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**VASANTA COLLEGE FOR WOMEN**

*(Admitted to the Privileges of Banaras Hindu University)*

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Editor

**Dr. Alka Singh**

Principal



अप्य दीपो भव

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## ***Editor's Note***

It gives us immense pleasure to bring out the Vol. 9 No. 1 (February 2025) issue of *Vasant Sahastradhara: An Interdisciplinary Journal (Peer Reviewed)* of Vasanta College for Women, Rajghat, Varanasi. Editorial board feels happy to share with our readers that Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi has provided us the publication grant for the session 2024-25. The present volume is a scholarly collection of ten articles from different disciplines of Humanities and Social Sciences. The opening article of the volume relates workload with job satisfaction amongst teachers of senior secondary school. The paper tends to explore that workload in excess enhances stress level and dissatisfaction at the workplace. The paper also brings out certain recommendations regarding how to make a balance between life and work and assure a quality teaching-learning environment. The second paper focuses on National Education Policy 2020 and its appropriate alignment with seventeen SDGs launched by United Nations in 2015, especially SDG four, which has been the basis of NEP 2020. The paper also talks about four SDG that advocates quality education and life-long learning. Besides, gender equality, skill development, environmental education and research and innovation are some SDGs that find place in NEP 2020 and certainly make it a roadmap to sustainable development. The third article looks into the difference between consumer expectations and perception of service quality in the banking industry with a particular focus on public and private banks in Punjab, state in western India. The paper also puts forth some suggestions to maintain a competitive advantage to foster a long-term customer loyalty and increase customer satisfaction by adopting strong strategies. The fourth article, very interestingly examines the unexplored potential of feminist theories and its advancement in organizational studies. Some such theories highlighted in the paper are decolonial feminism, posthuman feminism and Eco feminism that overall demonstrate the challenges faced by women around the globe. The paper also supports for changes in policy and those practices that promote gender equity and create a more inclusive workplace. The fifth paper explores the connection between potters and pilgrimage along the Panchkoshi Yatra route. The entire idea is to examine how local artisans (especially potters) contribute to the pilgrimage, which in turn shapes their socio-religious identity and affects their economic livelihood. The sixth paper ponders on urban planning through a study of smart cities of India in their theoretical perspective. The present study shows that due to exceptional support by people, financial sectors and exhaustive infrastructure smart cities are now rising fast all over India. The seventh paper examines the motion of feminism as shown in Indian and French tradition via Indian storyteller Sudha Murthy and French feminist Simone De Beauvoir. Despite belonging to different nations and cultures both voice for intellectual and economic independence of women, which in turn became the motto of feminist movement in the entire universe. The eighth paper

deals with narratives of sisterhood as projected in the noble Epic *Ramayana* and tries to list the different colours of female bonding, though many a times obstructed by male dominating narratives. The paper delves deep into the shared sorrow and sufferings of women as put forth in select novels written in English by Indian female novelists. The ninth article brings out the role of Panchayati Raj system in the formation of modern India and to add to it, e- Panchayat has added more transparency in the system and has increased and assured the roles of each citizen of rural India. The paper also dwells on the effective outcomes of the implementation of e- Panchayat and rural administration. The last article deals with the *Bhartiya Kalayein: Vartman Pariprekshya Mein Prasangikta*. In this article 64 art forms have been mentioned which was practiced in the ancient Indian education system. The paper further gives an analytical approach to these art form and compare it with the holistic life skill which are needed for happy living. The article also relate these art form with the present days scenario as mentioned New Education Policy-2020. The Journal has tended to form an interdisciplinary collaboration through this volume. It would be appropriate to state that everything is subjective in the human mind; nevertheless, our emotions, our opinions and our objectives are all relative. We look forward to the continued support of our readers and are hopeful to receive their responses.

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## Contributors

# Impact of Workload on Job Satisfaction of Senior Secondary Teachers

Ankita Tripathi\*

Malti Verma\*\*

## ABSTRACT

*The teaching profession, particularly at the senior secondary level, is known for its increasing demands on time, effort, and emotional investment. With teachers often expected to fulfill a wide range of responsibilities beyond classroom instruction, the issue of workload becomes central to understanding their job satisfaction. This paper explores the impact of workload on the job satisfaction of senior secondary teachers. It argues that excessive workload contributes to higher stress levels, job dissatisfaction, and burnout, while balanced workloads can lead to greater job satisfaction, engagement, and well-being. Through a review of relevant literature, this study outlines how administrative support, professional development, work-life balance, and school policies can mediate the negative effects of workload. The paper concludes with recommendations for educational institutions and policy makers to address the challenges of teacher workload, enhance job satisfaction, and improve teacher retention.*

**Keywords:** *Workload, Job Satisfaction, Senior Secondary Teachers, Teacher Well-being, Teacher Burnout, Work-life Balance, Teacher Motivation, Educational Policy.*

## Introduction

The role of teachers at the senior secondary level is multifaceted, requiring not only subject expertise but also the ability to manage a variety of tasks ranging from lesson planning and grading to extracurricular activities and administrative duties. In recent years, the increasing workload faced by teachers has become a significant issue, with reports suggesting that teaching professionals are working longer hours and dealing with heightened pressures. As workload increases, the relationship between workload and job satisfaction becomes more critical to explore, especially because job satisfaction

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directly influences teacher retention, engagement, and the quality of education provided to students.

Job satisfaction, broadly defined, refers to the level of contentment and fulfillment that an individual experiences in their job role. For teachers, job satisfaction is influenced by various factors, including workload, working conditions, salary, student behavior, administrative support, and opportunities for professional growth. However, workload remains a dominant factor, as it not only affects teachers' emotional and physical well-being but also their enthusiasm, engagement, and effectiveness in the classroom.

This paper seeks to examine the impact of workload on job satisfaction among senior secondary teachers. It will explore the factors that contribute to teachers' workload, how these factors affect their job satisfaction, and the consequences of high workload on teacher morale and retention.

## **Workload and Job Satisfaction**

### **Understanding Workload in Teaching**

Workload in the teaching profession refers to the amount of time and effort required by teachers to fulfil their duties. This includes time spent on teaching, grading, lesson planning, meetings, attending to student concerns, and other non-teaching responsibilities such as administrative tasks and extracurricular activities. Senior secondary teachers, in particular, are often responsible for a wide range of tasks that go beyond classroom instruction. These additional duties may vary based on the school system, but they often lead to extended working hours, increased stress, and, potentially, a reduction in job satisfaction.

### **The Relationship Between Workload and Job Satisfaction**

Research suggests that there is a clear inverse relationship between workload and job satisfaction. As workload increases, job satisfaction tends to decrease. Teachers who report higher levels of workload experience greater stress, burnout, and exhaustion, all of which contribute to a decline in job satisfaction. Conversely, teachers who experience a more manageable workload are more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction and are better able to focus on their teaching responsibilities and student outcomes.

## **Excessive workload is linked to several negative outcomes, including**

**1.Increased Stress and Burnout:** High workload can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion, which negatively affects teachers' well-being.

**2.Reduced Teacher Effectiveness:** Teachers under excessive workload may find it difficult to engage with students effectively or develop innovative teaching strategies.

**3.Decreased Teacher Retention:** Teachers with high job dissatisfaction, often a consequence of overwhelming workload, are more likely to leave the profession, leading to higher turnover rates in schools.

## **Factors Influencing the Impact of Workload on Job Satisfaction**

While the negative impact of excessive workload is clear, several factors can moderate the relationship between workload and job satisfaction. These factors include administrative support, professional development, work-life balance, and school policies.

### **1.Administrative Support**

Administrative support plays a crucial role in mitigating the negative effects of workload. Teachers who feel supported by school leadership in terms of resources, time management, and emotional support tend to report higher job satisfaction levels, despite high workload. Effective communication between teachers and administrators, along with adequate classroom support, can help alleviate stress and create a more positive working environment.

### **2.Professional Development**

Opportunities for professional development can offset the negative effects of workload. Teachers who are provided with opportunities to enhance their skills, stay updated on best practices, and pursue personal and professional growth are more likely to feel fulfilled in their roles. Furthermore, professional development programs can help teachers better manage their workload by equipping them with more efficient teaching methods and strategies.

### **3.Work-life Balance**

One of the most significant factors influencing job satisfaction is work-life balance. Teachers who are able to manage their work commitments alongside personal life tend

to experience lower stress levels and greater job satisfaction. A lack of work-life balance, especially in the face of a heavy workload, can lead to burnout and dissatisfaction. Schools that support flexible schedules, adequate leave policies, and a focus on teachers' well-being contribute to better work-life balance and, in turn, higher job satisfaction.

#### **4.School Policies and Practices**

School policies regarding workload distribution, support for teachers, and time management also play a significant role in teacher job satisfaction. Schools that emphasize reasonable work hours, provide planning time, and encourage collaborative teaching practices help to reduce teachers' workload and create a more sustainable working environment. Moreover, policies that prioritize teacher well-being and mental health can make a significant difference in how teachers perceive their roles.

#### **Consequences of High Workload on Teacher Job Satisfaction**

Excessive workload does not only affect teachers' job satisfaction but also has long-term implications for their overall health and effectiveness. Some of the major consequences include:

##### **1.Teacher Stress and Burnout**

Chronic stress resulting from excessive workload can lead to burnout, a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Teachers experiencing burnout may struggle with disengagement from their students, leading to a decline in the quality of education provided.

##### **2.Impact on Teaching Quality**

High levels of stress and workload can impair a teacher's ability to plan engaging lessons, provide individual attention to students, and maintain a positive classroom environment. Overburdened teachers are less likely to innovate in their teaching practices, impacting the learning experience for their students.

##### **3.Teacher Retention Issues**

Job dissatisfaction due to excessive workload is a key factor contributing to teacher turnover. Teachers leaving the profession due to burnout or job dissatisfaction create a revolving door that negatively affects the educational system. High turnover also

disrupts student learning, as new teachers must constantly be trained and acclimated to the school environment.

## **Recommendations**

To address the negative impact of workload on job satisfaction, educational institutions and policy makers should consider the following recommendations:

### **1. Implement Workload Management Strategies**

Schools should review teachers' workloads and establish systems that allow for better workload distribution. Providing teachers with more planning time, reducing non-teaching administrative tasks, and promoting collaborative teaching models can help to balance workloads.

### **2. Enhance Administrative Support**

Strong, supportive leadership is essential in reducing teacher stress. School administrators should prioritize creating an environment where teachers feel valued, supported, and equipped to manage their workload effectively. Regular communication, feedback, and provision of resources are crucial.

### **3. Promote Professional Development**

Teachers should have access to regular professional development opportunities that focus on both pedagogical skills and workload management. Professional development programs that focus on time management, stress management, and curriculum design can help teachers balance their workload and improve job satisfaction.

### **4. Encourage Work-life Balance**

Schools should create policies that help teachers maintain a healthy work-life balance, such as offering flexible working hours, sufficient leave, and wellness programs. A focus on teacher well-being is crucial for enhancing job satisfaction and reducing burnout.

## **Conclusion**

The impact of workload on job satisfaction is a critical issue that affects senior secondary teachers' well-being, engagement, and performance. High workloads, coupled with inadequate support, lead to increased stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction, which can ultimately affect the quality of education provided to students. However, by

addressing workload distribution, offering administrative support, promoting professional development, and encouraging work-life balance, educational institutions can significantly improve job satisfaction among teachers. By taking these steps, schools can create a more positive and sustainable work environment that benefits both teachers and students.

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# **National Education Policy of India (NEP) 2020: Road to Sustainability by Conforming with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

**Apoorva Joshi\***

## **ABSTRACT**

*India has remained committed to its journey of achieving Sustainable development goals launched in 2015 by United Nations. In line with this determination, the National Education policy 2020 is well aligned. Launched at the time of pandemic, NEP 2020 sets it's road map with these 17 goals. SGD 4 has been the very foundation of NEP 2020 that talks about Quality Education and Lifelong learning. National Credit framework has not only made learning inclusive but also continuous. Multiple entry – exit scheme is to make lifelong learning a reality. NEP provides for setting up of Gender Inclusion Fund to promote girl child and transgender education. The objective of breaking gender gaps aligns with SDG 5 of Gender Equality. The Skill development program launched by government that complements school education caters for 42% of Indian youth and carves the path to sustainable economy by 2030. Thus, conforming with SDG 8 for Employability and Skill development. The concept of experiential learning under NEP is to do away with the barrier between general and vocational education. Similarly, Environment Education has been given a rigorous push in the curriculum and so has been the adoption of Sustainable practices. Under the mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) various activities are organized by NCERT and CBSE for fulfilling SDG 13 for Climate change. SDG 9, Research and Innovation has been given a boost under various scholarship programs under NEP. It's collaboration with global higher institutes and faculties promotes Global Partnership for Development under SDG 17. Hence, making NEP intersect with sustainability in all forms.*

**Keywords** – NEP 2020, SDGs, Sustainability, Quality Education, Lifelong Learning.

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## **Introduction**

The word ‘Sustainable development’ was first introduced in 1987 by Brundtland Commission. It is defined as “development for meeting the needs of present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”. Launched in 2012 at Rio de Janeiro UN Conference, Sustainable development goals are an extension to Millennium development goals. These goals hold a promise to achieve Universal targets like zero poverty, no hunger, Climate change, Quality Education, Gender equality, etc. SDGs involves participation of countries and stakeholders like government, policy makers and citizens itself. They propose solution led objectives to tackle global problems concerning individual lives and the planet itself. Unlike MDGs, SDGs are target based and chases a time line of 2030 for achieving these targets. They are rigorous and dedicated towards achieving solving urgent problems.

Fig1- Illustration of SDGs.



Source- Copyright of UNDP

## **National Education Policy 2020**

Following the two educational policies in India-1968 and 1986, NEP 2020 is the third policy in line of educational reforms in India. It proposes to taking Indian ethos at global level for transforming India into a Vishwaguru. NEP 2020 is beyond Cognitive development of children and focuses on their ‘holistic development’. It paves way for physical development (Fit India Movement, Khelo India), Cultural development (Amrut

Bharat) as well as emotional development (Manodarpan). Therefore, developing soft skills.

One of the major transformations is School curriculum change from 10+2+3+2 to 5+3+3+4. Further, it focuses on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat), Coding, Vocational education at school level. Multiple entry-exit scheme through Academic Credit Bank at Higher Educational level to promote lifelong learning and curbing Dropout rates. Also, allowing students to choose subjects irrespective of stream and sets a goal of 50% enrollment by 2035. Global partnerships with universities, faculty exchange programs, setting up of global institutions and state of the art infrastructure.

NEP 2020 promotes technology in all aspects. It proposes Capacity building programs for teachers (In-service training, faculty improvement programs) and improvements in foundational teacher training programs through 4-year courses. It Emphasizes on skill development for both students as well as teachers. Shifts away from rote learning to learning by doing, by practical teaching and open book exams. NEP 2020 lays stress on Research and development in higher Education by various fellowship programs and scholarships. A National Research Foundation is been setup for the same. It also aligns various regulators like AICTE, UGC and NCTE through a single regulator.

### **NEP 2020 and Sustainability**

On analyzing the policy closely, it is found that it overlaps with Sustainable development goals. The objectives of NEP 2020 such foundational Literacy and Numeracy focuses on SGD 4 for quality education. It promotes girl child education and transgender education in its inclusive education policy. This bridges the gap of gender equality under SDG 5. It's vocational education training to students and skill development promotes SDG 8 for decent work and economic growth. The Coding program for school going students and Research in higher Education promotes SDG 9, that speaks of innovation and infrastructure.

NEP's vision to make education Affordable, Accessible and available to all sets a path to remove inequalities, thus will ensure SDG 10 to reduce inequalities. Promoting digital literacy, Online education and QR coded books help in reducing paper wastage and promotes responsible consumption and production as prescribed in SDG 12. Further, environment education and programs like LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) aid

in SDG 13 for Climate change and moreover will enable students to protect marine life as well as wildlife under SDG 14 and 15 respectively. Value education, Peace education, accompanied with moral education in turn will bring in peace and justice under SDG 16. Therefore, meeting all SDG goals.

### **Objectives of study**

- To understand the sustainable nature of NEP 2020.
- To review sustainable development goals in terms of NEP 2020.
- To propose strategies and road map to achieve the same.

### **Methodology**

A descriptive Method is used to predict the sustainable nature of the National Education Policy 2020. A qualitative analysis is performed using secondary data of UN reports as well as government policy documents and past research papers on NEP focusing on sustainability. Therefore, concluding the findings by proposing future plan of action for Sustainable development through NEP 2020.

### **Literature review**

NEP emphasizes bringing back Indian values and ethos of reputed age-old Universities like Nalanda, Takshashila, Vallabhi and speaks of following the path of great scholars such as Charaka, Sunetra, Gargi, Panini and so on. The idea of bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and modern science is the right step in the direction of achieving sustainability in all spheres of life. The agenda of NEP 2020 for lifelong education and quality education meets the sustainable development goal 4 of UN. By reducing school dropout rate through mid-day meal, vocational education and digital learning, students will be encouraged to continue school education.

The goal of achieving 100% enrollment rate in schools and 50% at higher education level is to enable professional development of all. Thus, providing sustainable employment and jobs to the Indian youth. This in turn will set a road map for quality life. NEP is to make education Affordable, Accessible and Accountable. This is to bring in equity, equality and quality in terms of education which is the foundation of Sustainability. The 21<sup>st</sup> century education is flexible, multilingual and Multidisciplinary.

It is inclusive and accommodates the needs and requirements of students from all background. This forms the very backbone of Sustainable educational practices.

The proposal in NEP to build state of the art infrastructure at educational institutes, teacher training premises and research institutes is to support quality education under SDG 4. Indian education system is set to adopt global practices and reforms to welcome collaborative education with countries involved in UNSDG 2030. Some of these practices include open book exams, bagless periods, experiential learning where students get hands on with vocational and practical courses. Such measures are sustainable in practice and build a strong foundation for a country's future, making India self-reliant (*Atmanirbhar*).

The Rural and Urban divide is to be bridged through 'National Curriculum'. Under One nation, one curriculum, government spending has increased from 4% to 6% of GDP for capacity building. To cater the needs of largest youth population, entrepreneurship is encouraged among college going students through skill development, workshops, seminar and other training programs by experts from around the world. In terms of higher education, single regulator has been proposed under 'Higher Education Commission' to replace multiple bodies like University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and NAAC to be replaced by 'National Accreditation Council'. More autonomous institutes have been proposed to initiate flexibility in Courses and programs in colleges, to cater the regional needs of population.

Reforms in medical courses, law and management courses have been proposed in line with global sustainable practices. Teacher Education is also given a global perspective through 4-year course with focus on pedagogical skills. In- service training among school teachers and faculty development program among college professors is a way to keep them updated with new technology and global practices. Online courses, LMS, MOOCs, channels like SWAYAM, SWAYAM Prabha are built to promote self-paced and continuous learning. Similarly, regular programs like NISHTHA for improving quality of school education through Integrated Teacher Training are focused on regular assessment and improvement as per sustainable practices.

## **Challenges ahead**

The immediate challenges foreseen include collaboration and synchronization of multiple stakeholders like government at district, state and national level, international heads and organizations, educational institutions, Research institutes, NGOs, etc. Another utmost challenge is the adaptability of teachers, students and school/College authorities. For instance, change in assessment patterns has pushed schools and colleges to quickly adapt to new system of examinations. Next challenge is meeting infrastructure requirements to implement various digital courses and ICT linked learning. Internet services and uninterrupted electricity supply are still lacking in small towns and rural areas. Therefore, seamless education becomes difficult due to digital divide.

Another hinder is the effective placement of new regulatory bodies in place. These bodies have yet not set up and there is no clear time line proposed. This leads to loss of time and efforts to set up quality education. There is also a void in regulation of fee structure of private institutions and those private Universities that offer professional courses. A big hindrance in affordability of quality education is posed by high fee structure of private institutions. There is also a need of setting up of State-of-the-art laboratories for Research and development. India's number of patents and research paper are yet to meet global standards. This shall be achieved by placing appropriate infrastructure in place.

The other challenge in line is inclusion. Inclusion of students from various social background is difficult due to various issues like adaptability, low accommodating nature, traditional and uniform Curriculum. Thus, there is a need to make NEP really 'Child-Centric' in true aspect. Following this, stakeholder feedback becomes important. This aspect is missing in the policy as students' involvement is not found at the feedback level or during implementation. Hence, creating a gap between objectives and results. The need has been found to bring in appropriate content for knowledge catering various subjects and in various languages. Although the work has been going on, it seems a distant dream.

## **Solutions and strategy**

The education policy aligns with sustainability in terms of its vision. However, in terms of implementation it falls short of meeting the targets of Sustainability. In order to

bridge this gap between objectives and outcome, a strategic road map is to be designed. The stakeholders like non-governmental bodies and students specially are need to be at the center of the policy in meeting sustainable goals. Their participation and feedback is to be welcomed and appreciated. The infrastructure development is to be fast paced and must meet deadline for timely results. This can be done through public-private partnership model.

Rigorous training of teachers must be in place for them to make necessary changes in teaching- learning practices. This also includes focusing emotional and mental health development along with pedagogical skills. For inclusive education, teachers need to be sensitive and skilled to set flexible curriculum and classroom teaching. Child- centric education needs to cater for children's physical, social and mental development. Setting up of regulatory bodies in place in time is to be adopted. These regulatory bodies must comprise of experts from multiple discipline without involving conflict of interest.

To conclude, NEP 2020 provides equitable, affordable and accessible education. It promotes sustainable development goals through equality, inclusion, awareness and capability. India has set a good record in past in following sustainable practices. India has remained committed and dedicated towards the achievement of SDGs by 2030. One of the finest example being the reduction in poverty. Similarly, Quality Education is the next big thing in Indian agenda to be achieved by 2030. India already is building it's reputation in providing good and affordable education and students from various parts of the world are coming to India to pursue higher education and professional courses. In coming years, with continuous efforts and reforms India will become a lighthouse of Education as a Vishwaguru.

