to which climate-resilient, sustainable water governance systems in the Indo-Pacific region are promoted by minilateral agreements like BBIN and the advancement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). The paper tackles the following research questions in light of these goals: What are the Indo-Pacific region's main water security issues, and how are they made worse by environmental vulnerability and climate change? What effects do transboundary river

disputes and climatic stress have on the Ganga-Brahmaputra basin's water security? What governance and institutional shortcomings prevent successful regional water cooperation? How much may unilateralism offer a more adaptable and practical governance strategy for dealing with water insecurity? How well does the BBIN framework support collaborative water governance, especially when it comes to data exchange, flood control, and climate adaptation? Lastly, how much can unilateral agreements help the Indo-Pacific region achieve SDG 6 and manage basins sustainably?

Indo-pacific and the water security -Nature

Indo-Pacific is the geographical region covering all the nations and islands surrounding the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean, including mainland Africa and Asian countries. In geographical dimension, the USA considers the area from the shores of Africa to the shores of the USA. It is the home to most of the populous countries and powerful countries like India, China, Japan and Australia. The Indo-Pacific area is getting more and more significant every day as the US-China conflict intensifies. The past decade has seen the Indo-Pacific area gain importance because of security, economic, technological and environmental challenges. Three factors have contributed to the development of the new geopolitical term, Indo-Pacific: 1. India's emergence as a major economic force and the rise of other significant Asian players. 2. The emergence of China and its assertive foreign policy with respect to the South China Sea's disputed island countries 3. The growing rivalry between China and the United States.

The nomenclature is derived from the Asia Pacific. The term Asia-Pacific emerged as a post-Cold War concept driven by the factors of economic integration, which allowed for closer security-level ties. The term Indo-Pacific emerged in 2007 and 2013 with Japan and Australia. The term got popular when the USA started using it strategically. The region has gained prominence in the context of geopolitical discussions and regional security strategies. It is a region with a diverse array of ecosystems and cultures.

The term Security signifies providing protection from threats to the social order. Environmental security has become one of the most controversial and stimulating issues in the field of international security studies today. One of the components of environmental security is water security. Let's explore water security and its nature with special reference to the Indo-Pacific. According to AWDO, water security is the availability of adequate water to ensure a safe and affordable water supply, inclusive sanitation for all, improved livelihoods, and healthy ecosystems, with reduced water-related risks toward supporting sustainable and resilient rural-urban economies in the Asia and Pacific region. According to AWDO, inappropriate management practices, rather than water scarcity, are the main causes of water insecurity. **Water security is one of the emerging issues and major concerns in the Indo-Pacific region;** this is due to climate change, transboundary river disputes, and rising demands for water and groundwater depletion. Three-quarters of its surface area is covered by water. But there is an issue of clean drinking water and sanitation systems, an increase in pollution, and growing water-related climate risks that jeopardise the security and stability of the region. 1.5 billion people living in rural areas and 0.6 billion in urban areas still lack adequate water supply and sanitation. Approximately 500 million people lack access to a basic water supply, and 1.14 billion lack access to basic sanitation. In this region, water is evolving into an issue of "high politics". Many countries in the region face shared risks due to transboundary river disputes (India, China, Bangladesh, and the Mekong basin), groundwater depletion, and water-related risks due to climate change. India, which is both a downstream and regional power in the region, faces challenges due to Chinese action on both the border and the hydrosphere. In the region, China's unwillingness to show transparency and its actions to control river flow and use river water as a strategic tool for downstream countries to create artificial floods show China's hydro-hegemonic actions that create threats to South and Southeast Asian states. China is building upstream dams on transboundary rivers (Mekong, Brahmaputra); it's controlling water flows, using water as strategic leverage, and its BRI hydro infrastructure projects have raised concern for the countries of the Indo-Pacific, particularly India.

Transboundary waters and the concern of water security: A Case study of the BBIN framework on the Ganga Brahmaputra

Transboundary waters are bodies of water that are located in different states. In many places of the world, it is now a cause of war. Political geography and physical geography interact to create the conflict. Transboundary water resources have been the greatest victim of the notion of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The notion compels states to appropriate more water before it crosses the boundary and share less and less with other basin states, automatically involving conflicts. The conflicts over transboundary rivers have several dimensions like-upstream downstream conflicts, sovereignty conceptions, territorial integrity, power positions, water scarcity and environmental security. The water availability varies spatially and seasonally in the water basins. Many countries depend on the transboundary river water from upstream neighbours for a substantial position as their supply. The downstream countries complain about reduced water flow and scarcity of water resources. The two most basic

and omnipresent issues are scarcity and security. Actual scarcity may be said to exist when real demand (i.e. need) exceeds the real supply.

Key problems related to transboundary rivers:

Upstream diversion, environmental impact of large river projects, contamination, and the dramatic seasonal variation in the flow due to Climate change.

About Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin

The Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers are the major river systems of the Ganga–Brahmaputra–Meghna (GBM) basin, comprising an extensive network of tributaries originating from both the northern and southern slopes of the Himalayas, which collectively feed into the main river channels. And extends across five countries—China, India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. The Ganga–Brahmaputra–Meghna basin is the third-largest hydrological region in the world and is endowed with enormous water, land, and forest resources. The GBM basin generates an annual runoff of approximately 1,150 billion cubic metres, representing the total outflow draining into the Bay of Bengal. Spanning an area of nearly 1.75 million square kilometres, the basin supports around 10 per cent of the world’s population. The Ganga–Brahmaputra transboundary river system supports the livelihoods of almost 600 million people. It includes some of the world's most productive agricultural floodplains and feeds into the Sundarbans delta, one of the world's most productive estuarine ecosystems that supports millions of people's livelihoods. For the over 1.3 million farming households and tens of thousands of fishing communities that depend on these rivers, any change in river flows—whether brought about by infrastructure development, greater navigation and shipping, or upstream interventions—has substantial ramifications (CUTS-CITEE, 2018). Interestingly, the GBM region is still among the world's poorest despite its abundance of natural resources. The basin's nations rank between 119 and 138 on the Human Development Index (HDI), and the area does poorly on important socioeconomic variables like health, education, child mortality, malnutrition, access to clean drinking water, and energy availability (Rasul, 2014).

Key issues and challenges in the GBM basin

1. Water supply has become more unpredictable throughout the basin due to poor management practices and climate-induced variability as the demand for water continues to rise. Despite having abundant resources, the GBM river systems are extremely susceptible to hydrological extremes, such as water stress during periods of drought and floods during the monsoon season. These difficulties are further worsened by sedimentation, water pollution, environmental degradation, and unsustainable resource use.
2. Cross-border water transportation in the region damages the quality of water if these vessels and/or upstream communities are not regulated to prevent the throwing of garbage, oil, and other pollutants into the rivers. (CUTS CITEE,2018)
3. Flooding in the region is a recurring phenomenon in Bangladesh, Nepal and India. We can’t completely avoid floods, but the damage can be minimised through the joint efforts of governments and those living in the major river basins. Flood forecasting can be substantially increased through the exchange of real-time data on river flow from upstream to downstream countries. There are initiatives by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) for real-time data sharing, but these initiatives remain limited.

	Mortality 1971–2008 (Average no. of people dying annually)	People affected per annum on average			Economic loss (annual average from 1971 to 2008)		
		Drought ('000)	Floods and storms ('000)	Share of population (%)	Droughts (million US\$)	Floods and storms (million US\$)	Largest loss per event (% of GDP)
Bangladesh	5,673	658	8,751	9.1	0	445.6	9.8
India	2,497	25,294	22,314	7.2	61.6	1,055.4	2.5
Nepal	137	121	87	2.0	0.3	25.8	24.6

Source: World Bank

4. Environmental concerns like damage to fish and dolphin sanctuaries due to dredging, river water pollution due to oil spillage and waste disposal also pose real challenges in Bangladesh and India. (CUTS CITEE, 2018)

Geographically, the Ganga–Brahmaputra basin is a single, integrated drainage system that is shared by several states in a complicated political environment. As growing economies, Nepal, India, Bhutan, and Bangladesh share the problems of rapid population expansion, poverty, and unequal development, while also being vulnerable to frequent natural and man-made hazards like flooding, droughts, and ecological degradation. Colonial legacies, including the imposition of strict political boundaries, post-colonial state formation, nation-building processes, growing resource consciousness, and conflicting ideas of territorial sovereignty, have profoundly influenced the hydro-politics of the basin. The urgent necessity for collaborative, basin-wide governance systems that may strike a balance between development goals, ecological sustainability and livelihood security is highlighted by these socioeconomic interconnections.

Bilateral efforts

The Mahakali Treaty(1996): To resolve India-Nepal water resource conflicts on kosi and Gandak treaties. **Bangladesh and India over the Farakka issues.** The Farakka barrage's flow schedule during the dry season months of January through May was established by the Ganges water sharing agreement treaty of 1996. The pact states that if the flow is more than 75,000 cusecs, India may draw up to 40,000 cusecs. The flow will be split evenly between the two nations if Farakka's availability drops below 70,000 cusecs, while if the flow is between 70,000 and 75,000 cusecs, Bangladesh will be guaranteed 35,000 cusecs. Sediments, biodiversity, and wider ecological issues were not taken into account in this accord. Only the volumetric distribution of river flow during the dry season is covered by this treaty. It does not concern benefit sharing, nor does it purport to be a comprehensive river sharing and management treaty.¹

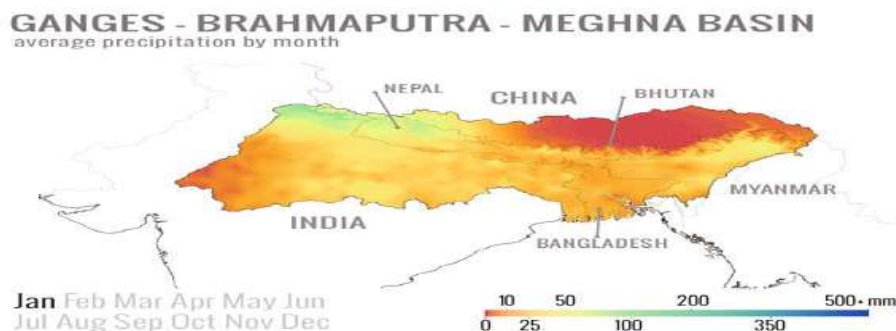
The removal of the Farakka barrage will not solve the problem, we need an integrated approach of governance, here BBIN Framework can play an important role (discussed further).

India and Bangladesh are at odds over the Teesta River, which is used for irrigation during the dry season (December to May). 39 percent went to India and 36 percent to Bangladesh by an ad hoc arrangement in 1983; the remaining portion was left unallocated but expired after two years.

In 2002, China and India signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the exchange of low-quality data about the Yarlung Tsangpo.

The equitable participation and benefit-sharing tenets of these treaties give the riparian governments additional opportunities. The development and management of water resources in the Ganga-Brahmaputra region require yet another paradigm change. In order to address the many but complementary problems of augmentation, energy production and transmission, improving storage capacity, flood management, and inland navigation development, transboundary water resource management need a regional approach in addition to bilateralism.

Concerns about dam safety, environmental risks, sedimentation, low water quality, deforestation, resettlement, and restoration, among other issues, are shared by these nations.



¹ <https://www.orfonline.org/research/governing-the-ganges-and-brahmaputra-beyond-reductionist-hydrology>

Figure: Countries in the Ganga and the Brahmaputra sub basins

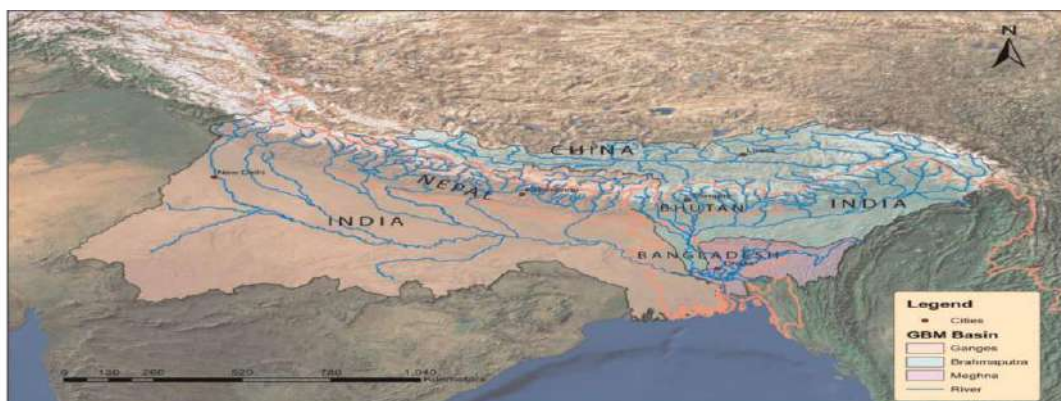


Figure : The Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river basin (map by Sagar Ratna Bajracharya, ICIMOD)

Country	Ganges sub-basin		Brahmaputra sub-basin	
	Sub-Basin area (1000 km ²)	Percentage of total area	Sub-Basin area (1000 km ²)	Percentage of total area
China	33	3	293	50
Nepal	140	13	—	—
Bhutan	—	—	45	8
India	861	80	195	34
Bangladesh	46	4	47	8

Source - NILANJAN GHOSH JAYANTA BANDYOPADHYAY,2020²

Regional Efforts, Minilateral Groupings, and Their Implications

As stated in Sustainable Development Goal 6.5.2, transboundary water cooperation is essential to advancing peace, regional integration, sustainable development, and climate resilience. The significance of collaborative water governance has been emphasised more and more by international forums including the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Bonn Conference, and the Hague Forum (Rangachari & Verghese, 2001). The creation of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) in 1995 to encourage the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin among Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam is an example of how institutional frameworks for shared river basin management have grown throughout the world. Benefits from collaboration in transboundary water management are multifaceted and include security, environmental, and economic advantages. In order to improve collective resilience and adaptive ability in the face of new problems like climate change, demographic pressures, and ecological degradation, effective governance necessitates international collaboration because rivers transcend political boundaries (Priscoli, 2009). Riparian governments can gain from economies of scale, long-term planning perspectives, cost effectiveness, and improved investment flows by working together to develop common water resources. Multipurpose river basin projects that can retain monsoonal water, reduce floods and droughts, increase dry-season flows, improve irrigation and navigation, produce hydropower, and improve energy and environmental security are also made possible by regional cooperation (et al., 1994). Large storage projects, like the proposed Sunkoshi Dam, for example, show how combining hydropower production with seasonal flow augmentation can benefit the entire basin (Ahmad, 2004). However, without regional cooperation, it is challenging to accomplish the substantial financial inputs, technological know-how, and basin-level coordination needed for such interventions. Despite these opportunities, South Asian cross-border energy

² <https://www.orfonline.org/research/governing-the-ganges-and-brahmaputra-beyond-reductionist-hydrology>

commerce is still restricted and mostly bilateral, especially between India and Bhutan and India and Nepal. Given the massive hydropower potential of Bhutan and Nepal, coordinated regional development might accelerate economic progress, reduce poverty, and improve human development outcomes (Lama, 2000; Srivastava & Misra, 2007; Dhungel, 2008; Crow & Singh, 2009). Floods and related calamities are often caused by excessive monsoonal flow in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) basin. However, even a small portion of this seasonal excess might be used for dry-season augmentation and hydropower generation with integrated basin-wide planning, which would help bring about long-term regional change (Rangachari & Verghese, 2001).

Minilateralism and Water Security: The Case of BBIN

Minilateral groupings³ have become viable alternatives in areas where more expansive multilateral structures encounter political obstacles. An example of this strategy is the Bangladesh–Bhutan–India–Nepal (BBIN) initiative, which was started in 2014. As a project-focused, sub-regional platform, BBIN works to improve collaboration in the areas of energy, trade, transportation, and environmental management. Despite not having a legally binding water-sharing agreement, BBIN has achieved significant strides in cross-border grid connectivity and hydro-energy collaboration. BBIN indirectly supports water security through increased regional interdependence by concentrating on certain, mutually beneficial areas, including hydropower development in Bhutan and Nepal. Cooperation in hydro-energy can increase access to electricity, boost communication, facilitate navigation, reduce the risk of flooding by installing storage facilities, and improve regional economic integration. Minilateralism has a number of benefits, including lowering the complexity of negotiations, focusing on areas of reachable agreement, and gradually fostering confidence through project-based cooperation. But structural issues still exist. Deeper cooperation is hampered by unequal power dynamics, sovereignty sensitivities, a lack of formal basin-wide water-sharing procedures, and poor data transparency. Regional water administration is also made more difficult by external geopolitical factors, such as upstream-downstream conflicts in the Brahmaputra basin. BBIN has to institutionalise processes for data sharing, flood forecasting, water quality monitoring, integrated river basin management, and trust-building in order to go beyond indirect contributions to water security. Policy coherence may be improved by combining frameworks for water diplomacy with nexus governance, which connects food, energy, water, and environmental security. Converting technological collaboration into quantifiable governance results will also require efficient assessment of science–policy interfaces.

Governance Challenges in the GBM Basin

Because of the interaction of social, political, economic, cultural, and ecological elements, the governance of the Ganga and Brahmaputra river systems is complicated. Substantial information and knowledge gaps, such as a lack of hydro-meteorological data, a lack of ecosystem-based scientific research, and inadequate institutional coordination, provide a substantial problem. Improved transboundary collaboration may support evidence-based policymaking and fortify data-sharing protocols. Furthermore, growing worries about water insecurity have been exacerbated by the dominant paradigm of "reductionist hydrology," which places a higher priority on large-scale hydropower development and short-term resource optimization. Governance is made more difficult by the lack of thorough institutional and legal structures for the entire basin. Academics like Ben Crow and Nirvikar Singh have highlighted the necessity of expanding talks to include private economic actors in addition to state diplomacy and moving away from bilateral agreements toward multilateral discussions.

Way Forward: Toward Integrated River Basin Governance

Interventions like wastewater discharge, deforestation, over-extraction, or infrastructure development in one area of a basin can have downstream effects across temporal and spatial scales, and rivers transcend political boundaries. Water governance must incorporate both quantitative (allocation and storage) and qualitative (water quality and ecosystem health) aspects due to this ecological interconnectedness. Therefore, basin-wide environmental and socioeconomic evaluations must inform policy decisions. Bandyopadhyay's idea of Integrated River Basin Governance (IRBG) offers a helpful framework for analysis in this regard. IRBG places a strong emphasis on community involvement, multi-stakeholder participation, transparency in budgeting and finance, and cross-border, cross-sector coordinated planning. By providing financial resources, promoting technical collaboration, and operationalising coordinated basin-level actions, minilateral platforms like BBIN can support IRBG. Long-term water security in the GBM basin, however, necessitates trust-based diplomatic engagement,

³ Bhubhinder Singh and Sarah Teo, "minilateralism occupies space between bilateralism and broader regional multilateralism and its cooperative relations that usually involve between three and nine countries, and are relatively exclusive, flexible and functional in nature."

institutional strengthening, legally based frameworks, and ongoing data openness. The significant monsoonal excess in the GBM basin, although now linked to floods and frequent calamities, has the capacity to bring about radical change. Cooperative infrastructure planning, coordinated transboundary governance, and creative storage solutions can transform seasonal fluctuation from a source of risk into a force for sustainable regional growth.

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“Education Financing and the Vision of a Sustainable Future: A Critical Analysis of India’s Union Budget 2026–27”

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Abstract

The Union Budget 2026–27 represents a significant moment in India’s education policy trajectory, with a record allocation of ₹1,39,289.48 crore to the education sector—an increase of 8.27 percent over the previous fiscal year. This enhanced fiscal commitment reflects the growing recognition of education as a foundational pillar of sustainable development. Situated within the broader framework of the conference theme “Sustainable Future,” this chapter critically examines the structure, priorities, and political discourse surrounding the education budget. It analyzes allocations to school education, higher education, research, and skill development, and integrates parliamentary perspectives to demonstrate how democratic deliberation shapes fiscal governance. The chapter argues that while the budget signals progress toward strengthening human capital, the realization of sustainable outcomes depends on long-term fiscal commitment, cooperative federalism, and institutional accountability.

Key Words: Education Policy, Union Budget 2026–27, Sustainable Development, Fiscal Governance, Democratic Deliberation

Introduction: Education and the Architecture of Sustainability

The concept of sustainability has evolved beyond environmental conservation to encompass economic stability, social justice, institutional resilience, and inter generational equity. Sustainable development requires societies to invest in systems that enhance human capabilities and promote inclusive growth. Education, in this context, is not merely a social service but a trans-formative force that shapes economic productivity, democratic participation, and social cohesion.

In India, education occupies a central position in national planning frameworks. The demographic profile of the country—with a large youth population—demands sustained investment in human capital formation. Recognizing this imperative, the Union Budget 2026–27 enhances allocations to education and aligns fiscal priorities with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The increased allocation underscores the belief that a sustainable future must be built upon an educated and skilled citizenry capable of responding to technological change, environmental challenges, and global economic shifts.

Overview of the Education Allocation in the Union Budget 2026–27

The total allocation of ₹1,39,289.48 crore marks the highest-ever funding for education in India. Of this amount, ₹83,562 crore has been allocated to School Education and Literacy, while ₹55,727 crore is designated for Higher Education. The comparatively higher growth rate in higher education funding reflects an increasing emphasis on research, innovation, and global competitiveness.