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# Service Quality Gaps in Public and Private Sector Banks: A Case Study of Punjab

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## ABSTRACT

*Rapid advances in banking services have increased competition among banks, both private and public, as they seek to develop a strong presence in the minds of their consumers. This study looks into the difference between consumer expectations and perceptions of service quality in the banking industry, with a particular focus on the major public and private sector banks in Punjab, India. The study uses the SERVQUAL methodology to assess five essential service quality dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. A standardized 22-item questionnaire was used to collect data from 520 clients in six major districts of Punjab. Paired sample t-tests were performed to compare the expected and perceived service quality on these characteristics. The findings demonstrate considerable gaps in tangibility and responsiveness, with customers expecting higher levels of both traits than what they receive in actual service delivery. However, no significant differences were detected in reliability, assurance, or empathy, showing that these characteristics closely match customer expectations. This study adds useful insights to the banking service quality literature and provides practical recommendations for service providers looking to optimize their strategies in a highly competitive marketplace.*

**Keywords:** *Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality, Private and Public Banks, Banking Sector*

## Introduction

The banking sector is critical to the Indian economy, helping to maintain financial stability and drive economic progress. According to Gazi et.al., (2021), banks can be identified based on their economic functions and roles. Banking services marketing differs significantly from products marketing, necessitating unique strategies and approaches. Customer pleasure should continue for a long-time basis. The bank must also accurately measure and express itself. Although public and private sector banks work together to drive success, they use different techniques and strategies. The

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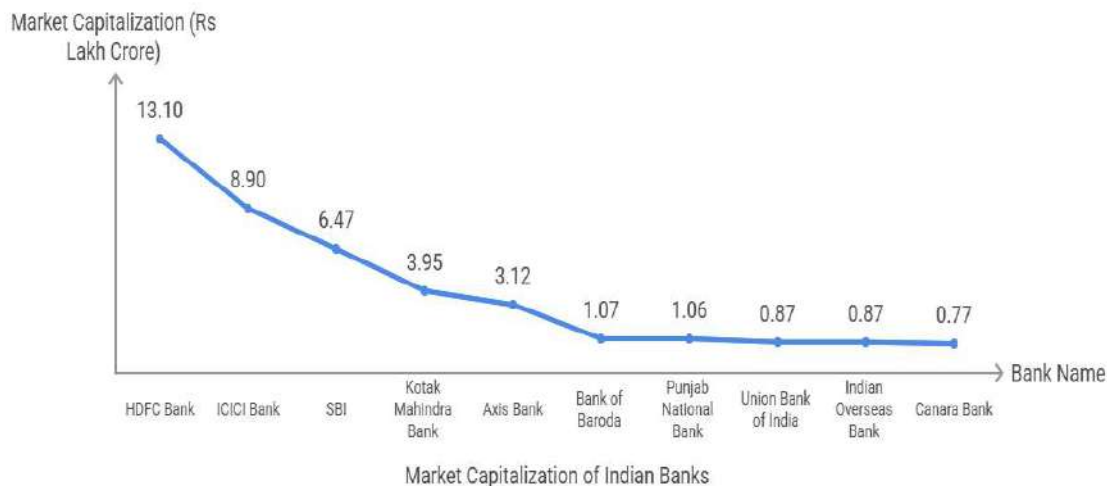
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government-backed public sector banks focus on financial inclusion, rural banking, and social welfare services. They play an important role in implementing government initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) and Mudra Loans, which ensure underprivileged populations have access to banking. Their large branch network, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, contributes to increased financial penetration. Private sector banks, on the other hand, place an emphasis on customer-centric innovations, cutting-edge technology, and competitive financial offerings. With a heavy emphasis on digital banking, they are at the forefront of mobile banking, AI-powered financial services, and tailored banking experiences. Their ability to implement global best practices and fintech alliances gives them a competitive advantage in service delivery.

Both governmental and private banks help to strengthen India's economy by meeting a wide range of client needs. Public banks provide accessibility and stability, whereas private banks promote efficiency and innovation.

Together, they form a balanced and healthy banking ecosystem that promotes economic growth and financial inclusion. As per RBI Report June,2024 the Indian banking sector recorded sustained improvement in capital positions, asset quality and profitability amidst strong business expansion. Credit growth remains robust, mainly driven by personal loans and lending to the services sector. Accruals in term deposits rose with increased transmission of monetary policy. The regulatory prescription of higher risk weights for certain category of loans has had a sobering impact on such loans. Lending by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) moderated in the second half of 2023-24, especially personal loans, and asset quality improved further. Bilateral exposures among entities in the Indian financial system continued to expand, commensurate with expansion in business.

Table 1: Top 10 banks in India by their market caps.



Source: [www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/top-10-banks-india-by-market-cap/87913/1](http://www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/top-10-banks-india-by-market-cap/87913/1)

The rise of more national and global banking institutions, together with more informed clients, has heightened competitiveness in the Indian banking sector. Given the high degree of competition, service quality has been identified as an important factor of bank success and greater service quality helps banks increase client retention and profitability. As a result, service quality is regarded as one of the most important criteria determining banks' long-term viability. Banks that provide high-quality services can build a strong and distinct brand image in the minds of their clients. Given this perspective, assessing bank service quality is critical for understanding consumer expectations and service gaps. One of the most important effects of service quality is found to be on customer satisfaction (Kumar et al., 2009; Kumar et al., 2010; Dutta & Dutta, 2009) The current study investigates the key factors of service quality in the Indian banking system and identifies service quality disparities in both public and private banks. The paper opens with a review of the literature, followed by a thorough discussion of the study methods. The next section contains the findings and commentary. The final portion discusses societal and management ramifications.

## 2. Review of Literature

The SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1988) has served as a foundation for numerous investigations. Parasuramann et al. (1985) divided service quality into four

groups with ten dimensions. The 10 dimensions were: willingness, dependability, availability, competence, courtesy, trustworthiness, communication, empathy, tangibility, and assurance.

Parasuraman et al. (1988) divided the 10 aspects of service quality into five: reliability, responsiveness, tangibility, empathy and assurance. However, no sector-specific strategy has been provided until now, and various scales have been developed to quantify services (Singh et al. (2013); Zeinalizadeh et al. (2015).

Kulkarni and Tilak (2023) examined the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality in the banking sector, which is a major driver of economic activity. A structured SERVQUAL-based questionnaire was used to collect data from a convenience sample of 500 respondents in Sangli City. Overall satisfaction is between 60 and 70 percent, with gaps in tangibility, reliability, and empathy. The study emphasizes the necessity for banks to improve service quality in order to increase customer happiness and loyalty.

Phi and Huyong (2023) investigated the relationship between customer loyalty, satisfaction, reputation, and service quality in banking. Analysis was performed using PLS-SEM on data from 400 Bank for Investment and Development of Vietnam customers in Binh Thuan province. The findings demonstrate that service quality indirectly influences customer loyalty through satisfaction and reputation. Key service dimensions are tangibles, assurance, dependability, empathy, and responsiveness. The study advances our theoretical understanding of customer relationship management, recommending additional research on retention determinants in Vietnamese commercial banks.

Shetty et al., (2022) analysed modified SERVQUAL model to assess service quality in Indian public sector banks. Primary data was acquired using a standardized questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. A pilot survey of 66 individuals was undertaken, followed by a final survey of 1,329 people. Factor analysis preserved all items, and SEM analysis demonstrated that assurance, empathy, responsiveness, and tangibles all had a substantial impact on service quality. Banks should prioritize innovation in these areas to improve customer happiness, trust, and loyalty, hence increasing their competitive edge and client retention.

This study examines service quality and gaps in the Banking sector. According to Parasuramann et al. (1985), service quality is determined by the gap between consumers' expectations and perceptions of service performance. Previous research has found a considerable discrepancy between perceived and expected service quality measures (Ali et al., 2019).

Service quality becomes the most important aspect influencing customers. Bank customers have expectations for the service they receive when visiting a branch. Service quality is determined by how successfully the bank delivers a service relative to its customers' expectations. Service quality encompasses five dimensions: tangible, reliability, responsibility, assurance, and empathy. Tangibles refer to the physical aspects of a service, including the bank's appearance, cleanliness, and the professional presentation of employees, all of which influence customer perceptions. Reliability is the bank's ability to consistently deliver promised services, ensuring dependability and trust. Responsiveness highlights the speed and willingness of the bank to assist customers, addressing concerns promptly and efficiently. Assurance reflects the knowledge, confidence, and courtesy of employees, which help build customer trust and satisfaction. Lastly, empathy measures the bank's ability to provide personalized attention and care, making customers feel valued and understood. Thus based on past literature, the researcher has formulated the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a difference between perceived tangibility and expected tangibility

H2: There is a difference between perceived reliability and expected reliability

H3: There is a difference between perceived responsiveness and expected responsiveness

H4: There is a difference between perceived assurance and expected assurance

H5: There is a difference between perceived empathy and expected empathy

**3. Research Gap:** A research gap identified in the existing literature is the lack of studies comparing the expected and perceived service quality provided by top public and private sector banks in Punjab. Organizations that offer high-quality services can gain a competitive advantage by reducing the gap between consumer expectations and perceptions, leading to improved customer satisfaction. This research aims to fill this gap by examining the differences in service quality perceptions and expectations across

leading public and private sector banks in Punjab, offering a unique contribution to the banking service sector literature.

**4. Research Methodology:** The study is exploratory cum descriptive study, to explore service quality determinants and analyze the service quality gap in the banking industry. The researcher developed a structured comprehensive questionnaire for studying the service quality of the banking sector. The researcher collected the data from 600 customers of public and private banks about the service quality of the top five banks in 2024. The 22-item questionnaire, according to developers Parasuraman et al., Leonard L Berry and Valarie A. Zeithaml is based on five generic quality dimensions: tangibles, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, and reliability. It is useful to a wide range of services and used in this research. The study employed a five-point Likert scale to assess the service quality of bank services providers. The researcher initially conducted pilot testing on 100 questionnaires to validate the questionnaire. Researchers employed Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to assess scale reliability. The tool was used to assess the consistency and uniformity of the Likert scale questions in the second half of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha values for the constructs range from 0.848 to 0.923. Hence, there was enough internal consistency of the questionnaire.

**4.1 Research Design:** The current study is exploratory, descriptive and casual research. At first, an exploratory study was conducted to gain comprehensive knowledge about the variables of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction among customers of Punjab. The secondary data used in the literature portion of the study is often sourced from different websites and journals. The data was then analysed using descriptive research. Studying the causes and effects of expected and perceived service quality on customer satisfaction makes it casual research as well.

**4.2 Rationale and Objectives of the Study:** The study aims to contribute to the literature on banking service quality, providing significant insights for banking services to develop customer-specific strategies based on key service quality aspects. This report categorizes banking service quality into major dimensions and assesses the existing service quality of Public and Private banks.

**The key objectives of the study are**

1. To investigate the factors influencing service quality in the banking services.
2. Evaluate the gap between client expectations and perceptions for each service quality dimension.

4.3 Sampling & Data collection method: The study is being done in six important districts of Punjab, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Patiala, Bathinda, and Mohali. The sampling unit includes consumers from the top five banks. Data was acquired using a non-probability sampling method (judgmental sampling), with the researcher physically visiting the branches of these banks in major regions of Punjab to solicit responses. Respondents were carefully chosen to guarantee equal representation from each district. A valid sample size of 520 was determined for the study.

**Table 1 Sample Size of the study**

Name of the Company	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Rejected	Questionnaires Accepted	Valid Sample	Response Rate Size
HDFC BANK	100	12	88	88	88%
ICICI BANK	100	14	86	86	86%
SBI	100	16	84	84	84%
KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK	100	18	82	82	82%
AXIS BANK	100	13	87	87	87%
BANK OF BARODA	100	7	93	93	93%
TOTAL	600	80	520	520	86.6%

4.4 Statistical Techniques: The data is analyzed using SPSS 21. The study employed exploratory factor analysis to identify characteristics of service quality. An independent samples t-test compares customer perceptions and expectations of service quality for public and private banks

**5. Gap for customer expectation and customer perception for each identified service quality dimensions.**

**Table 2: Independent Samples Statistics (Top Commercial Banks)**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Expected Tangibility	4.1740	520	.60485	.02652
	Perceived Tangibility	3.9115	520	.86748	.03804
Pair 2	Expected Reliability	3.978	520	.6434	.0282
	Perceived Reliability	4.024	520	.7368	.0323
Pair 3	Expected Empathy	3.888	520	.6740	.0296
	Perceived Empathy	3.930	520	.6615	.0290
Pair 4	Expected Assurance	3.8524	520	.75022	.03290
	Perceived Assurance	3.9221	520	.62440	.02738
Pair 5	Expected Responsiveness	4.0250	520	.63920	.02803
	Perceived Responsiveness	3.8894	520	.70423	.03088

**Table 3: Independent Samples Test (Top Commercial Banks)**

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Expected Tangibility - Perceived Tangibility	.26250	1.11311	.04881	.16660	.35840	5.378	519	.000
Pair 2	Expected Reliability - Perceived Reliability	-.0454	.9457	.0415	-.1269	.0361	-1.094	519	.274

Pair 3	ExpectedEmpathy - PerceivedEmpathy	-.0423	.9014	.0395	-.1200	.0353	-1.070	519	.285
Pair 4	ExpectedAssurance - PerceivedAssurance	-.06971	.94862	.04160	-.15144	.01201	-1.676	519	.094
Pair 5	Expected Responsiveness - Perceived Responsiveness	.13558	.92226	.04044	.05612	.21503	3.352	519	.001

The paired samples t-test results indicate a significant difference between expected and perceived tangibility ( $p = 0.000$ ), confirming that customers expect a higher level of tangibility than they actually perceive. Similarly, a significant gap is observed in responsiveness ( $p = 0.001$ ), suggesting that service providers need to enhance their responsiveness to meet customer expectations. However, no significant differences were found in reliability ( $p = 0.274$ ), empathy ( $p = 0.285$ ), and assurance ( $p = 0.094$ ), as their p-values exceed the 0.05 threshold. This implies that customers' expectations and perceptions in these areas are relatively aligned. Overall, service providers should prioritize improving tangibility and responsiveness to bridge the expectation-perception gap and enhance service quality.

**Table 4: Results of Paired Sample t-test**

Hypothesis	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value (Sig. 2-tailed)	Decision
H <sub>1</sub> : There is a difference between perceived tangibility and expected tangibility	0.2625	5.378	0	Accepted
H <sub>2</sub> : There is a difference between perceived reliability and expected reliability	-0.0454	-1.094	0.274	Rejected
H <sub>3</sub> : There is a difference between perceived responsiveness and expected responsiveness	0.13558	3.352	0.001	Accepted

H4: There is a difference between perceived assurance and expected assurance	-0.06971	-1.676	0.094	Rejected
H5: There is a difference between perceived empathy and expected empathy	-0.0423	-1.07	0.285	Rejected

H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> are accepted, indicating significant differences between expected and perceived tangibility and responsiveness, while H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>4</sub>, and H<sub>5</sub> are rejected, indicating no significant difference in reliability, assurance, and empathy. To satisfy customer expectations, service providers should improve tangibility and responsiveness.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of this study emphasize the need of bridging the gap between customer expectations and perceptions of service quality in the Indian banking sector. Significant discrepancies were found in the dimensions of tangibility and responsiveness, with customers expecting higher levels of both traits than what was encountered during service delivery. This suggests that banks should prioritize increasing the tangibility of their services and responsiveness in order to satisfy client expectations and assure better satisfaction. In contrast, there were no significant differences in the dimensions of reliability, assurance, and empathy, indicating that these features are more matched with client expectations. The results indicate that, while public and private sector banks in Punjab generally meet customer expectations in areas such as reliability and assurance, there is a clear need to improve service delivery in terms of tangibility and responsiveness in order to maintain a competitive advantage and foster long-term customer loyalty. These findings are useful for banking service providers looking to improve service quality, increase customer satisfaction, and strengthen their strategic positioning in an increasingly competitive market.

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# Women Theories and Organisational Transformation

Damanpreet Kaur\*

## ABSTRACT

*This work examines the unexploited potential of feminist theories and activist actions to tackle significant organizational and societal issues, including inequality, sustainability, and environmental stewardship. While recognizing advancements in gender concerns within organizational studies, we highlight underexplored dimensions of feminist theory—such as decolonial feminism, feminist ethics of care, posthuman feminism, and ecofeminism—that provide novel answers. Through an analysis of five recent articles from *Organization Studies*, we demonstrate how these frameworks uncover concealed power dynamics in sectors such as global banking and the beauty industry, emphasize the challenges faced by women in the Global South, and scrutinize the intersection of gender and occupation within social media. We advocate for a sophisticated research strategy in management and organization studies that highlights the structural dynamics of patriarchy, examines men's responsibilities within these frameworks, and enhances attention to Western contexts to rectify the disproportionate emphasis on Global studies. We contend that a thorough engagement with feminist theories, especially anti-racist and decolonial viewpoints, is crucial for promoting social change and improving the inclusivity of academic research.*

**Keywords:** *Feminist Theories; Organizational Change; Equality; Sustainability*

## Introduction

Over the past several years, there has been a renaissance in both the academic debate and popular culture about feminist theories and the concept of patriarchy. Management theories have a great impact on organization studies. Within the field of management and organization studies (MOS), feminist theory has played a significant role in bringing attention to the confluence of gender, power, and inequality in organizational contexts.

As a social justice movement, feminism tries to actively intervene to promote equality and justice. It does this by confronting structural injustice and working to eliminate it.

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Global feminist movements such as #MeToo and conversations about gender equality in corporate contexts have brought attention to the fact that gender-based disparities continue to exist and that patriarchal systems continue to exert their impact.

In the meantime, the idea of patriarchy has resurfaced as an important analytical tool to analyze the power dynamics that are associated with gender. Even though there are concerns that theories of patriarchy can sometimes appear unduly simplistic or monolithic, recent researchers contend that patriarchy still possesses important explanatory value when it is contextualized within contemporary frameworks of gender inequality. Through a synthesis of concepts from feminist literature, this paper investigates the linkages between feminist theories and patriarchy within the context of MOS. The purpose of this study is to investigate the contributions that feminist theories have made to the field of MOS, to investigate how patriarchy functions as both an explanatory framework and a lived experience in organizational contexts, and to suggest future research avenues that are in line with feminist praxis. The purpose of this analysis is to widen our awareness of the gender dynamics that exist within organizations and to highlight the role that feminist action plays in pushing systemic change.

### **Review of Literature**

In the field of Organization Studies, Feminist Theories and Activist Theories and Practices inequality, sustainability, and social justice are only some of the current organizational concerns that can be addressed with the help of feminist theories and action, which offer frameworks that are less frequently exploited. Throughout its history, feminist study has been primarily concerned with promoting equal opportunities for women and offering a framework for combating prejudice that is embedded in the system. The feminist movement, which is a social justice movement, has actively engaged to change the political landscape by fighting violence, poverty, lack of opportunity, and other types of inequality that put women's bodies at risk on a worldwide scale (McRobbie 2009).

Existing disparities, particularly those that are rooted in gender, have been brought to light and intensified because of recent global events like as the COVID-19 epidemic. Women have been driven into higher economic and social precarity because of the epidemic, as demonstrated by academics such as Akhter, Elias, and Rai (2022) and Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser (2019). This is especially true in geopolitical

circumstances where violence against women is considered to be the norm. The pandemic has brought to light the linked nature of numerous challenges, including climate change, economic inequality, and labor shortages, all of which contribute to the worsening of gender gaps. Peredo et al. (2022) contend that corporate practices have contributed to these crises, reflecting deeply underlying issues of social inequality in society. This is the argument that they make in their critique of how management researchers have treated the epidemic.

There is a vast variety of perspectives that are included in feminist theories. Some examples of these perspectives are decolonial feminism, ecofeminism, and feminist ethics of caring. A good example of this is decolonial feminism, which emphasizes the necessity of addressing systemic power relations that perpetuate colonial and patriarchal legacies, particularly in the Global South (Allison & Banerjee, 2014; Gray et al., 2018). To critique how patriarchal structures exploit both women and nature, ecofeminism focuses on the nexus of environmental justice and gender justice. (Fotaki 2011), feminist ethics of care emphasizes relationality, empathy, and the well-being of the community. This perspective provides an alternative to the norms of competition and individualism that are frequently found in corporate cultures. All these different schools of thought within the feminist movement contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how gender inequality is maintained and reproduced inside organizations.

Scholarly studies have demonstrated how feminist theories can be utilized in organizational research to uncover and address inequities in social and organizational structures. Examples of topics that have been investigated in research that has been published in the journal "Organization Studies" include power entanglements in global banks (Beavan 2021), disruptions of gendered practices in the cocoa value chain (McCarthy & Moon 2018), the contestation of gender regimes at social events (Ortlieb & Sieben 2019), and the role of social media at the intersection of gender and occupation (Vaast 2020). These works, which make use of feminist techniques, bring to light inequities, and commit to bringing about social and epistemic change. (Sprague and Kobryniewicz 1999), academics contend that knowledge is not produced in a vacuum; rather, each subject is located in a particular time and location, which impacts their viewpoint on the subject of study.

Additionally, continual attempts to resist patriarchal structures are required because current global trends reveal that patriarchal forces are adapting and changing (Guterres 2023). Not only does this resistance require criticizing patriarchal conventions, but it also involves pushing for alternative methods of organizing work, with an emphasis on values such as caring, community, and sustainability. In the field of management and organization studies, the concept of patriarchy is discussed. Over more than three decades, the concept of patriarchy has been investigated in MOS, with crucial topics including intersections, subjects, and contexts for discussion. Recent academic efforts have been made to redefine patriarchy as a more nuanced concept that takes into consideration the intersecting power structures that shape gender relations. This is despite criticisms that portray patriarchy as being too rigid, universalizing, and lacking in intersectionality (Acker 1989; Beechey 1979; Pollert 1996). For instance, academics such as (Hearn 2015) have presented the concept of "transpatriarchies," which examine how gender intersects with citizenship, culture, ethnicity, migration, and other aspects. These "transpatriarchies" transcend national or societal contexts.