Presenting the budget in Parliament, Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted the importance of youth empowerment and capacity building, framing the allocation as an investment in India’s future. The budget narrative emphasized “Yuva Shakti” and the need to strengthen the education-to-employment pathway, thereby linking fiscal policy with long-term developmental objectives.

While the nominal increase is noteworthy, a critical perspective reveals that education expenditure as a percentage of GDP remains below the recommended 6 percent benchmark. This gap underscores the need for sustained multi-year fiscal expansion rather than incremental increases.

School Education and Social Sustainability

School education forms the bedrock of social sustainability. Investments in foundational literacy and numeracy, teacher capacity building, digital infrastructure, and inclusive schemes aim to reduce structural inequalities.

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Sustainable societies require equitable access to quality education, particularly at the primary and secondary levels.

The 2026–27 budget emphasizes strengthening foundational learning outcomes and expanding digital classrooms. The integration of technology into pedagogy reflects an effort to prepare students for participation in a knowledge-based economy. However, the digital divide remains a significant barrier, particularly in rural and marginalized regions.

During parliamentary debates, Anurag Thakur underscored the importance of linking education with skill development and youth employment. He emphasized that investments in early education must ultimately translate into economic opportunity. Conversely, Dr. Sivadasan expressed concerns about regional disparities and the need for equitable infrastructure development. These exchanges illustrate the democratic scrutiny applied to education financing.

Social sustainability requires more than infrastructure expansion; it demands inclusive access, gender equity, and curricular reforms that foster critical thinking and civic responsibility.

During parliamentary discussions on education financing and broader fiscal priorities, Raghav Chadha emphasized that education must be treated not merely as a sectoral expenditure but as the backbone of national development. He argued that India cannot aspire to become a developed nation unless it substantially increases investment in public education, particularly at the school level. Highlighting disparities in infrastructure and teacher availability across states, he stressed the need for higher budgetary allocations to ensure quality education for every child, regardless of socio-economic background. Chadha further underscored that strengthening government schools and universities is essential for reducing inequality and fostering social mobility. In his remarks, he linked education financing with long-term economic sustainability, stating that investment in human capital yields far greater returns than short-term populist expenditures. His intervention reflects a broader parliamentary concern that sustainable development requires consistent and substantial public investment in education.

Higher Education, Research, and Innovation

Higher education plays a pivotal role in economic sustainability. The increased allocation for universities and research institutions signals an ambition to strengthen India's innovation ecosystem. Investment in advanced research areas such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy, biotechnology, and interdisciplinary sciences contributes to long-term productivity and competitiveness.

In parliamentary discussions, Shrikant Shinde described the budget as development-oriented and forward-looking, emphasizing that enhanced funding for higher education would improve India's global standing. Similarly, Kartikeya Sharma defended the fiscal framework as a blueprint for building a resilient knowledge economy.

The expansion of research funding aligns with sustainable development objectives by fostering innovation-driven growth. Universities serve as hubs for generating solutions to environmental challenges, technological disruptions, and public policy concerns. Thus, higher education funding is directly linked to long-term national sustainability.

Skill Development and Employability

A notable feature of the 2026–27 education budget is its emphasis on skill development and employability. By integrating vocational education and digital skills training, the government seeks to bridge the gap between academic learning and labor market requirements.

Sustainable economic growth depends on a workforce that is adaptable and technologically proficient. The focus on artificial intelligence, digital literacy, and industry-academia collaboration reflects an understanding that education systems must evolve alongside economic transformations.

However, achieving this alignment requires robust institutional frameworks, updated curricula, and effective coordination between educational institutions and industry stakeholders.

Governance, Accountability, and Fiscal Sustainability

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The sustainability of education financing depends on transparent governance and efficient resource utilization. The emphasis on digital financial monitoring systems and performance audits strengthens accountability mechanisms. Parliamentary oversight further enhances fiscal responsibility by enabling debate and evaluation of policy outcomes.

Education being a concurrent subject under the Constitution necessitates cooperative federalism. Sustainable implementation requires coordination between Union and State governments. Variations in administrative capacity across states pose challenges to uniform implementation.

Fiscal sustainability also involves balancing education spending with competing priorities such as healthcare, defense, and infrastructure. Long-term commitment and strategic planning are essential to ensure that increased allocations translate into meaningful outcomes.

Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

The education budget aligns with global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education). By promoting gender inclusion, skill development, and innovation, the budget also contributes indirectly to goals related to economic growth, industry, and climate action.

Sustainability requires an integrated approach that connects education policy with broader social and economic objectives. The 2026–27 budget demonstrates progress in this direction, though significant structural challenges remain.

Challenges and Critical Reflections

Despite enhanced allocations, several challenges persist. The digital divide limits equitable access to technology-enabled education. Inflationary pressures may diminish the real value of allocations. Teacher shortages and administrative inefficiencies further complicate implementation.

Moreover, while parliamentary discourse reflects consensus on the importance of education, debates over adequacy and distribution highlight ongoing concerns. Sustainable development requires not only increased funding but also structural reforms and long-term strategic planning.

Increase Education Expenditure to 6% of GDP

Several political leaders, including Raghav Chadha, have argued that India must move decisively toward allocating at least 6 percent of GDP to education, as recommended by earlier national education policies. While the 2026–27 allocation marks progress, it remains below this benchmark. A phased roadmap over five years could ensure fiscal sustainability while gradually enhancing investment.

Suggestion: Introduce a legally monitored medium-term fiscal framework for education expenditure growth linked to GDP expansion.

Strengthen Public School Infrastructure

Opposition members in Parliament emphasized the need to reduce disparities between urban and rural schools. Infrastructure gaps—such as lack of laboratories, libraries, sanitation facilities, and digital access—continue to undermine equitable learning outcomes.

Suggestion:

Create a dedicated “**National School Infrastructure Sustainability Fund**” focused on rural and aspirational districts, with outcome-based monitoring.

Enhance Teacher Recruitment and Training

Education quality depends heavily on teacher capacity. Parliamentary debates frequently highlight teacher shortages and contractual employment practices that affect morale and instructional quality. Adopt a national teacher workforce planning mechanism ensuring permanent recruitment, continuous professional development, and digital pedagogy training.

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Expand Higher Education Research Grants

During discussions, leaders such as Shrikant Shinde emphasized the importance of research-driven growth. To build a sustainable knowledge economy, universities must receive predictable and performance-linked research funding.

Establish a Green Research and Innovation Fund supporting climate studies, renewable energy, AI, and sustainable development research aligned with national priorities.

Bridge the Digital Divide

The expansion of digital classrooms and AI-based learning has been widely welcomed. However, concerns were raised regarding unequal access in rural and marginalized communities. Integrate education technology initiatives with rural broadband expansion schemes and subsidized device distribution programs for economically weaker students.

Conclusion

The Union Budget 2026–27 represents a significant milestone in India’s ongoing effort to position education at the centre of national development and sustainability. The allocation of ₹1,39,289.48 crore to the education sector is not merely a fiscal statistic; it symbolizes a policy direction that acknowledges education as the foundational infrastructure of a sustainable society. Sustainable development, as discussed throughout this chapter, extends beyond environmental protection to encompass economic resilience, social inclusion, institutional accountability, and intergenerational equity. In this broader framework, education becomes the most powerful instrument for long-term transformation.

The enhanced allocation reflects an understanding that India’s demographic dividend can only be converted into productive national capital through systematic investment in schooling, higher education, and skill development. The focus on foundational literacy, digital classrooms, teacher capacity building, and inclusive infrastructure seeks to address structural inequalities that have historically limited social mobility. By strengthening school education, the budget attempts to ensure that sustainability begins at the grassroots level—where access to quality education determines future opportunities and democratic participation.

At the same time, the comparatively higher growth in higher education funding signals an ambition to build a knowledge-driven economy. Research, innovation, and interdisciplinary scholarship are essential for addressing emerging global challenges such as climate change, technological disruption, and economic volatility. Universities and research institutions serve as engines of intellectual capital, generating solutions that shape policy, industry, and governance. The budget’s emphasis on digital integration, artificial intelligence, and skill-oriented education reflects the recognition that sustainability in the twenty-first century requires adaptability and technological competence.

The parliamentary discourse surrounding the budget further reinforces the democratic character of education financing. Leaders such as Nirmala Sitharaman articulated the allocation as an investment in “Yuva Shakti,” emphasizing youth empowerment and national progress. Meanwhile, opposition voices including Raghav Chadha stressed the need for greater public investment, equitable distribution of resources, and stronger support for government schools. These diverse perspectives illustrate that education policy remains a central arena of democratic debate, reflecting competing visions of development and equity. Such deliberation is itself a sign of institutional sustainability, ensuring that fiscal decisions remain accountable and responsive to public concerns.

However, the path toward a truly sustainable future requires more than incremental budgetary increases. Education expenditure as a proportion of GDP still falls short of long-standing policy recommendations. Persistent regional disparities, digital divides, teacher shortages, and administrative constraints continue to challenge effective implementation. Without addressing these structural barriers, increased allocations may not yield proportional improvements in learning outcomes or social equity. Sustainable transformation therefore demands a multi-year commitment, cooperative federalism between Union and State governments, and robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure efficient utilization of funds.

Moreover, sustainability implies intergenerational responsibility. Investments made today in classrooms, laboratories, digital infrastructure, and research ecosystems will shape the capabilities of future generations. Education financing must therefore be seen not as consumption expenditure but as capital formation—an investment that yields social, economic, and civic dividends over time. Transparent governance, outcome-based

budgeting, and parliamentary oversight will be crucial in maintaining public trust and ensuring that financial commitments translate into measurable impact.

In alignment with the conference theme “Sustainable Future,” this chapter concludes that the Union Budget 2026–27 lays a constructive foundation for strengthening India’s educational landscape. It signals political recognition that education is central to nation-building, economic growth, and social justice. Yet sustainability is a continuous process rather than a one-time fiscal decision. The ultimate success of this budget will depend on sustained political will, institutional reform, inclusive policy design, and effective implementation across states and regions.

A sustainable India will emerge not solely through economic expansion or technological advancement, but through the cultivation of informed, skilled, ethical, and socially conscious citizens. Education financing, therefore, stands at the intersection of fiscal policy and moral responsibility. The 2026–27 budget provides momentum toward this goal; its enduring legacy will be determined by how consistently and equitably its vision is realized in practice.

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“A Sustainable Village Development Framework for Improving Living Standards, Controlling Rural–Urban Migration, and Achieving Viksit Bharat: Evidence from Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu”

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Abstract

Sustainable village development is a fundamental requirement for achieving India’s vision of *Viksit Bharat*. This study presents an integrated rural development framework emphasizing local production and consumption, revenue generation through self-employment, financial discipline via postal recurring deposits, environmental sustainability, scientific drainage systems to prevent mosquito-borne diseases, groundwater recharge, removal of environmentally unfriendly crops such as eucalyptus and tobacco, healthcare access, education, milk production, child nutrition, transportation, cold storage facilities, and export-quality rural products. The study further demonstrates that **improved living standards within villages significantly reduce rural–urban migration by ensuring livelihood security, health, education, and social well-being at the local level**. Empirical evidence from successful village models in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu indicates that villages achieving economic self-reliance and quality infrastructure experience minimal migration, reduce pressure on urban systems, and contribute substantially to national economic growth.

Keywords

Sustainable village; Rural infrastructure, Migration control, Self-employment, Groundwater management, Viksit Bharat

1. Introduction

Rural regions play a vital role in India’s economic stability, food security, and social structure. However, inadequate employment opportunities, limited healthcare facilities, water scarcity, poor sanitation, and low living standards have historically driven large-scale rural–urban migration. This migration has resulted in excessive urbanization while weakening rural economies [1].

Several Indian villages illustrate that these challenges can be effectively addressed through integrated development. **Ralegan Siddhi (Maharashtra)** transformed from a drought-prone village into a sustainable rural model through watershed management, afforestation, sanitation discipline, and community participation [2]. **Hiware Bazaar (Maharashtra)** achieved economic stability by regulating water usage, eliminating water-intensive crops, expanding dairy farming, and strengthening local governance, resulting in near-zero migration [3]. Similarly, **Odanthurai (Tamil Nadu)** attained energy self-sufficiency through renewable energy generation and utilized surplus revenue for village welfare and infrastructure development, improving living standards and reducing migration [4].

These case studies highlight the importance of integrated village development for balanced national growth and the realization of *Viksit Bharat*.

2. Results and discussion

2.1. Improvement in living standards and local economic stability

The results indicate that sustainable village interventions significantly improved living standards through stable employment, diversified income sources, and enhanced food security. As presented in **Table 1**, villages transitioned from seasonal employment to year-round self-employment, leading to improved household income stability and reduced economic vulnerability.

2.2. Revenue generation through self-employment

Self-employment in agriculture, dairy farming, food processing, handicrafts, and renewable energy emerged as the primary source of village revenue. Diversified livelihood opportunities reduced dependency on external employment and government support, as observed in Hiware Bazaar and Ralegan Siddhi.

2.3. Financial discipline through postal recurring deposits

Postal recurring deposit (RD) schemes encouraged regular savings and strengthened household financial security. Monthly savings enabled investments in education, healthcare, and productive assets while reducing reliance on informal credit systems.

2.4. Environmental sustainability and crop rationalization

The removal of environmentally unfriendly crops such as eucalyptus and tobacco resulted in improved soil fertility and groundwater levels. Replacement with millets, horticulture, and fodder crops enhanced ecological balance and agricultural productivity (see **Table 1**).

2.5. Drainage systems, groundwater recharge, and public health

Scientific drainage systems eliminated stagnant water, reducing mosquito breeding and vector-borne diseases. Integrated rainwater harvesting and percolation tanks significantly improved groundwater recharge. The impact of infrastructure interventions on public health is summarized in **Table 2**.

2.6. Healthcare access and community well-being

Village-level hospitals and primary health centers improved access to preventive and curative healthcare. Improved sanitation and clean water availability further reduced disease incidence and healthcare expenditure.

2.7. Milk production and child nutrition

Dairy cooperatives provided stable income for farmers while ensuring regular milk supply for children. Improved nutrition reduced malnutrition levels and enhanced educational outcomes among rural children.

2.8. Education, skill development, and human capital

Quality village schools and vocational training centers strengthened human capital formation. Education aligned with local economic activities reduced migration pressures by enabling youth to find employment within villages.

2.9. Transportation, cold storage, and market access

Improved transportation networks and cold storage facilities reduced post-harvest losses and enhanced market access for perishable products. These interventions significantly increased farmer incomes and export potential (see **Table 2**).

2.10. Social institutions, discipline, and governance

Temples and community institutions promoted discipline, dedication, and ethical values. Strong local governance ensured effective implementation of development initiatives and long-term sustainability.

2.11. Control of rural–urban migration through improved living standards

Improved living standards emerged as the most effective strategy for controlling rural–urban migration. As illustrated in **Table 4**, villages offering employment, healthcare, education, sanitation, and social dignity experienced negligible migration. Case villages such as Hiware Bazaar and Ralegan Siddhi clearly demonstrate this outcome.

Table 1. Key Indicators of Village Conditions Before and After Sustainable Development Interventions

Indicator	Before Development	After Development	Evidence from Case Villages
Employment opportunities	Limited seasonal employment	Year-round self-employment	Hiware Bazaar, Ralegan Siddhi
Rural–urban migration	High (seasonal & permanent)	Negligible / near zero	Hiware Bazaar
Groundwater availability	Critically low	Significantly improved	Ralegan Siddhi
Crop pattern	Water-intensive / harmful (eucalyptus, tobacco)	Millets, horticulture, fodder crops	Maharashtra villages
Health conditions	High disease incidence	Improved public health	Drainage-based sanitation
Income stability	Low and uncertain	Stable and diversified	Dairy + agriculture

Table 2. Infrastructure Interventions and Their Impact on Living Standards

Infrastructure Component	Intervention Implemented	Outcome
Drainage system	Scientific drainage, no stagnant water	Reduced mosquito-borne diseases
Water management	Rainwater harvesting, percolation tanks	Groundwater recharge
Healthcare	Village hospitals / PHCs	Reduced medical expenses
Education	Well-equipped schools	Improved literacy & skills
Transportation	Improved rural roads	Market access & mobility
Cold storage	Village-level cold storage units	Reduced post-harvest losses

Table 3. Economic Activities and Revenue Generation in Sustainable Villages

Sector	Local Production Activity	Economic Benefit
Agriculture	Millets, vegetables, fruits	Food security & income
Dairy	Milk, curd, ghee	Regular income & nutrition
Food processing	Value-added products	Employment & exports
Handicrafts	Village-made products	Self-employment
Renewable energy	Solar, biogas	Revenue generation
Savings	Postal RD schemes	Financial security

Table 4. Role of Improved Living Standards in Controlling Rural–Urban Migration

Factor	Urban Migration Driver	Village-Level Solution
Employment	Lack of jobs	Local self-employment
Healthcare	Poor access	Village hospitals
Education	Limited schools	Quality village schools
Sanitation	Poor hygiene	Proper drainage systems
Income security	Irregular earnings	Dairy + savings
Quality of life	Low dignity	Social & cultural cohesion

Table 5. Comparative Analysis of Case Villages

Village	State	Key Intervention	Major Outcome
Ralegan Siddhi	Maharashtra	Watershed, discipline	Water security
Hiware Bazaar	Maharashtra	Crop control, dairy	Zero migration
Odanthurai	Tamil Nadu	Renewable energy	Revenue surplus

3. Conclusion

This study confirms that sustainable village development requires integrated economic, social, environmental, and infrastructural interventions. Improving living standards through employment generation, financial discipline, drainage systems, groundwater management, environmentally responsible agriculture, healthcare, education, transportation, and cold storage is the most effective long-term strategy to prevent rural–urban migration. Evidence from Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu demonstrates that such villages become engines of inclusive growth, forming the foundation for achieving *Viksit Bharat*.

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“स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियों पर विकास योजनाओं का प्रभाव: बिल्हा विकासखण्ड, छत्तीसगढ़ का समाजशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण”

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सारांश

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन का उद्देश्य छत्तीसगढ़ के बिल्हा विकासखण्ड में विकास योजनाओं के स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियों पर पड़ने वाले प्रभावों का समाजशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण करना है। अध्ययन में सर्वेक्षण पद्धति के माध्यम से प्राथमिक आंकड़ों का संकलन किया गया तथा मात्रात्मक एवं गुणात्मक दोनों विधियों से उनका विश्लेषण किया गया। अनुसंधान से यह स्पष्ट हुआ कि विकास योजनाओं ने आय-स्तर में आंशिक वृद्धि, रोजगार के वैकल्पिक अवसर तथा महिला सशक्तिकरण को बढ़ावा दिया है। हालांकि, योजनाओं का प्रभाव सभी सामाजिक वर्गों तक समान रूप से नहीं पहुँच पाया है। अध्ययन यह निष्कर्ष प्रस्तुत करता है कि स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियों को स्थायी एवं आत्मनिर्भर बनाने के लिए विकास योजनाओं में संरचनात्मक सुधार एवं क्षेत्र-विशिष्ट हस्तक्षेप आवश्यक हैं।

मुख्य शब्द : ग्रामीण समाज, स्वयं सहायता समूह, महिला सशक्तिकरण, आर्थिक परिवर्तन, बिल्हा विकासखण्ड, समाजशास्त्रीय अध्ययन

परिचय

स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियाँ ग्रामीण समाज की आत्मा होती हैं, जो कृषि, पशुपालन, कुटीर उद्योग, स्वयं सहायता समूह और प्राकृतिक संसाधन प्रबंधन जैसे विविध स्रोतों पर आधारित होती हैं। भारत के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में जीवन-यापन का मुख्य आधार कृषि तथा उससे संबंधित गतिविधियाँ हैं, इसलिए ग्रामीण आजीविका से जुड़ी योजनाएँ सामाजिक और आर्थिक दोनों दृष्टिकोणों से अत्यधिक महत्वपूर्ण होती हैं (Kulkarni et al., 2023)। छत्तीसगढ़ एक कृषि प्रधान राज्य है जहाँ ग्रामीण आबादी का बड़ा हिस्सा कृषि, मजदूरी और आजीविका आधारित गतिविधियों पर निर्भर है। राज्य सरकार एवं केंद्रीय/राज्य स्तरीय विकास योजनाओं जैसे राजीव गांधी किसान न्याय योजना, गोदान न्याय योजना, तथा राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन-आधारित कार्यक्रमों ने ग्रामीण आजीविका को सुदृढ़ करने पर विशेष ध्यान दिया है (Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana, 2020; Godhan Nyay Yojana, 2020)।

बिल्हा विकासखण्ड, जो आसपास के कृषि-अर्थव्यवस्था-संबंधित क्षेत्रों का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है, ग्रामीण समुदायों की आजीविका से जुड़ी विविध चुनौतियों और अवसरों का अध्ययन करने के लिए एक उपयुक्त संदर्भ प्रदान करता है। इसी क्षेत्र के दूरदराज़ गाँवों में राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन (NRLM) से जुड़े स्वयं सहायता समूहों द्वारा महिलाओं को स्वरोजगार के अवसर प्रदान किए जाने से आजीविका के वैकल्पिक मार्ग विकसित हुए हैं, जिससे पारंपरिक कृषि-आधारित आय के अतिरिक्त आय के स्रोत सृजित हुए हैं (Rural Livelihood Mission, Bilha, 2024)। राज्य में ग्रामीण महिला किसानों द्वारा एग्रोफॉरेस्ट्री (Agroforestry) सहित अन्य प्राकृतिक संसाधन आधारित आजीविका गतिविधियों को अपनाने में वृद्धि देखी जा रही है। इससे न केवल पारिवारिक आय में वृद्धि हुई है बल्कि सामाजिक सशक्तिकरण और पर्यावरण-अनुकूल अभ्यास भी प्रोत्साहित हुए हैं (Agroforestry, Chhattisgarh, 2024)।