To investigate the structural dynamics of gender inequality, patriarchy serves as a theoretical basis for the investigation. (Acker 1990), organizations are gendered structures by patriarchal norms and values are ingrained in the practices, policies, and structural hierarchies of the company. By adopting this viewpoint, the attention is shifted from discrimination at the individual level to the more systemic organizational processes that contribute to the continuation of gender disparity. A similar definition of patriarchy can be found in (Walby 1989), who describes it as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women." This definition highlights the fact that patriarchal authority occurs across numerous domains, such as the family, the workplace, the state, and culture.

Recently, the concept of patriarchy has been overtaken by the term "gender" in the study conducted by the MOS. This shift is reflective of a larger tendency in feminist studies, which is that "gender" has become a fundamental lens for interpreting power relations. Scholars such as (Acker 1989) have argued that the concept of "gender" provides a more nuanced understanding of the various ways in which women's subordination is reproduced. On the other hand, some people, such as (Bennett 2006; Bryson 1999), warn that concentrating simply on "gender" may cause the critical-political acuity of feminist analysis to become less pronounced. The argument that they

are making is that the term "gender" can sometimes hide the specific power dynamics that are taking place and does not address the systemic character of patriarchy. To overcome these limitations, academics have advocated for a recommitment to the use of patriarchy as an analytical lens in mass media studies. To do this, it is necessary to investigate the structural and political forces that are associated with patriarchy. Particular attention should be paid to the way patriarchal norms and practices not only influence the lives of women but also men's roles as both agents and subjects of patriarchal dominance. In addition, scholars have drawn attention to the significance of addressing the overrepresentation of studies on patriarchy in the Global South. They have suggested that a more balanced focus on Western contexts is required to comprehend how patriarchy functions in a variety of settings.

### **Discussion and Analysis of Critical Thinking**

Establishing a connection between feminist Theories and Organizational Practice through the incorporation of feminist theories into organizational practice, it becomes apparent that these theories have the potential to challenge and reinvent conventional management principles. Alternative ways of organizing work are provided by feminist philosophies such as decolonial feminism and ecofeminism. These beliefs emphasize interconnection, social justice, and environmental sustainability. The feminist ethics of care call for empathizing with others, providing care, and putting the community's welfare before competitive individualism. Taking this approach is consistent with the recommendations for management styles that are more ethical and humanitarian, and that place a higher importance on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Researchers have observed that the fight against patriarchy is an ongoing and context-dependent struggle that involves opposition to the various types of power that are associated with patriarchy. Taking this perspective into consideration highlights organizations' role in maintaining or contesting existing power systems. It is possible for academics to reveal the subtle ways in which gendered power dynamics are maintained in businesses and to investigate measures for building more equal workplace conditions if they use feminist methodologies.

Changing the Framing of Gender and Power Dynamics for feminist researchers, one of the most important concerns has been the recasting of gender and power dynamics within MOS, and intersectionality has been a significant analytical tool in this regard.

Crenshaw (1989) was the first person to establish the notion of intersectionality, which brings attention to how different types of social stratification, including as race, gender, class, and sexuality, overlap and interact with one another to shape the experiences of oppression or privilege that individuals have. By incorporating this idea into the study of patriarchy, academics can gain a better understanding of the myriad and subtle ways in which patriarchal dominance presents itself in a variety of organizational settings. As an illustration, decolonial feminist scholars contend that traditional conceptions of patriarchy frequently fail to take into account the one-of-a-kind experiences of women of color and women living in the Global South. These women's struggles are intricately connected to colonial legacies and systemic economic inequalities (Allison & Banerjee, 2014; Gray et al., 2018).

Understanding patriarchy through an intersectional perspective makes it possible to move the focus away from a one-size-fits-all approach and instead investigate the variety of experiences that women have had while being subjected to patriarchal dominance. It also sheds light on the mutually constitutive relationship that exists between structure and subjectivity in the process of establishing gendered identities. This viewpoint is consistent with the arguments that were presented by academics such as Walby (1989), who conceptualized patriarchy not as a fixed, monolithic system but rather as one that is composed of multiple, intersecting structures. These structures include the family, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality, and cultural institutions. Together, these structures constitute a dynamic and adaptable system of male dominance.

In addition, researchers have underlined the significance of rethinking patriarchy in order to take into account men's responsibilities not just as agents of patriarchal dominance but also as people generated by patriarchal frameworks. For the most part, traditional feminist interpretations have concentrated on the experiences of women, frequently depicting men as the oppressors themselves. Recent research, on the other hand, has advocated for a more nuanced investigation of masculinity and its connection to patriarchy. This research suggests that men, like women, are influenced by patriarchal norms and discourses in ways that have an effect on their behavior and identities inside organizations. This is consistent with the earlier theoretical work on masculinity that was done by Connell (1995). He stated that patriarchal structures frequently prescribe inflexible rules of masculinity, which results in the subjection of

not only women but also some groups of males who do not conform to the dominant ideal of masculinity. An examination of the ways in which males navigate their responsibilities within patriarchal environments, according to the findings of some academics, can provide insights into the ways in which patriarchal power is reproduced and fought in organizational settings. In order to design tactics to question and modify patriarchal norms, it is essential to have a solid understanding of these dynamics. This will allow for the promotion of a workplace culture that is more inclusive and equitable. Activism and reflexivity play important roles in the process of organizational change. As crucial components of driving organizational change, activism and reflexivity are advocated for by feminist theories in the field of management of science. Within the context of the research process, the term "reflexivity" refers to the process by which researchers critically assess their positionalities, biases, and practices. This self-reflective posture is especially significant in the field of feminist study because it recognizes that the production of knowledge is intrinsically political and located within particular power relations (Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 1999).

Reflexivity, according to the argument of feminist scholars, enables researchers to examine and disrupt the normative behaviors that are occurring within organizations that are responsible for maintaining patriarchal institutions. This entails actively engaging with the voices and experiences of oppressed groups, such as women of color, those who identify as LGBTQ+, and people with disabilities, to question dominant discourses and promote behaviors that are more inclusive and equitable. For instance, research on feminist ethics of care provides a framework that prioritizes relationality, empathy, and the well-being of the community over profit-driven motivations. Through the implementation of an ethics of care approach, organizations can establish environments in which the various needs and identities of their staff members are acknowledged and respected.

Active participation is an essential component in the process of questioning and altering patriarchal structures that exist inside organizations. Efforts to raise awareness, engage collective action, and lobby for legislative reforms that address gender inequities are all examples of feminist activism. Feminist activism goes beyond academic study. As an illustration, the #MeToo movement has brought concerns of sexual harassment and gender-based violence to the forefront of public conversation. As a result, organizations

have been prompted to examine their policies and practices around gender equality and safety in the workplace.

Feminist researchers place a strong emphasis on the significance of relating theory to practice. They argue that academic study should not be limited to theoretical discussions but rather should actively contribute to social change. To do this, it is necessary to work together with activists, practitioners, and politicians to devise strategies for advancing gender equality within the framework of organizational settings. Not only does feminist action oppose overt forms of discrimination, but it also challenges the more subtle, everyday behaviors that maintain gendered power relations. These practices include gendered language, dress codes, and leadership styles.

In the context of contemporary research, a reconsideration of the significance of patriarchy is a major idea in MOS research, patriarchy has recently received fresh attention, which highlights the importance of this notion in terms of comprehending and correcting modern gender disparities. The notion of patriarchy has been criticized for being either out of date or unduly simplistic; yet, recent research has shown that it possesses enduring analytical power when it is addressed in a manner that is nuanced and attentive to the context in which it is being considered. Researchers can investigate how gendered norms, practices, and discourses are produced, perpetuated, and contested in organizational contexts if they conceptualize patriarchy as a dynamic system of power that intersects with other axes of inequality.

There is a school of thought that contends that by re-examining patriarchy, MOS research has the potential to make significant contributions to the ongoing discussions on gender inequality. To accomplish this, it is necessary to move beyond assessments conducted at the personal level and investigate the more extensive structural and political influences that form the life of an organization. An example of this would be the examination of how patriarchy functions under neoliberal capitalist frameworks. This can provide insights into how gender disparities are replicated through labor practices, market mechanisms, and corporate governance structures. Within the framework of this discussion, feminist researchers emphasize the importance of systemic change, calling for policies and practices that challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender justice.

## Conclusion

To investigate and address gender inequality inside organizations, feminist theories and the concept of patriarchy provide helpful lenses through which to view the situation. As a result of the incorporation of feminist philosophy into MOS, many important insights into the complexity of gendered power relations have been revealed. These insights have highlighted the significance of intersectionality, reflexivity, and activism in the process of bringing about social change. Feminist theories pose a challenge to conventional management models and advocate for methods that are more inclusive and fairer. They do this by underlining the interconnectivity of many types of oppression.

The enduring importance of patriarchy in gaining an understanding of gender dynamics is highlighted by the fact that it has recently been rediscovered as an analytical framework in recent academic research. Contemporary research has been working to reframe patriarchy as a flexible and intersectional concept, which is capable of reflecting the range of experiences across a variety of social and cultural contexts. This is despite the criticisms that have been leveled against it in the past. By revisiting the concept of patriarchy, academics can investigate how structural and political pressures impact the experiences of both women and men inside organizational settings. This provides a more thorough understanding of gender inequality.

Future studies must continue to investigate the intersections of gender, power, and organizational practices, to resolve the various kinds of patriarchy that are now prevalent in modern society. To do this, it is necessary to not only investigate how patriarchal norms are perpetuated and challenged within organizations, but also to advocate for changes in policy and practices that promote gender equity. Through the establishment of a connection between theory and practice, feminist studies in MOS has the potential to contribute to the continuous fight for equality and social justice, thereby promoting more inclusive workplaces.

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# **Pilgrimage and Pottery: A Preliminary Study of the Kardameśvara Mahādeva and Bhīmacaṇḍī Paḍāva (Halts) on the Pañcakośī Yātrā Route**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper explores the connection between potters and pilgrimage along the Pañcakośī Yātrā route. The sacred Pañcakośī Yātrā is an 88.5-kilometre pilgrimage circuit that encircles Varanasi. The study focuses on the region between the first and second paḍāvas (pilgrimage halts): from Kardameśvara Mahādeva Temple (the first paḍāva) to Bhīmacaṇḍī Temple (the second paḍāva).*

*The Kardameśvara Mahādeva Temple—one of the oldest surviving temples in Varanasi, with origins dating to approx. 6th–7th century and significant expansion during the 12th century under the Gahadavala rulers—serves as the first night halt on the pilgrimage route and is a crucial sacred site for pilgrims. The Bhīmacaṇḍī Temple, located about 15.9 km further along the route, features a sacred tank (Gandharva Sāgara) and a group of shrines dedicated to the goddess Caṇḍī and Lord Śiva. It functions as the second night halt and is another important point on the yātrā.*

*Employing ethnographic methodologies, the research includes interviews with potters from over twenty pottery production centres situated between two key stops of the Pañcakośī route mentioned above. These interviews help us understand the social life, traditions, and financial situation of the potter communities in the study area. They also show how important these potters are in keeping the cultural heritage of the pilgrimage*

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*alive. This study also offers an insight on the evolution of terracotta traditions in the region with the change in the demands.*

*This study examines how local artisans—especially terracotta craftsmen—contribute to the pilgrimage and how their participation in the Pañcakośī Yātrā shapes their socio-religious identity and affects their economic livelihood. By integrating ethnographic fieldwork of the potters' families, the article also aims to illuminate the significance of potter settlements along the Pañcakośī patha, underscoring their contribution to the preservation of Varanasi's rich cultural and religious tapestry.*

**Keywords:** *Potters, Pañcakośī yātrā, Terracotta, pottery, Kardameśvara, Bhīmacaṇḍī, pilgrimage.*

## **Introduction**

Varanasi is considered one of the oldest cities and has continuously been a religious and cultural centre. Kashi has always been known as the city of spiritual gain (puṇya) and liberation (mokṣa) because of its rich religious and spiritual history. Pilgrims visiting Kashi undertake spiritual journeys by worshipping at various temples scattered across the city. It is traditionally believed that Kashi houses symbolic replicas or miniature representations of the major tīrthās (pilgrimage sites) of the Indian subcontinent, each of which is considered as spiritually potent as the original site. Consequently, many pilgrims perform rituals in Kashi as a substitute for pilgrimages they are unable to undertake elsewhere.

These rituals are carried out through various tīrthayātrās (pilgrimage circuits), each followed during specific times of the year according to the religious calendar. These routes involve circumambulatory paths that encompass a set of temples designated for particular spiritual goals. Several of these pilgrimages have been practiced since ancient times and continue to be observed today. Prominent among them are the Pañcakośī yātrā, Antargrhī yātrā, Kaśī Bhairava yātrā, Nava Gaurī yātrā, Aṣṭa Vināyaka yātrā, Dvādaśa Jyotirlinga yātrā, and Kaśī Cāradhāma yātrā, among others. These sacred yātrās have also significantly influenced the settlement patterns of the city. Consequently, these have deeply shaped the religious, social, economic, and political aspect of Kashi throughout history.

One of its most prominent traditional events is the Pañcakośī (or Pañcakrośī) Parikramā/yātrā, a ritual walk around the city that dates back to approximately the 14th

century CE. This circumambulation is observed in two ways: as a one-day yātrā or a five-day yātrā. The one-day yātrā takes place every year on Śivratri, while the five-day yātrā is performed every third year during the intercalary month (Adhika Māsa), which is used to regulate the Hindu lunar calendar. Many famous saints and poets from the Bhakti movement such as Tulasī (1497–1623), praised this holy route and called it the outer border of the city. During the Mughal rule (16th–17th centuries), many important temples and idols were destroyed. In the 18th century, when there was a strong revival of Hindu traditions, many of them were found again, and new replicas were also made. By the end of the 19th century, the Pañcakośī yātrā became a popular pilgrimage again, with five resting places and 44 dharmasālās (rest houses) built for the pilgrims.

This practice exemplifies Varanasi's distinctive cultural tapestry and is sustained by three key groups: lifelong residents, elderly pilgrims who relocate for spiritual liberation (mokṣa), and new arrivals drawn to the city's sacred reputation. In Sanskrit, the language of Hindu ritual and the root language of many of India's vernacular languages, Pañcha means the number five. Krośī or kośī refers to the unit of distance measurement equal to ¼ of the 'yojana' or approximately 2.2 miles in contemporary terms (Singh, 2009, p. 270). Thus, five Krosha equals about 11 miles (17.6km). The Pañcakośī yātrā (pilgrimage) circular patha, at a radius of pañcakrośa demarcates the territorial limit of the cosmic territory of Varanasi, generally known as Kashi Mandala (Singh, 2004, pp. 166–167). The yātrā is approximately 80–100 kilometers. The pilgrims who circumambulate Kashi on this sacred way take five days for the trip and visit 108 shrines along the way. (Eck, 1982, p. 42). Many of these shrines are mentioned in the Kaśī Khaṇḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa and are later referenced in texts such as Vārāṇasī Vaibhava, highlighting their enduring religious and cultural significance. The route and practice are preserved not only through oral tradition and religious texts like the Kaśī Khaṇḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa but also through the active participation of local communities, who maintain temples, offer shelter, and engage in service (sevā) for the pilgrims.

The Pañcakośī yātrā traditionally commences from Maṇikarṇikā Ghat after taking saṅkalpa, from where pilgrims proceed along the riverfront path to Assi Ghat. From there, they follow the road through Nagwa and continue via Naria, Karaundi, and Chitaiapur, eventually reaching the second principal stop (Paḍāva) of the pilgrimage — Kardameśvara Mahādeva. The route then extends further through a series of villages,

leading to Bhīmacaṇḍī, the next significant halting point. The pilgrimage concludes by returning to Maṇikarnikā Ghat. Throughout this sacred journey, devotees offer worship at various temples situated along the route. They must walk on foot without shoes, except in the case of the sick or infirm, taking with them only necessary food, without luxuries of any kind. They must refrain from quarrelling or using bad language. They must not give or receive food or water, nor take any gifts from anyone (Havell. 1905, p. 187)

As a spiritual epicenter, Varanasi offers extensive facilities to both its inhabitants and various visitors. The Pañcakośī yātrā has served not only as a religious journey but also as a driver of social and economic development along its route. The regular flow of pilgrims created a steady demand for food, shelter, religious items, and daily necessities. As a result, settlements began to grow near important halting points such as Kardameśvara, Bhīmacaṇḍī, Rāmeśvara, and Kapiladhārā. These places gradually developed into active centers where local people offered services like hospitality, ritual assistance, and the sale of religious objects such as terracotta figures, clay lamps, bangles, and images of deities. In this way, the Pañcakośī yātrā has also reflected the intertwined relationship between sacred space, local culture, and religious practice in Varanasi.

Traditional crafts, especially pottery, woodwork, and weaving, flourished in these areas due to the continuous arrival of visitors. The sacred nature of the yātrā ensured that these local businesses remained active and connected to the spiritual purpose of the pilgrimage. Seasonal markets and ritual fairs (melas) also emerged, where pilgrims and local vendors came together, creating a unique blend of religious and economic activity.

During festival times, these settlements became lively centers of ritual and trade. Craftspeople, priests, vendors, and performers worked together to meet the needs of the pilgrims. Over the centuries, even with political and social changes, the pilgrimage route continued to support these traditional crafts and ways of life. Thus, the Pañcakośī route illustrates how sacred geography can shape not only spiritual life but also patterns of habitation, craftsmanship, and commerce over time.

In addition to other craft-based markets, terracotta and pottery have played a significant role in shaping both the livelihoods of local potters and the experiences of pilgrims undertaking the Pañcakośī yātrā. During this five-day yātrā, pilgrims halt each night at

one of the five designated paḍāvas, where they cook their own food, rest, and then resume the journey the following morning to the next halt. For cooking purposes, clay utensils are considered the most pious, and pilgrims traditionally collect them from local potters. Because of this long-standing tradition, potters sell not only clay utensils but also items such as toys and decorative terracotta pieces during the Pañcakośī yātrā. This seasonal market has also influenced the settlement patterns of the potter communities along the yātrā route.

In the case of Varanasi, these settlement patterns have changed significantly over the past 15 to 20 years. The transformation is largely due to the expansion of the city's urban area, improvements in transportation infrastructure, and the increased use of alternative materials such as plastic, which have replaced traditional terracotta products in many households. This study specifically focuses on the potters' settlements located along the stretch of the Pañcakośī route between Kardameśvara Mahādeva and Bhīmacaṇḍī.

### **Potters Settlement**

Field research has identified numerous settlements of traditional potter communities in this segment of the route. Notable among these are Kandwa Mokampura, Kandwa, Amra, Amra Khaira, Lathiya, Audhe, Bandepur, Kashipur, Ashwari, among others. Approximately eighteen villages have been surveyed, each with a longstanding tradition of pottery-making passed down through generations. The study area, which is one segment of the Pañcakośī route, has lesser archaeological sites in comparison to its other segments. There are explored and excavated sites showing use of the terracotta objects from the ancient times, and these sites are not much far from the main route segment. The region studied was the settlement of the ancient peoples also, as archaeological exploration has yielded ancient sites along the Pañcakośī such as Delhana, Nidura, Misipur, Badhaini, Babhniyav, Mahavan (Alam, 2020). These archaeological sites have their antiquity traced back to the Kushana period and some to the Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW). The potters' settlements fall between the two key stations of the Pañcakośī pilgrimage—Kardameśvara Mahādeva and Bhīmacaṇḍī are shown against the number of potter families residing per villages (Table 1)

**Table 1: No. of Potters family in the village**

S. No.	Potter settlement	Number of Potter's Family in Cluster
1.	Kandwa Mokampura	10
2.	Kandwa	50
3.	Pahadi	26
4.	Nakain	12
5.	Amra Khaira	200
6.	Amra Khaira Naibasti	4
7.	Lathiya	20
8.	Audhe	25
9.	Khushipur	60
10.	Misirpur	6
11.	Sagahat	6
12.	Bacchaw	15
13 .	Bandepur	15
14.	Badarasi	5
15.	Kashipur	7
16.	Jagardevapur	2
17.	Nedura	25
18.	Badhaini	6
19.	Ashwari	12
20.	Bhīmacaṇḍī	10

From the survey, it has been observed that the potter settlements are located along the Pañcakośī route and within a 4–5 km surrounding area (fig. 1a & 1b). This pattern highlights how these communities have gradually become integrated into the main pilgrimage path. Interviews with potters further reveal that shifts in the settlement have occurred over time—from their original villages to locations along the yātrā route—primarily to facilitate the sale of their products.



**Fig. 1a & 1b: Survey of the potters in the study area (2025)**

Initially, these settlements were temporary, where potters would bring and sometimes produce their goods during the *yātrā* period. In recent years, however, these have transformed into permanent settlements, often taking the form of shops or shop-residences.

The survey also notes that due to the urban expansion of Varanasi, one of the *Paḍāva* (*halts*)—the *Kardameśvara*—has now been included within the municipal limits (*Nagar Nigam*), while the second *Paḍāva* (*halt*), *Bhīmacañḍī*, though still outside, is relatively close to the urban fringe. As a result, traffic and accessibility along the route have increased, making it safer and more economically feasible for potters to establish permanent residences and businesses along the route.