इन योजनाओं और कार्यक्रमों के कारण ग्रामीण समुदाय के जीवन स्तर, सामाजिक संरचना और शक्ति केन्द्रों में भी बदलाव आया है। महिलाओं के स्वयं सहायता समूहों के गठन तथा स्थानीय नेतृत्व के विकास ने पारिवारिक और सामुदायिक निर्णय-प्रक्रियाओं में उनकी भागीदारी को बढ़ाया है (Bhupesh Baghel Livelihood Mission ‘Bihan’, 2023)। इस प्रकार, छत्तीसगढ़ के बिल्हा विकासखण्ड में विकास योजनाओं का स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियों पर प्रभाव केवल आर्थिक नहीं है, बल्कि सामाजिक संरचना, सामुदायिक सशक्तिकरण तथा संसाधनों के सतत प्रबंधन जैसी बहुआयामी प्रक्रियाओं को भी प्रभावित करता है। इस अध्ययन का उद्देश्य उन सामाजिक कारकों, आर्थिक परिवर्तनों तथा योजनाओं और स्थानीय समुदायों के पारस्परिक प्रभावों को समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टिकोण से विश्लेषित करना है।

अनुसंधान पद्धति

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन वर्णनात्मक (Descriptive) एवं विश्लेषणात्मक (Analytical) प्रकृति का है। इसका उद्देश्य बिल्हा विकासखण्ड में क्रियान्वित विभिन्न विकास योजनाओं के प्रभावों को स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियों पर समाजशास्त्रीय दृष्टिकोण से समझना एवं विश्लेषित करना है। अध्ययन में मात्रात्मक तथा गुणात्मक—दोनों प्रकार की शोध विधियों का समन्वित प्रयोग किया गया है। इस अध्ययन के प्रमुख उद्देश्य निम्नलिखित हैं—

1. बिल्हा विकासखण्ड में प्रचलित स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियों (कृषि, मजदूरी, पशुपालन, कुटीर उद्योग, स्वयं सहायता समूह आदि) की प्रकृति का अध्ययन करना।

2. केंद्र एवं राज्य सरकार की प्रमुख विकास योजनाओं का स्थानीय स्तर पर कार्यान्वयन एवं पहुँच का विश्लेषण करना।
3. विकास योजनाओं के कारण आजीविका के स्वरूप, आय-स्तर तथा रोजगार के अवसरों में आए परिवर्तनों का मूल्यांकन करना।
4. विकास योजनाओं का सामाजिक संरचना, लैंगिक भूमिकाओं एवं सामुदायिक सहभागिता पर प्रभाव का अध्ययन करना।

अध्ययन क्षेत्र के रूप में बिल्हा विकासखण्ड (जिला – बिलासपुर, छत्तीसगढ़) का चयन किया गया है। इस क्षेत्र का चयन निम्न कारणों से किया गया अध्ययन में सर्वेक्षण पद्धति (Survey Method) को मुख्य अनुसंधान विधि के रूप में अपनाया गया है। इसके साथ-साथ केस स्टडी एवं साक्षात्कार विधि का भी सहायक रूप से प्रयोग किया गया है, ताकि आंकड़ों की गहराई एवं विश्वसनीयता सुनिश्चित की जा सके।

नमूना चयन के लिए स्तरीकृत यादृच्छिक नमूना विधि (Stratified Random Sampling) का प्रयोग किया गया है। इसमें ग्रामीण आबादी को विभिन्न स्तरीय वर्गों—जैसे कृषक, मजदूर, महिला स्वयं सहायता समूह सदस्य, पशुपालक आदि—में विभाजित कर प्रत्येक वर्ग से प्रतिनिधिक नमूना चुना गया। अध्ययन हेतु बिल्हा विकासखण्ड के चयनित गाँवों से कुल 120 उत्तरदाताओं का चयन किया गया, जिनका वितरण निम्न प्रकार रहा— कृषक परिवार – 50, कृषि/अकृषि मजदूर – 30, महिला स्वयं सहायता समूह सदस्य – 25, अन्य आजीविका से जुड़े व्यक्ति – 15.

- प्राथमिक आंकड़े: संरचित प्रश्नावली, अर्ध-संरचित साक्षात्कार
- द्वितीयक आंकड़े : सरकारी रिपोर्टें, जनगणना आँकड़े, शोध पत्र, पुस्तकें एवं योजना दस्तावेज

संकलित आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण तालिकाओं, प्रतिशत विधि एवं तुलनात्मक विश्लेषण के माध्यम से किया गया है। गुणात्मक आंकड़ों का विश्लेषण वर्णनात्मक पद्धति द्वारा किया गया। अध्ययन क्षेत्र केवल बिल्हा विकासखण्ड तक सीमित है। उत्तरदाताओं की व्यक्तिगत धारणा एवं अनुभवों पर आधारित जानकारी में कुछ हद तक विषयगत पक्षपात की संभावना है।

परिणाम एवं विमर्श

प्रस्तुत परिणाम यह दर्शाते हैं कि बिल्हा विकासखण्ड में विकास योजनाएँ स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियों को सुदृढ़ करने की दिशा में आंशिक रूप से सफल रही हैं। इन योजनाओं ने आय-वृद्धि, रोजगार के वैकल्पिक अवसर तथा महिला सशक्तिकरण को प्रोत्साहित किया है, किंतु आजीविका की स्थायित्व, सामाजिक समावेशन तथा समान वितरण जैसे मुद्दे अभी भी चुनौती बने हुए हैं। अतः यह कहा जा सकता है कि विकास योजनाओं का प्रभाव संरचनात्मक परिवर्तन की प्रक्रिया में है, किंतु इसके लिए दीर्घकालिक एवं स्थानीय-आवश्यकता-आधारित हस्तक्षेप की आवश्यकता है।

उद्देश्य 1: बिल्हा विकासखण्ड में स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियों की प्रकृति का विश्लेषण

तालिका 1: उत्तरदाताओं की प्रमुख आजीविका गतिविधियाँ (N = 120)

आजीविका का प्रकार	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत (%)
कृषि (मुख्य)	48	40.0
कृषि मजदूरी	32	26.7
पशुपालन	14	11.6
स्वयं सहायता समूह/कुटीर उद्योग	18	15.0
अन्य (दुकान, सेवा आदि)	8	6.7
कुल	120	100

विश्लेषण एवं विमर्श

तालिका 1 से स्पष्ट होता है कि बिल्हा विकासखण्ड में आजीविका का मुख्य आधार अब भी कृषि एवं कृषि-मजदूरी है (66.7%)। तथापि, स्वयं सहायता समूहों तथा कुटीर उद्योगों से जुड़े उत्तरदाताओं का प्रतिशत (15%) यह संकेत देता है कि ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था में विविधीकरण (Livelihood Diversification) की प्रक्रिया प्रारंभ हो चुकी है। यह परिवर्तन पारंपरिक आजीविका संरचना से बहुआयामी आजीविका की ओर संक्रमण को दर्शाता है, जो ग्रामीण समाज में आर्थिक सुरक्षा की नई संभावनाएँ उत्पन्न करता है।

उद्देश्य 2: विकास योजनाओं की पहुँच एवं लाभार्थिता का विश्लेषण

तालिका 2: विभिन्न विकास योजनाओं से लाभान्वित उत्तरदाता

विकास योजना	लाभान्वित उत्तरदाता	प्रतिशत (%)
मनरेगा	62	51.7
राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन (NRLM)	38	31.7
किसान सहायता/न्याय योजना	44	36.7
पशुपालन/डेयरी योजनाएँ	21	17.5
कोई योजना नहीं	19	15.8

विश्लेषण एवं विमर्श

उपरोक्त तालिका से यह स्पष्ट होता है कि मनरेगा सर्वाधिक व्यापक रूप से पहुँचने वाली योजना है, जिसने अस्थायी रोजगार सुरक्षा प्रदान की है। वहीं NRLM से जुड़ी योजनाओं ने विशेषकर महिलाओं के लिए संगठित आजीविका के अवसर सृजित किए हैं। तथापि, 15.8% उत्तरदाताओं का किसी भी योजना से लाभान्वित न होना यह दर्शाता है कि योजना पहुँच में अभी भी संरचनात्मक एवं प्रशासनिक बाधाएँ विद्यमान हैं।

उद्देश्य 3: विकास योजनाओं के कारण आय एवं रोजगार में आए परिवर्तनों का मूल्यांकन

तालिका 3: विकास योजनाओं के पश्चात पारिवारिक आय में परिवर्तन

आय में परिवर्तन	उत्तरदाता	प्रतिशत (%)
उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि	34	28.3
आंशिक वृद्धि	49	40.8
कोई विशेष परिवर्तन नहीं	27	22.5
आय में गिरावट	10	8.4
कुल	120	100

विश्लेषण एवं विमर्श

तालिका 3 दर्शाती है कि कुल 69.1% उत्तरदाताओं की आय में किसी न किसी रूप में वृद्धि हुई है। यह तथ्य संकेत करता है कि विकास योजनाएँ आर्थिक सहारा तो प्रदान कर रही हैं, किंतु अधिकांश मामलों में यह वृद्धि पूरक आय (Supplementary Income) के रूप में है, न कि पूर्ण आजीविका के रूप में। इससे यह स्पष्ट होता है कि योजनाएँ अभी तक आजीविका की स्थायी संरचना विकसित करने में सीमित भूमिका निभा रही हैं।

उद्देश्य 4: विकास योजनाओं का सामाजिक संरचना एवं लैंगिक भूमिका पर प्रभाव

तालिका 4: सामाजिक एवं लैंगिक परिवर्तन से संबंधित उत्तरदाताओं की धारणा

सामाजिक परिवर्तन का संकेतक	सहमत (%)	असहमत (%)
महिलाओं की आर्थिक भागीदारी बढ़ी	72.5	27.5
पारिवारिक निर्णयों में महिलाओं की भूमिका बढ़ी	64.2	35.8
सामुदायिक सहभागिता में वृद्धि	58.3	41.7

सामाजिक असमानता में कमी	46.7	53.3
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विश्लेषण एवं विमर्श

तालिका 4 से स्पष्ट है कि विकास योजनाओं ने महिला सशक्तिकरण की दिशा में सकारात्मक प्रभाव डाला है, विशेषकर स्वयं सहायता समूहों के माध्यम से। महिलाओं की आर्थिक भागीदारी एवं निर्णय-निर्माण में भूमिका बढ़ी है, जो ग्रामीण सामाजिक संरचना में परिवर्तन का संकेत है। तथापि, सामाजिक असमानता में अपेक्षित कमी न आ पाना यह दर्शाता है कि योजनाओं का प्रभाव अभी समान रूप से सभी वर्गों तक नहीं पहुँच पाया है।

निष्कर्ष

प्रस्तुत समाजशास्त्रीय अध्ययन से यह स्पष्ट होता है कि बिल्हा विकासखण्ड में क्रियान्वित विकास योजनाओं ने स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियों पर बहुआयामी प्रभाव डाला है। अनुसंधान से यह तथ्य उभरकर सामने आया कि इस क्षेत्र में आज भी कृषि एवं कृषि-मजदूरी आजीविका का प्रमुख आधार बनी हुई है, तथापि विकास योजनाओं के हस्तक्षेप से आजीविका के स्वरूप में धीरे-धीरे विविधीकरण की प्रक्रिया प्रारंभ हुई है।

अध्ययन से यह भी ज्ञात हुआ कि मनरेगा, राष्ट्रीय ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन तथा राज्य स्तरीय सहायता योजनाओं ने ग्रामीण परिवारों को अतिरिक्त आय के अवसर प्रदान किए हैं, जिससे उनकी आर्थिक असुरक्षा में कुछ हद तक कमी आई है। हालांकि, अधिकांश मामलों में यह आय अस्थायी अथवा पूरक प्रकृति की पाई गई, जिससे यह निष्कर्ष निकलता है कि विकास योजनाएँ अभी तक आजीविका की स्थायी एवं आत्मनिर्भर संरचना विकसित करने में पूर्णतः सफल नहीं हो सकी हैं।

सामाजिक दृष्टिकोण से अध्ययन ने यह दर्शाया कि स्वयं सहायता समूहों एवं महिला-केन्द्रित योजनाओं के माध्यम से महिलाओं की आर्थिक भागीदारी एवं निर्णय-निर्माण में भूमिका में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि हुई है। यह परिवर्तन ग्रामीण समाज में पारंपरिक लैंगिक संरचना के आंशिक पुनर्गठन की ओर संकेत करता है। इसके बावजूद, सामाजिक असमानता, सीमांत वर्गों की सीमित पहुँच तथा योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन में प्रशासनिक बाधाएँ अभी भी विद्यमान हैं।

समग्र रूप से यह कहा जा सकता है कि बिल्हा विकासखण्ड में विकास योजनाओं ने स्थानीय आजीविका प्रणालियों को सुदृढ़ करने की दिशा में सकारात्मक पहल की है, किंतु इनके प्रभाव को अधिक व्यापक, समावेशी एवं दीर्घकालिक बनाने के लिए स्थानीय आवश्यकताओं के अनुरूप नीति-निर्माण एवं प्रभावी क्रियान्वयन की आवश्यकता है।

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“आदिवासी पारंपरिक आजीविका और आधुनिक आर्थिक दबावों के बीच संतुलन: कटघोरा (कोरबा) का समाजशास्त्रीय अध्ययन”

कुलवंत तिर्की
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सारांश

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन कटघोरा (कोरबा) क्षेत्र के आदिवासी समुदायों की पारंपरिक आजीविका प्रणालियों और आधुनिक आर्थिक दबावों के बीच अंतर्संबंधों का समाजशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण प्रस्तुत करता है। अध्ययन में यह पाया गया कि कृषि, वनोपज संग्रह और पशुपालन जैसी पारंपरिक आजीविकाएँ आज भी आदिवासी जीवन की आधारशिला हैं, किंतु खनन, औद्योगीकरण और बाजारोन्मुख अर्थव्यवस्था के विस्तार ने इन पर गहरा प्रभाव डाला है। आय सुरक्षा और जीविकोपार्जन की आवश्यकता के कारण अधिकांश आदिवासी परिवार पारंपरिक और आधुनिक दोनों प्रकार की आजीविका रणनीतियों को अपनाने के लिए विवश हैं। इस परिवर्तन की प्रक्रिया में सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक संरचनाओं, सामुदायिक एकजुटता तथा पारंपरिक ज्ञान प्रणालियों में क्षरण देखा गया है, साथ ही महिलाओं पर श्रम का दोहरा भार भी बढ़ा है। अध्ययन निष्कर्षतः यह संकेत करता है कि आदिवासी समाज के सतत विकास के लिए ऐसी नीतियों की आवश्यकता है जो आर्थिक विकास, सामाजिक न्याय और सांस्कृतिक संरक्षण के बीच संतुलन स्थापित कर सकें।

मुख्य शब्द: आदिवासी समाज, पारंपरिक आजीविका, आधुनिक आर्थिक दबाव, खनन एवं औद्योगीकरण, आजीविका संतुलन, सामाजिक परिवर्तन

परिचय

भारत का आदिवासी समाज अपनी विशिष्ट सामाजिक संरचना, सांस्कृतिक पहचान और प्रकृति-आधारित जीवन पद्धति के लिए जाना जाता है। परंपरागत रूप से आदिवासी समुदायों की आजीविका वन, भूमि, जल और सामुदायिक संसाधनों पर आधारित रही है, जिसमें कृषि, वनोपज संग्रह, पशुपालन, शिकार तथा हस्तशिल्प जैसे कार्य प्रमुख रहे हैं (Xaxa, 1999)। ये आजीविका प्रणालियाँ केवल आर्थिक गतिविधियाँ नहीं हैं, बल्कि सामाजिक संबंधों, सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों और सामुदायिक एकजुटता से गहराई से जुड़ी हुई हैं। हाल के दशकों में औद्योगीकरण, खनन विस्तार, शहरीकरण और बाजारोन्मुख अर्थव्यवस्था के प्रसार ने आदिवासी समाज की पारंपरिक आजीविका संरचनाओं पर गहरा प्रभाव डाला है। विशेष रूप से संसाधन-समृद्ध क्षेत्रों में विकास परियोजनाओं के कारण भूमि अधिग्रहण, विस्थापन और आजीविका असुरक्षा जैसी समस्याएँ सामने आई हैं (Fernandes, 2011)। परिणामस्वरूप, आदिवासी समुदायों को पारंपरिक जीवन पद्धतियों और आधुनिक आर्थिक दबावों के बीच संतुलन स्थापित करने की चुनौती का सामना करना पड़ रहा है।

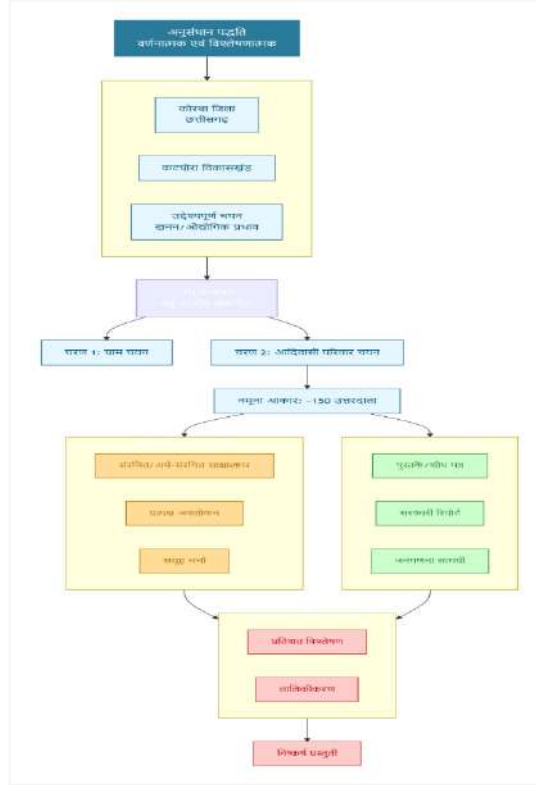
छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य का कोरबा जिला, विशेषकर कटघोरा क्षेत्र, खनिज संसाधनों और औद्योगिक गतिविधियों के कारण तीव्र आर्थिक परिवर्तन का साक्षी रहा है। इस क्षेत्र में निवास करने वाले आदिवासी समुदायों की पारंपरिक आजीविका पर खनन, वन क्षरण और मजदूरी-आधारित रोजगार के बढ़ते प्रभाव स्पष्ट रूप से देखे जा सकते हैं (Planning Commission, 2014)। जहाँ एक ओर आधुनिक आर्थिक अवसर कुछ हद तक आय के नए साधन प्रदान कर रहे हैं, वहीं दूसरी ओर वे सामाजिक असमानता, सांस्कृतिक क्षरण और आजीविका की अनिश्चितता को भी जन्म दे रहे हैं। इस पृष्ठभूमि में प्रस्तुत अध्ययन कटघोरा (कोरबा) क्षेत्र के आदिवासी समुदायों की पारंपरिक आजीविका प्रणालियों और आधुनिक आर्थिक दबावों के बीच विकसित हो रहे संतुलन का समाजशास्त्रीय विश्लेषण करता है। यह अध्ययन यह समझने का प्रयास करता है कि किस प्रकार आदिवासी समाज बदलती आर्थिक परिस्थितियों के अनुकूलन की प्रक्रिया में अपनी सांस्कृतिक पहचान, सामाजिक संबंधों और आजीविका सुरक्षा को बनाए रखने का संघर्ष कर रहा है (Béteille, 2008)।

अध्ययन के उद्देश्य

1. कटघोरा (कोरबा) क्षेत्र के आदिवासी समुदायों की पारंपरिक आजीविका प्रणालियों की प्रकृति और संरचना का अध्ययन करना।
2. आधुनिक आर्थिक दबावों (खनन, औद्योगीकरण, बाजार अर्थव्यवस्था) के प्रभाव का आदिवासी आजीविका पर विश्लेषण करना।
3. पारंपरिक आजीविका और आधुनिक आर्थिक गतिविधियों के बीच विकसित हो रहे संतुलन और अनुकूलन रणनीतियों को समझना।
4. आजीविका परिवर्तन के सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक प्रभावों का समाजशास्त्रीय मूल्यांकन करना।

अनुसंधान पद्धति

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन के लिए वर्णनात्मक एवं विश्लेषणात्मक अनुसंधान पद्धति को अपनाया गया है, जिससे आदिवासी पारंपरिक आजीविका और आधुनिक आर्थिक दबावों के बीच संबंधों को गहराई से समझा जा सके। अध्ययन क्षेत्र के रूप में छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य के कोरबा जिले के कटघोरा विकासखंड का चयन उद्देश्यपूर्ण रूप से किया गया, क्योंकि यह क्षेत्र खनन एवं औद्योगिक गतिविधियों से प्रत्यक्ष रूप से प्रभावित है। उत्तरदाताओं के चयन हेतु बहु-स्तरीय नमूना चयन तकनीक का प्रयोग किया गया, जिसमें पहले चयनित ग्रामों और तत्पश्चात आदिवासी परिवारों का चयन किया गया।



अध्ययन में कुल लगभग 150 आदिवासी उत्तरदाताओं को नमूने के रूप में सम्मिलित किया गया, जिससे पर्याप्त प्रतिनिधित्व सुनिश्चित हो सके। प्राथमिक आँकड़ों के संग्रह के लिए संरचित एवं अर्ध-संरचित साक्षात्कार अनुसूची, अवलोकन तथा समूह चर्चा विधियों का उपयोग किया गया, जबकि द्वितीयक आँकड़े पुस्तकों, शोध पत्रों, सरकारी रिपोर्टों एवं जनगणना स्रोतों से प्राप्त किए गए। संकलित आँकड़ों का विश्लेषण मात्रात्मक विधि से किया गया, जिसमें प्रतिशत, तालिकीकरण विश्लेषण के माध्यम से निष्कर्ष प्रस्तुत किए गए।

परिणाम एवं विमर्श

तालिकात्मक परिणामों से स्पष्ट है कि कटघोरा (कोरबा) क्षेत्र में आदिवासी समुदाय पारंपरिक आजीविका और आधुनिक आर्थिक दबावों के बीच संतुलन बनाने हेतु द्वैध रणनीतियाँ अपना रहे हैं, किंतु इसके सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक निहितार्थ गहरे और जटिल हैं।

तालिका 1: पारंपरिक आजीविका के प्रमुख स्रोत (उद्देश्य 1)

आजीविका का प्रकार	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत (%)
कृषि (लघु/सीमांत)	48	32.0
वनोपज संग्रह	45	30.0
पशुपालन	15	10.0
कृषि + वनोपज (संयुक्त)	25	16.7

अन्य पारंपरिक गतिविधियाँ	17	11.3
कुल	150	100.0

उद्देश्य 1: आदिवासी समुदायों की पारंपरिक आजीविका प्रणालियों की प्रकृति का अध्ययन अध्ययन में सम्मिलित 150 उत्तरदाताओं में से अधिकांश (लगभग 62%) की आजीविका का मुख्य आधार पारंपरिक कृषि, वनोपज संग्रह और पशुपालन पाया गया। इनमें लघु एवं सीमांत कृषि के साथ महुआ, तेंदूपत्ता, चिरौंजी और साल बीज जैसे वनोपजों का संग्रह प्रमुख रहा। यह स्पष्ट हुआ कि पारंपरिक आजीविका केवल आय का साधन नहीं है, बल्कि यह सामुदायिक सहयोग, सांस्कृतिक परंपराओं और प्रकृति के साथ सह-अस्तित्व की भावना से जुड़ी हुई है। तथापि, भूमि की घटती उपलब्धता और वन संसाधनों पर नियंत्रण ने इन आजीविकाओं की स्थिरता को प्रभावित किया है।

तालिका 2: आधुनिक आर्थिक गतिविधियों में सहभागिता (उद्देश्य 2)

आधुनिक गतिविधि	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत (%)
खनन/औद्योगिक मजदूरी	52	34.7
असंगठित क्षेत्र मजदूरी	35	23.3
सेवा/छोटा व्यवसाय	20	13.3
आधुनिक गतिविधि से असंबद्ध	43	28.7
कुल	150	100.0

उद्देश्य 2: आधुनिक आर्थिक दबावों के प्रभाव का विश्लेषण, परिणामों से पता चला कि 150 में से लगभग 58% उत्तरदाता खनन, औद्योगिक श्रम या असंगठित क्षेत्र की मजदूरी से आंशिक या पूर्ण रूप से जुड़े हुए हैं। आधुनिक आर्थिक गतिविधियों ने नकद आय के अवसर तो बढ़ाए हैं, परंतु रोजगार की अस्थिरता, कम मजदूरी और कार्य-सुरक्षा के अभाव जैसी समस्याएँ भी सामने आई हैं। विशेष रूप से युवा वर्ग पारंपरिक आजीविका को छोड़कर मजदूरी आधारित कार्यों की ओर आकर्षित हो रहा है, जिससे पारंपरिक ज्ञान और कौशल के क्षरण की स्थिति उत्पन्न हो रही है।

तालिका 3: आजीविका संतुलन एवं अनुकूलन रणनीतियाँ (उद्देश्य 3)

रणनीति	उत्तरदाताओं की संख्या	प्रतिशत (%)
केवल पारंपरिक आजीविका	55	36.7
केवल आधुनिक आजीविका	25	16.6
द्वैध/संयुक्त आजीविका	70	46.7
कुल	150	100.0

उद्देश्य 3: पारंपरिक और आधुनिक आजीविका के बीच संतुलन एवं अनुकूलन रणनीतियाँ, अध्ययन से यह स्पष्ट हुआ कि लगभग 47% उत्तरदाता द्वैध आजीविका रणनीति अपना रहे हैं, जिसमें वे कृषि एवं वनोपज संग्रह के साथ-साथ मजदूरी या छोटे व्यवसाय भी करते हैं। यह रणनीति आय विविधीकरण के माध्यम से आर्थिक जोखिम को कम करने का प्रयास है। हालांकि, इस संतुलन प्रक्रिया में समय, श्रम और सामाजिक संबंधों पर अतिरिक्त दबाव भी देखा गया। महिलाएँ विशेष रूप से पारंपरिक और आधुनिक दोनों क्षेत्रों में श्रम का दोहरा भार वहन कर रही हैं।

तालिका 4: आजीविका परिवर्तन के सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक प्रभाव (उद्देश्य 4)

प्रभाव का प्रकार	सहमत उत्तरदाता	प्रतिशत (%)
सामुदायिक एकजुटता में कमी	83	55.3

पारंपरिक ज्ञान/कौशल में क्षरण	76	50.7
उपभोक्तावादी प्रवृत्तियों में वृद्धि	68	45.3
महिलाओं पर श्रम का दोहरा भार	72	48.0

उद्देश्य 4: आजीविका परिवर्तन के सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक प्रभावों का मूल्यांकन, परिणाम दर्शाते हैं कि आजीविका में हो रहे परिवर्तनों का सामाजिक संरचना पर गहरा प्रभाव पड़ा है। लगभग 55% उत्तरदाताओं ने यह स्वीकार किया कि सामुदायिक एकजुटता, पारंपरिक त्योहारों और सामूहिक श्रम प्रणालियों में कमी आई है। इसके साथ ही उपभोक्तावादी प्रवृत्तियों और बाहरी सांस्कृतिक प्रभावों में वृद्धि देखी गई। विमर्श से यह निष्कर्ष निकलता है कि आधुनिक आर्थिक दबावों के साथ तालमेल बिठाने की प्रक्रिया में आदिवासी समाज सांस्कृतिक संरक्षण और आर्थिक सुरक्षा के बीच संतुलन बनाने के जटिल दौर से गुजर रहा है।

निष्कर्ष

प्रस्तुत समाजशास्त्रीय अध्ययन से यह स्पष्ट होता है कि कटघोरा (कोरबा) क्षेत्र के आदिवासी समुदाय वर्तमान में पारंपरिक आजीविका और आधुनिक आर्थिक दबावों के बीच एक जटिल संक्रमणकाल से गुजर रहे हैं। पारंपरिक कृषि, वनोपज संग्रह और पशुपालन आज भी उनकी आजीविका और सांस्कृतिक पहचान का आधार बने हुए हैं, किंतु खनन, औद्योगीकरण और बाजारोन्मुख अर्थव्यवस्था के प्रभाव ने इन प्रणालियों की स्थिरता को कमजोर किया है। अध्ययन से यह भी सामने आया कि अधिकांश आदिवासी परिवार आय सुरक्षा के लिए द्वैध आजीविका रणनीति अपना रहे हैं, जिसमें पारंपरिक और आधुनिक दोनों प्रकार की गतिविधियाँ सम्मिलित हैं। हालांकि, यह संतुलन आर्थिक दृष्टि से आवश्यक प्रतीत होता है, परंतु इसके साथ सामाजिक एकजुटता में कमी, पारंपरिक ज्ञान के क्षरण और महिलाओं पर बढ़ते श्रम भार जैसी चुनौतियाँ भी उभरकर सामने आई हैं। अतः यह अध्ययन संकेत करता है कि आदिवासी आजीविका के सतत विकास हेतु ऐसी नीतियों और योजनाओं की आवश्यकता है, जो आर्थिक अवसरों के साथ-साथ सांस्कृतिक संरक्षण और सामाजिक न्याय को भी समान रूप से सुनिश्चित करें।

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“स्थानीय स्वशासन के आधारभूत स्तर पर महिलाओं का सशक्तिकरण : पंचायती राज संस्थाएँ, लैंगिक भागीदारी एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास के संदर्भ में सतत शासन”

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सारांश

प्रस्तुत शोध-पत्र स्थानीय स्वशासन के आधारभूत स्तर पर महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण, पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में उनकी भागीदारी तथा हरित औद्योगिक विकास के संदर्भ में सतत शासन की भूमिका का विश्लेषण करता है। भारत में पंचायती राज संस्थाएँ विकेन्द्रीकृत लोकतंत्र की आधारशिला हैं, जहाँ महिलाओं के लिए संवैधानिक आरक्षण ने स्थानीय शासन में उनकी भागीदारी को सुदृढ़ किया है। विशेष रूप से छत्तीसगढ़ के सरगुजा संभाग जैसे सामाजिक-आर्थिक एवं पारिस्थितिक दृष्टि से संवेदनशील क्षेत्रों में महिला प्रतिनिधियों की भूमिका सतत एवं सहभागी शासन की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण मानी जाती है।

यह अध्ययन भागीदारी शासन सिद्धांत, नारीवादी शासन सिद्धांत तथा सतत विकास सिद्धांत पर आधारित है। शोध का उद्देश्य पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधियों की सहभागिता, निर्णय-निर्माण स्वायत्तता, हरित विकास नीतियों के प्रति जागरूकता तथा नेतृत्व-शैली का सतत शासन और हरित औद्योगिक विकास पर पड़ने वाले प्रभाव का अनुभवजन्य परीक्षण करना है। अध्ययन में वर्णनात्मक एवं विश्लेषणात्मक सर्वे पद्धति का प्रयोग किया गया, जिसमें सरगुजा संभाग की चयनित ग्राम पंचायतों की 100 निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधियों को नमूने के रूप में शामिल किया गया। आँकड़ों का संकलन संरचित प्रश्नावली, साक्षात्कार एवं आधिकारिक अभिलेखों के माध्यम से किया गया तथा प्रतिशत एवं तुलनात्मक विश्लेषण अपनाया गया।

अध्ययन के निष्कर्ष दर्शाते हैं कि महिला प्रतिनिधियों के निर्वाचन के पश्चात् ग्राम सभा सहभागिता, हरित पहलों में संलग्नता, निर्णय-निर्माण स्वायत्तता, हरित नीतियों की जागरूकता एवं महिला-नेतृत्व वाले स्वयं सहायता समूहों के समर्थन में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि हुई है। यह परिणाम इस तथ्य की पुष्टि करते हैं कि स्थानीय स्वशासन के आधारभूत स्तर पर महिलाओं का नेतृत्व सहभागी, पारदर्शी एवं पर्यावरण-संवेदनशील शासन को सुदृढ़ करता है। निष्कर्षतः, यह अध्ययन स्थापित करता है कि पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिलाओं का सशक्तिकरण न केवल सामाजिक न्याय का विषय है, बल्कि सतत एवं समावेशी विकास की प्राप्ति हेतु एक रणनीतिक आवश्यकता भी है।

प्रस्तावना (Introduction)

सतत भविष्य की स्थापना के लिए ऐसे समावेशी शासन तंत्रों की आवश्यकता होती है, जिनमें समाज के हाशिए पर स्थित वर्गों-विशेषतः महिलाओं की निर्णय-निर्माण प्रक्रियाओं में सक्रिय एवं प्रभावी भागीदारी सुनिश्चित हो। भारत में पंचायती राज संस्थाएँ विकेन्द्रीकृत लोकतंत्र की आधारशिला हैं, जो नागरिकों को स्थानीय स्तर पर शासन में भागीदारी का अवसर प्रदान करती हैं।

पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिलाओं के लिए संवैधानिक आरक्षण ने ग्रामीण राजनीतिक भागीदारी की संरचना में महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन उत्पन्न किया है, विशेषकर छत्तीसगढ़ के सरगुजा संभाग जैसे सामाजिक-आर्थिक एवं पारिस्थितिक दृष्टि से संवेदनशील क्षेत्रों में। इससे महिलाओं की न केवल संख्यात्मक उपस्थिति बढ़ी है, बल्कि स्थानीय शासन में उनकी भूमिका भी अधिक सशक्त हुई है।

वर्तमान समय में सतत एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास एक प्रमुख नीतिगत प्राथमिकता के रूप में उभरा है, जिसमें पर्यावरण-उत्तरदायी विकास, स्थानीय संसाधनों का विवेकपूर्ण उपयोग तथा समुदाय की सहभागिता पर विशेष बल दिया गया है। पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधि प्राकृतिक संसाधन प्रबंधन, स्वयं सहायता समूहों (SHGs), पर्यावरण-अनुकूल आजीविका के विकास तथा सामुदायिक जागरूकता जैसे क्षेत्रों में निर्णयों को प्रभावित कर सततता को स्थानीय शासन से जोड़ने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती हैं।

यह अध्ययन अनुभवजन्य रूप से यह विश्लेषण करता है कि निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधि पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में अपनी भागीदारी, नेतृत्व-शैली एवं निर्णय-निर्माण भूमिकाओं के माध्यम से सतत शासन और हरित औद्योगिक विकास पहलों में किस प्रकार योगदान देती हैं।

अध्ययन की सैद्धांतिक पृष्ठभूमि

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन भागीदारी शासन सिद्धांत पर आधारित है, जो यह प्रतिपादित करता है कि नागरिकों की सक्रिय सहभागिता के बिना सतत एवं प्रभावी शासन संभव नहीं है। इसके अतिरिक्त, नारीवादी शासन सिद्धांत यह रेखांकित करता है कि महिलाओं का नेतृत्व संस्थागत प्राथमिकताओं को समावेशन, समानता एवं सततता की दिशा में रूपांतरित करने में सक्षम होता है।

साथ ही, सतत विकास सिद्धांत सामाजिक समानता, पर्यावरण संरक्षण और आर्थिक विकास की पारस्परिक निर्भरता पर बल देता है। स्थानीय स्वशासन के आधारभूत स्तर पर महिला नेता वैश्विक सतत विकास लक्ष्यों को स्थानीय आवश्यकताओं एवं संदर्भों के अनुरूप रूपांतरित करने वाली प्रमुख अभिकर्ता के रूप में देखी जाती हैं। इन सिद्धांतों का समन्वय महिलाओं के सशक्तिकरण, शासन संक्रमण तथा हरित औद्योगिक विकास के विश्लेषण हेतु एक सुदृढ़ वैचारिक ढाँचा प्रदान करता है।

अध्ययन का महत्व

- महिलाओं के नेतृत्व और सतत शासन के संबंध में अनुभवजन्य साक्ष्य प्रस्तुत करता है
- आदिवासी एवं अर्ध-आदिवासी क्षेत्रों में स्थानीय शासन की वास्तविक स्थिति को उजागर करता है
- +लैंगिक-समावेशी हरित विकास से संबंधित नीतिगत विमर्श को सुदृढ़ करता है
- शासन, जेंडर अध्ययन एवं सतत विकास साहित्य के बीच वैचारिक सेतु स्थापित करता है
- पंचायती राज संस्थाओं तथा ग्रामीण विकास एजेंसियों हेतु व्यावहारिक सुझाव प्रदान करता है

समस्या का विवरण

यद्यपि पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिलाओं के प्रतिनिधित्व हेतु संवैधानिक प्रावधान सुनिश्चित किए गए हैं, तथापि यह प्रश्न अभी भी बना हुआ है कि निर्वाचित महिलाएँ शासन प्रक्रियाओं में कितनी प्रभावी भागीदारी करती हैं तथा सतत एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास पहलों में उनका वास्तविक योगदान किस स्तर तक है। विशेष रूप से छत्तीसगढ़ के सरगुजा संभाग में महिलाओं की कार्यशैली, निर्णय-निर्माण स्वायत्तता एवं पर्यावरण-संवेदनशील शासन में उनकी भूमिका पर सीमित अनुभवजन्य अध्ययन उपलब्ध हैं।

प्रमुख शब्दों की कार्यपरक परिभाषाएँ

- **महिला सशक्तिकरण** : पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिलाओं की निर्णय-क्षमता, नेतृत्व कौशल एवं स्वायत्तता का विकास
- **सतत शासन** : सामाजिक समानता, पर्यावरणीय उत्तरदायित्व एवं सहभागी निर्णय-निर्माण को एकीकृत करने वाली शासन प्रक्रिया
- **हरित औद्योगिक विकास** : पर्यावरण-अनुकूल आजीविका एवं औद्योगिक गतिविधियाँ जो पारिस्थितिक संतुलन को प्रोत्साहित करें
- **पंचायती राज संस्थाएँ** : 73वें संविधान संशोधन के अंतर्गत गठित स्थानीय स्वशासी निकाय

चर

- **स्वतंत्र चर**
 - ग्राम सभा में सहभागिता
 - निर्णय-निर्माण में स्वायत्तता
 - हरित विकास नीतियों के प्रति जागरूकता
 - नेतृत्व-शैली
- **आश्रित चर**
 - सतत शासन के परिणाम

- हरित पहलों का अंगीकरण
- पर्यावरण-अनुकूल विकास में सामुदायिक सहभागिता

अध्ययन के उद्देश्य

1. पंचायती राज शासन में महिला प्रतिनिधियों की सहभागिता के स्तर का विश्लेषण करना
2. सतत एवं हरित विकास को बढ़ावा देने में उनकी भूमिका का परीक्षण करना
3. महिला नेतृत्व से पूर्व एवं पश्चात शासन संकेतकों में आए परिवर्तनों का आकलन करना
4. महिला-नेतृत्व वाले सतत शासन में बाधक एवं सहायक कारकों की पहचान करना

शोध प्रश्न

1. निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधियों में शासन सहभागिता का स्तर क्या है?
2. महिला नेता सतत एवं हरित विकास पहलों को किस प्रकार प्रभावित करती हैं?
3. क्या महिला नेतृत्व के पश्चात शासन संकेतकों में सार्थक सुधार हुआ है?