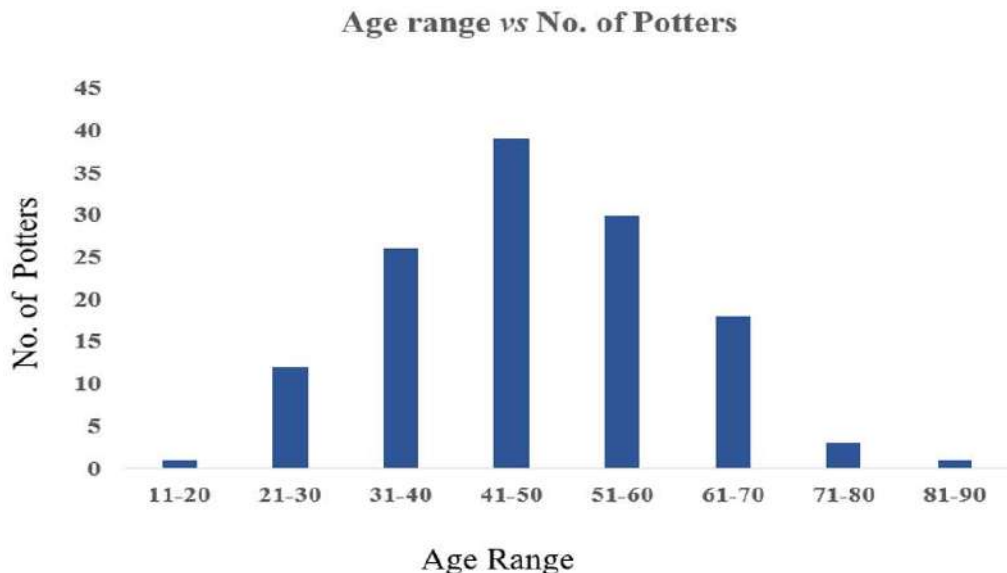
Interestingly, in recent years, potters who have engaged in large-scale production, began shifting away from the main route again, seeking larger spaces and easier access to raw materials. At the same time, some potters have adopted a business-only model, purchasing finished goods from potters in more remote villages. These distant settlements are typically located near natural water sources such as ponds, which remain essential for pottery production and daily household use.

A survey of 131 potter families was conducted along the *Pañcakośī* route and within a 4 to 5 km buffer zone. It has been found that there are two categories of potters who create the designs thus can be called artisans and the one who work on the moulds created by the former. There are few potters with joint families where all the male members are involved in the pottery-making business. Interviews were conducted with either male or female members who serve as the primary earners for their families through this traditional occupation. The data was collected based on various parameters,

including age, sex, religion, type of livelihood, nature of work, types of products manufactured, awareness and access to government schemes, and several other relevant indicators.

### **i. Age**

The age distribution of currently active potters is shown in the bar chart (fig. 2). Most surveyed potters are between 40 and 60 years old. Very few younger generation members are engaged in this traditional craft. These demographic data indicate a generational shift: younger people are increasingly disengaging from pottery-making and transitioning to other occupations such as painting, plumbing, driving, vending, and electrical work. Some educated individuals hold private-sector jobs, including teaching and roles as medical representatives and other professions. This shift reflects a pursuit of greater economic security. Urbanization, the rise of alternative products—especially plastics—difficulty in sourcing raw materials, and financial instability have contributed to the decline of this traditional art.



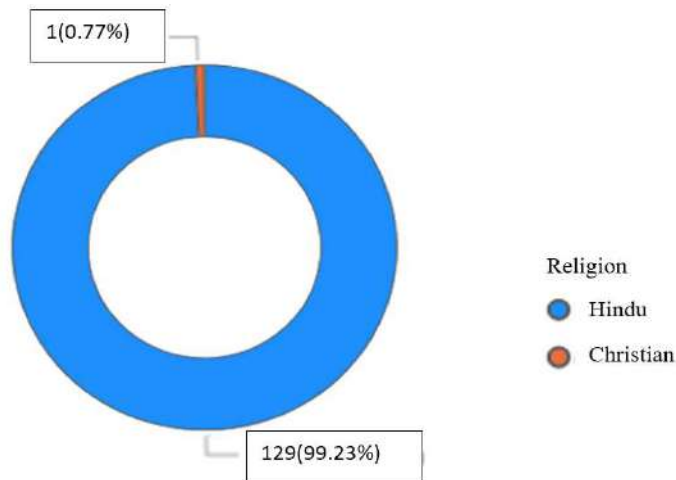
**Fig. 2: Graph showing age Range vs the number of Potters.**

### **ii. Religion**

Among the 131 potter families surveyed, out of approximately 516 residing in the study area, all except one belong to the Hindu religion (fig. 3). One of the potters, named Ramashankar Prajapati of Pahadi Village, was found to be a follower of Christianity,

having converted from Hinduism in the past 5–6 years. Unlike many others in the area who are facing financial constraints, his business appears to be well-established and sustainable. It has been observed that the relative success of his business is due to the support he has received through religious funding. This funding ensures capital investment in raw materials, modern machinery, and the establishment of a dedicated retail outlet at his home for wholesale product sales. All of this has ultimately contributed to the growth of his business.

It was found that the main potter, Ramashankar Prajapati, is 55 years old, and three of his sons are actively participating in the business and working towards its expansion. This collective participation suggests a strong familial commitment to continuing the pottery tradition, contrasting with the broader trend of younger generations moving away from such occupations. In this case, the craft not only serves as a source of cultural identity but also as the primary means of livelihood for the entire household. This example highlights how external support and internal family cooperation can significantly influence the sustainability and growth of traditional artisanal practices in changing socio-economic contexts.



**Fig. 3: Pie-chart showing the religion of the surveyed Potters.**

### **iii. Main source of livelihood**

Out of the 131 potters surveyed, 66% reported pottery-making as their primary source of livelihood. In addition to pottery, younger members of many families are engaged in other occupations such as running general or vegetable shops, working as electricians,

plumbers, painters, carpenters, vendors, labourers, teachers, and various private jobs. Despite their primary employment, many of them continue to assist in pottery-making during their free time.

It has also been observed that, with the introduction of mould machines, women who are unable to operate the potter's wheel are now producing pottery using moulds and supporting their families (fig. 4a & 4b). Due to the introduction of these mould machines, the involvement of the younger generation has also increased. The remaining potters are involved in pottery production seasonally, particularly during festive periods, or part-time, working in the mornings and evenings alongside their main jobs. In some of these part-time potter families, the responsibility of pottery-making is entirely managed by the women.



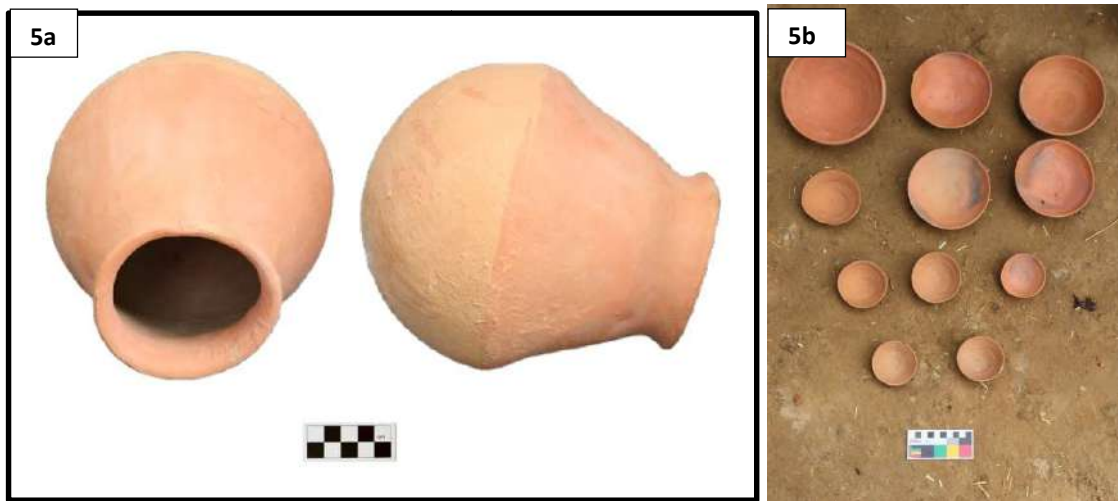
**Fig. 4a & 4b: Mould based Pottery manufacturing mainly run by the women of the potter's community (2025)**

#### **iv. Nature of work**

The selected area of study includes two halts, namely Kardameśvara Mahādeva and Bhīmacaṇḍī, which have shown that pottery and terracotta are the dominant products sold during the Pañcakośī yātrā, in addition to daily commercial goods. Of the two, Kardameśvara is now located in an urban setting, while Bhīmacaṇḍī remains in a rural landscape. However, prior to 1994, both locations fell under rural administrative jurisdictions.

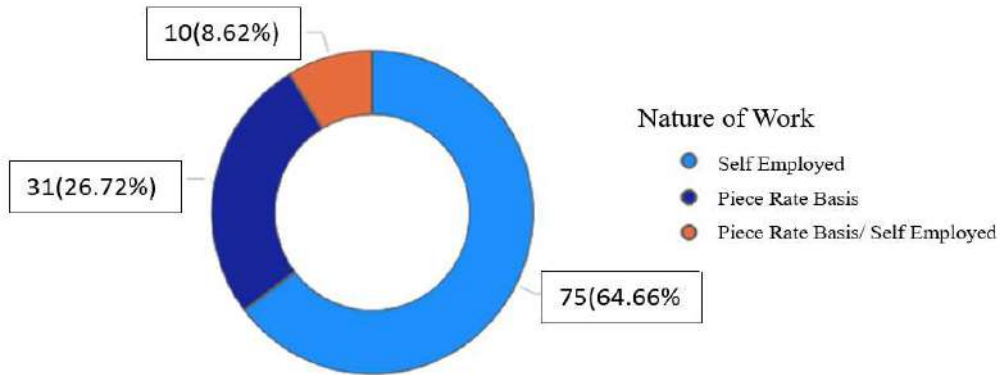
The potter communities in the study area historically depended on the seasonal pilgrimage market created by the Pañcakośī yātrā. This scenario continued even 15 to 20 years back. During the yātrā, there was a heightened demand for clay items used in

rituals and cooking, such as lamps (diyās), kulhaḍs, hāṇḍī, paraī and other functional wares (fig. 5a & 5b). Additionally, potters produce a variety of terracotta items for amusement and decoration, including toys and flower vases which were sold easily during the yātrā. But due to urbanization, the dominance of yātrā-influenced terracotta products has decreased over time. In their place, commercial products like kulhaḍa and purvā for tea, lassi, and chat (snacks) have been raised in demand. However, over the past two decades, the decline in foot-based pilgrimage participation and the increased use of plastic and metal substitutes have also significantly affected the demand for traditional clay products. Consequently, the economic viability of pottery production has diminished. It has been observed that most of the potters who were dependent on this yātrās, are now shifted to this commercial product. Approximately 90% of the potter households at these sites serve as supply centres for the urban markets of Varanasi.



**Fig. 5a & 5b: Hāṇḍī (pot) Cooking and Paraī (lid) Serving pottery used by Pilgrimage during the Pañcakośī yātrā (2025)**

It has been observed that the concentration of pottery-producing settlements increases with distance from the urban core, suggesting a livelihood strategy shaped by their spatial proximity to city markets. The mode and scale of pottery production vary accordingly, reflecting the influence of urban-rural dynamics. Based on the survey findings, the employment pattern among the potter families can be broadly classified into three categories: self-employment, piece-rate work, and daily wage labor. A visual summary of this classification is shown in pie chart (fig. 6).



**Fig. 6: Pie-chart showing the nature of work done by the surveyed Potters.**

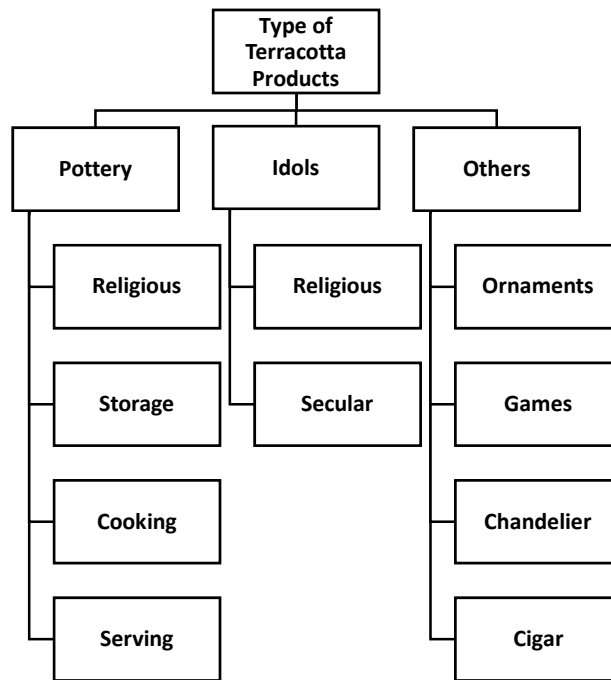
Self-employed potters are those who both produce and sell their own pottery. Their sales are typically direct to customers and fall under the business-to-customer (B2C) model. Piece-rate workers are those who sell their products to intermediaries or directly to businesses. This model operates as a business-to-business (B2B) transaction, where payment is based on the number of items produced. Daily wage laborers do not have their own production units. Instead, they work in the workshops of other potters and are paid wages based on the number of pottery they produce.

Among the families surveyed, the majority fall under the self-employed category, actively involved in both making and selling their products using a combination of B2B and B2C approaches. In Kandwa (Kardameśvara), now part of the expanding urban area, many potter families have reduced their own production. Instead, they procure finished clay products from distant production centers and sell them in the local markets. In some families, women are engaged in bead-making on a piece-rate basis. These beads are sold to middlemen without being fired. In contrast, Bhīmacaṇḍī, which remains a rural area, continues to function as a production hub for clay products that are supplied to urban markets. Potters here preserve traditional practices, although they have adapted to changing market demands, especially those linked to festivals and pilgrimage seasons.

#### **v. Work details**

It has been observed from the study area that potters are shifting from traditional pottery to more commercial products. With the decrease in the market for clay products used for cooking, amusement, and decoration during the Pañcakośī yātrā, potters have moved

towards producing commercial items that are in higher demand. In this way, these potters' income is directly proportional to the manufacturing and selling of daily-based products. They do not have to store items for a specific season of sale. Based on these inputs, terracotta products being produced in the study area can be categorized into two namely- potteries, idols and others including ornaments, games, chandeliers, toys, cigar etc (fig. 7).



**Fig. 7: Chart showing the nature of work of the potters**

The work of pottery production in the studied region follows a structured flow, beginning with the type of pottery being produced, which includes both utilitarian commercial and seasonal products. There potteries are made by both wheelmade, mouldmade and combinations of the technique. Potters in the study area were earlier more dependent on the ritualistic, serving and cooking potteries. Ritualistics pottery includes- lamps (diyās), pot (Kalaśa) of varied sizes, lids. These products are crafted either for daily use—such as clay cups, plates, and storage containers—or for special purposes, particularly those related to festivals and cultural traditions. Pottery production peaks during specific religious events, such as Diwali, Navratri, and local temple fairs, where there is a high demand for ritual items like diyās (lamps), incense holders, and figurines of deities. This seasonal cycle not only dictates the nature and

volume of production but also directly influences the economic sustenance of potter families, many of whom depend heavily on these cultural occasions for income generation. The relationship between the type of pottery and the associated festivals thus forms a critical aspect of the local pottery economy apart from the commercial mass productive work.

### **b. Idols**

Idols produced by the potters in the study area are mainly festival-based. For example, during Diwali, they make Gaṇeśa and Lakṣmī idols; for Ganesh Chaturthi, they produce only Gaṇeśa idols; for Janmashtami, they craft Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā figures along with various secular figures; and for Teej, they create Śiva and Pārvatī idols, among others. In addition, they also manufacture female figures carrying a diya, called “Gwalin,” which are mass-produced and sold during Diwali.

### **c. Other Terracotta products**

Other terracotta products made by the potters include toys, ornaments, games, and clay cigars. These wares are typically produced in large quantities during religious festivals and pilgrimage fairs, reflecting both local customs and the demand for sustainably made, symbolic clay artifacts.

### **vi. Decline of the Terracotta traditions**

Many factors are contributing to the decline of traditional Pañcakośī terracottas, which include all potteries, idols, and animal figurines used for ritual, utilitarian, decorative, and recreational purposes. As urban areas expand into villages, the population is increasing in previously less-populated spaces, resulting in a decrease of working space. This urbanization has also led to a reduction in the number of ponds in these areas, which were the main source of clay.

Furthermore, the conversion of villages into urban settlements has constrained the availability of other raw materials, such as fuel for firing. The new urban colonies have also created a hurdle for this occupation due to opposition to the smoke produced during firing. In addition, the use of plastic and metal products, especially the former, has significantly reduced the market for terracotta products. It has been observed that the cups, glasses, and plates once used for serving refreshments to pilgrims during the one-night Pañcakośī yātrā have been largely replaced by plastic products (fig. 8a). The

discard of these plastic products after the Pañcakośī yātrā has raised major environmental concerns (fig, 8b).



**Fig. 8a: Residents serving refreshment to the pilgrims of Pañcakośī Yātrā (2025)**



**Fig. 8b: Plastic waste after the refreshment service in Pañcakośī Yātrā (2025)**

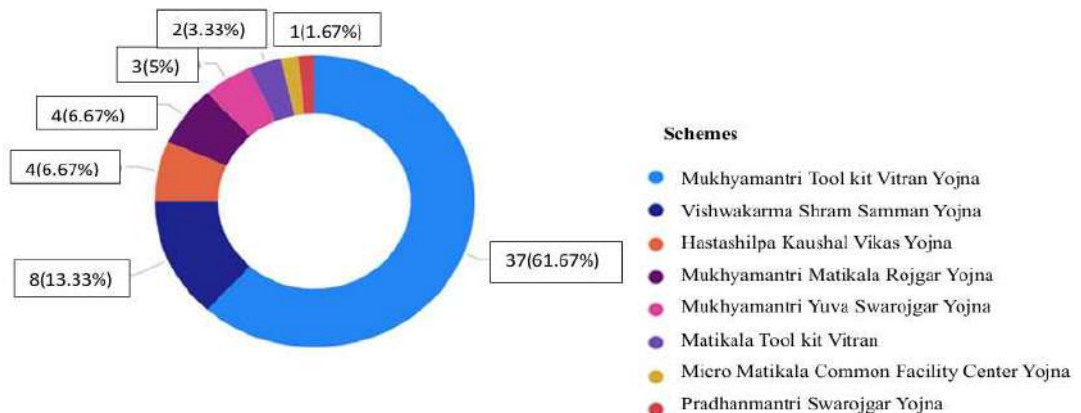
However, with the growth of Varanasi's social and tourist culture, people still prefer to have tea, lassi, chats, and sweets in terracotta pottery. This has prompted the potters in these regions to shift towards producing these more-demanded commercial products. The government is also working to revive the clay product culture in place of plastic to reduce public health risks and preserve Varanasi's local culture.

#### **vii. Government plans for revival of the terracotta art and potters**

The government is actively working towards preserving the clay art tradition of the kashi as part of preserving heritage and sponsoring the small business. In this run, government have launched various schemes for potters namely-

- i. Pradhan Mantri Swarojgar Yojna
- ii. Mukhyamantri Yuva Swarojgar Yojana
- iii. Vishwakarma Shram Samman Yojana
- iv. Hasta Shilpi Kaushal Vikash Yojana
- v. Mattikala Tool Kit Vitaran Yojna
- vi. Mukhyamantri Matikala Rojgar Yojana
- vii. Matikala Kaushal Vikash Yojana
- viii. Micro Matikala Common Facility Centre Yojana
- ix. Matikala Purushkara Yojana
- x. Matikala Viparana Vikas Sahayata evam Prachara Prasar yojana

A survey has revealed that government schemes have significantly benefited potters in the study area, with almost 90% of them having received aid from one or two programs. These initiatives have effectively helped potters return to their traditional business. Among all the schemes, the data on potters who have benefitted from specific programs is shown in the pie chart below (Fig. 9). From a survey of 131 potters, it was observed that schemes like Mukhyamatri Tool Kit Vitaran Yojana have benefited most potters in this region, helping to revive their traditional work. In addition to providing toolkits—such as electric wheels, blunger machines, and molding machines—these schemes also offer training to help potters meet current market demands. This training is particularly beneficial for women who were previously unable to use the stone wheel but are now able to work with the electric wheel, helping them support their families and become financially independent.



**Fig. 9: Pie chart showing Government schemes vs benefited Potters.**

## **Conclusion**

The study explains in detail the historically intertwined life narratives of the potters and pilgrimage along the Pañcakośī yātrā from Kardameśvara Mahādeva to Bhīmacanḍī in Varanasi. Ethnographic survey of 131 potter families in 20 settlements revealed a steep decline in ritual pottery is partly due to urbanization-but more because of replacement of clay-to the plastic and metal alternatives. About 66% of respondents claimed that pottery is their main source of livelihood. These practitioners are aged mostly between 40 and 60, while younger generations are near extinction, opting for other professions such as plumbing, teaching, and driving, mainly due to economic uncertainty and changing aspirations.

However, technological advancements such as electric wheels and molding machines enhanced and streamlined production, also enabling greater participation of women and reducing reliance on traditional techniques. The Pañcakośī yātrā continues to offer seasonal economic opportunities through pottery and terracotta products. Although, due to decreased sales, production shifted toward commercial terracotta items that meet urban market demands year-round. Government schemes such as the Matikala Tool Kit Vitaran Yojana have played a key role in popularizing pottery again. To sustain this craft heritage, continuous policy support is essential, and young people should explore culture-based livelihoods.