समस्या का क्षेत्र, परिसीमन एवं अध्ययन क्षेत्र

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधियों की शासन-प्रथाओं, सततता पहलों एवं नेतृत्व भूमिकाओं तक सीमित है। यह शोध छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य के सरगुजा संभाग की चयनित ग्राम पंचायतों में सम्पन्न किया गया है तथा इसमें केवल निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधियों को सम्मिलित किया गया है।

साहित्य समीक्षा

पूर्ववर्ती अध्ययनों से यह स्पष्ट होता है कि पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिलाओं की भागीदारी में वृद्धि हुई है, किंतु कई क्षेत्रों में उनकी निर्णय-निर्माण स्वायत्तता सीमित पाई गई है। कुछ अध्ययनों ने यह भी स्थापित किया है कि महिला नेतृत्व सार्वजनिक सेवाओं की गुणवत्ता, प्राकृतिक संसाधन प्रबंधन तथा हरित आजीविका पहलों में अपेक्षाकृत बेहतर परिणाम प्रदान करता है, विशेषकर जब नेतृत्व प्रशिक्षण एवं संस्थागत सहयोग उपलब्ध हो।

शोध अंतराल

अधिकांश शोध प्रतिनिधित्व के अध्ययन तक सीमित हैं, जबकि शासन के वास्तविक परिणामों पर कम ध्यान दिया गया है। आदिवासी क्षेत्रों में महिलाओं के पंचायती राज नेतृत्व और सतत एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास के बीच संबंधों पर पर्याप्त अनुभवजन्य शोध का अभाव है।

शोध पद्धति

- **शोध अभिकल्प** : वर्णनात्मक एवं विश्लेषणात्मक सर्वे
- **जनसंख्या** : चयनित पंचायती राज संस्थाओं की सभी निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधियाँ
- **नमूना** : 100 महिला प्रतिनिधियाँ
- **नमूना चयन विधि** : स्तरीकृत यादृच्छिक नमूनाकरण
- **आंकड़ों का डेटा स्रोत** : प्राथमिक एवं द्वितीयक
- **शोध उपकरण** : लाइकर्ट-स्केल आधारित संरचित प्रश्नावली एवं साक्षात्कार अनुसूची
- **आंकड़ों का डेटा संकलन** : क्षेत्रीय सर्वेक्षण, साक्षात्कार एवं आधिकारिक अभिलेख
- **सांख्यिकीय विश्लेषण** : प्रतिशत एवं तुलनात्मक विश्लेषण

सारणीकरण एवं व्याख्या

सारणी 1 : शासन एवं सततता संकेतक (प्रतिशत में)

संकेतक	चुनाव से पूर्व	चुनाव के बाद
ग्राम सभा में सहभागिता	35	68
हरित पहलों में सहभागिता	22	55
निर्णय-निर्माण स्वायत्तता	30	62
हरित नीतियों की जागरूकता	18	49
महिला-नेतृत्व वाले SHGs का समर्थन	40	71

व्याख्या

सारणी से स्पष्ट है कि महिला प्रतिनिधियों के निर्वाचन के पश्चात सभी शासन एवं सततता संकेतकों में उल्लेखनीय सुधार हुआ है। ग्राम सभा सहभागिता में वृद्धि स्थानीय लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रियाओं के सुदृढीकरण को दर्शाती है। हरित पहलों, निर्णय-निर्माण स्वायत्तता तथा नीतिगत जागरूकता में वृद्धि यह संकेत देती है कि महिला नेतृत्व पर्यावरणीय संवेदनशीलता एवं दीर्घकालिक विकास को प्राथमिकता देता है। महिला-नेतृत्व वाले स्वयं सहायता समूहों का सशक्त समर्थन हरित उद्यमिता एवं आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण को प्रोत्साहित करता है।

परिकल्पना का परीक्षण

H₀ : महिला नेतृत्व का सतत शासन पर कोई सार्थक प्रभाव नहीं है।

H₁ : महिला नेतृत्व सतत शासन में उल्लेखनीय सुधार करता है।

प्रेक्षित आँकड़ों के आधार पर शून्य परिकल्पना अस्वीकृत तथा वैकल्पिक परिकल्पना स्वीकृत की जाती है।

अध्ययन के निष्कर्ष

अध्ययन यह निष्कर्ष प्रस्तुत करता है कि पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिलाओं का नेतृत्व सहभागी शासन, पारदर्शिता, उत्तरदायित्व एवं सतत तथा हरित विकास को सुदृढ करता है। महिला प्रतिनिधियों की बढ़ी हुई सहभागिता, निर्णय-स्वायत्तता एवं नीतिगत जागरूकता स्थानीय स्वशासन को अधिक जन-केंद्रित एवं पर्यावरण-संवेदनशील बनाती है। अतः यह अध्ययन स्थापित करता है कि स्थानीय स्वशासन के आधारभूत स्तर पर महिलाओं का सशक्तिकरण केवल सामाजिक न्याय का प्रश्न नहीं, बल्कि सतत एवं समावेशी विकास की एक रणनीतिक आवश्यकता है।

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“लोकतंत्र में महिलाओं की भूमिका: पंचायती राज संस्थाओं के माध्यम से सतत शासन एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास का अध्ययन”

श्रीमती अनुपमा अम्बष्ट
शोधार्थी

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सारांश (Abstract)

भारत में सतत एवं समावेशी विकास की अवधारणा तभी साकार हो सकती है जब जमीनी स्तर पर शासन प्रक्रियाओं में महिलाओं की सक्रिय, प्रभावी एवं निर्णयात्मक भागीदारी सुनिश्चित हो। पंचायती राज संस्थाएँ लोकतांत्रिक विकेंद्रीकरण का प्रमुख आधार हैं, जहाँ महिलाओं की भागीदारी ने ग्रामीण शासन को नई दिशा प्रदान की है। प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में छत्तीसगढ़ के सरगुजा संभाग की चयनित ग्राम पंचायतों में निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधियों की भूमिका का अध्ययन किया गया है, विशेष रूप से सतत शासन एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास के संदर्भ में। अध्ययन से यह स्पष्ट होता है कि महिला नेतृत्व ने ग्राम सभा सहभागिता, पर्यावरण-अनुकूल पहलों, निर्णय-निर्माण स्वायत्तता तथा महिला-आधारित आजीविका कार्यक्रमों को सुदृढ़ किया है। शोध निष्कर्ष यह संकेत देते हैं कि महिलाओं का सशक्तिकरण न केवल सामाजिक न्याय का प्रश्न है, बल्कि सतत विकास की एक रणनीतिक आवश्यकता भी है।

मुख्य शब्द: महिला सशक्तिकरण, पंचायती राज, सतत शासन, हरित औद्योगिक विकास, ग्राम सभा

प्रस्तावना (Introduction)

इक्कीसवीं सदी में विकास की अवधारणा केवल आर्थिक वृद्धि तक सीमित नहीं रह गई है, बल्कि इसमें सामाजिक समावेशन, पर्यावरण संरक्षण तथा सहभागी शासन को समान महत्व दिया जाने लगा है। इस संदर्भ में महिलाओं की भूमिका विशेष रूप से महत्वपूर्ण हो जाती है, क्योंकि वे न केवल परिवार बल्कि समुदाय और संसाधन प्रबंधन की भी केंद्रीय कड़ी होती हैं।

भारत में पंचायती राज संस्थाओं के माध्यम से महिलाओं को शासन में भागीदारी का संवैधानिक अवसर प्राप्त हुआ है। 73वें संविधान संशोधन द्वारा प्रदत्त आरक्षण ने ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में महिलाओं की राजनीतिक उपस्थिति को सुदृढ़ किया है। छत्तीसगढ़ जैसे जनजातीय एवं अर्द्ध-जनजातीय राज्यों में यह परिवर्तन और भी अधिक महत्वपूर्ण है, जहाँ स्थानीय संसाधनों, आजीविकाओं और पर्यावरणीय संतुलन का सीधा संबंध समुदाय से जुड़ा हुआ है।

वर्तमान समय में हरित एवं सतत औद्योगिक विकास एक उभरती हुई नीति प्राथमिकता है, जिसमें पर्यावरण-अनुकूल आजीविकाएँ, स्व-सहायता समूह, स्थानीय उद्यमिता तथा संसाधन संरक्षण प्रमुख घटक हैं। पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिला प्रतिनिधि इन सभी क्षेत्रों में नीति एवं व्यवहार के स्तर पर महत्वपूर्ण हस्तक्षेप करती हैं।

अध्ययन की सैद्धांतिक पृष्ठभूमि

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन सहभागितामूलक शासन सिद्धांत पर आधारित है, जिसके अनुसार लोकतांत्रिक निर्णय-प्रक्रिया में नागरिकों की सक्रिय भागीदारी से अधिक टिकाऊ एवं उत्तरदायी शासन संभव होता है। इसके साथ-साथ नारीवादी शासन सिद्धांत यह स्पष्ट करता है कि महिला नेतृत्व केवल प्रतिनिधित्व तक सीमित न होकर संस्थागत प्राथमिकताओं को मानवीय, समावेशी एवं पर्यावरण-संवेदनशील बनाता है।

सतत विकास सिद्धांत सामाजिक समानता, आर्थिक प्रगति तथा पर्यावरणीय संरक्षण के अंतर्संबंध को रेखांकित करता है। जमीनी स्तर पर महिलाएँ इन तीनों आयामों को व्यावहारिक रूप में जोड़ने की क्षमता रखती हैं। इस प्रकार, ये सिद्धांत मिलकर महिला सशक्तिकरण, शासन परिवर्तन तथा हरित औद्योगिक विकास के अध्ययन हेतु सुदृढ़ आधार प्रदान करते हैं।

अध्ययन का महत्व

यह अध्ययन निम्नलिखित दृष्टियों से महत्वपूर्ण है—

- पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिला नेतृत्व के वास्तविक शासन परिणामों को रेखांकित करता है
- जनजातीय क्षेत्रों में सतत विकास की जमीनी प्रक्रियाओं को उजागर करता है
- लैंगिक-समावेशी हरित विकास पर नीति-निर्माण को सैद्धांतिक समर्थन प्रदान करता है
- ग्रामीण विकास एजेंसियों एवं पंचायती संस्थाओं हेतु व्यावहारिक सुझाव प्रस्तुत करता है

समस्या कथन

यद्यपि पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिलाओं का प्रतिनिधित्व संवैधानिक रूप से सुनिश्चित है, तथापि यह स्पष्ट नहीं है कि यह प्रतिनिधित्व शासन की गुणवत्ता एवं सतत विकास पहलों को किस सीमा तक प्रभावित कर रहा है। विशेष रूप से छत्तीसगढ़ के सरगुजा संभाग में महिलाओं की निर्णय-निर्माण स्वायत्तता, कार्यशैली तथा पर्यावरण-अनुकूल शासन में भूमिका पर सीमित अनुभवजन्य शोध उपलब्ध है।

मुख्य अवधारणाओं की परिचालनात्मक परिभाषाएँ

- **महिला सशक्तिकरण:** शासन प्रक्रियाओं में महिलाओं की स्वतंत्र निर्णय-क्षमता एवं नेतृत्व प्रभाव
- **सतत शासन:** सामाजिक, आर्थिक एवं पर्यावरणीय संतुलन पर आधारित सहभागी शासन व्यवस्था
- **हरित औद्योगिक विकास:** पर्यावरण-अनुकूल आजीविका एवं सूक्ष्म उद्यम आधारित विकास
- **पंचायती राज संस्थाएँ:** स्थानीय स्वशासन की लोकतांत्रिक संस्थाएँ

चर

स्वतंत्र चर:

- ग्राम सभा में सहभागिता
- निर्णय-निर्माण स्वायत्तता
- हरित नीतियों के प्रति जागरूकता
- नेतृत्व व्यवहार

आश्रित चर:

- सतत शासन परिणाम
- हरित पहलों का क्रियान्वयन
- सामुदायिक सहभागिता

अध्ययन के उद्देश्य

1. पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिला प्रतिनिधियों की शासन सहभागिता का विश्लेषण करना
2. सतत एवं हरित विकास में उनकी भूमिका का अध्ययन करना
3. महिला नेतृत्व से पूर्व एवं पश्चात शासन संकेतकों में परिवर्तन का आकलन करना
4. महिला-नेतृत्व वाले शासन में बाधाओं एवं सहायक कारकों की पहचान करना

शोध प्रश्न

- महिला प्रतिनिधियों की शासन सहभागिता का स्तर क्या है?
- महिला नेतृत्व सतत एवं हरित विकास को किस प्रकार प्रभावित करता है?
- क्या महिला नेतृत्व के पश्चात शासन में गुणात्मक सुधार परिलक्षित होता है?

शोध प्रविधि

यह अध्ययन वर्णनात्मक एवं विश्लेषणात्मक सर्वेक्षण पद्धति पर आधारित है। चयनित पंचायती राज संस्थाओं की 100 निर्वाचित महिला प्रतिनिधियों का स्तरीकृत यादृच्छिक नमूना लिया गया। प्राथमिक आँकड़े प्रश्नावली एवं साक्षात्कार के माध्यम से तथा द्वितीयक आँकड़े आधिकारिक अभिलेखों से संकलित किए गए। आँकड़ों का विश्लेषण प्रतिशत एवं तुलनात्मक विधि द्वारा किया गया।

आँकड़ों का विश्लेषण एवं व्याख्या

अध्ययन से यह स्पष्ट हुआ कि महिला प्रतिनिधियों के निर्वाचन के पश्चात ग्राम सभा सहभागिता, पर्यावरण-अनुकूल पहलों में भागीदारी, निर्णय-निर्माण स्वायत्तता तथा महिला-आधारित स्व-सहायता समूहों के समर्थन में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि हुई। यह परिवर्तन इस बात का संकेत है कि महिला नेतृत्व ने शासन को अधिक सहभागी, संवेदनशील एवं सतत बनाया है।

परिकल्पना परीक्षण

अध्ययन में यह पाया गया कि महिला नेतृत्व का सतत शासन पर सकारात्मक एवं महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव पड़ता है। अतः शून्य परिकल्पना अस्वीकृत तथा वैकल्पिक परिकल्पना स्वीकार की जाती है।

निष्कर्ष

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन यह स्थापित करता है कि पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में महिलाओं की प्रभावी भागीदारी से शासन की गुणवत्ता में सुधार होता है। महिला प्रतिनिधियाँ पर्यावरण संरक्षण, सतत आजीविकाओं तथा सामुदायिक सहभागिता को बढ़ावा देकर हरित औद्योगिक विकास की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान देती हैं। इस प्रकार, जमीनी स्तर पर महिला सशक्तिकरण सतत एवं समावेशी विकास का एक अनिवार्य आधार है।

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शोध सारांश (Abstract)

ग्रामीण पर्यटन से स्थानीय रोजगार का सृजन हुआ है जिससे ग्रामीण जनजीवन में आर्थिक, सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक बदलाव आ रहे हैं। सतत विकास, पर्यावरण संरक्षण, प्रभावी विकासात्मक रणनीति द्वारा ग्रामीण संस्कृति का महत्व बढ़ा है। टिकाऊ तथा पारिस्थितिकी मानकों पर पर्यटन के विविध आयामों में विशेषकर इको टूरिज्म तथा एथेनो टूरिज्म अत्यंत लोकप्रिय हुए हैं; जिससे स्थानीय रोजगार ने ग्रामीण सशक्तिकरण में विशेष योगदान दिया है। प्रस्तुत शोध अध्ययन ग्रामीण पर्यटन के महत्व का अध्ययन करता है तथा ग्रामीण पर्यटन स्थानीय संसाधनों, संस्कृति, कृषि-आधारित उद्यमिता, जीवन-शैली के सुनियोजित एवं सतत प्रयोग द्वारा रोजगार के अवसर उत्पन्न हो रहे हैं। शोध अध्ययन में ग्रामीण पर्यटन के विकास से स्थानीय होमस्टे एवं पर्यटन मार्गदर्शक, हस्तशिल्प एवं कुटीर उद्योग, लोक-भोजन सेवाएँ, कृषि एवं वनोंपज उद्यमिता, परिवहन साधनों, सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियों तथा मध्यम उद्यमों के क्षेत्र में रोजगार के नए अवसर सृजित हुए हैं।

देश के ही समान विविधताओं और अपनी प्राकृतिक सुंदरता के लिए प्रसिद्ध छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य पर्यटन के क्षेत्र में प्रगति के पद पर अग्रसर है जिसमें ग्रामीण पर्यटन उद्योग के गति से कारोबार एवं रोजगार तथा आय संवृद्धि से अनुसूचित जनजाति बाहुल्य प्राकृतिक संसाधनों एवं समृद्ध से युक्त राज्य में ग्रामीण पर्यटन ने स्थानीय पिछड़े समुदायों, महिलाओं, युवाओं एवं के लिए स्वरोजगार एवं आय वृद्धि के अवसर प्रदान किए हैं, जिससे ग्रामीण आय में वृद्धि तथा ग्रामीण-शहरी पलायन में कमी देखी गई है। इसके साथ ही, ग्रामीण पर्यटन ने स्थानीय समुदायों में सांस्कृतिक संरक्षण, सामाजिक सहभागिता तथा पर्यावरणीय जागरूकता को भी प्रोत्साहित किया है। ग्रामीण पर्यटन से पर्यावरण संतुलन में सहायक सिद्ध हो रहा है जिससे स्थानीय लोगों का प्रकृति से लगाव, संरक्षण, साफ स्वच्छ रखने की प्रवृत्ति बढ़ी है पर्यटन केंद्रों के विविधता, पर्यटकों के मनोरंजन स्थल के चुनाव में भिन्नता, मानसिक शांति और प्राकृतिक सौंदर्य को बढ़ाया है। तथापि, अपर्याप्त आधारभूत संरचना, कौशल एवं प्रशिक्षण का अभाव, विपणन एवं डिजिटल संपर्क की सीमाएँ ग्रामीण पर्यटन की संभावनाओं को पूर्ण रूप से साकार होने से रोकती हैं। अध्ययन का निष्कर्ष है कि यदि ग्रामीण पर्यटन को समग्र नीति समर्थन, संस्थागत ढाँचे, स्थानीय समुदाय की सक्रिय भागीदारी तथा सतत विकास के सिद्धांतों के अनुरूप विकसित किया जाए, तो यह भारत एवं छत्तीसगढ़ में स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन एवं ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था के सुदृढीकरण में दीर्घकालिक भूमिका निभा सकता है।

शब्द कुंजी (Keywords): ग्रामीण पर्यटन, स्थानीय रोजगार, सतत विकास, ग्रामीण उद्यमिता, सशक्तिकरण, रोजगार सृजन, इको एथनो टूरिज्म।

प्रस्तावना (Introduction)

ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में पर्यटन जिसमें ग्रामीण समुदायों की भागीदारी, कृषिगत गतिविधियाँ, व्यावसायिक संरचना, आजीविका के अतिरिक्त साधन, सतत विकास तथा पारंपरिक व सांस्कृतिक पहचान से है; अभी ग्रामीण पर्यटन विकास के दौर में है जिससे स्थानीय अर्थव्यवस्था को गति मिलेगी, आजीविका संरचना में बदलाव होगा तथा आत्मनिर्भरता ग्रामीण अंचलों में बढ़ेगी। जिससे ग्रामीणों में गरीबी मिटेगी और पलायन रुकेगी। गांधीजी ने कहा था कि ‘भारत की आत्मा गांवों में बसती है’। गांव आध्यात्मिक और सांस्कृतिक विरासत और देश की प्राकृतिक सुंदरता का संगम हैं। ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन से सामुदायिक भागीदारी तथा ग्राम विकास संभव है। ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय उत्पादों जैसे कृषि, हस्तशिल्प, वनोंपज, टेराकोटा लौहमेटल शिल्प जैसे सेवाओं की बिक्री को सक्षम बनाने के साथ-साथ युवाओं को उद्यमी बनने के लिए सशक्त माध्यम प्रदान करता है।

ग्रामीण पर्यटन स्थानीय अर्थव्यवस्था को पुनर्जीवित कर ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में रोजगार के विविध अवसर पैदा करता है। यह होमस्टे, गाइड सेवाएँ, हस्तशिल्प और पारंपरिक भोजन के माध्यम से आय बढ़ाता है। इसके द्वारा स्थानीय कला-संस्कृति का संरक्षण होता है और महिलाओं व युवाओं को स्वरोजगार के अवसर मिलते हैं। यह कृषि से अलग आय का एक टिकाऊ स्रोत है, जो ग्रामीण पलायन को कम करता है।

स्थानीय रोजगार से ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था की वृद्धि और विकास होगा जो देश के समावेश की विकास की कुंजी बनेगी। स्थानीय समुदायों को सशक्त बनाने और पर्यटकों को संपूर्ण सुविधा तथा सेवाएँ प्रदान करने में ग्रामीण पर्यटन एक संसाधन के रूप में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाएगा। ग्रामीण पर्यटन को सतत, अबाधित विकसित करने से स्थानीय रोजगार के माध्यम मजबूत होंगे पलायन घटेगा पारंपरिक व्यावसायिक संरचना जीवित होगा।

भारत सरकार की नई पहल 'पर्यटन मित्र' और 'पर्यटन दीदी' है। जिसमें पर्यटकों को स्थानीय 'पर्यटक- अनुकूल' व्यक्तियों से जोड़ने से पर्यटकों का अनुभव और भी समृद्ध आकर्षित करने का प्रयास है। देखो अपना देश, स्वदेश दर्शन योजना, प्रसाद योजना, अतिथि देवो भव अभियान, राष्ट्रीय पर्यटन नीति, कौशल विकास और प्रमाणन कार्यक्रम आदि महत्वपूर्ण पहल है। वैश्विक पर्यटन मानचित्र पर भारत की पहचान दिनों-दिन दिन बढ़ती जा रही है। 2025 में लगभग 3 बिलियन घरेलू पर्यटक, तथा 1.8 मिलियन विदेशी पर्यटक भारत आए जिस देश की पर्यटन क्षेत्र को गति मिली। पर्यटन उद्योग अर्थव्यवस्था का आधार बन रहा है जिससे स्थानीय स्तर पर रोजगार सृजन, सकल घरेलू उत्पाद जीडीपी में 5.22 प्रतिशत योगदान रहा। पर्यटन ज्ञान आदान-प्रदान में भूमिका निभा रहा है।

छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य में ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार रोजगार सृजन क्षेत्रों में :

होमस्टे (Homestay): ग्रामीण घरों में पर्यटकों के ठहरने की व्यवस्था करना। छत्तीसगढ़ जैसे राज्य इसके लिए विशेष नीतियां (जैसे- छत्तीसगढ़ होमस्टे नीति 2025-30) बना रहे हैं।

गाइड और टूर ऑपरेटर: स्थानीय महिला-पुरुषोंको पर्यटक गाइड, अनुवादक और भ्रमण ऑपरेटर के रूप में काम मिलता है।

हस्तशिल्प और कला : स्थानीय कारीगरों को अपने उत्पाद (मिट्टी के बर्तन, टोपी, शॉल) सीधे पर्यटकों को बेचने का मौका मिलता है।

पारंपरिक खान-पान : ग्रामीण व्यंजनों की मांग से स्थानीय लोगों को होटल, केटरिंग और रेस्तरां के अवसर मिलते हैं।

सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियां: लोकगीत, नृत्य और त्योहारों का प्रदर्शन करके रोजगार।

इको टूरिज्म व कृषि पर्यटन: स्थानीय लोगों की आज का संरचना में बदलाव तथा पर्यावरण संरक्षण सतत विकास प्राकृतिक स्थलों की जिम्मेदारी पूर्ण यात्रा इको टूरिज्म भ्रमण है तथा किसानों द्वारा खेती के अनुभवों को पर्यटकों के साथ साझा करना, जैसे- खेत में काम करने का अनुभव देना। ग्रामीण पर्यटन के माध्यम से पर्यटक ग्रामीण जीवन शैली का आनंद ले सकते हैं, जिसमें पारंपरिक भोजन, हस्तशिल्प, स्थानीय खेल और पर्यावरण के अनुकूल गतिविधियां शामिल हैं। रोजगार सृजन में सहायक पहलें: संयुक्त राष्ट्र पर्यटन सर्वश्रेष्ठ पर्यटन गांव पहल: यह ग्रामीण विकास और सामुदायिक कल्याण को बढ़ावा देती है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र पर्यटन सरकारी योजनाएं: 'हुनर से रोजगार' और 'दीनदयाल उपाध्याय ग्रामीण कौशल योजना' पर्यटन और आतिथ्य में प्रशिक्षण देकर रोजगार योग्य बनाते हैं।

ग्राम पर्यटन समिति: पंचायत स्तर पर समितियां बनाकर पर्यटन का प्रबंधन किया जा रहा है,। धुडमारास छत्तीसगढ़ के बस्तर जिले में स्थित एक प्रसिद्ध पर्यटन गांव है। यह (कांगेर घाटी राष्ट्रीय उद्यान) जो घने जंगलों, कांगेर नदी और समृद्ध जैव-विविधता से घिरा है। यह गांव इको-टूरिज्म के लिए जाना जाता है और स्थानीय धुरवा जनजाति की संस्कृति, परंपराओं और आतिथ्य के लिए विश्व स्तर पर पहचान बना चुका है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र विश्व पर्यटन संगठन ने 2024 में धुडमारास को बेस्ट टूरिज्म विलेज अपग्रेड प्रोग्राम में शामिल किया है। यह दुनिया के 60 देशों से चुने गए टॉप 20 गांवों में से एक है। ग्रामीण पर्यटन न केवल स्थानीय लोगों को आय प्रदान करता है, बल्कि उन्हें अपनी परंपरा और संस्कृति को संरक्षित करने में भी मदद करता है।

गांवों की सादगी, परंपरा, लोकसंस्कृति, कृषि, हस्तशिल्प और प्राकृतिक सौंदर्य अब शहरों के लोगों को अपनी ओर आकर्षित कर रहे हैं। पर्यटक अब केवल पहाड़ या समुद्र नहीं, बल्कि असली भारत को जानने की इच्छा रखते हैं। यही अवसर किसानों और ग्रामीणों के लिए आय का नया द्वार खोल रहा है। ग्रामीण पर्यटन बहुआयामी होता है। इसमें खेत/कृषि पर्यटन, सांस्कृतिक पर्यटन, प्रकृति पर्यटन, साहसिक पर्यटन और पर्यावरण पर्यटन शामिल हैं। परम्परागत पर्यटन के विपरीत ग्रामीण पर्यटन की प्रमुख विशेषता है कि यह अनुभव-उन्मुखी होता है। ग्रामीण पर्यटन के दौरान कृषि उद्योग और फसलें उगाने के लिये किसान कैसे काम करते हैं और गांव के व्यंजनों की विविधता का भी आनंद ले सकते हैं। भारत के गांवों में आगंतुकों के समक्ष पेश करने के लिये अद्वितीय संस्कृति, शिल्प, संगीत, नृत्य और विरासत है। देश में ग्रामीण पर्यटन को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिये यह अत्यन्त महत्वपूर्ण है। ऐसा करने पर ही ग्रामीण पर्यटन का विस्तार और विकास हो सकता है तथा स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन से ग्रामीण भारत की तस्वीर बदल सकती है।

अध्ययन के उद्देश्य (Objective of the Study)

1. प्रस्तुत शोध अध्ययन ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार की वृद्धि की संभावनाओं का विश्लेषण करता है।
2. ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार में आए परिवर्तनों का तथा पर्यटन क्षेत्र में रोजगार संभावना की चुनौतियों की पहचान करना।
3. अध्ययन क्षेत्र में ग्रामीण पर्यटन के जैव-विविधता प्रभाव, सतत विकास को केंद्रित तथा समन्वित करने के विभिन्न उपायों का सुझाव देना।

4. सस्टेनेबल टूरिज्म विकास हेतु स्थानीय रोजगार के अवसर पैदा करना।
5. आधुनिक पर्यटन प्रवृत्ति में ग्रामीण पर्यटन एवं रोजगार परंपरा के एकीकरण की संभावनाओं का विश्लेषण करना।
6. प्रस्तुत शोध में स्थानीय समुदाय को भागीदारी तथा आय सृजन का अध्ययन करना है।
7. ग्रामीण पर्यटन के आर्थिक, सामाजिक एवं क्षेत्रीय प्रभावों का अध्ययन करना तथा नई उभरती चुनौतियों की पहचान करना।

आंकड़ों के स्रोत एवं विधि तंत्र (Research Methodology)

अध्ययन का मुख्य उद्देश्य प ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगारका अध्ययन करना है। इस अध्ययन हेतु द्वितीय आंकड़ों का प्रयोग किया गया है। जिसमें ग्रामीण पर्यटन और स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन पर हुए रिसर्च पेपर आदि शामिल है। प्रस्तुत अध्ययन में भारत और राज्य सरकार की रिपोर्ट, शोध पत्र, पुस्तक और इंटरनेट आदि का उपयोग किया गया है। इस अध्ययन में मुख्यतः वर्णनात्मक और विश्लेषणात्मक विधियों का प्रयोग किया गया है; जिसमें डेटा माध्यमिक स्रोतों जैसे विद्वतापूर्ण लेखों, पर्यटन उद्योग की रिपोर्टों से एकत्र किया गया है।

अंतरराष्ट्रीय संगठनों जैसे यूएनडब्ल्यूटीओ और नीति आयोग को रिपोर्ट शामिल की गई है जो अनुसंधान क्रिया विधि के प्रभाव से ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार के लिए रणनीतियां विकसित करने में सहायक होगी।

ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार की संभावनाएं एवं चुनौतियां:

ग्रामीण पर्यटन की पहचान ग्लोबल विलेज के रूप में: ग्रामीण पर्यटन अब ग्लोबल विलेज के रूप में उभर रहा है। गांव अपनी स्थानीय संसाधनों कृषि, वन उत्पाद, बुनाई -कढ़ाई, कास्ट- शिल्प, मेटल एवं लौह शिल्प आदि से वैश्विक स्थान हासिल कर रहा है।

छत्तीसगढ़ टूरिज्म पहले चरण में 20 पर्यटन स्थल चयनित कर नई नीति के तहत बस्तर, जशपुर और सरगुजा के 20 प्रमुख पर्यटन स्थलों को पहले चरण में विकसित किया जाएगा। नीति में इको टूरिज्म को प्राथमिकता दी जाएगी। सरगुजा और बस्तर संभाग में होम-स्टे, होटल, एडवेंचर स्पोर्ट्स और वेलनेस सेंटर जैसी परियोजनाओं के लिए सब्सिडी दी जाएगी। सामान्य क्षेत्रों में 45 प्रतिशत और आदिवासी व माओवादी प्रभावित क्षेत्रों में 10 प्रतिशत अतिरिक्त अनुदान मिलेगा। संयुक्त राष्ट्र विश्व पर्यटन संगठन ने 2024 में धुड़मारास को बेस्ट टूरिज्म विलेज अपग्रेड प्रोग्राम में शामिल किया है। यह दुनिया के 60 देशों से चुने गए टॉप 20 गांवों में से एक है। इससे पहले इसे भारत सरकार और छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यटन द्वारा भी कई पुरस्कार मिले हैं, जैसे बेस्ट रूरल टूरिज्म विलेज। यह बस्तर की सांस्कृतिक धरोहर, सस्टेनेबल टूरिज्म और कम्युनिटी भागीदारी का बेहतरीन उदाहरण है।

पर्यटन अधोसंरचना का विकास: निजी निवेश और आधुनिक सुविधाओं का विकास राज्य सरकार पर्यटन विकास को गति देने के लिए निजी निवेश आकर्षित करेगी और पर्यटन अधोसंरचना का विकास करेगी। पर्यटकों के ठहरने के लिए आधुनिक सुविधाओं से युक्त होटल और रिसॉर्ट तैयार किए जाएंगे। साथ ही पर्यावरण के अनुकूल पर्यटन स्थलों को विकसित किया जाएगा। युवाओं को आकर्षित करने के लिए एडवेंचर स्पोर्ट्स को बढ़ावा दिया जाएगा और स्थानीय लोगों के लिए रोजगार के नए अवसर सृजित होंगे। छत्तीसगढ़ सरकार पर्यटन को बढ़ावा देने के लिए 2025-26 बजट में कई महत्वपूर्ण पहल कर रही है। मुख्य फोकस बस्तर, सरगुजा और जशपुर जैसे क्षेत्रों पर है, जहां स्थानीय संस्कृति, इको-टूरिज्म और ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूत किया जा रहा है।

होम-स्टे नीति (2025-30): बस्तर और सरगुजा में ग्रामीण/आदिवासी क्षेत्रों में होम-स्टे को प्रोत्साहन। नए होम-स्टे के लिए 1 लाख तक सहायता, स्थानीय रोजगार और सांस्कृतिक अनुभव बढ़ावा।

एडवेंचर और इको-टूरिज्म-जशपुर में एडवेंचर टूरिज्म और पर्यटन सर्किट विकास (मधेश्वर महादेव जैसी परियोजनाओं के माध्यम से)।

आधारभूत संरचना-

नवा रायपुर में हाई-एंड टूरिज्म डेस्टिनेशन के लिए 200 करोड़ रुपये। अटल मेमोरियल एवं म्यूजियम के लिए 40 करोड़ रुपये। मुख्यमंत्री जन पर्यटन प्रोत्साहन योजना-10+ लोगों के समूहों को टूर पैकेज पर सब्सिडी (बच्चों के लिए 85%, वयस्कों के लिए 75% तक छूट), पर्यटन को जन-जन तक पहुंचाने के लिए। क्षेत्रीय विकास: बस्तर, जशपुर और सरगुजा के 20 प्रमुख पर्यटन स्थलों को पहले चरण में विकसित करने की योजना। रोजगार और कौशल- पर्यटन क्षेत्र में कौशल विकास के लिए 60 करोड़ रुपये का प्रावधान। ये प्रयास राज्य को प्रमुख पर्यटन गंतव्य बनाने, स्थानीय समुदायों को आर्थिक रूप से सशक्त करने और सस्टेनेबल टूरिज्म को बढ़ावा देने के उद्देश्य से किए गए हैं।

महिलाओं की भागीदारी व सशक्तिकरण-

ग्रामीण पर्यटन में महिलाओं की भागीदारी से महिला सशक्तिकरण को बढ़ावा मिलेगा। छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य के ग्रामीण पर्यटन में महिलाओं के निरंतर भागीदारी हो रही है, ग्रामीण पर्यटन उद्योग रोजगार के अवसर के साथ-साथ महिलाओं को नेतृत्व, मार्गदर्शन और उद्यमिता के क्षेत्र में प्रगति के नए अवसर प्रदान कर रहे हैं जो उनके आर्थिक और सामाजिक सशक्तिकरण में योगदान कर रहा है।

स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन से ग्रामीण विकास को बढ़ावा-

ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा नए रोजगार की संभावना उत्पन्न होता है यथा स्थानीय वन्य उत्पाद, कृषि उत्पादन, हस्तशिल्प, डोकराकला, धातु शिल्प, स्थानीय व्यंजन -पकवान तथा पर्यटन सेवाओं को बढ़ावा देकर स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन को सतत, अबाधित बना सकते हैं। साथ ही साथ सतत विकास एवं पर्यावरणीय संरक्षण से ग्रामीण क्षेत्र की समृद्धि में मदद कर सकते हैं। अब ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा कई सहायक उद्योगों परिवहन, मनोरंजन, उद्यमिता स्टार्टअप आदि तथा प्रशासन के प्रयासों से रोजगार के अवसर उत्पन्न हो रहे हैं जो समग्र आर्थिक विकास को प्रोत्साहित करते हैं जिसे स्थानीय स्तर में लोगों के जीवन स्तर में सुधार का आधार बन रहा है।

ग्रामीण परिवर्तन द्वारा दूरस्थ पर्यटन गंतव्य का विकास-

ग्रामीण बुनियादी ढांचे में सुधार तथा स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन के माध्यम से दूरस्थ पर्यटन अंचल के क्षेत्र के विकास को गति प्रदान करना। जिससे सामाजिक-आर्थिक- सांस्कृतिक बदलाव हो। साथ ही साथ यह क्षेत्र नये ग्रामीण पर्यटन गंतव्य के रूप में स्थापित हो।

सांस्कृतिक धरोहरों का संरक्षण और संवर्धन-

ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा सांस्कृतिक धरोहर का संरक्षण और संवर्धन से स्थानीय रोजगार के अवसर उत्पन्न होते हैं। जिससे स्थानीय विरासत, लोक कला, पारंपरिक त्यौहार, विरासत संरक्षित होते हैं साथ ही साथ वैश्विक पहचान मिलती है।

ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार और चुनौतियाँ –

आवश्यक बुनियादी ढांचे की कमी होना -

भारत तथा विभिन्न राज्यों के ग्रामीण पर्यटन गंतव्य स्थलों में आवश्यक बुनियादी ढांचे की कमी है, जैसे कि अच्छी सड़कों, स्वच्छता सुविधाओं और सार्वजनिक परिवहन का अभाव है। इसके साथ ही, दूरदराज के इलाकों में कनेक्टिविटी की स्थिति भी संतोषजनक नहीं है।

पर्यटकों के लिए सुरक्षा संबंधी चिंताओं का होना-

ग्रामीण अंचलों में पर्यटकों के लिए सुरक्षा को लेकर चिंता बढ़ रही है। बेहतर सेवाओं तथा सुविधाओं का अभाव तथा प्राकृतिक आपदाओं की घटनाओं के कारण भारत में तथा विभिन्न राज्यों में ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार के अवसरों पर प्रभाव पड़ रहा है, जिससे पर्यटकों की संख्या में कमी आ सकती है।

पर्यावरणीय गिरावट होने से पर्यटन क्षेत्र में प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ना –

अत्यधिक पर्यटन भी पर्यावरण पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव डालता है। भीड़-भाड़, अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन की समस्याएं, और प्रदूषण पर्यटन स्थलों की सुंदरता और स्थिरता को प्रभावित करते हैं।

मौसमी निर्भरता पर आधारित होना-

भारत तथा छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य के बस्तर सरगुजा दूरस्थ अंचलों में कई लोकप्रिय पर्यटन स्थलों की सफलता मुख्य रूप से पीक सीजन पर निर्भर होती है, जिससे ऑफ-सीजन के दौरान आय में गिरावट और रोजगार की अस्थिरता का सामना करना पड़ता है।

कुशल कार्यबल की कमी का होना -

विशेष का छत्तीसगढ़ राज्यों के वनांचल में स्थित ग्रामीण पर्यटन स्थलों में कुशल पेशेवरों की कमी सेवा की गुणवत्ता को प्रभावित करती है। प्रशिक्षित कर्मचारियों की जरूरत को पूरा करने के लिए सही कौशल विकास कार्यक्रमों की आवश्यकता है।

जटिल सरकारी प्रक्रिया और नौकरशाही बाधाओं का होना-

जटिल सरकारी प्रक्रियाएँ, लाइसेंसिंग की समस्याएं और वीजा प्रक्रिया में देरी पर्यटन क्षेत्र के विकास और निवेश को प्रभावित करती हैं, जिससे विकास की गति धीमी हो जाती है।

विपणन अंतराल का होना –

कम-ज्ञात दूरस्थ ग्रामीण पर्यटन स्थलों, राज्यों के पर्यटन सर्किट स्थलों का प्रचार-प्रसार कम है, जिससे देश के पर्यटन क्षेत्र की वैश्विक दृश्यता में रुकावट आती है। “अतुल्य भारत” जैसे अभियानों के बावजूद, असंगत ब्रांडिंग और प्रचार से यह समस्या बनी रहती है।

ग्राम पंचायत विकास योजनाओं के माध्यम से पर्यटन को प्रोत्साहित करना, उनकी श्रेणीकरण करना, मानचित्रण करना, प्रशिक्षण तथा कौशल उन्नयन करना, स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन हेतु निवेश आकर्षित करने पर जोर देना। पर्यावरण अनुकूल सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करने का प्रयास तथा सेवाओं एवं गुणवत्ताओं में सुधार, स्थानीय गतिविधियों में साहसिक खेलकूद,; इको टूरिज्म, स्थानीय मेलों और त्योहारों के माध्यम से ग्रामीण पर्यटन को बढ़ावा देना, स्थानीय उत्पादों सेवाओं का प्रोत्साहन, महिलाओं और युवाओं का सशक्तिकरण इत्यादि।

परिणाम एवं विश्लेषण-

ग्रामीण पर्यटन ने आय सृजन , रोजगार संरचना में बदलाव, ग्रामीण अन्य सहायक उद्योगों का विकास, स्थानीय रोजगार से ग्रामीण सशक्तिकरण से पर्यटन में नये बदलाव ने अनुभव और विपणन को आसान बना दिया है, जिससे पर्यटक आकर्षित हुआ है पर्यटन केंद्र की नई पहचान और विकास हुआ है। लेकिन इसने डेटा गोपनीयता, डिजिटल डिवाइड और कुछ नौकरियों के नुकसान जैसी चुनौतियाँ भी पैदा की हैं, जिसके लिए सतत विकास के लिए पर्यावरण संरक्षण, डिजिटल कौशल और जिम्मेदार नवाचार की आवश्यकता है।

ग्रामीण पर्यटन गंतव्य स्थलों का तकनीकी साधनों की पहुंच एवं प्रशिक्षण सुविधाएं तथा स्मार्टफोन ऐप्स और ऑनलाइन बुकिंग प्लेटफॉर्म ने यात्रा की योजना बनाना और बुक करना आसान बना दिया है। व्यक्तिगत अनुभव: आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलीजेंस और डेटा एनालिटिक्स व्यक्तिगत सिफारिशें प्रदान करते हैं, जिससे यात्रियों का अनुभव बेहतर होता है। सोशल मीडिया और इन्फ्लुएंसर मार्केटिंग गंतव्यों को बढ़ावा देने और यात्रियों को प्रेरित करने में मदद करते हैं।

स्मार्ट डेस्टिनेशन मैनेजमेंट और पर्यावरण-अनुकूल परिवहन जैसे तकनीकें पर्यावरणीय प्रभाव को कम करती हैं। प्रौद्योगिकी ने पर्यटन को वैश्विक आर्थिक विकास का एक प्रमुख स्रोत बनाया है, जिससे रोजगार के अवसर पैदा हुए हैं, आय सृजन का माध्यम बना है भारत के संदर्भ में 'देखो अपना देश' जैसी पहलें वर्चुअल टूर प्रदान करती हैं, खासकर महामारी के दौरान महत्वपूर्ण। अत्यधिक डिजिटलीकरण व्यक्तिगत जुड़ाव को कम कर सकता है। डेटा गोपनीयता और सुरक्षा महत्वपूर्ण चिंता का विषय बना हुआ है , डेटा उल्लंघनों और गोपनीयता के जोखिम बढ़ गए हैं। डिजिटल डिवाइड, छोटे व्यवसायों और ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में डिजिटल नवाचार का स्तर कम है, जिससे असमानता पैदा होती है। नौकरियों का विस्थापन: स्वचालन (ऑटोमेशन) के कारण कुछ पारंपरिक नौकरियां जैसे टूर गाइड प्रभावित हुई हैं। डिजिटल बुनियादी ढांचे का विस्तार और कर्मचारियों के लिए डिजिटल कौशल की कमी एक चुनौती है। तथा तकनीकी विस्तार के पर्यावरणीय प्रभाव भी चिंता का विषय हैं। एकीकृत दृष्टिकोण की आवश्यकता: प्रौद्योगिकी के लाभों को अधिकतम करने और चुनौतियों से निपटने के लिए सरकार, उद्योग और हितधारकों के बीच सहयोग जरूरी है - भविष्य में ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन में अधोसंरचना को विकसित करने में योजनाओं व सरकारी प्रयास से नये गंतव्य स्थलों की पहचान से स्थिरता, आर्थिक व्यवहार्यता और सामाजिक वांछनीयता को संतुलित करना महत्वपूर्ण है। स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन में आवश्यक सभी चरणों में सांस्कृतिक और संगठनात्मक संरचनाओं के प्रभावों पर अधिक शोध की आवश्यकता है।

निष्कर्ष-

प्रस्तुत शोध अध्ययन ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार के नवीन दृष्टिकोण का विश्लेषण करता है। विभिन्न नीतिगत उपाय जिसमें सामाजिक आर्थिक विकास हो तथा पर्यटन द्वारा ग्रामीण पिछले क्षेत्र में सामाजिक बदलाव हो , ग्रामीण पर्यटन प्रोत्साहित हो तथा समग्र बेहतर प्रबंधन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार को नई दिशा एवं दशा मिले। ऐसा नीतिगत कदम उठाने से ग्रामीण पर्यटन का सामाजिक , आर्थिक एवं पर्यावरणीय रूप से समग्र विकास में योगदान देगा। विश्व में आज पर्यटन उद्योगों में ग्रामीण पर्यटन से स्थानीय रोजगार अवसर की रणनीतियां अत्यधिक विकसित और लोकप्रिय हुई है। वर्तमान में पर्यटन उद्योगों में ग्रामीण पर्यटन को जन उद्योग और तात्कालिक आवश्यकता के लिए विकास और उन्नति हेतु इनको विकसित करने की जरूरत है।