## **Acknowledgement**

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# Urban Planning through Smart Cities: A Theoretical Study

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D.D. Sharma\*\*

## ABSTRACT

*Urbanization is measured by the proportion of people living in urban areas to overall population and is referred as the process of turning rural areas into towns, cities, and metropolitan areas. The most pressing issues include those related to urbanization, infrastructure development, traffic congestion, noise pollution, improper rubbish disposal, unhygienic conditions, sewerage issues, and general quality of life. The main significance of smart city lies on holistic and sustainable changes for building model i.e. replicable, emphasis lies on the sustainable and holistic changes with giving an impetus to creation of smart cities. The present study pertains to smart cities of India in their theoretical perspective based on secondary information collected from various sources. It is revealed from the study that exceptional works are being done in the cities with involvement of people and through the availability of finance for development. ICT mainly focus on strengthening the capacities and system of community for urban management in smart service delivery areas.*

**Keywords:** Urbanisation, Smart Cities, ICT, Development

## Introduction

Urbanization is defined as transition of a country from agrarian to an industrial economy (Trewartha, 1969). Towns and cities expand as a result of physical, social, and economic development. It is a unique phenomenon linked to population concentration, structural change, and social upheaval. According to Mitra and Mehta (2011), cities are regarded as the "engines of economic growth" since they are essential for economic progress and bring about significant changes in almost every aspect of social life. Population expansion and urbanization are linked to a number of issues, including technical, social, organizational, and economic ones, which endanger the viability of cities' economies and environments. In addition to controlled population increase, several policies must be implemented in an integrated manner to stabilize the

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urbanization process (Meadows, 1975). In India's hill states, where urbanization is relatively low, a different picture and related issues are presented. Around ten percent of the population in Himachal Pradesh lives in urban areas (Census of India, 2011). Issues can be best appreciated in the perspective of Himachal Pradesh cities of Shimla and Dharamshala. The most pressing issues include those relating to urbanization, infrastructure development, traffic congestion, noise pollution, improper rubbish disposal, unhygienic conditions, sewerage issues, and general quality of life. Cities have an excess of people due to influx of visitors on land, which causes an imbalance of resources. Smart city Planning is a technique for coping with and managing urbanization, starting with strategic urban planning concepts (Bansal, Shrivastava, and Singh, 2015). Giffinger (2010) insisted that "Smart City is a smart society in which various elements such as people; environment, mobility, governance, and the economy are built within a smart infrastructure". Haphazard construction of buildings taking place rapidly indicates that no efforts have been made to construct residential areas in planned manner with proper connectivity to roads. Therefore, new models and strategies of urban planning with reference to smartness, development and operation needs to be adopted, calling attention towards smart alternatives for retaining natural heritage of Shimla and Dharamshala. The goal of smart city is to enhance its residents' quality of life. Smart city is a systematic approach enabling the use of information technology based on real-time data analysis for provision of natural, energy and urban resource management services promoting sustainable economic development and ensure high standard of living. Smart city is a city in which information & communication technologies and other tools, on one hand, enhances efficiency of cities and provision of urban services to strengthen competitiveness and on the other hand, ensure sustainable development without rendering negative impact on various components of the city such as social, economic and environmental. In general, "smart city is an umbrella term with reference to different types of innovation taking place in an urban environment" (Anthopoulous et al., 2016). Crucial solutions for the establishment of smart cities enable convergence and integration of project with local authorities and organizations. The research paper aims to present theoretical study of city planning in context to smart cities of India.



with people, television, mobile phones and so on. In present times people are familiar with two smart gadgets i.e. mobiles phones and television. Smart phones are updated version of Java phones that can be used for various purposes. The term “Smart” is now used as a prefix with the cities forming part of resilient cities. City is equated to a liveable organism and is not only related to technology-oriented ideas, with people having varying approaches for choosing the conditions and environment for their living.

The main significance of smart city lies on holistic and sustainable changes for building model i.e. replicable by giving an impetus to the creation of smart cities world over. Aim of Smart Cities Mission is enhancement of quality of life of people with persuasion of growth in its finances by creating local area by provision of facilities and technological linkage (Jirwankar and Meshram, 2020). The smart cities are infrastructure centric with focus on installation of technology i.e. smart. A smart city is defined as “A city monitoring and integrating the conditions of all infrastructures inclusive of water, tunnels, power, communication, maintenance with proper optimization of resources, monitoring the aspects of security with maximisation of availability of services to the citizens” (Hall, 2000). Smart cities expose citizens to the components that are technically driven mechanism. The cities use internet of things combined with technology for optimising infrastructure of the city to make city liveable and efficient for supporting growth of urban areas, keeping in mind the wellbeing of citizens for developing urban entity for agglomeration development (Zwada, 2022). In 1990s, the concept of smart city appeared for the first time when there was change of idea for taking information and communication enabled technology as an important infrastructure for development of modern city.

The main aim of smart city development is involvement of citizens and their participation at all the stages with an objective to achieve a city that is open and people are engaged in a democratic and transparent way. Though citizens are considered as central part of a smart city but in reality, they are just users of the infrastructure and not involved in the beginning stages and in innovation building (Joanna L. Hilebrand et. al, 2022). City is defined as a web dealing with the interaction between citizens, the environment, means inclusive of both present and past, production means and development of a well social and economic life. City that is smart works in sharing knowledge, culture inspiring people to motivate them for creating a meaningful life (Nam and Pardo, 2011). The smart city highlights issues of citizens participating in

bringing out changes in the city integrated with smart city paradigm (Kitchin et. al, 2019). It refers to the improvement of automation and level of intelligence in the planning process, management, service and construction with wider usage of Information and Communication Technology with latest development and innovation. Smart city project is in its infancy stage of being theoretical in nature and less applicable at ground level, which requires more research for helping local government to formulate future cities through project implementation (Yuan, 2021). In present times, cities have potential of being designated as a “Smart City” well equipped with basic provisions such as participation of people and government, availability of water facilities, resource conservation. The main central idea is to make city more efficient for people in a way to develop effective ecosystem, integrated with social, institutional, physical framework designated as main pillars of development in a comprehensive manner (Upadhyaya, 2016). Citizens have played a dominant role in infrastructure development, as they are influenced by community participation offering inclusiveness of projects at local level along with organised activities for achievement of a goal (Zimmermann and Rappaport, 1988).

### **Defining Smart Cities**

Smart cities are solution to problems associated with rapid urbanisation and meeting challenges with innovation (Belanchi, Casola and Ories, 2016). Smart city concept emerged to highlight the technological advancement and innovation in developing and maintenance of cities example, setting up smart boards to know about the parking slots in the city (Battara et. al., 2016). Smart City by Paskaleva (2009) has been defined as “city to take advantages of opportunity offered by information and communication technology in increasing local prosperity and competitiveness- an approach that implies integrated urban development involving multi-actor, multi-sector and multi-level perspectives”.

Smart city projects are still in the process of infancy even after two decades of their implementation (Alizadeh, 2017). Smart cities adopt a technology driven approach, ignoring economic, social and political aspects leading to increasing addiction and dependency on computers (Kunzmann, 2014). The development of smart city is considered as an important solution for enhancement of living, and aspiring for a sustainable city (Li et. al., 2019). Smart cities as defined by scholars is investment in all types of capital whether human or social and means of transportation and information

and communication technological infrastructure that acts as a means for economic growth in sustainable manner and for improving quality of life of people and enabling proper use of resources through governance.

### **Inception and Genesis of Smart City in India**

The country's stages of development are dependent upon smart city progress with political willingness to transform finances and urban systems. It is conversion of data into information comprising of time, capital, real time data collection, water supply, management of resources and decision making. The negative factors are lack of strong management, rapid changing environment, security especially cyber security and no awareness. The concept of smart city has its contribution in fields namely traffic management, water supply, environmental protection, safety and manufacturing (Yuan, 2021). It helps for planning in a well organised manner where there is proper identification, monitoring and control through technology for innovation and by being creative. Knowledge economy is to be developed within city for enhancing sustainable development of the city in a cohesive manner for smarter development of urban regions in the future (Kourtit et al., 2012).

“Smart City is a city that is environmentally secure, safe with an efficient futuristic urban centre having advancement in infrastructure including electronics, sensors and digital technology for stimulating sustainable economic growth and for enhancing quality of life” (Hall, 2000). The term smart city is used in various areas such as by academicians, businessmen and government professionals for describing the cities, that are composed and monitored through digital computing and city governance through innovation as a driving force along with creativity performed by people designated as smart. Urbanisation deals with importance of cities economically through the development of sustainable smart city (Nathali et al. 2018 quoted by Attaran et al., 2022). Smart cities are developed as a response to increasing urbanisation keeping in mind economic importance, thereby increasing sustainability for living.

Smart City concept is new and is considered as successor of resilient, digital, information and sustainable cities and is an urban renewal mission with an aim to develop smart cities all over the country, making them sustainable and citizen friendly. The concept note of Smart city mission proposes for “very high quality of life”. The note states that “Smart cities are those that are able to attract investments and experts and professionals.”

## Smart City Mission: An Indian Context

“Smart City is referred as safe, secure environmentally green, and efficient urban centre of future with advanced infrastructures such as sensors, electronics and networks to stimulate sustainable economic growth and high quality of life” (Hall, 2000).

They require an approach i.e. holistic in nature with prime focus lying on three main pillars of Smart City such as operations, infrastructure and people. It was in 2015 that concept of smart cities considered as a bold initiative of government evolved in India by NDA led BJP government in which 100 smart cities were selected based on standardised criteria under Ministry of Urban Development to become smart by 2024. The mission maybe extended further based upon the evaluation by Ministry. It was one of the well known projects of urban areas with main objectives of increasing standard of living, increasing efficiency and provision of services for locals. It adopts a holistic approach for cities development using ICT, IOT in a sustainable manner. There was selection of 100 smart cities round wise i.e. in the first round twenty cities were selected that was topped by Bhubaneswar followed by Pune and Jaipur.

## Features and Objectives of a ‘Smart City’

Smart cities have objectives that are to be achieved by the cities designated as smart. The features, objectives and need of smart city (figure 2) implies implementation of Smart city projects lead to planning of built-up that already exist for making the area more efficient, effective and liveable.

## Features for Smart City Development

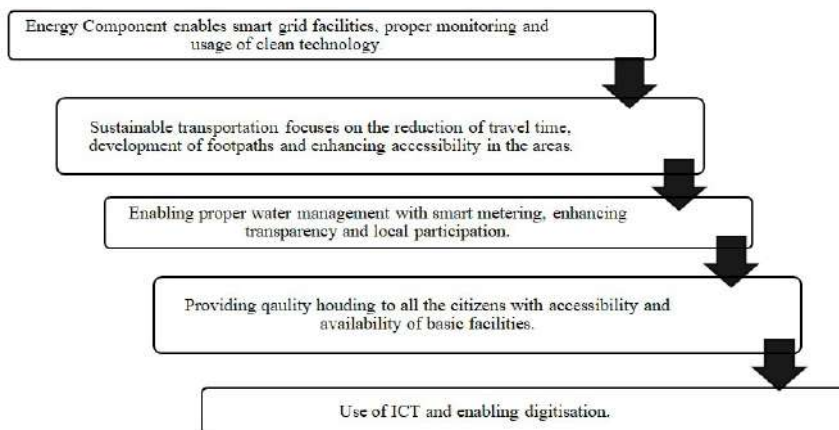


Figure 2: Source: Prepared by the Authors

Smart cities are developed on the basis of various stages. There are four stages of development namely adhoc stage deals with the initial step of planning and framing outline of the projects, opportunistic stages include identifying and deploying barriers in adoption of projects collaborated with other departments. Later different events are identified for identifying and integrating finances. In the entire process, the committee is managed on the basis of shifts taking into consideration the structure of governance in the city. Thus, the whole project should be sustainable in nature with the improvement of information technology for the enhancement of autonomy for analysing different aspects.

Cities in India have been designated as smart after passing through the criteria of Smart City Mission. A few cities designated as smart under the AMRUT scheme in India have been discussed in the table 1. These exemplars have been selected in a way that Bhubaneswar in Odisha is the first city in India to be designated as a smart city while other cities covers the south comprising of Kochi in Kerala, east (Gangtok in Sikkim) and west (viz. Jaipur in Rajasthan) cities of the country:

**Table 1: Exemplar of Smart Cities in India at a glance**

	<b>Jaipur (Rajasthan)</b>	<b>Kochi (Kerela)</b>	<b>Gangtok (Sikkim)</b>	<b>Surat (Gujarat)</b>	<b>Bhubaneswar (Odisha)</b>
<b>Concept of Smart City</b>	Development of smart city Jaipur begins with involvement of citizens aspiring to maintain its heritage, tourism for enhancing quality of life of people.	It implies implementation of solutions that are smart for providing basic infrastructure to people.	Making a city sustainable and liveable and improve economic development.	Proper implementation of smart city projects for making city suitable for living.	It aims at attaining decision making thereby enabling transparency and developing a liveable and clean city for creating smart outcomes by harnessing technology.
<b>Strategies towards becoming “smart</b>	The main focus is on development that is area-	Development of areas-based city and pan city.	Key strategies include embedding	Adopting pan city proposal and retrofitting strategy for	Main strategy is to develop engagement of people enhancing

<b>city”</b>	based development and development of proposal for pan city development.		component of Pan City and Area based development.	maximizing services availability and accessibility.	proactive research for improving quality of life.
<b>Main driving factors towards smart city</b>	Engagement of citizens for sharing their problems and solutions and giving feedbacks about the working.	IT and service industries act as driving force for smart city development.	Potential of economic growth by upgrading tourism and skill development.	Achievement of inclusiveness by proper use of all the factors such as physical environment.	Citizen participation, IT sector and regional planning.
<b>The challenges faced towards becoming smart city</b>	Lack of inter department coordination and lack of finance.	Finance and lack of multi modal transport system.	Lack of transparency, inadequate public transport facility and lack of physical infrastructure.	Lack of finance and local participation.	Risks identification and proper utilisation of resources and finance crisis.

**Source:** Compiled by the authors from various sources

For provision of capital (finance), engagement of stakeholders is kept at the priority. Different key drivers play a dominant role in various smart cities of India and many issues faced by the project namely lack of finance, no citizen participation are kept at the priority to deal with. With development of smart cities employment ventures will be developed in the cities and basic services issues will be solved as a whole.

Smart city is defined as a “city that improves the quality of life, including ecological, cultural, political, institutional, social, and economic components leaving a burden on future generation” (Zhao, 2011). Eight main components of smart city mission are discussed as follows:

- **Smart Economy (Competitiveness):** It is important for creating and maintaining a vital city with economic competitiveness viz. production, innovation, labour market and integration of market. It aims at providing measures for strengthening economy, enhancing creativeness, and creating an innovative economy. Its main objective is to implement solutions that are innovative in nature to boost opportunity for achieving a smart economy.
- **Smart People (Social and Human Capital):** It deals with social interaction for public life, through portals and platforms for creating smart infrastructure utilising smart services. Smart city strategies are relying on citizens to become smart utilising technology as driving force. The main emphasis lies on the creation of competencies among locals (Mohanty, 2017). The main force driving is to develop citizens for knowledge relating to urban development (Herman et al., 2018). Digitisation has played a dominant role by providing online services to the citizens for meeting basic needs of the citizens.
- **Smart Governance (Participation):** Smart governance component involves participation of policy makers i.e. the politicians working for the citizens for provision of basic services with an aim to bring transparency for effective service delivery system. It is possible through the integration of ICT for provision of e-services and solving issues faced by local citizens in their grievance solving and for decision making for cities development (Upadhyaya, 2016).
- **Smart Mobility:** It deals with aspects of accessibility and availability of ICT and sustainable transport networks with use of GIS, remote sensing and surveillance. It provides clean, safe, diversified transportation to people by reduction in time and cost by reducing air pollution providing safe transportation and smart mobility for solving the problem of smart traffic congestion, smart lighting and developing smart parking and smart streets. IOT plays a dominant role in smart logistics for automation of transport system and providing information in real time manner (Korczak and Kijewska, 2019).
- **Smart Environment (Natural resources):** It includes factors such as cleanliness, economy, resources for energy conservation for creating healthy and safe living conditions for promoting smart health, low consumption of resources for improving its quality and smart monitoring through technological solutions. A suitable environment is

creating through improvement of environmental conditions, proper management of resource and reduction of environmental issues.

- **Smart Living (Quality of life):** It is inclusive of various aspects such as health, education, security and tourism for the promotion of a healthy living by using ICT. A smart city is beneficial in context of availability of social and cultural service. It is defined based on coexistence based on different classes namely income, culture, age that are well organised indicators of smart living.
- **Smart Technology:** Smart technology implies use of information and communication technology and IOT for data collection and its use by citizens for enabling exchange of data in an efficient manner.
- **Smart Buildings:** It mainly relates to structures enabled with sensors for monitoring of power and water supply issues in real- time for sustainable interaction with components of smart cities.

### **Strategies of 'Smart City'**

There are four main strategies to develop a city under the Smart cities Mission are:

1. **Retrofitting:** It implies construction of cities in a built-up environment that is predominant for making it liveable and productive. Present infrastructure services are to be identified for smart applications to reduce problems regarding urban alliance or resilience, requiring policy framers and investments for pre take off for the establishment of green retrofitting buildings that is applicable for 500 acres of land for improving functional flexibility and developing connectivity (Prakash et al., 2016).
2. **Redevelopment:** It will develop co-create to new layout with enhancement of infrastructure. Two redevelopments social and economic are vital for cities by reducing negative consequences. Plans are developed for promotion of compact settlements, accommodating increasing density and using of land in mixed form in core of the city. It is mainly working for decongesting the city and displaces people and convert land for new uses and 50 acres of land will be needed to fulfil this strategy.
3. **Greenfield:** This strategy aims at introducing smart solutions in previously vacant area which has to be more than 250 acres. It aims at enhancing creative strategies, introduction of resources for the provision of affordable housing facility for meeting needs of rapidly increasing population. The focus on Greenfield construction is

integration of land-use planning by infrastructure provision and enhancement of opportunities. Application of smart solutions helps in improving infrastructure for expanding land for urban use for accommodating increasing population.

**4. Pan-City:** It implies application of solutions that are smart for the infrastructure in the city. It implies including mayor and municipal commissioner and councillors to focus on both area and project specific plan. To provide better facilities smart solutions are implemented for the betterment of city. It is concept associated with smart cities, involving use of technology, information and data for improving quality of services and infrastructure for betterment of governance.

### **Need of the Smart City**

Increasing population is causing rapid pressure on the land and affecting provision of basic amenities viz. water, transportation, housing and others wherein features such as retrofitting, redesign and redevelopment for accommodating the future growing population as at present more than half the population of the world lives in cities (State of World Population Report, 2007).

Smart cities will contribute more than sixty five percent to the gross domestic product in around 2025 suitable for polarized economic growth. The development should take place in a sustainable manner for reducing emissions of harmful gases and to deal with the problem of rapid increasing pollution. This can be achieved by opting sustainable strategies for transportation development, urban planning and by constructing green buildings. The projects depend upon budget and require huge investment this also leads to budgetary constraints in the cities to meet the needs of population pressure.

### **Conclusion**

The research paper deals with the concept of smart city, its inception and meaning at all levels viz. national and international. Cities from various countries have been mentioned and it was concluded that smart city concept evolved in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is buzzword and its notion has been integrated with many other cities such as green, resilient, intelligent cities. Concept of smart cities has a long history and has been traced from world to state levels. The impact of information and communication technology has been discussed with smart city components. It is revealed from the study that exceptional works are being done in the cities with involvement of people and through the availability of finance for development. ICT mainly focus on strengthening

capacities and system of community for urban management in smart service delivery areas. Citizens are involved in the proposal and awareness is being generated regarding smart city terminology and its working. Smart city mission has been introduced in India on the basis of various stages of development inclusive of adhoc, opportunistic, repeatable, managed and optimised. Various schemes rolled out by the government from time to time have been discussed in this chapter which are mainly correlated with smart city mission directly or indirectly. Smart city mission also deals with cleanliness of cities in general that forms part of the Swachh Bharat mission in particular. Smart Cities aim at providing housing for all as covered under the Rajiv Awas Yojana and maintenance of heritage of the city which is the prime objective of HRIDAY scheme and also of smart city project. Thus cities are working towards becoming “Smarter and Sustainable”.

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# The Concept of Feminism in Indian and French Novels: A Comparative Study of Sudha Murty and Simone de Beauvoir

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the notion of feminism as shown in Indian and French literary traditions via a comparative analysis of the writings of Sudha Murty and Simone de Beauvoir. Despite their differing cultural backgrounds and historical contexts, both authors have made substantial contributions to feminist debate through their writings. Murty's pragmatic feminism, rooted in Indian social realities, demonstrates women's achievement of autonomy within traditional structures, while Beauvoir's existentialist feminism fundamentally challenges patriarchal institutions and advocates for complete liberation from gender constraints. This study analyzes the impact of cultural contexts on feminist expression in literature by conducting a textual examination of notable works, including Murty's *Mahashweta*, *Gently Falls the Bakula*, *House of Cards*, Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, and *The Mandarins*. The study reveals that, while their differing approaches, both authors share a commitment to women's intellectual and economic independence, a critique of marriage as potentially restrictive, and an emphasis on female solidarity. This comparative approach deepens our understanding of feminism as both a universal philosophical concept and a culturally-specific movement adapted to distinct contexts.*

**Keywords:** *Comparative feminism, Sudha Murty, Simone de Beauvoir, Indian literature, French literature, cultural feminism, existentialist feminism, women's autonom*

Feminism, as both a social movement and an intellectual tradition, has diversified across cultural contexts while maintaining core concerns regarding women's autonomy, dignity, and equality. Literature has served as a powerful medium for expressing feminist ideas, with novels particularly skilled at exploring the complex realities of women's experiences. This paper examines the expression of feminist ideas in the

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Indian and French literary traditions, concentrating on the works of two notable female authors: Sudha Murty and Simone de Beauvoir.