स्थानीय अधोसंरचना विकास ने पर्यावरण-अनुकूल यात्रा, बेहतर प्रबंधन और स्थानीय समुदायों को सशक्त बनाने में सहायक हुए है, जिससे आर्थिक स्थिरता और संरक्षण होता है। हालाँकि, ग्रामीण दूरस्थ पर्यटन स्थलों की दीर्घकालीन पर्यटन नीति, बजट, व योजनाओं की त्वरित कार्रवाई का अभाव है। जिससे समावेशी नीतियों पर ध्यान देना महत्वपूर्ण है, ताकि यह सुनिश्चित हो सके कि विकास सभी के लिए न्यायसंगत और टिकाऊ हो स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन से ग्रामीण सशक्तिकरण हो।

ग्रामीण जीवन, कला, संस्कृति, धरोहर तथा वहां के समुदायों की आर्थिक और सामाजिक बदलाव, पर्यटन अनुभव ग्रामीण पर्यटन से संवर रहा है। ग्रामीण अंचलों में कम आबादी, प्राकृतिक वातावरण, स्थानीय कार्यक्रम, संस्कृति धरोहर और परंपराओं के कारण ग्रामीण पर्यटन सर्किट विकसित हो रहा है। जिसमें पर्यटन मंत्रालय और संयुक्त राष्ट्र विकास कार्यक्रम का संयुक्त प्रयास से ग्रामीण पर्यटन उद्योग तेजी से विकास कर रहा है। विकसित अशोक संरचनाओं ने पर्यटन स्थलों के प्रबंधन, संसाधन आवंटन और पर्यावरणीय प्रभावों को कम करने में मदद करते हैं, साथ ही यात्रियों को स्थायी विकल्प चुनने में मार्गदर्शन करने हेतु सशक्त माध्यम है, यह ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में आय के अवसर पैदा करता है, छोटे व्यवसायों को बढ़ावा देता है, और स्थानीय समुदायों को अपनी सांस्कृतिक पहचान बनाए रखने में सशक्त बनाता है।

अतः ग्रामीण पर्यटन द्वारा स्थानीय रोजगार सृजन से तथा व्यावसायिक संरचना में बदलाव से ग्रामीण सशक्तिकरण व रोजगार से पलायन रुका है, गरीबी दूर हुआ है, दूरस्थ पर्यटन गंतव्य स्थलों का पिछड़ापन दूर हुआ है। अतः विकसित संसाधनों तथा प्रचार प्रसार तथा स्थानीय उत्पादों की मार्केटिंग, समावेशी, सतत और समुदाय-केंद्रित तकनीकी दृष्टिकोण अपनाकर ग्रामीण पर्यटन को स्थानीय रोजगार अवसर, दीर्घकालिक विकास का सशक्त माध्यम बनाया जा सकता है।

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“छत्तीसगढ़ स्थापना (2000) के पश्चात राज्य के सामाजिक परिवर्तन और स्थिरता: एक ऐतिहासिक एवं विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन”

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शोध सार

प्रस्तुत शोध-पत्र छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य की स्थापना (1 नवंबर 2000) के बाद के सामाजिक परिवर्तनों और स्थिरता का ऐतिहासिक एवं विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन प्रस्तुत करता है। राज्य की स्थापना मध्य प्रदेश सेविभाजन के पश्चात हुयी, जो क्षेत्रीय अस्मिता और विकास की मांग पर आधारित थी। पिछले 25 वर्षों में, राज्य ने जनसांख्यिकीय बदलाव, शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, जनजातीय विकास, और आर्थिक प्रगति में उल्लेखनीय परिवर्तन दिखाई पड़ता हैं। हालांकि नक्सलवाद, धार्मिक हिंसा, ग्रामीण विकास और आर्थिक असमानताएं स्थिरता के लिए अभी भी चुनौतियां बनी हुई हैं। यह अध्ययन द्वितीयक स्रोतों, जैसे सरकारी रिपोर्ट्स, शैक्षणिक पत्रों, और मीडिया विश्लेषणों पर आधारित है, जो यह दर्शाता हैं कि राजनीतिक स्थिरता और सरकारी पहलों ने सामाजिक परिवर्तनों को बढ़ावा दिया है, लेकिन समावेशी विकास की आवश्यकता बनी हुई है।

बीज बिन्दु - छत्तीसगढ़, राज्य निर्माण, सामाजिक परिवर्तन, स्थिरता, आदिवासी समाज, नक्सलवाद, विकास नीति

प्रस्तावना

छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य की स्थापना 1 नवंबर 2000 को मध्य प्रदेश पुनर्गठन अधिनियम के तहत हुई, जब यह मध्य प्रदेश से अलग होकर भारत का 26वां राज्य बना। यह निर्णय 1920 के दशक से चली आ रही क्षेत्रीय मांगों का परिणाम था, जो 1990 के दशक में छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य निर्माण मंच के माध्यम से संगठित हुआ। राज्य की स्थापना का मुख्य उद्देश्य क्षेत्रीय विकास, प्रशासनिक निकटता, और जनजातीय समुदायों की बेहतर प्रतिनिधिता सुनिश्चित करना था।

2000 के बाद, राज्य ने आर्थिक विकास में उछाल देखा, जहां बजट 6,000 करोड़ रुपये से बढ़कर 2025-26 में 1.65 लाख करोड़ रुपये हो गया। सामाजिक रूप से, जनजातीय जनसंख्या (30.62%) और ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों (76.76%) पर केंद्रित परिवर्तनों ने शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, और लिंग समानता में सुधार किए। हालांकि, नक्सलवाद असमानता और धार्मिक हिंसा जैसी चुनौतियां सामाजिक स्थिरता को प्रभावित करती रहीं। यह शोधपत्र इन परिवर्तनों का ऐतिहासिक संदर्भ में विश्लेषण करता है, जिसमें राजनीतिक स्थिरता की भूमिका प्रमुख है।

साहित्य समीक्षा

साहित्य में छत्तीसगढ़ के सामाजिक परिवर्तनों पर विभिन्न अध्ययन उपलब्ध हैं। ज्योति पांडेय और अन्य (2025) ने राज्य के मानव विकास सूचकांक (HDI) में सुधार का विश्लेषण किया, जो 1993-94 में 0.334 से बढ़कर 2020-21 में 0.589 हो गया, जो आर्थिक सुधारों का प्रभाव दर्शाता है। पूर्णेन्दु अधिकारी (2020) ने झारखंड और छत्तीसगढ़ की तुलना में खनिज-समृद्ध राज्यों में निकासी व्यवस्थाओं के राजनीतिक निर्माण पर चर्चा की, जहां छत्तीसगढ़ में बेहतर शासन ने समावेशी विकास को बढ़ावा दिया।

नक्सलवाद पर अध्ययन, जैसे सेल्वराज (2025), ईसाई अल्पसंख्यकों पर हिंसा को राज्य की राजनीतिक परिवर्तनों से जोड़ते हैं, जो 2003-2018 के भाजपा शासन से 2018-2023 के कांग्रेस शासन तक निरंतर रही। प्रिथक (2025) ने राज्य के औद्योगिक नीति परिवर्तनों (2004-2024) का विश्लेषण किया, जो समावेशी विकास पर केंद्रित हैं। ये अध्ययन दर्शाते हैं कि सामाजिक परिवर्तन राजनीतिक स्थिरता से जुड़े हैं, लेकिन असमानताएं बनी हुई हैं।

ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि

छत्तीसगढ़ का इतिहास दक्षिण कोसल के रूप में प्राचीन है, जहां मौर्य, गुप्त, और कलचुरी राजवंशों का शासन रहा। 1740 तक हैहयवंशी राजवंश ने शासन किया, उसके बाद मराठा और ब्रिटिश काल (1845-1947) आया। स्वतंत्रता के बाद, यह मध्य प्रदेश का हिस्सा बना, लेकिन क्षेत्रीय अलगाव की मांग 1920 से उठी।

2000 की स्थापना के बाद, राज्य ने भाजपा के नेतृत्व में स्थिर शासन देखा, जहां डॉ. रमन सिंह (2003-2018) और उसके पश्चात भूपेश बघेल और विष्णुदेव साय ने विकास को प्राथमिकता दी। 2018-2023 में कांग्रेस शासन ने सामाजिक कल्याण पर जोर

दिया, लेकिन 2023 में भाजपा की वापसी हुई। और इस अवधि में नक्सलवाद से संघर्ष और उस समस्या के ठोस समाधान के साथ आर्थिक विकास पर बल दिया जा रहा है।।

सामाजिक परिवर्तन

1. जनसांख्यिकीय बदलाव

2001 में जनसंख्या 2.08 करोड़ थी, जो 2011 में 2.55 करोड़ हो गई, और 2026 में अनुमानित 3.14 करोड़। शहरीकरण 25.24% है, जबकि जनजातीय जनसंख्या 30.62% (भारत में सर्वाधिक) है। भाषाई परिवर्तन में छत्तीसगढ़ी 68.7% प्रमुख है। प्रजनन दर 2.4 (2017) है, जो ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में अधिक है।

2. शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य

साक्षरता दर 2001 में 64.66% से बढ़कर 2024 में 78.5% हो गई। महिला साक्षरता 55.85% से 60.99% (2011) हुई। स्वास्थ्य में, स्वच्छ भारत अभियान से राज्य खुले में शौच मुक्त (2017) बना। हालांकि, जनजातीय क्षेत्रों में कुपोषण (ST महिलाओं में 50%) बनी समस्या है।

3. जनजातीय विकास

जनजातीय समुदायों के लिए योजनाएं जैसे महतारी वंदन जैसी अनेक योजनाओं ने महिलाओं को वित्तीय सहायता प्रदान की। रामकृष्ण मिशन जैसी संस्थाओं ने शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य में योगदान दिया। हालांकि, जादू-टोना आरोपों के खिलाफ 2005 का अधिनियम महिलाओं की सुरक्षा के लिए महत्वपूर्ण रहा। जनजातीय विकास को ध्यान में रखकर विभिन्न योजनाओं को धरातल पर लाकर स्थितियां बेहतर बनाने का कार्य निरंतर जारी है।

4. लिंग समानता और महिलाओं की स्थिति

लिंग अनुपात 991 (2011) है। ग्रामीण महिलाएं स्वतंत्र हैं, लेकिन जनजातीय क्षेत्रों में जादू-टोना हिंसा बनी हुई। महिलाओं के लिए सुरक्षित वातावरण के निर्माण के लिए लगातार प्रयास किया जा रहा है किन्तु अभी भी यौनहिंसा, मानव तस्करी, बेरोजगारी और अशिक्षा की समस्या बनी हुती है।

स्थिरता के पहलू

1. राजनीतिक स्थिरता

भाजपा का लंबा शासन (2003-2018) ने छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य को स्थिरता प्रदान किया है, जहां PDS सुधारों से गरीबी में कमी आई। कांग्रेस शासन (2018-2023) में भी लोक-संस्कृति को समृद्ध करने एवं पिछड़े अल्पसंख्यकों और अन्य जन के कल्याण के विकास कार्य उल्लेखनीय है। 2023 से अभी तक भाजपा शासन में सामाजिक समरसता के लिए नुकसानदायक धर्मपरिवर्तन पर और विकास में बाधा उत्पन्न करने वाले नक्सलवाद के उन्मूलन के लिए सख्त कार्रवाई हो रही है।।

2. आर्थिक विकास और स्थिरता

जीएसडीपी 2025-26 में 6.35 लाख करोड़ रुपये अनुमानित है। खनन और उद्योग (32% GSDP) प्रमुख हैं, लेकिन कृषि (32%) निर्भरता बनी हुई। गरीबी 2004-05 में 50% थी, जो राष्ट्रीय औसत से दोगुनी, है।

3. सामाजिक सद्भाव और चुनौतियां

नक्सलवाद में 2000 से 12,000 मौतें हुईं। मोबाइल और सोशल मीडिया ने समर्थन घटाया। विदेशी सहायता से जनजातीय वर्ग को लालच देकर या बरगलाकर धर्मपरिवर्तन कराने वाले ईसाई मिशनरियों पर निरंतर कार्यवाही हो रही है। कवर्धा और छिटपुट जगह पर छोटी मोटी बातों पर धार्मिक वैमनस्यता की स्थिति निर्मित हुती थी, जिसे प्रशासन के द्वारा तत्काल सुलझा दिया गया था। बस्तर, कोरबा, रायगढ़ और सरगुजा क्षेत्र की अपार खनिज संपदा के कारण पूंजीपतियों के द्वारा इन वन क्षेत्रों का विनाश किया जा रहा है। जिससे आम जनमानस में आक्रोश है। वन क्षेत्रों के विनाश के बाद उस क्षेत्र में निवासरत जनजातीय समुदाय का विस्थापन चुनौतियां हैं। जिसमें सरकार के द्वारा समाधान की कोशिश की जा रही है।
विश्लेषण

ऐतिहासिक रूप से, राज्य की स्थापना ने क्षेत्रीय विकास को बढ़ावा दिया, लेकिन सामाजिक परिवर्तन असमान रहे। राजनीतिक स्थिरता (भाजपा शासन) ने PDS जैसे सुधारों से सामाजिक स्थिरता मजबूत की, लेकिन नक्सलवाद और धार्मिक हिंसा ने सद्भाव बिगाड़ा। आर्थिक विकास ने शहरी क्षेत्रों को लाभ पहुंचाया, लेकिन जनजातीय क्षेत्रों में असमानता बढ़ी। जनजातीय क्षेत्रों में जल, जंगल और जमीन पर पूंजीपति वर्ग की गिद्ध दृष्टि और उनको प्राप्त राजनैतिक समर्थन से जनजातीय समाज में रोष है। यह विश्लेषण यह दर्शाता है कि समावेशी नीतियां (जैसे औद्योगिक परिवर्तन 2004-2024) आवश्यक हैं, किन्तु प्राकृतिक संतुलन और लोकहित को ध्यान में रखना जरूरी है। राजनैतिक परिवर्तनों ने भी धर्म, जाति और क्षेत्रीयता को मुद्दा बनाकर विकास के कार्य को प्रभावित किया है।

निष्कर्ष

छत्तीसगढ़ ने 2000 के बाद सामाजिक परिवर्तनों में प्रगति की, लेकिन स्थिरता के लिए नक्सलवाद और असमानता जैसी चुनौतियों का समाधान आवश्यक है। भविष्य में, जनजातीय विकास और समावेशी शासन पर जोर से राज्य मजबूत हो सकता है।

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“सतत और हरित औद्योगिक विकास में महिला सशक्तिकरण”

भोजकुमारी निर्मलकर

शोधार्थी

कलिंगा विश्वविद्यालय रायपुर

सारांश:

सतत और हरित औद्योगिक विकास में महिलाओं की भूमिका अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि महिलाएं प्रबंधन, पर्यावरण संरक्षण, प्राकृतिक संसाधनों के विवेकपूर्ण उपयोग में निपुण हैं, महिला कार्य बल में अधिक योगदान देती है जिससे सकल घरेलू उत्पाद में वृद्धि होती है। इस अध्ययन का उद्देश्य यह समझना है की महिलाओं की शिक्षा, तकनीकी कौशल, रोजगार अवसर तथा निर्णय निर्माण में उनकी उपस्थिति किस प्रकार हरित औद्योगिक प्रक्रियाओं को गति प्रदान करती है।

इस अध्ययन में मिश्रित विधि का उपयोग किया गया है जिसमें सर्वेक्षण, साक्षात्कार और दस्तावेजीय विश्लेषण शामिल है। निष्कर्षों से ज्ञात हुआ कि महिलाओं की सहभागिता बढ़ने से पर्यावरणीय अनुकूलन, सुरक्षा मानकों, गुणवत्ता नियंत्रण तथा संसाधन संरक्षण संबंधी प्रक्रियाओं में सकारात्मक सुधार दिखाई देता है। यह शोध दर्शाता है की सतत औद्योगिक विकास तभी संभव है जब महिलाओं को नीति निर्माण, प्रबंधन तथा तकनीकी क्षेत्रों में व्यापक रूप से शामिल किया जाए।

प्रस्तावना-

सतत एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास आज विश्व का प्रमुख विषय है, यह वर्तमान समाज एवं आने वाली पीढ़ियों के लिए प्राकृतिक संसाधनों के संरक्षण, स्वच्छ पर्यावरण, अनुकूल जीवन शैली हेतु महत्वपूर्ण है। इस क्षेत्र में महिला सशक्तिकरण से पर्यावरण संरक्षण, जैविक कृषि, प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का उपयोग, सामाजिक जागरूकता और हरित अर्थव्यवस्था में महिलाओं की भूमिका प्रासंगिक है।

इस शोध का उद्देश्य यह विश्लेषण करना है कि महिला सशक्तिकरण किस प्रकार सतत एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास के लक्षण को प्राप्त करने में सहायक है।

कीवर्ड- महिला सशक्तिकरण, सतत एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास, पर्यावरण संरक्षण, सामाजिक जिम्मेदारी, सरकारी योजनाएं, महिला उद्यमी संगठन

विषय का महत्व एवं उसका उद्देश्य-

इस शोध में महिला सशक्तिकरण के महत्व, चुनौतियां, अवसरों और हरित औद्योगिक विकास में योगदान को बताने का प्रयास किया गया है। इस शोध के मुख्य उद्देश्य निम्नलिखित हैं -

- सतत एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास में महिलाओं की वर्तमान भूमिका का विश्लेषण
- महिलाओं की भागीदारी को प्रभावित करने वाले सामाजिक आर्थिक कारकों की पहचान करना
- पर्यावरण संरक्षण व हरित ऊर्जा कार्यक्रम में महिला सशक्तिकरण की स्थिति का मूल्यांकन करना
- महिला नेतृत्व वाले उदाहरण का अध्ययन करना
- महिला सशक्तिकरण को बढ़ावा देने हेतु सुझाव और नीतिगत समाधान प्रस्तुत करना।

शोध की पद्धतियां-

- वर्णनात्मक पद्धति-इसमें महिलाओं की भूमिका, पृष्ठभूमि और समीक्षा को स्पष्ट किया है।
- विश्लेषणात्मक पद्धति-इसमें महिलाओं के वैचारिक दृष्टिकोण, सामाजिक, आर्थिक और राजनीतिक दृष्टिकोण का सूक्ष्म विश्लेषण किया गया है।
- डेटा संग्रह-विभिन्न सरकारी रिपोर्ट ऑन शोध पत्रों और समाचार पत्रों, इंटरनेट माध्यम से डेटा संग्रह किया गया है।

सतत और हरित औद्योगिक विकास में महिला सशक्तिकरण एक अवलोकन, समीक्षा और परिचर्चा-

भारत में जनसंख्या लगातार वृद्धि कर रही है जिसमें औद्योगिकरण, ऊर्जा और नवीकरणीय संसाधनों का उपभोक्ता बड़ा है। यह एक चुनौती है, इसलिए हरित औद्योगिक विकास से पर्यावरण पर पड़ने वाले नकारात्मक प्रभाव को कम करना, स्वच्छ एवं टिकाऊ प्रौद्योगिकियों तक पहुंचाना और उनका उपयोग करना वर्तमान में आवश्यक है।

● भारतीय महिलाओं की पृष्ठभूमि-

जनसंख्या की आधी आबादी महिलाएं हैं लेकिन महिलाओं की श्रम शक्ति में भागीदारी कम है, महिला सशक्तिकरण से महिलाओं को उनके अधिकारों और अवसरों के बारे में जागरूक करना और उन्हें अपने जीवन के निर्णय लेने के लिए सक्षम बनाना, पुरुषों की भांति समान अवसर प्रदान करना है, जिससे महिलाओं के साथ समाज और देश के विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती हैं।

हरित अर्थव्यवस्था में महिलाओं की भागीदारी- परिवार में हर दृष्टिकोण से महिलाएं प्राकृतिक संसाधनों का संरक्षण, परिवार वालों का स्वास्थ्य व पोषण, बच्चों की शिक्षा और जागरूकता हेतु तत्पर रहती हैं। कृषि में बहू फसली, कृषि जल संरक्षण और बीज संरक्षण का नवाचार करती हैं। नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा में सोलर लैंप, बायोगैस संयंत्र सौर चूल्हा का इस्तेमाल करती हैं। घर में ही कबाड़ से जुगाड़ और पैसे की बचत व खर्च का हिसाब रखती हैं। इसी तरह सामाजिक स्तर पर और राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भी महिलाएं सतत एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास की आधार हैं। कुछ उदाहरण -केरल की महिला उद्यमी कई क्षेत्रों में अपना योगदान दे रही है जैसे जैविक खेती, हस्तशिल्प पर्यटन आदि में कदम रख चुकी हैं। कनिका तालुकदार असम की वर्मी कंपोस्टिंग से ई-कॉमर्स लीडर तक, बीना देवी मशरूम उत्पादन, रूबी पारेख जैविक कृषि और मूल्य संवर्धन, सुदर्शन कुमारी हिमाचल से सतत शिल्प उद्यमिता, श्री महिला गृह उद्योग लिज्जत पापड़ आदि भारतीय केस स्टडी है। महिला स्व सहायता समूह के द्वारा स्थानीय संसाधनों का उपयोग करके स्वरोजगार के अवसर पैदा कर रही है, ग्रामीण महिलाओं को उद्यमी, सामाजिक, आर्थिक विकास हेतु ग्रामीण आजीविका मिशन, गैर सरकारी संगठन का सहयोग मिलता है। कई आंकड़े महिला सशक्तिकरण को दर्शाता है जैसे- 68% से अधिक मुद्रा लाभार्थी महिलाएं हैं, स्टैंड अप इंडिया से लाभान्वित होने वाली 81% उद्यमी महिलाएं हैं 56% से अधिक जन धन खाते महिलाओं के पास है। महिलाएं कृषि में जैविक खाद, पुनर्चक्रण, लघु और कुटीर उद्योग, शासकीय और निजी सेवा क्षेत्रों में भी जिम्मेदारी निभा रही हैं। चुनौतियां - महिलाओं को सुरक्षा, सामाजिक, धार्मिक चुनौती झेलना पड़ता है, घर से बाहर उच्च शिक्षा, तकनीकी कौशल, रोजगार गारंटी, नीति निर्माण कमी, संसाधनों का अभाव, अवसर की असमानता, भेदभाव, शोषण, आर्थिक सहयोग न मिलने से उद्यमिता में कमी होती है।