The authors, varying by region, era, and philosophical viewpoint, offer distinct interpretations of feminism that reflect the gender politics and cultural conventions of their respective civilizations. Sudha Murty (1950-), an Indian engineer, philanthropist, and prolific author, crafts narratives primarily set in contemporary India, exploring women's experiences under traditional societal structures while advocating for their education and economic independence. In contrast, Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), a French existentialist philosopher and novelist, developed a radical feminist philosophy that significantly challenged the notion of gender as a social construct in post-war Europe.

This paper seeks to examine the portrayals of feminism by these authors to understand how cultural contexts shape feminist expression in literature and to identify both universal and culturally-specific aspects of feminist philosophy. The examination focuses on their major works and examines their investigation of critical feminist topics, including women's autonomy, marriage, education, employment, and solidarity.

Sudha Murty's feminist perspective emerges from the complex milieu of post-independence India, when women's roles were evolving amidst persistent traditional structures. The Indian feminist movement has always engaged with the relationship between Western feminist ideologies and indigenous values, often seeking to transform rather than reject local traditions (Chaudhuri, 2005). This context shaped Murty's pragmatic feminism, advocating for women's education and economic independence while acknowledging home duties and traditional norms.

As a trailblazing female engineer in India and the founding chairperson of the Infosys Foundation, Murty's life epitomizes the deconstruction of gender barriers. Her writings encapsulate her belief that women can achieve autonomy through education and financial independence without completely forsaking traditional Indian family structures (Ramakrishnan, 2018).

Beauvoir's feminism arose in post-World War II France, an era marked by profound social inquiry and existentialist philosophy. The feminist movement in Europe during her time became increasingly radical, challenging fundamental societal systems rather than seeking inclusion within them (Moi, 2008). Beauvoir's pivotal work *The Second Sex* (1949) provided the philosophical foundation for modern Western feminism by analyzing the portrayal of women as "the Other" in relation to males. Unlike Murty's pragmatic approach, Beauvoir's existentialist feminism required a thorough reassessment of gender dynamics and advocated for the complete liberation of women from patriarchal constraints. Her writings explore the existential challenges encountered by women seeking authentic life in a world that denies them full subjectivity (Bauer, 2001).

Sudha Murty's novel *Mahashweta* (2007) recounts the story of Anupama, a beautiful young woman who develops leukoderma (vitiligo) soon after her marriage. Subsequent to her spouse and in-laws' rejection due to her infirmity, she independently reconstructs her life, ultimately attaining contentment as an educator and playwright. The tale critiques societal superficiality while celebrating female resilience and independence.

Her education became her greatest asset. It was the one thing that couldn't be taken away from her...With her degree in hand, Anupama found the courage to apply for teaching positions. Education had given her wings when society had tried to clip them.

Murty's feminism is pragmatic and solution-oriented. Rather than directly challenging societal institutions, Anupama fosters a meaningful presence inside existing structures, demonstrating that women's worth surpasses mere physical allure and married condition.

As she stood before her class of students, Anupama realized that her participation in the world of ideas and learning had restored her dignity when all else had failed her.

Her achievement is attained not by rejecting society but by showcasing her value via education and engagement (Singh, 2015).

Murty's second novel, *Gently Falls the Bakula*, released in 2008, explores the gradual deterioration of Shrimati and Shrikant's marriage as Shrikant's corporate successes overshadow Shrimati's academic aspirations.

Education had been important to her; it had given her confidence and independence of thought. But slowly she had allowed all that to be submerged in her love and admiration for Shrikant." (Page 52-53)

Shrimati had dreams beyond the four walls of her home, but she also understood the value of family. It wasn't about choosing one over the other, but finding a way to honor both...She had spent her entire married life waiting for him, adjusting to his needs. Now she realized that she too had her dreams, ambitions and a life of her own." (Page 143)

Education was significant to her; it provided her with confidence and autonomy of thought. However, she gradually permitted all of it to be eclipsed by her affection and reverence for Shrikant.

She had given him nineteen years of unwavering support. Now it was time to live for herself, to pursue her own academic interests that she had sacrificed. (Page 160)

Ultimately, Shrimati separates from her husband to pursue her academic objectives, challenging the traditional expectation that women must relinquish their aspirations for their spouses' careers. She had provided him with nineteen years of steadfast support. It was now time for her to prioritize her own academic objectives that she had previously sacrificed. (Page 160)

The feminist message is complex yet powerful: women's intellectual fulfillment is as important as men's professional success. Notably, Shrimati does not reject marriage itself, but rather a union that hinders her intellectual growth. This exemplifies Murty's nuanced feminism, which values women's education and self-actualization without wholly rejecting traditional institutions (Patel, 2014).

Shrimati had dreams beyond the four walls of her home, but she also understood the value of family. It wasn't about choosing one over the other, but finding a way to honor both.

Murty's subsequent novel, *In House of Cards*, released in 2013, narrates the story of Mridula, a rural schoolteacher who marries a doctor and relocates to Bangalore. As her spouse grows progressively materialistic and deceitful, Mridula endeavors to uphold her honesty. Ultimately, she declares her autonomy by parting ways with him and sustaining herself through teaching.

The story exposes the corruption of relationships by materialism and underscores the significance of women's financial autonomy. Mridula's choice to depart from her husband, in spite of societal pressure, illustrates how Murty's protagonists attain autonomy through moral fortitude and financial independence rather than through a fundamental repudiation of marriage (Deshpande, 2016)

Simone de Beauvoir novel *She Came to Stay* (1943) somewhat inspired on Beauvoir's relationships with Jean-Paul Sartre and Olga Kosakiewicz, examines themes of jealousy, dependency, and power dynamics among women. Beauvoir utilizes the figure of Françoise to explore the internalization of patriarchal values by women and their potential complicity in the oppression of other women.

The story presents a feminist existentialist perspective, illustrating women's challenges in attaining real life in a world that denies them complete subjectivity. In contrast to Murty's characters, who operate within social frameworks, Françoise's odyssey entails the acknowledgment and repudiation of the patriarchal values that have influenced her awareness (Fallaise, 1988).

*The Mandarins* (1954) This Prix Goncourt-winning novel depicts post-war intellectual life in Paris through characters inspired by Beauvoir's circle, including herself (as Anne Dubreuilh) and Sartre. Beauvoir, via Anne, examines a woman's quest for significance beyond her identities as spouse and mother, which includes an extramarital relationship with an American author.

The feminist themes encompass women's sexual autonomy, intellectual independence, and the constraints of matrimony. Anne's existential crises and her affair signify a repudiation of socially mandated feminine norms and the quest for genuine experience. In contrast to Murty's characters, who frequently achieve satisfaction within altered

traditional roles, Anne pursues emancipation by completely transcending those positions (Moi, 2008).

*Les Belles Images* (1966) This subsequent work analyzes bourgeois society through Laurence, an advertising executive who encounters existential emptiness despite her professional achievements. Laurence interrogates her society's ideals as she witnesses her daughter starting to internalize constrictive gender stereotypes.

The feminist criticism is structural, contesting not only individual connections but also the overarching social framework that influences awareness. Beauvoir maintains that genuine emancipation necessitates the repudiation of the "aesthetic representations" that society constructs to uphold gender hierarchy. This systemic critique differs from Murty's more individualistic perspective on women's empowerment (Tidd, 2004).

Both authors appreciate women's liberty, however they conceptualize it in distinct manners. For Murty, autonomy signifies self-sufficiency and the capacity to make independent decisions within established social frameworks. The heroes attain liberation via education, employment, and ethical principles, frequently without entirely renouncing conventional roles (Ramakrishnan, 2018).

According to Beauvoir, autonomy necessitates the complete transcendence of socially imposed gender norms. Her existentialist feminism asserts that women must acknowledge and repudiate the influence of patriarchy on their awareness. Genuine freedom is achieved by honest decisions that challenge societal norms rather than conforming to them (Bauer, 2001).

Both authors examine the constraints marriage imposes on women's potential, albeit with differing focal points. Murty depicts marriages that falter when they hinder women's intellectual or moral development, yet she does not dismiss the institution itself. Her characters frequently exit particular bad marriages instead than interrogating marriage as a social construct (Patel, 2014).

Beauvoir's critique is foundational, depicting marriage as a mechanism that institutionalizes women's dependency and subjugation. In *The Second Sex*, she asserts

that marriage conventionally operates as "a career" placed on women as their fundamental fate, constraining their transcendence. Her novel protagonists frequently pursue fulfillment beyond marriage or grapple with its limitations (Beauvoir, 1949/2011).

Both authors underscore the significance of women's education and financial autonomy. Murty, a trailblazing female engineer, depicts education as the foremost avenue for women's empowerment in Indian society. The protagonists leverage their education to attain economic autonomy in the absence of supportive family structures (Singh, 2015).

Beauvoir also prioritizes women's intellectual and professional advancement while highlighting how societal limitations may render these efforts inadequate for genuine liberty. In *The Mandarins*, Anne's intellectual endeavors do not entirely alleviate her existential dilemma, indicating that personal accomplishment alone cannot surmount systemic gender oppression (Fallaise, 1988).

Both authors acknowledge the significance of female mutual assistance, albeit through distinct approaches. Murty's stories frequently depict women discovering support networks that assist them in enduring male abandonment or familial rejection. This pragmatic solidarity assists women in maneuvering through challenging situations (Deshpande, 2016).

Beauvoir's viewpoint on female relationships is intricate, frequently examining competitiveness and treachery among women as manifestations of their subjugation. In *She Came to Stay*, women strive for male validation, demonstrating how patriarchy fosters rivalry among them. Beauvoir eventually supports conscious solidarity among women as vital for collective liberation (Tidd, 2004).

The disparities between Murty's and Beauvoir's feminist perspectives illustrate their unique cultural settings. Indian feminism frequently navigates the tension between modernization and traditional preservation, aiming to enhance women's standing while without entirely discarding tradition. This elucidates Murty's focus on reforming established systems and her characters' persistent appreciation for family and community (Chaudhuri, 2005).

French feminism, especially Beauvoir's existentialist interpretation, originated from a philosophical tradition that scrutinized conventional norms and institutions. Post-war European intellectuals exhibited skepticism towards conventional social institutions, facilitating a more radical reconfiguration of gender relations (Moi, 2008).

Cultural disparities manifest in their familial treatment. Murty's protagonists frequently uphold familial ties while seeking autonomy, illustrating the significance of family in Indian culture. Beauvoir's characters more readily sever familial bonds that restrict their autonomy, embodying a more individualistic European viewpoint.

Notwithstanding these distinctions, Murty and Beauvoir align on numerous fundamental concepts. Both unequivocally advocate for women's intellectual and economic autonomy as fundamental to liberty. Both critique unions that subordinate women's aspirations to those of men. Both acknowledge the constraints imposed by cultural expectations on women's potential and champion the notion that women should define themselves beyond these confines. Both authors fundamentally reject the idea that women's value is contingent upon their relationship with men. Both Murty's self-sufficient heroines, who reconstruct their life post-rejection, and Beauvoir's philosophical claim that women should be subjects rather than objects, emphasize women's intrinsic worth and ability for self-determination.

This comparative analysis of feminism in the works of Sudha Murty and Simone de Beauvoir illustrates the various manifestations of feminist concepts across cultural contexts, while preserving fundamental issues about women's autonomy and dignity. Murty's pragmatic feminism, which advocates for reform within established frameworks, stands in stark contrast to Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, which fundamentally contests those frameworks. Both offer significant insights to feminist deliberation.

The distinctions among these authors underscore feminism's capacity to adapt to various cultural contexts. Murty's methodology acknowledges the significance of operating within established social frameworks in environments where conventional family structures are predominant, whereas Beauvoir's incisive critique contests fundamental

beliefs on gender that sustain inequity. Their convergences illustrate the universal elements of feminism: the significance of women's education, economic autonomy, and self-determination beyond cultural confines. Both authors finally conceive worlds in which women can completely realize their potential and determine their own destinies.

This comparative method enhances our comprehension of feminism as a universal philosophical idea and a culturally-specific movement that adjusts to local settings. Reading Murty and Beauvoir in conjunction enhances our understanding of feminism's global importance and its varied manifestations across cultural divides.

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# Retellings of *The Ramayana* — Accenting the Stories of Sisterhood

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## ABSTRACT

*Indian mythology stands to be one of the oldest in the world. It encapsulates stories well blended with the elements of reason and imagination, truth and perceptions. Despite having an innate humane connection with its community, it still remains to be a collection of stories as old as mankind itself, thus prone to inconsistencies and paradoxes. This often leads to negation of many different ideas, because after all every book is a collection of stories and events chosen at the discretion of its authors who may or may not have the same opinions based on the same ideas. However, subdued one may think of it to be, authors play a significant role in shaping the stories that we read and see. Hayden White in his seminal work *Metafiction* talks about the concept of historiography, of how history too is written as a narrative, wherein one chooses stories from a pool of many different stories. The same idea can be applied in the mythological fiction narratives. Books like *The Palace of Illusion*, *The Forest of Enchantments* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and *Sita's sister* by Kavita Kane, take up the female narratives in contrast to the renowned male narratives as the central theme of their novel. Representation of women characters has been resurfacing gradually in many such fictional narratives. The paper would deal with the narratives of sisterhood as projected in the great epic *Ramayana*. It would try to chart out different colors of female bonding otherwise veiled by the male-dominated narratives and aims to highlight the endearing relationships that women share with each other through their shared sorrows and sufferings but also through their victories and courage.*

**Keywords** - sisterhood, mythological fiction, shared sorrows, courage

## Introduction

What is Mythology? The term can be read and understood through varied theoretical lenses as one may please. To focus on the etymological creation of the word, *Mythology* - the word first came into existence from the Middle English, from French *mythologie* or from Latin *mythologia*. The root word *myth* means the story of the people, which

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comes from the people through modes of oral utterances, tales and legends.

The great Indian epic *Ramayana* is the literal attempt to epitomize the idea of an ideal man and his ideal victory of good over evil. *Maryadapurshottam Ram* as a dutiful son adheres to a rather painstaking decision by his father King Dasharatha to go on an exile of fourteen long years. He is accompanied by his dutiful wife Sita and dutiful brother Lakshmana. In an unfortunate incident Sita is abducted by Lanka King Ravana. The story moves forward with the brothers' earnest pursuit to get Sita back as a result of which happens the greatest of all war, the war between the good and evil. Other than this universal theme of good vs evil, another significant theme that stands out throughout the story is that of the relationship shared by the brothers, the effervescent brotherhood is palpable throughout the story, or has been made noticeable through different episodes and scenes in the epic. What is even more remarkable is the blunt ignorance of the stories and relationships shared by Sita with her other three sisters Urmila, Mandavi and Shrutkirti, who were all married to Lakshmana, Bharat and Shatrughana respectively, and thus were a part of the same family. There can be multiple reasons and theories for this unconscious/conscious disregard for the stories of sisterhood in a text written by male writers apotheosizing the godliness of a man or the manliness of a God. This again becomes a one of the hundredth question in the domain of mythology in general and Indian mythology in particular.

The paper aims primarily to study the dimensions of sisterhood in the provided possibilities of *The Ramayana* retellings. The two primary texts for the study are *The Forest of Enchantments* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and *Sita's Sisters* by Kavita Kane. Before jumping directly into the pool of these stories, the paper also discusses two theorists and their work to understand the concept of how and why the narratives change. This would foster a better understanding of the distinguishing features of mythology and its effect as well as relevance in current scenarios. The works discussed are Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* and Hayden White's *Metahistory*. These seminal works are applied in context of the western history and historiography, an attempt to relate them in the Indian context has been made to see the concurrent overlapping of this methodology in reading and comprehending both history and historical/mythological fiction.

According to Roland Barthes, an important post-structuralist literary theorist, Myths are nothing but a set of ideas that become universally accepted and/or understood according

to the dominant ideal. In his text *Mythologies*, Barthes does a semiotic reading of different aspects of society in order to identify the ideological beliefs that support them. Thus, *mythology* is a mode of communication that signifies what supposedly goes without saying in society, the language that makes unrealistic truths seem natural. His core concept, based purely on semiology further advanced to post-structuralist understanding, highlighted the deliberate coercion on values rather than facts. The form and meaning that come together to create a myth are never final and fixed. He notes that “truth is no guarantee” for a myth. Myths are capable of constantly shifting and evolving as they are constructed and reconstructed, and their values change along with the circumstances. He defined myth as consisting of a sign and a concept signified. He conveniently writes: What is a myth, today? I shall give at the outset a first, very simple answer, which is perfectly consistent with etymology: *myth is a type of speech*. (Barthes, 107)

He lucidly then goes on to explain why myth is a system of communication, that it is a message. We can also look at this theoretically, in terms of developing the whole narrative around the God of righteousness and his kingdom, his struggle to get back his pure and pious wife, it also talks about the sufferings of Sita and how she maintained her dignity and image of not just an ideal woman, but an ideal wife, thus paving the perfect sculpted notion of how a woman must be. What needs to be understood is that we are deeply enmeshed in the catechisms of narratives. Any narrative whether true or false carries the potential to become the inevitable truth if projected continuously with a compelling fervor. Any story that deals with the emotional inklings of religious ideologies becomes a difficult and sensitive deal and such narratives usually never change, and even if there stands a chance for some restructuring to the authentic narrative, the remodeling carries with it an impasse of contradictory opinions and perspectives. The narrative of a story has more substance than the story itself. Narrative thus is the soul of historiography. Historiography can be defined as the methodology used for writing history. Hayden White in his seminal text *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* talks about the fundamental roles of historians in shaping the history of a place or culture, he deems them as artists who imbue historical action with aesthetic and ethical purpose.

The form of the discourse, the narrative, adds nothing to the content of the representation, but is rather a simulacrum of the structure and processes of real events.

And insofar as this representation resembles the events of which it is a representation, it can be taken as a true account. The story told in the narrative is a "mimesis" of the story lived in some region of historical reality, and insofar as it is an accurate imitation it is to be considered a truthful account thereof. (White, 3)

When we talk about *The Ramayana*, we are unconsciously aware about the religious and moral significance the text holds. Valmiki is revered as the *Ādi Kavi*. His story is a compelling narrative, of a king and his kingdom the symbol of righteousness, also for its humane emotional experiences by the divine figures, thus assuring an infallible connection with the readers and believers of this text. A specialist of Indian folklore, A.K. Ramanujan likened *The Ramayana* tradition to a pool of signifiers, arguing that each author 'dips into it and brings out a unique crystallization, a new text with a fresh context.' thus concluding that, 'no text is original, yet no telling is a mere retelling.'

Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni stands to be one of the most distinguished writers of Indian historical fiction. She clinically projects the celebrated stories of the great epics through the lenses of the eclipsed character. *The Forest of Enchantments* is Divakaruni's *Sitayana*. The story remains the same (most of the time) but the narrative is changed, the eyes who look at the events and the voice that describes the event has changed, and so historiographically speaking, the tone, the message and the aesthetic imbue of the text is altered. Ram is the epitome of the ideal king, who puts his duty far superior than any other vocation in his life, who is blinded by his righteous contortions about duty, readily forgoes his beloved wife and children to abstain from falling into the overpowering pull of love over duty. To this, Divakaruni through the voice of Sita writes in the novel: And that is the final advice I leave for my children: my dearest boys, balance duty with love'. (Divakaruni, 6)

Sita of Ramayan must be a goddess but Banerjee's Sita is a human, a one who is relatable. Sita's contemporary rendition is focal in this novel. She is capable of being smitten, angry, confused, afraid, or heartbroken.

In a manner of pleasant surprise is the introduction of Sita's sister Urmila in the story. She is depicted as the woman of honor and vigor. Mostly neglected as a subordinate character in *The Ramayana*, Divakaruni has enhanced the nuisances and characterisation of Urmila. She does not fail to explore the innocent and faithful relationship shared between Urmila and Sita. The two sisters were together before

marrying the descendants of the Ikshavaku clan. They were brought up in the similar environment, as the daughters of King Janak and their upbringing foregrounded their interpersonal relationships in the time of adversity, and this connection remained untainted throughout, come what may. She beautifully depicts the differences in their personalities

‘I was very fond of my sister, though she was quite different from me, always wanting to play with dolls and dress up in Mother’s jewelry, and entertain the daughters of our ministers or visiting dignitaries.’ (Divakaruni, 9)

This theme of sisterhood remained camouflaged in the original text. They consider each other their confidants and share moments of both misery and joy, this sisterly bond acts as an armor against the disguised sufferings and complexities of their courtly life. Post Sita’s return, Urmila asks a very poignant yet heartbreaking question to Sita: ‘Ram took you with him. Why then did Lakshaman refuse to take me? Was I so unworthy?’ (Divakaruni, 281)

In the initial pages of the book Divakaruni vividly explores the bond shared by the two sisters, she writes:

‘Urmila, merry and mercurial, the baby of our family, who would pout until she got her way. Whom I loved dearly, and who loved me back with her whole being. Who never said, not even when we had our spats, that she was the real princess and I the foundling.’ (Divakaruni, 17)

One is forced to think about the bent a tragedy like this would have made in the young poor heart of Urmila’s which used to be a temple of joyful hopes and a horizon of untainted possibilities of a happy future.

The sisterly love worked as a safety blanket for both of them. In a poignant manner Divakaruni renders the sensitive and care-bearing relationship they had. Talking about a troubled night post the day they first saw the two princes of Ayodhya, a troubled Urmila had grown restless of anticipation, she writes:

‘When she was this way, I’d learned over the years, only one thing calmed her down: my singing. So, I made up a song, one I felt was appropriate for tonight, repeating it over and over until her eyes closed and her breath slowed.’ (Divakaruni, 22)

Urmila, the less talked about woman in the story of *The Ramayana* has her own wide

share of pain, agony as well as responsibility, which Sita acknowledged and realized that her sister was no less a warrior than her own self, and that she too was living in an exile. This was the exile which deprived Urmila of a happy married life, a life filled with love, with aspirations and with the support of her sister in navigating through their lives in a kingdom as big and as revered as theirs. Divakaruni adds in all her historical fiction writings, the element of realism and less fantasy. She depicts and projects her characters emotions and vulnerabilities with a deep humane touch. The conversations that she develops between the two sisters are filled with all the intricate nuances that can be found everywhere, even in this day and age. Sisterhood takes many different forms in the text, but mostly it resonates with the idea of shared sorrows between the women of *The Ramayana*.