समाधान - उच्च शिक्षा, कार्य स्थल में सुरक्षा, कौशल प्रशिक्षण, संगठित क्षेत्र में आरक्षण, निर्णय लेने की स्वतंत्रता, कच्चे माल की उपलब्धता, बाजार में निवेश, तकनीकी शिक्षा, सामाजिक व आर्थिक समानता का निति से महिला सशक्तिकरण सफल होगा। सरकारी योजनाएं - ग्रामीण स्तर पर पंचायती राज अधिनियम 1992 के तहत महिलाओं को के लिए 33% सीट आरक्षित है उन्हें स्थानीय शासन में भाग लेने का अवसर मिलता है, 106 वें संविधान संशोधन अधिनियम 2023 जिसे नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम कहा गया के अंतर्गत लोकसभा व राज्यसभा में भी 33% महिलाओं के लिए आरक्षित हैं। अन्य योजनाओं में -बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ, सुकन्या समृद्धि योजना, उज्वला योजना, महिला उद्यमिता विकास कार्यक्रम आदि है। इनसे महिलाओं की दशा और दिशा में विकास हुआ है।

परिणाम - ग्रामीण एवं शहरी क्षेत्रों में लघु एवं मध्यम उद्योग तक चुनौतियों को दूर करना, व्यवसाय का विस्तार करना, कौशल विकास से उद्यमिता को बढ़ावा देना, पूंजी निर्माण में, विकास प्रबंधन, विपणन कौशल की कमी में सुधार होना जिससे हरित उद्योग, कृषि, सौर ऊर्जा, जल संरक्षण आदि में गति आएगी।

निष्कर्ष -

सतत और हरित औद्योगिक विकास में महिला सशक्तिकरण एक महत्वपूर्ण विषय है जिसमें महिलाओं का प्राकृतिक संसाधनों की उपयोगिता, संवर्धन, आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता, निर्णय निर्माण में समान भागीदारी, कौशल विकास का प्रशिक्षण, अवसर तकनीकी, सामाजिक आर्थिक, राजनीतिक नेतृत्व से हरित विकास को गति और प्रभावशीलता मिली है, यह शोध हमें बताता है कि महिलाएं सतत एवं हरित औद्योगिक विकास की सशक्त वाहक हैं और मूल आधार है।

संदर्भ सूची -

- पर्यावरण संरक्षण विषयक शोध पत्र
- स्थानीय ,गैर सरकारी संगठन की रिपोर्ट
- संयुक्त राष्ट्र विकास कार्यक्रम की रिपोर्ट
- भारत सरकार महिला एवं बाल विकास मंत्रालय की रिपोर्ट
- विश्व बैंक की रिपोर्ट महिला सशक्तिकरण और आर्थिक विकास
- इंटरनेट से प्राप्त सामग्री ।

“Representation of Womanhood: A Study on Popular Children’s Magazine in Kerala”

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This paper is an analysis of popular Malayalam children’s magazine, *Balarama*(Garden) And *Eureka*, scientific magazine published by Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath. I examine these magazines not as simple, innocent texts that are meant for mere entertainment, but as instruments of cultural and ideological socialization. I am looking at children’s magazines as a source of alternative education for children. Emergence of these two magazines considered as the important landmark in genre of children’s literature in Kerala. The magazine *Balarama* is considered as secular by public and the objective of *Eureka* is to construct a rational childhood. In this paper I am looking the way both magazines presents a desirable childhood through presetting certain group of women and children as not desirable.

Balarama is a Malayalam comic magazine, published by M.M Publication of the Malayala Manorama group from Kottayam. Started as monthly in 1972, it became fortnightly in November 1984, before it became a weekly in 1999. In Kerala, the earlier attempts to publish Malayalam periodicals for children were proved a failure. However, it was Pai and Pai Company’s comic magazine *Poompatta* that established among the readers for the first time in 1964. N.M Mohan was the editor of *Poompatta*. But later he left the magazine and joined *Balarama* as its editor in chief. Now the magazine is published from Thrissur by Sooryaprabha Publications, Thrissur.

Balarama is known for its decade’s long partnership with *Amar Chitra Katha*. *Amar Chithra Katha* is well known as a project aimed at introducing children’s to “Indian” values. Nandini Chandra observes *Amar Chithra Katha* construction of Hindu superheroes that fought against foreign oppression, whether the “foreigners” was the “Asura” Muslim or British and the superhero fought on behalf of Hindus or those under the protective net of Hindu rulers (Nadini, 2004). She is exploring the way *Amar Chithra Katha* naturally organize its image, narratives, myth to make the transition from Hindu to national. A breakthrough for the magazine *Balarama* was its syndication with American magazines, followed by inclusion of their comic strips such as ‘Spiderman’, ‘Phantom’, ‘Alice in Wonderland’ and the like which was initiated in its March issue, in the year 2000.

Next section of this paper focuses on the construction of Muslim ‘other’ in *Balarama* through presenting Muslim women as un-desirable and the imagination of ‘ideal’ childhood by popular children’s magazine in the 1980s. And the different strategies and narrations they are using for constructing a hegemonic childhood. Before that, I would like to elaborate the concept ‘hegemonic/normal childhood. Deepa sreenivas complicated the idea of universal childhood in her article ‘Telling Different Tales: Possible Childhood in Children’s literature’. The article gives space for ‘other’ possible childhood through analyzing childhood stories written by Dalit and Muslim writers. She observes these stories take multiculturalists turn. It recognizes different childhood it pushes for the inclusion and acceptance of the subjugated culture ‘differences’ alongside the dominant culture. (Sreenivas 2011) Stories she analyzed educate middle-class children about cultural diversity and prepare them for more egalitarian and inclusive society. And it critiques the concept of ‘ideal/normal/middle-class childhood which constructed through school textbooks, mainstream children’s magazine etc.

D. Vasantha observes ideal/dominant/ white/ middle class urban childhood is the norm in Developmental psychology, education, welfare policy and legislation for children. The category of childhood than is something and socially produced and enforced. It is an institution created by adults in their own broader social interests, and it is evident that constructions of dominant ideologies about childhood are culturally specific. The normative and ideal childhood are ideas constructed and circulated by international aid agencies to monitor and distribute their funds (Vasantha 2004).

In this part, I am going to analyze some stories of *Balarama*, its narration about Muslim childhood and women. By examining such stories I argue, the magazine presents a miserable Muslim childhood and women with many lacks like poverty, misery, separation etc. and most of the time the magazine presents Muslim characters in a paradoxical way. Amir Mufti in his “Secularism and minorities: Elements of Critique” observes the way Nehruvian secularism conceive the representation of Muslims in Indian politics. He is forwarding the idea that secularism always lacks the language to understand Muslim politics and existence. For Nehru Jinna’s claim for a separate nation is his ‘historical backwardness’ even though Jinna has all western elements. Mufti is asking the crucial question that who is represents the Muslims? He is saying whereas the majority is implicitly recognized as being internally structured by class, that is, as constituting a social whole, the minority is cast as segment only, and become undifferentiated staging for ground for the traditional, the pre-modern and the underdeveloped, and archaic (Mufti,1995). We can see the same tendency of representation in mainstream children’s magazine also.

In August 1979 *Balarama* included a story titled *Sammanam* or gift. Here a nameless boy is the main character. The story tells, every day evening the boy’s father came with some sweets for him. One day he did not come, and her mother said to him, ‘your father will no longer here’, and she did not give a proper reason for their separation. Gradually the boy understood that father divorced her mother after the birth of his brother Kunjalu. And the boy

had no idea about the reason of their divorce. Then also weekly he met his father from town, and the father gave him some sweets packets. One day the boy's school teacher told him about the excursion, and he wished to participate. He told his father about the trip, but angry father shouted him and said: "I don't want to make you a great person, go and ask your mother". Finally, his coolie mother gave money for the excursion. When returning after the tour, he brought some orange and *halwa* for brother and mother. From that mother packed a small packet of orange and *halwa* for the father. When he is walking to town with that package, he saw the sad mother was sitting in the courtyard.

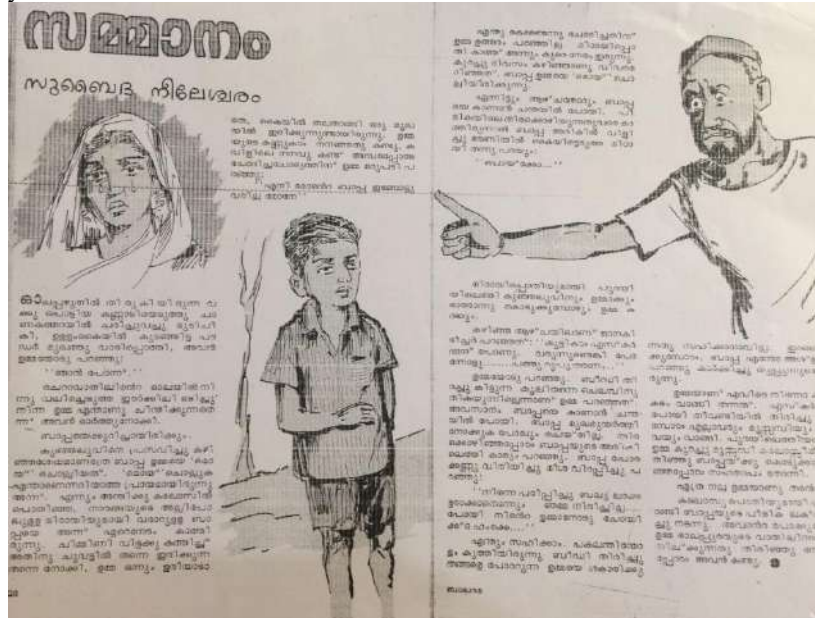


Image1: sad boy in between wretched mother and angry father.

The above story portrays a wretched Muslim boy from a broken family. His mother is a victim of patriarchy, and she did not get proper maintenance from her husband. The story also includes a visual representation of the sad mother, angry and cruel father and wretched boy in between them. The story portrayed the father as a person he did not protect his children after divorce. He is carrying all visual indications of a practising Muslim like the white dress, Islamic cap, and beard. In the story author never reveals the reason for divorce. Through this, the story creates a notion that for divorce they don't need a proper reason. This way the story presents the family as a weak and patriarchal institution.

Balarama published in March 1976 includes a story titled *Dukham* or misery. The story is a monologue of nameless Muslim adolescent girl. One day the girl remembered the words of her mother, 'let's, stop her schooling, and we should give more education to Sathar'. And she imagined an educated Sathar and her weakness as a woman. However, her neighbours Pathamavathi and Sathya Bama, elder to her, were enjoying their school days without any hindrance. It made the 'nameless girl' very upset. Her father told her to sit in the house and be a disciplined and compassionate girl. When she heard the advice of her father, she was searching the meaning of 'disciplined and compassionate'. She is just as a symbol of sadness, and she can't enjoy her life. When her old friends ask, 'why you stopped school?' She looks them silently and asks herself 'what'? The story also includes a picture of a teenage Muslim girl sits in a closed space. Here the story represents a sad Muslim girl who is the victim of suppression and her neighbours from other religion enjoying the school days. She is the only character has no name in the story. By presenting her as a nameless girl, the story tells it can be any Muslim girl at anywhere



Image 2: sad adolescent Muslim girl

In another story, published in 1977 September titled, *clausukayattam* (class upgrading) is about a Muslim girl Aysha. The story portrays Aysha as a strange character. She is the most backward student in the class. She is not hygienic and didn't change her dress for a couple of days. When she enters into the class others, move away because of bad smell. At morning she simply stands in front of hotel or tea shop while going to school and eats whatever she wants. Meanwhile, the classes will start. She is the eldest one, and she has eight siblings. All teachers disturbed because of her drivel behaviour. Finally, other teachers, requested Damu Master, a Gandhian and loveable person to take care of her but he also disastrous to manage her. When she failed the third class, her father came and said to Damu master to upgrade her to fourth grade. But Damu Master explained her all bad habits to him. The concerned father said, this all because of her mother she did not give proper attention to Aysha. And he said to Damu Master he is thinking about her wedding. At that time Gandhian, Damu master discouraged the father and ensured he will take care of Aysha and will make her as a good student. Then he asked little Aysha, she stands near to father 'are you ready to be a good student? Your father is hard working for you' Aysha silently nodded her head. Then he said to father, 'Let her sit one more year in my class. Meanwhile, I will make her a good student'. The happy father agreed. It is the starting of Aysha's good school life, and the Sadhusheelan Damu Master felt satisfaction.

The above story Aysha is carrying all features of the worst student. Like her, the father also depicted a person without education. In the conversation between the father and Damu Master, the Damu master speaking in standard Malayalam and the father is talking native vocal Mappila Malayalam. He chewed pan, in between his conversation with Master the father spit pan into school courtyard. The master portrayed as a reformist, Gandhian and he did not use any pan or cigarette in his entire life. He opposed the father's decision about the wedding of Aysha. The story shows the division of uncivilized parent and educated teacher. The same tendency we can see in other two stories also. These stories depict a neglectful parenting and suffering childhood. Here the parents are uneducated, and they were not bothering about children's education. They are out of 'desirable' family and children, and the child has no separate happy world, at the same time the adult world is presenting through the eyes of a child. For example, the story titled, *Sammanam* the boy did not know the reason for his parent's separation, but his upset when he is seeing the sad mother

Above stories, we can see the image of *Balarama* about Muslim women is pre-modern. The uneducated/ill-treated/women are the central character of these stories. Here the magazine following the imagination of liberalism about oriental women as derived and subjugated. Joseph Massad in his *Islam in liberalism* reviews the process of universalizing US and West European liberal feminism on a global scale and the methods and tools by which they came to dominate the discourse and policies of emancipating Muslim women from gender-based discrimination in their societies and countries and how Western liberalism links and delinks the latter to "Islam." He is saying enslaving Muslim women was the theme of early French literature. Foundational text of western liberal feminism Mary Wollstonecraft arranges the image of enslaved Muslim women to offend Christian Europeans for their treatment of Christian women (Massad 2015). He is focusing the way American and European missionaries of liberalism that, is those who imagined in future the global community will fall on secular frame set down their value system as model for entire world and their narration about Muslim women and their "urge" to protect them from "intolerant", "homosexual" men and "misogynist" Islam. He is pointing out the discrimination, stereotyping

and patronizing of Muslim women has a historical route and it embedded on the discourse on liberalism. We can see enslaved, controlled and oppressed Muslim women are the central theme of *Balarama*.

In the same magazine we can see ideal woman is one who follows Hindu tradition and rituals. For example the issue of *Balarama* in September 1977 includes an article titled as '*Hari Sree*'. The article includes a picture of a boy, sat on an old teacher's lap and writing something on a plate and backside boy's mother is eagerly watching his attempt at writing. They sat near on a lighted up *nilavilakk*, a traditional lamp commonly using for the Hindu ceremonies in Kerala. The picture is in the context of the *vidhyarabham* ceremony of a little boy. During the ceremony an old man, he is called Ashan hold figure of the little one and makes him write the first letter of Malayalam language on rice. Here the author remembering his *vidhyarabham* ceremony and he is explaining nowadays instead of learning the first letter 'aa' - one of the complicated letters of Malayalam, people learn the letter 'ra' - the easiest letter of Malayalam. Then he is discussing the reason for the opening prayer of *vidhyarabham*, '*harisree ganapatheya nama*'. He is saying the Lord *Ganapathi* is the lord of *Vidhya* and he will help us to do any job without any obstruction. Here the magazine presents an 'ideal' way of schooling and a student, who prayed to Lord *Ganapathi* for the successful education. The mother portrayed as a perfect mother, she watches and enjoys the *vidhyarabham* of her son.



Image 3: *vidhyarabham* ceremony of a child

In Aysha's story her mother depicted as a woman, she is not concerned about her children's education. This way the magazine makes the binary of bad and good mother. The concept of schooling and ideal parenting by the magazine is related to rituals of a particular community. It reinforces and normalises the dominant idea of *Vidhya* and knowledge. Bourdieu in his view of culture discusses the identity and capital reproduced through misrecognition and symbolic violence. In the process of misrecognition agents subjected are two forms of violence while presenting them as inferior, denied resources, limited mobility etc. Here through treating or recognising the Muslim woman and childhood as inferior the magazine preserving a cultural capital of a particular community.

Eureka: The emergence of rational childhood

In this part, I am analysing the way children's magazine *Eureka* constructs a rational childhood. The magazine *Eureka* made a landmark development in children's literature in Kerala. The magazine is published by Kerala Sasthra Shathiya Parishath (KSSP) and started at 1970 June. Dr K.N Pishardi was the first chief editor. In the first issue, Managing Editor Shankunni wrote, "Eureka published by Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath from Thrissur. The objective of the magazine is to build a scientific attitude among the school children".

Here I am analysing strategies of *Eureka* for constructing a rational childhood. *Eureka* creates a binary of reasonable new generation and irrational old generation to create an ideal child. Most of the time irrational old generation is presented by grandmother and her knowledge is considered as un-scientific. For example, *Eureka* published in 1976, September includes an article about the eclipse. It mentions about two narrations about eclipses. One is by grandmother and another one by an adolescent boy. Grandmother of eclipses goes like this, one day angels or Devas saw an Asura namely Rahu eating *Amrita*, the drink of immortality. Angry Devas killed *Rahu*. But the drink of immortality gave him rebirth. The crazy Rahu tried to swallow moon and sun, but he failed. It is

the reason of lunar and solar eclipses. Grandmother narrated this story to a younger child. At that time elder boy called the younger one and described his idea about the eclipse. It is a scientific explanation of eclipses. He told during the lunar eclipses; the moon passes directly behind the earth into its umbra. It can cause only when the sun, earth and moon are aligned. A solar eclipse that occurs when the moon passes between the sun and earth and when the moon fully or partially blocks the sun. Then the elder one advised younger boy, "this is the 'real' reason for eclipses if you want you can teach this is to grandmother".

1973 July *Eureka* includes an article titled, *Muthassiyude Mantravadam* or grandmother's witchcraft. The story happening in a household and it goes like this, one day a boy had some digestion problem because he ate a variety of foods. His stomach becomes a big ball. While seeing this, the grandmother said, the boy is affecting bad eyes. As a remedy, she arranged a kind of witchcraft. She kept a big mud pot, steel vessel and kept while stone in the middle of the steel vessel. Then she kept a small lamb fire on the rock. She asked the boy to sit in front of the vessel. She kept the mud pot near his mouth and asked him to make a loud sound. She arranged clay pot on the fire. Suddenly water entered the mud pot, and she declared that "the boy is alright". After few times the boy's father also gave some medicine to him. But the grandmother claims because of her treatment only the boy overcome the digestion problem.

After many years, the boy learned about the bell jar experiment from science class and understood that grandmother did the same kind of operations and he showed bell jar experiment to her and said, "even though there are no bad eyes the water should enter into the mud pot".

Above two articles disqualify the knowledge of grandmother and portrays it as irrational. To show its irrationality it brings scientific reason for eclipses and bell jar experiments. This way the magazine makes a modern child who questions the 'un scientific' and traditional knowledge system.

This way both magazines uses womanhood as tool creates an ideal childhood. In *Balarama* this process is happening through otherising Muslim woman and in *Eureka* rational ideal child is one who questions the irrational knowledge of grandmother.

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पीएम आवास योजना



26 लाख

से अधिक परिवारों को पक्की छत देने वाले

महतारी वंदन योजना



70 लाख

महिलाओं को आर्थिक रूप से आत्मनिर्भर बनाने वाले

पीएम किसान सम्मान निधि



26 लाख

किसानों के चेहरे पर मुस्कान लौटाने वाले

तेंदूपत्ता संग्रहण दर ₹5500 मानक बोरा



13 लाख

संग्राहक परिवारों के चेहरे पर मुस्कान लाने वाले

मोदी

संग बढ़त है

छत्तीसगढ़



उद्यम क्रांति योजना



युवाओं को स्वरोज़गार के लिये 50% सब्सिडी पर ब्याजमुक्त ऋण उपलब्ध कराने वाले

दीनदयाल उपाध्याय भूमिहीन कृषि मजदूर कल्याण योजना



5.62 लाख

भूमिहीन कृषि मजदूरों को प्रतिवर्ष ₹10,000 की आर्थिक सहायता देने वाले

प्रधानमंत्री उज्वला योजना



37 लाख

महिलाओं को धुएं से मुक्ति दिलाने वाले

श्री रामलला अयोध्या धाम दर्शन योजना



37 हजार

से अधिक राम भक्तों को अयोध्या धाम की निःशुल्क यात्रा कराने वाले

छत्तीसगढ़ में शांति, विश्वास और विकास का मार्ग हो रहा प्रशस्त

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