Another important text which deals with the buried presence of women characters in amayana is a novel by Kavita Kane, *Sita's Sisters*. Kavita Kane, renowned for her mythological fiction, specializes in retelling narratives from the Indian epics like *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. In this novel, she explores the unbreakable bond of sisterhood, offering a unique perspective by narrating the Ramayana through the voice of Urmila. The story unfolds the bonds among the four sisters - Sita, Urmila, Mandavi and Shrutkirti - from childhood, to adulthood, emphasizing women supporting and standing by each other. The novel portrays instances where women express solidarity, speak up and provide mutual support, allowing readers to glean virtues from these female characters and witness the evolving relationships across different life stages. She projects the regular lives and day to day inklings of the sisters.

The four young girls engaged in such banter all the time. There was no malice in it, no shred of meanness. They were simply disarmingly frank with each other; brutally blunt with each other sometimes, and why wouldn't they? They were sisters, after all, and there was no need to be nice and good all the time. (Kane, 8)

Talking about the bonds shared by these sisters, Kavita Kane pens, 'Urmila...a foil to Sita right from the start. The two cradles had rocked in perfect harmony since childhood as smooth and strong as the bond that was to blossom between the two girls. Completing the circle of love and laughter were Mandavi and Kirti, their younger cousins, the two chirpy daughters of King Kushadhwaj...the younger brother of Seeradhvaj Janak.' (Kane, 11-12)

The story moves forward from their lives in Mithila to their marriage in the kingdom of Koshala, Ayodhya, and the deployment of dramatic elements throughout the change in their exterior as well as anterior environment is commendable. Married in the same household the sisters accepted the air of change in their own capacities. They formed their own equation with the family members, especially the ladies of the kingdom, the mothers and their maidservants. When Ayodhya was waiting for its king to declare the to-be king, the inner workings of the family observed some serious strains, tainting many relationships. The four sisters who were not just sisters any more but also sisters-in-law started to feel the heat of these disagreements on their otherwise warm relationships. One incident, staged by Kane, transpires a clash of opinion between the sisters on who should be the ideal choice for the King of Ayodhya. Mandavi, wife of Bharat had her share of bitter manipulations by Manthara and became vicious in one such discussion, and pours hurtful words for her sisters, to which Urmila, maturely and mindfully says:

Please, girls, don't! We are fighting! She said angrily, bringing the two girls to their senses. 'We have fought before as well but this is so hideously vindictive!' she cried. 'What are we fighting about - who'll be queen, who is superior, who ups who? How does it matter? Did we ever think this way? We were always sisters, never cousins, never queens and princesses. Oh, what's wrong with us?' (Kane, 110-111)

The story follows the similar storyline as the original text, underlining just the unseen perspectives shared by the women who were left behind as a result of their husband's principles and ideologies of being first for their people, and then for each other, and finally for their wives. Mandavi breaks down looking at the adverse condition of her kingdom, and her household, with everything falling apart, and realizes the only thing that has been shielding them from the tribulations is the sisterly love.

'It would be very mean and selfish of me but I'm thankful you are here with me...you are our glue! And that is what you have always been to us - an adhesive binding us sisters together, holding us up.' (Kane, 238)

This becomes the essence of the entire novel, the mutual feeling of togetherness and love that may be veiled sometimes, but is always present, in the happiest and saddest of times.

Both the novels are an attempt at exploring the actions and emotions of characters who

do not get any dominant voice in the dominant narrative of the story. If looked intently, one can see the similarities of representations and characterization of the women of *Ramayana*, and realize that the not spoken off too carries a deep ocean of emotion and narration.

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## ई-पंचायत— सूचना और प्रौद्योगिकी से ग्रामीण विकास का बदलता परिदृश्य

बलकार सिंह\*

### सारांश

भारत में ग्रामीण विकास के विकास प्रक्रिया में पंचायती राज संस्थाएं गाँव के रूपान्तरण के अभिकर्ता के रूप में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा रही है। इन संस्थाओं के द्वारा लोकतंत्र देश के निचले स्तर पर पहुँचा है। स्थानीय प्रशासन की व्यवस्था में बदलाव के साथ गाँवों का समावेशी विकास की शुरुआत पंचायती राज संस्थाओं के माध्यम से हुई है। इस समावेशी विकास को लाने में सूचना एवं संचार प्रौद्योगिकी ने मुख्य भूमिका निभाई है। जिसके कारण आज पंचायतें ई-पंचायतों में परिवर्तित होकर अंतिम स्तर तक शासन में पारदर्शिता एवं तीव्रता के साथ प्रत्येक नागरिक की सहभागिता सुनिश्चित कर रही है। ई-पंचायत के माध्यम से पंचायती राज संस्थाओं की अधिक जबावदेही बढ़ गई है। अब तक देश में लगभग 2.50 लाख पंचायतों में सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी लागू कर दी गयी है। विश्व बैंक के अनुसार “ई-गवर्नेंस का अर्थ है कि सरकारी एजेंसियों द्वारा सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी का प्रयोग कर नागरिकों को बेहतर सुविधा प्रदान करना और सरकारी योजनाओं में बेहतर प्रबंधन करना”।

ई-पंचायतों को वर्ष 2006 में शुरू किया गया था जिसके फलस्वरूप पंचायतों की कार्य प्रणाली में गुणात्मक सुधार हुआ और ये नागरिकों को बेहतर सेवाएं प्रदान करने और विकास योजनाओं में भागीदारी बढ़ाने में सफल रही हैं।

**कुंजी शब्द** — ई-पंचायत, समावेशी विकास, ई-गवर्नेंस, सूचना और संचार प्रौद्योगिकी

### परिचय

भारत में गाँवों का विकास किए बिना देश के विकास की कल्पना अधूरी है। गाँवों के विकास की धुरी पंचायतें ही हैं। गाँव के सामाजिक आर्थिक एवं राजनैतिक के साथ-साथ बात करें, तो गाँव में समावेशी विकास का सपना केवल पंचायती राज संस्थाओं के द्वारा ही सम्भव है।

आजादी के बाद देश के ग्रामीण विकास की कल्पना पंचायती राज संस्थाओं के द्वारा हो सकती है, इसी सोच के साथ 2 अक्टूबर 1959 को देश में पंचायती राज की नींव रखी गई थी, परन्तु समय के साथ कतिपय कमियों के कारण 1990 तक इसमें ज्यादा सफलता नहीं मिली। भारत में पंचायती राज में क्रांतिकारी बदलाव 73 वें संविधान संशोधन अधिनियम 1993 में लोकतांत्रिक विकेंद्रीकरण द्वारा ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में रहने वाले सभी नागरिकों के जीवन में एक नए युग की

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\* सहायक आचार्य, ग्रामीण विकास विभाग, इग्नू, नई दिल्ली

शुरुआत हुई। इस ऐतिहासिक कदम के द्वारा स्थानीय सरकार के रूप में ग्राम पंचायतों को स्थापित किया गया एवं उन्हें अधिकारों के साथ साथ सक्षम भी बनाया गया।

विश्व बैंक रिपोर्ट 2004 में उल्लेख किया गया है कि “विकास को प्रत्यक्ष रूप से मानवीय आवश्यकताओं का समाधान करना चाहिए। प्रत्येक लोकतंत्र की संस्थाएं जैसे पंचायत उन प्रक्रियाओं में निहित होनी चाहिए जो बदलती हुई परिस्थितियों के प्रति सामाजिक रूप से विशिष्ट और अनुकियाशील हों”। पंचायती राज मंत्रालय द्वारा दिसम्बर 2004 में सातवें गोलमेज सम्मेलन का आयोजन किया गया था, जिसमें पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में ई-गवर्नेंस लागू करने की सिफारिश की गई थी। इसे वर्ष 2006 में शुरू किया गया था, जिसके फलस्वरूप पंचायतों की कार्य प्रणाली में गुणात्मक सुधार हुआ है, और नागरिकों को बेहतर सेवा प्रदान करने और विकास योजनाओं में उनकी भागीदारी को बढ़ाने में सफल रही है।

### पंचायती राज में सूचना और संचार प्रौद्योगिकी

भारत की अधिकांश जनसंख्या ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में रहती है। 2019 तक कुल भारत की आबादी का लगभग 66% भाग गांवों में बसता है। ग्रामीण भारत त्रिस्तरीय पंचायती राज प्रणाली का उपयोग करके कार्य करता है जिनमें ग्राम पंचायत (निचले स्तर पर) ब्लॉक मंडल पंचायत (मध्यम स्तर पर) जिला पंचायत (जिला स्तर पर) शामिल है। भारत में 630 जिला पंचायतें, 6614 ब्लॉक पंचायतें और 25163 ग्राम पंचायतें हैं। ग्रामीण भारत आज भी कई विकास चुनौतियों का सामना कर रहा है और उनके निपटान के लिए एक केन्द्रित निरंतर एवं एकीकृत दृष्टिकोण की आवश्यकता है।

पंचायती राज शासन के विभिन्न पहलुओं को साकार करने के लिए प्रौद्योगिकी एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा सकती है। साक्ष्य आधारित योजना ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के समग्र विकास का सतत पहलू है। जमीनी स्तर पर साक्ष्य आधारित योजना को और अधिक सुविधाजनक बनाने के लिए डेटा तक पहुंचें और विभिन्न हितधारकों के विचारों को ग्रहण करना अत्याधिक आवश्यक है।

सूचना और प्रौद्योगिकी की परिवर्तनकारी क्षमता को साकार करने के लिए केंद्रीय और राज्य सरकारें ग्रामीण विकास के स्थानीय प्रशासन सुधार एवं पंचायती राज के कार्यों में गुणवत्ता लाने के लिए सूचना और प्रौद्योगिकी की विभिन्न पहलें शुरू हो चुकी हैं।

विगत दो दशक में संचार के क्षेत्र में क्रांतिकारी परिवर्तन हुआ है। देश के एक कोने से दूसरे कोने में अब सूचनाओं के माध्यम से कार्य कुछ ही क्षणों में हो जाता है। आज के गाँव इक्कीसवीं सदी के संचार माध्यमों से अछूते नहीं हैं। बदलते दौर में संचार के आधुनिक साधन अब पंचायती राज संस्थाओं के लिए सबसे बेहतरीन साधन हैं।

आज के सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी युग में डिजिटल कवरेज के दायरे में आने वाली पंचायतों की संख्या बहुत अधिक है ।

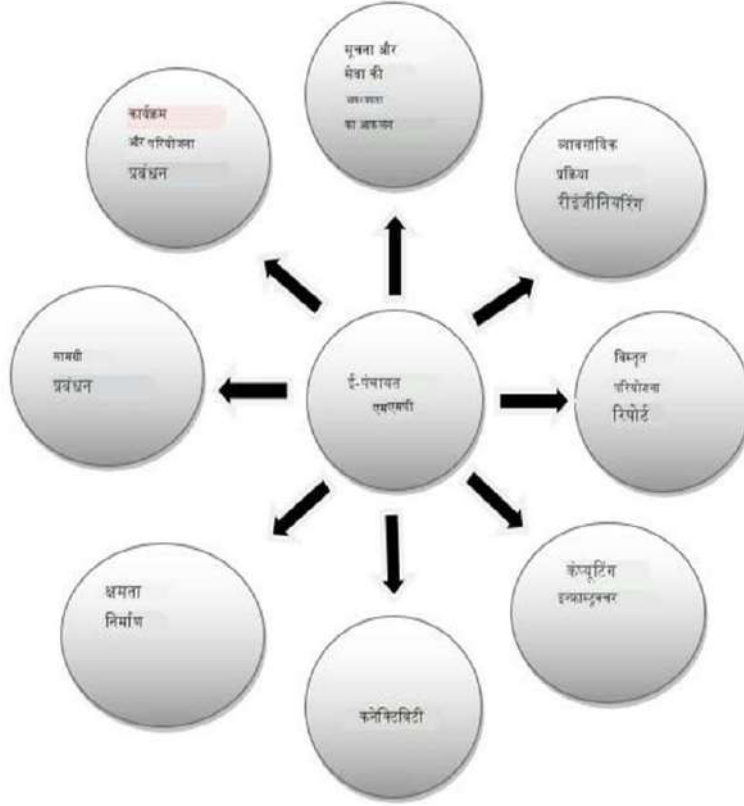
ऑनलाईन डैश बोर्ड आज के डिजिटल युग में सूचना एवं संचार का सशक्त माध्यम हैं । आज अपने घर में बैठकर देश के किसी भी कोने की असली समयबद्ध जानकारी प्राप्त कर सकते हैं पंचायती राज मंत्रालय ने भी डैश बोर्ड निर्माण में अग्रणी भूमिका निभाई है। पंचायती राज मंत्रालय द्वारा संचालित स्वामित्व योजना, ई- ग्राम स्वराज, लोकल गर्वमेंट डायरेक्टरी, ग्राम पंचायत विकास योजना, ऑडिट ऑनलाईन, राष्ट्रीय पंचायत पुरस्कार, सर्विस प्लस एवं पंचायत चार्टर से सम्बन्धित डैशबोर्ड संचालित है जो संबन्धित योजना के नवीनतम आंकड़ों एवं सूचनाओं को आमजन तक पहुंचा रहे हैं। इन डैशबोर्ड में पंचायत स्तर पर योजना के क्रियान्वयन की जानकारी प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

### **ई-पंचायत – इतिहास एवं मौजूदा स्थिति**

पंचायती राज मंत्रालय ने केन्द्रीय मंत्रालयों, राज्यों के विभिन्न विभागों, पंचायतों और नागरिकों समेत तमाम हितकारकों की सूचना और सेवाओं की जरूरतों की पहचान के लिए सभी राज्यों और केन्द्र शासित प्रदेशों में विस्तृत अध्ययन करवाया है। इससे 12 मूल सार्वजनिक एप्लीकेशनों की पहचान की गई, जो पंचायत के कामकाज के सभी पहलुओं को अपने में समेटें हुए हैं। इन पहलुओं में योजना निर्माण, क्रियान्वयन, निगरानी, बजट व्यवस्था, अकाउंटिंग, और सामाजिक ऑडिट सरीखे आंतरिक मूल कार्यों के अलावा प्रमाण पत्र और लाइसेंस जारी करने जैसी नागरिक सेवाओं की डिलीवरी भी शामिल है।

ये एप्लीकेशन मिल कर पंचायत उधम समूह (पी ई एस) बनाते हैं ये साफटवेयर एप्लीकेशन ई-शासन के सभी मानकों के अनुरूप मुक्त स्रोत प्रौद्योगिकी पर आधारित हैं ये पूरी तरह अंतर – संचालनीय हैं ताकि उपयोगकर्ता को बार-बार डाटा की प्रविष्टि नहीं करनी पड़े ।

प्रधानमंत्री ने 24 अप्रैल 2012 को राष्ट्रीय पंचायती राज दिवस के मौके पर एप्लीकेशनों के ई-पंचायत समूह का शुभारंभ किया ।



ई-पंचायत परियोजना के मुख्य उद्देश्य निम्नलिखित हैं

- पंचायतों के आंतरिक कार्यप्रवाह प्रक्रियाओं का स्वचालीकरण
- नागरिक सेवा वितरण में सुधार
- पंचायत प्रतिनिधियों और कर्मचारियों का क्षमता निर्माण
- स्थानी स्वशासन में सुधार
- पारदर्शिता, जवाबदेहिता व कुशलता बढाना
- निर्णय निर्माण प्रक्रिया में सुधार
- सामाजिक लेखा परीक्षा आदि ।

पीआरआई में ई-शासन को मजबूत करने के मकसद से पंचायती राज के लिए सरल कार्य-आधारित अकाउंटिंग एप्लीकेशन ई-ग्राम स्वराज विकसित किया गया है। इसमें ई-पंचायत एम एस पी से सम्बन्धित एप्लीकेशनों के कार्यों को समाहित कर लिया है। जिनमें प्लान प्लस, एक्शन साफ्ट प्रियासॉफ्ट और राष्ट्रीय संपदा निर्देशिका शामिल है। क्षेत्र प्रोफाइलर एप्लीकेशन और स्थानीय शासन निर्देशिका को भी सम्मिलित किया गया है। इस तरह यह सार्वजनिक वित्तीय प्रबंधन प्रणाली (पीएफएमएस) के साथ व्यवस्था के लिए आधार बन गया है। (योजना नवम्बर 2021, मयंक खरबन्दा पेंज 48-52)

### पंचायत से ई-पंचायत तक का सफर

ईक्कीसवीं शताब्दी में सरकार के लिए देश की मजबूत अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए ग्रामीण ढांचे को मजबूत करना सबसे बड़ी चुनौती है। वास्तव में इन संस्थाओं को प्रतिनिधि राजनीतिक संस्थाओं से स्वयं को स्थानीय समुदाय समर्पित एवं प्रत्यक्ष लोकतंत्र प्रतिनिधि संस्थाओं के रूप में रूपांतरित करना है।

इन संस्थाओं को अच्छे शासन के लिए निचले स्तर पर बहुत बड़े वर्ग के प्रतिनिधि के ढांचे के अंतर्गत कार्य करना है। इन संस्थाओं की सकारात्मक चुनौतियां निचले स्तर पर स्वस्थ लोकतंत्र का निर्माण एवं संरक्षण करना, अच्छे व पारदर्शी शासन के लिए अनिवार्य कदम उठाना, सामाजिक अंकुषण (आडिट) के प्रति जवाबदेही होना व कार्यों में पारदर्शिता बनाए रखना नए रोजगार एवं स्वरोजगार के ढांचे को मजबूत करना, आत्मनिर्भरता के लिए प्रयास, नए योजनाओं एवं कार्यक्रमों के लिए अत्योदय की भावना के साथ कार्य करना, गैर सरकारी संगठनों एवं सामुदायिक संगठनों के साथ मिलकर सामाजिक गतिविधियों को बढ़ाना महिला सशक्तिकरण, पिछड़े वंचित वर्गों को समाज की मुख्य धारा में जोड़कर उनके भागीदारी को सुनिश्चित करना, समानता के भाव से विकास की गतिविधियों को सभी की सहभागिता के साथ संचालित करना, युवा शक्ति को देश व समाज के प्रति कर्तव्य की भावना पैदा करना है।

इन चुनौतियों का सामना करने के लिए, 1990 के दशक से केन्द्र और राज्य सरकारों द्वारा प्राप्त मात्रा में सूचना एवं संचार प्रौद्योगिकी की पहले प्रारम्भ की गई है। इन पहलों में पंचायती राज संस्थाओं को और अधिक जबाबदेह, अनुक्रियाशील और नागरिक मैत्रीपूर्ण बनाने की अपार संभावनाएं हैं। सूचना और संचार प्रौद्योगिकी आज समाज में सबसे अधिक परिवर्तनकारी है और सूचना ही इसका आधार है, जिसके माध्यम से एक सूचित समाज का निर्माण होता है।

**ई-पंचायत** - राष्ट्रीय ई-गवर्नेंस योजना के अंतर्गत ई-पंचायत एक महत्वपूर्ण मिशन मोड परियोजना है जिसे ग्रामीण भारत को सशक्त और रूपांतरित करने की दृष्टि से क्रियान्वित किया

जा रहा है। ई-पंचायत व्यवस्था सही मायनो में ग्रामीण लोगो को विकास प्रक्रिया में सहभागी बना रही है।

ई-पंचायत परियोजना न केवल संसाधनो का समयबद्ध व चरणबद्ध उपयोग होगा, बल्कि ग्रामीण लोगो को भी सरकार की योजनाओ एवं कार्यक्रमो से सीधा जुडने का मौका मिलेगा।

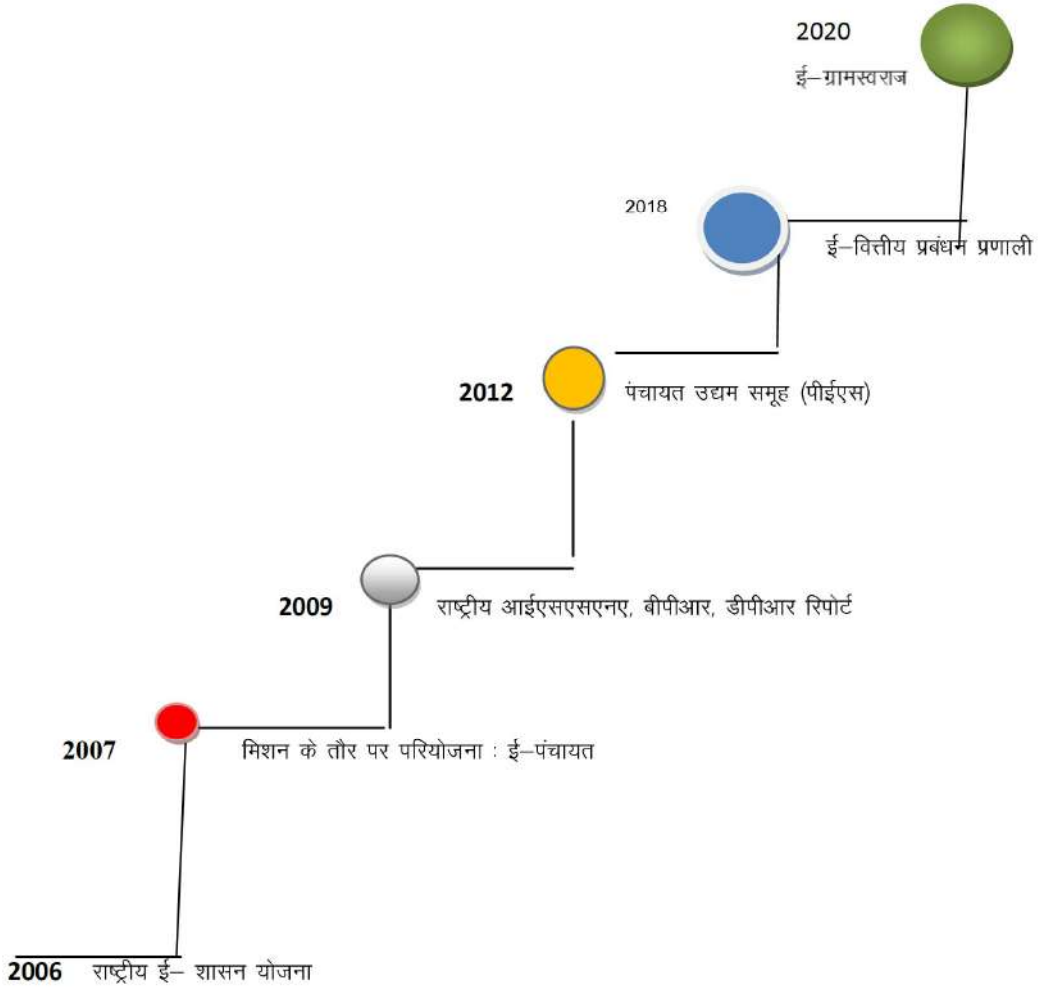
केंद्रीय पंचायती राज मंत्रालय (एमओपीआर) ने पूरे भारत में पंचायत उधक सूट (पीईएस) वाले ई-पंचायत प्रणाली को लागू करना अनिवार्य कर दिया है। इस प्रणाली को 2006 में पेश किया गया था

ई-पंचायत मिशन मोड परियोजना का मुख्य उद्देश्य देश की 2.45 लाख (लगभग) पंचायतो की आंतरिक कार्यप्रवाह प्रक्रियाओं का स्वचालन करना है। यह परियोजना पूरी तरह बेव आधारित है इसके माध्यम से पंचायत स्तर पर डिजिटल सेवाएं प्रदान की जाती हैं। ई-पंचायत सुशासन को बढ़ावा देने का माध्यम बन रही है। पंचायती राज मंत्रालय द्वारा ई-पंचायत के लिए 7 मुख्य घटक परिभाषित किये गए हैं

### ई-पंचायत के भाग

ई-पंचायत एप्लीकेशन सॉफ्टवेयर के मुख्य चार भाग हैं

1. **प्रशासनिक भाग** – यह ग्राम पंचायत अधिकारियों को अपने कर्तव्यो एवं जिम्मेदारियों को पूरा करने में मदद करता है। इसे विभिन्न कार्यों की सूचना प्रबंधन प्रणाली के साथ जोडा गया है।
2. **प्रबंधन सूचना भाग** – इसके द्वारा केंद्र एवं राज्य सरकारों की विभिन्न योजनाओ जैसे कि ग्राम पंचायत विकास योजना और वित्त एवं राजस्व विभाग से संबंधित कार्यप्रणाली के साथ जोडा गया है।
3. **नागरिक सेवा भाग**– इसके द्वारा नागरिको को सेवाओं के अधिकार के तहत विभिन्न सेवाएं प्रदान की जाती है।
4. **निर्वाचित प्रतिनिधी भाग**– मल्टीमीडिया पर आधारित सूचना प्रचार सॉफ्टवेयर, बायोमैट्रिक आधारित उपस्थिति एवं कार्यों की निगरानी हेतु सॉफ्टवेयर इसका हिस्सा है।



## रेखाचित्र 2 : ई-पंचायत का सफर

स्रोत :- पंचायती राज मंत्रालय भारत सरकार

### ई-पंचायत परियोजना के उद्देश्य

- सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी के माध्यम से नागरिकों को अधिदेशित सेवाओं की बेहतर प्रदायगी में पंचायतों को सक्षम बनाना।
- पंचायतों को पारदर्शिता, नागरिकों को सेवाओं के प्रकटन और सामाजिक परीक्षण के साधन के रूप में सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी का उपयोग करने में सक्षम बनाना।
- पंचायतों और आंतरिक प्रबंधन और निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रियाओं में सुधार करना।

- पीआरआई को पंचायतों को भेजी जाने वाली विधि की इलेक्ट्रॉनिक ट्रेकिंग तथा ट्रेकिंग निगरानी के लिए सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी का उपयोग करने में सक्षम बनाने सहित विधि के तीव्र बैंक अंतरण आदि को सुनिश्चित करना ।

### ई-पंचायत के माध्यम से प्रशासनिक क्षमता में वृद्धि

ई-पंचायत, या इलेक्ट्रॉनिक पंचायत, भारत में पंचायतों के रूप में ज्ञात स्थानीय स्वशासन निकायों में विभिन्न प्रशासनिक प्रक्रियाओं के डिजिटलीकरण और स्वचालन को संदर्भित करता है। ई-पंचायत के कार्यान्वयन का उद्देश्य प्रौद्योगिकी का लाभ उठाकर प्रशासनिक कार्यों की दक्षता और प्रभावशीलता को बढ़ाना है। यहां कुछ ऐसे तरीके दिए गए हैं जिनमें ई-पंचायत प्रशासनिक क्षमता बढ़ाने में योगदान दे सकती है:

**सुव्यवस्थित प्रक्रियाएं:** ई-पंचायत रिकॉर्ड रखने, आवेदन जमा करने और अनुमोदन जैसी प्रक्रियाओं को डिजिटलाइज और स्वचालित करती है। यह मैनुअल कागजी कार्रवाई को कम करता है, अनावश्यक कदमों को समाप्त करता है, तथा साथ ही सुचारु कार्यप्रवाह प्रबंधन सुनिश्चित करता है। नतीजतन, प्रशासनिक कार्यों को तेजी से और अधिक सटीकता के साथ पूरा किया जा सकता है।

**बेहतर पहुंच:** ई-पंचायत के साथ, नागरिक विभिन्न सेवाओं और सूचनाओं का ऑनलाइन उपयोग कर सकते हैं, जिससे पंचायत कार्यालयों में भौतिक यात्राओं की आवश्यकता समाप्त हो जाती है। यह विशेष रूप से दूरस्थ क्षेत्रों में रहने वाले व्यक्तियों या सीमित गतिशीलता वाले लोगों के लिए पहुंच को बढ़ाता है। यह आमने-सामने की बातचीत और पूछताछ को कम करके पंचायत कर्मचारियों पर बोझ को भी कम करता है।

**पारदर्शी शासन:** ई-पंचायत नागरिकों को ऑनलाइन पोर्टल के माध्यम से बजट, परियोजनाओं और निर्णयों जैसी जानकारी तक पहुंच प्रदान करके शासन में पारदर्शिता को बढ़ावा देती है। यह पारदर्शिता प्रशासन और नागरिकों के बीच विश्वास बनाने में मदद करती है, भ्रष्टाचार के जोखिम को कम करती है और निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रिया में बेहतर सार्वजनिक भागीदारी को सक्षम बनाती है।

**डेटा-संचालित निर्णय लेना:** ई-पंचायत स्थानीय शासन के विभिन्न पहलुओं से संबंधित बड़ी मात्रा में डेटा उत्पन्न करती है। इस डेटा का विश्लेषण करके, प्रशासक समुदाय की जरूरतों, परियोजना के प्रदर्शन और संसाधन आवंटन में मूल्यवान अंतर्दृष्टि प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।

डेटा-संचालित निर्णय लेने से प्रशासकों को सूचित विकल्प बनाने, संसाधन उपयोग का अनुकूलन करने और साक्ष्य-आधारित नीतियों और कार्यक्रमों को लागू करने में सक्षम बनाता है।

**कुशल वित्तीय प्रबंधन:** ई-पंचायत वित्तीय लेनदेन और लेखा प्रक्रियाओं के डिजिटलीकरण की सुविधा प्रदान करती है। यह राजस्व और व्यय पर नजर रखने, धन का समय पर संवितरण और वित्तीय गतिविधियों की प्रभावी निगरानी करने में सक्षम बनाता है। यह न केवल कुप्रबंधन और धोखाधड़ी की संभावना को कम करता है बल्कि ऑडिटिंग और रिपोर्टिंग आवश्यकताओं को भी सरल करता है।

**संवर्धित संचार और सहयोग:** ई-पंचायत प्लेटफार्मों में अक्सर प्रशासकों, नागरिकों और अन्य हितधारकों के बीच संचार और सहयोग की विशेषताएं शामिल होती हैं। यह विभिन्न विभागों के बीच वास्तविक समय की जानकारी साझा करने, प्रतिक्रिया संग्रह और समन्वय की सुविधा प्रदान करता है, जिससे प्रशासन के भीतर बेहतर समन्वय और सहयोग होता है।

**आसान डेटा पुनर्प्राप्ति और विश्लेषण:** ई-पंचायत प्रणाली में संग्रहीत डिजिटल रिकॉर्ड और डेटा को आसानी से पुनर्प्राप्त और विश्लेषण किया जा सकता है। यह भौतिक अभिलेखों के माध्यम से खोज करने में समय और प्रयास बचाता है और प्रशासकों को रिपोर्ट तैयार करने, शोध करने और विभिन्न पहलों के प्रभाव का अधिक कुशलता से मूल्यांकन करने में सक्षम बनाता है।

यह ध्यान रखना महत्वपूर्ण है कि जहां ई-पंचायत प्रशासनिक क्षमता बढ़ाने के लिए कई लाभ प्रदान करती है, वहीं इसका सफल कार्यान्वयन बुनियादी ढांचे की उपलब्धता, डिजिटल साक्षरता और पंचायत कर्मचारियों की क्षमता निर्माण जैसे कारकों पर निर्भर करता है। प्रभावी स्थानीय प्रशासन के लिए ई-पंचायत की क्षमता को अधिकतम करने के लिए प्रशासकों और नागरिकों को उचित प्रशिक्षण और सहायता प्रदान की जानी चाहिए।

### **ई-पंचायत पुरस्कार**

ई पंचायत को चालू करने के लिए राज्यों और पंचायतों के प्रयासों को मान्यता देने के लिए (एमओपीआर) ने 2011 में ईपंचायत पुरस्कार की स्थापना की है। पीईएस में चयनित आवेदनो के अधिकतम आवेदनो वाले शीर्ष तीन रैंकिंग वाले राज्यों को हर साल राष्ट्रीय पंचायत दिवस पर सम्मानित और प्रस्तुत किया जाता है। 2011 के पुरस्कार विजेता ओड़ीसा (प्रथम पुरस्कार) महाराष्ट्र और त्रिपुरा (द्वितीय) और असम और पंजाब (तीसरा पुरस्कार) थे। 2012 के विजेता महाराष्ट्र और त्रिपुरा (प्रथम पुरस्कार) छत्तीसगढ़ (द्वितीय) उत्तर प्रदेश और आंध्र प्रदेश (तीसरा पुरस्कार) है।

## ई-पंचायत के लिए चुनौतियां

जबकि ई-पंचायत में प्रशासनिक प्रभावकारिता को बढ़ाने की क्षमता है, इसके सफल कार्यान्वयन के लिए कई चुनौतियाँ हैं जिन्हें संबोधित करने की आवश्यकता है। इन चुनौतियों में शामिल हैं:

**डिजिटल इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर:** ई-पंचायत को इंटरनेट कनेक्टिविटी, कंप्यूटर सिस्टम और बिजली आपूर्ति सहित विश्वसनीय और मजबूत डिजिटल इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर की आवश्यकता है। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में, जहां कई पंचायत स्थित हैं, इन बुनियादी ढांचे के घटकों की उपलब्धता और गुणवत्ता सीमित हो सकती है। अपर्याप्त बुनियादी ढांचा ई-पंचायत प्लेटफॉर्म को अपनाने और उपयोग में बाधा बन सकता है।

विशेष रूप से ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में पंचायत अधिकारियों और नागरिकों के बीच डिजिटल साक्षरता का निम्न स्तर एक महत्वपूर्ण चुनौती है। कई प्रशासकों में डिजिटल सिस्टम और सॉफ्टवेयर को प्रभावी ढंग से संचालित करने के लिए आवश्यक कौशल की कमी हो सकती है। इसी तरह, नागरिकों को ऑनलाइन सेवाओं तक पहुँचने और उनका उपयोग करने में कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ सकता है। इस डिजिटल खाई को पाटने और यह सुनिश्चित करने के लिए व्यापक प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम आवश्यक हैं कि सभी हितधारक ई-पंचायत का इष्टतम उपयोग कर सकें।

ई-पंचायत को पेश करने से उन प्रशासकों और कर्मचारियों के विरोध का सामना करना पड़ सकता है जो पारंपरिक मैनुअल प्रक्रियाओं के आदी हैं। चिंताओं को दूर करने, स्पष्ट लाभ प्रदान करने और संक्रमण प्रक्रिया में हितधारकों को शामिल करने के लिए परिवर्तन प्रबंधन के प्रयास किए जाने चाहिए। प्रायोगिक परियोजनाओं और सफलता की कहानियों के माध्यम से ई-पंचायत के लाभों को प्रदर्शित करने से प्रतिरोध को दूर करने में मदद मिल सकती है।

ई-पंचायत में व्यक्तिगत जानकारी और वित्तीय रिकॉर्ड सहित संवेदनशील डेटा का संग्रह और भंडारण शामिल है। डेटा गोपनीयता और सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करना नागरिकों के बीच विश्वास बनाने और अनधिकृत पहुंच, डेटा उल्लंघनों या दुरुपयोग से बचाने के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है। डेटा की गोपनीयता और अखंडता को सुरक्षित रखने के लिए मजबूत साइबर सुरक्षा उपायों, डेटा एन्क्रिप्शन और सख्त पहुंच नियंत्रण को लागू किया जाना चाहिए।

**वित्तीय बाधाएं:** ई-पंचायत को लागू करने के लिए डिजिटल बुनियादी ढांचे, प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रमों और चल रहे समर्थन के विकास और रखरखाव के लिए पर्याप्त धन की आवश्यकता होती है। हालांकि, कई पंचायतें वित्तीय बाधाओं का सामना करती हैं और ई-पंचायत पहलों के लिए पर्याप्त संसाधन आवंटित करने में संघर्ष कर सकती हैं। सरकारी सहायता, अनुदान और निजी संगठनों

या गैर-सरकारी संगठनों के साथ साझेदारी वित्तीय बाधाओं को कम करने में मदद कर सकती है।

**कनेक्टिविटी और बिजली के मुद्दे:** ग्रामीण क्षेत्र, जहां पंचायत स्थित हैं, अक्सर इंटरनेट कनेक्टिविटी और विश्वसनीय बिजली आपूर्ति से संबंधित चुनौतियों का सामना करते हैं। अपर्याप्त या रुक-रुक कर कनेक्टिविटी ई-पंचायत प्लेटफॉर्म तक पहुंच को बाधित कर सकती है और रीयल-टाइम इंटरैक्शन को बाधित कर सकती है। इसी तरह, बिजली की कमी या सीमित बिजली की उपलब्धता डिजिटल सिस्टम के कामकाज को बाधित कर सकती है। इन चुनौतियों का समाधान करने के लिए वैकल्पिक समाधान जैसे ऑफलाइन मोड या मोबाइल-आधारित प्लेटफॉर्म पर विचार किया जाना चाहिए।

### **सुझाव**

ई-पंचायत के कार्यान्वयन से जुड़ी चुनौतियों का समाधान करने के लिए निम्नलिखित सुझावों पर विचार किया जा सकता है:

ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में डिजिटल इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर के विकास को प्राथमिकता दें, जिसमें इंटरनेट कनेक्टिविटी, कंप्यूटर सिस्टम और बिजली आपूर्ति शामिल है। सरकार की पहल और निजी संगठनों के साथ साझेदारी बुनियादी ढांचे की खाई को पाटने में मदद कर सकती है।

**डिजिटल साक्षरता और प्रशिक्षण:** पंचायत अधिकारियों और नागरिकों की डिजिटल साक्षरता बढ़ाने के लिए व्यापक प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम लागू करें। इन कार्यक्रमों में बुनियादी कंप्यूटर कौशल, सॉफ्टवेयर उपयोग और ई-पंचायत प्लेटफॉर्म की समझ शामिल होनी चाहिए। प्रशिक्षण कार्यशालाओं, ऑनलाइन मॉड्यूल या स्थानीय प्रशिक्षण केंद्रों के माध्यम से दिया जा सकता है।

**हितधारक जुड़ाव और जागरूकता:** ई-पंचायत के लाभों के बारे में पंचायत अधिकारियों, नागरिकों और प्रभावशाली स्थानीय लोगों को शिक्षित करने के लिए जागरूकता अभियान चलाएँ। सफलता की कहानियों को हाइलाइट करें और इस बात पर जोर दें कि ई-पंचायत कैसे प्रशासन, सेवा वितरण और पारदर्शिता में सुधार कर सकती है।

**परिवर्तन प्रबंधन:** पंचायत अधिकारियों के बीच परिवर्तन के प्रतिरोध को संबोधित करने के लिए परिवर्तन प्रबंधन रणनीतियों का विकास करना। उन्हें निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रिया में शामिल करें, ई-पंचायत के लक्ष्यों और लाभों के बारे में स्पष्ट संचार प्रदान करें, और परिवर्तन चरण के दौरान सहायता प्रदान करें।

**डेटा गोपनीयता और सुरक्षा उपाय:** संवेदनशील जानकारी की सुरक्षा के लिए मजबूत डेटा गोपनीयता और सुरक्षा उपायों को लागू करें। इसमें एन्क्रिप्शन, नियमित सुरक्षा ऑडिट, एक्सेस कंट्रोल और प्रासंगिक डेटा सुरक्षा नियमों का अनुपालन शामिल है। डेटा गोपनीयता के महत्व और इसे सुनिश्चित करने के उपायों के बारे में पंचायत अधिकारियों और नागरिकों के बीच जागरूकता बढ़ाना।

**वित्तीय सहायता:** ई-पंचायत कार्यान्वयन के लिए पर्याप्त धन आवंटित करें, जिसमें बुनियादी ढांचा विकास, प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम और चल रहे रखरखाव शामिल हैं। सरकारी धन, अनुदान और सार्वजनिक-निजी भागीदारी से वित्तीय बाधाओं को दूर करने में मदद मिल सकती है।

**ऑफलाइन क्षमताएँ:** ऑफलाइन क्षमताओं के साथ ई-पंचायत प्लेटफॉर्म विकसित करें, जिससे उपयोगकर्ता निरंतर इंटरनेट कनेक्टिविटी के बिना भी कुछ सेवाओं और कार्यों का उपयोग कर सकें। ऑफलाइन मोड उपयोगकर्ताओं को इंटरनेट कनेक्शन उपलब्ध होने पर ऑफलाइन काम करने और उनके डेटा को सिंक करने में सक्षम कर सकते हैं।

**कानूनी ढाँचे और जवाबदेही तंत्र:** कानूनी ढाँचे और विनियमों की स्थापना करना जो ई-पंचायत प्रणालियों के उपयोग को नियंत्रित करते हैं, जवाबदेही, पारदर्शिता और दुरुपयोग के खिलाफ सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करते हैं। किसी भी उल्लंघन या अनियमितता की निगरानी और रिपोर्टिंग के लिए तंत्र लागू करें।

**तकनीकी विशेषज्ञों से सहयोग:** ई-पंचायत के क्रियान्वयन एवं उपयोग के दौरान पंचायत अधिकारियों एवं नागरिकों को तकनीकी सहयोग एवं सहायता प्रदान करना। यह सहायता डेस्क, समर्पित हेल्पलाइन या ऑनलाइन समर्थन पोर्टल के रूप में हो सकता है।

**सतत मूल्यांकन और प्रतिक्रिया:** ई-पंचायत कार्यान्वयन की प्रभावशीलता और प्रभाव का नियमित मूल्यांकन करें। सुधार के लिए क्षेत्रों की पहचान करने और आवश्यक समायोजन करने के लिए पंचायत अधिकारियों, नागरिकों और अन्य हितधारकों से प्रतिक्रिया प्राप्त करें।

इन सुझावों को लागू करने से, ई-पंचायत से जुड़ी चुनौतियों का समाधान किया जा सकता है, जिससे सुचारू कार्यान्वयन, गोद लेने में वृद्धि और स्थानीय स्वशासन में प्रशासनिक क्षमता में वृद्धि हो सकती है।

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# भारतीय कलाएं: वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्य में प्रासंगिकता

पूजा शर्मा\*

## सारांश

भारतीय कलाएं हजारों वर्षों से सांस्कृतिक, आध्यात्मिक और सामाजिक विकास का प्रतीक है वर्तमान समय में कलाओं की उतनी ही प्रासंगिकता है जितनी प्राचीन समय में थी। महत्व की दृष्टि से वर्तमान समय में कलाएं और अधिक महत्वपूर्ण हो गई हैं क्योंकि ये आधुनिक जीवन में लोगों को उनकी जड़ों और पहचान से जोड़ने में मदद करती हैं। प्राचीन भारतीय शिक्षा प्रणाली में 64 कलाओं का उल्लेख है, जिनमें संगीत, नृत्य, चित्रकला, शिल्प, व्याकरण, गणित, ज्योतिष, नाट्यकला, कूटनीति, आयुर्वेद, वस्त्र निर्माण आदि शामिल हैं। इन कलाओं को व्यापक रूप से जीवन उपयोगी कौशल (life skills) के रूप में देखा जाता था। राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति-2020 प्राचीन ज्ञान को आधुनिक कौशल विकास से जोड़ने की बात करती है। नीति में यह स्पष्ट किया गया है कि छात्रों को केवल सैद्धांतिक ज्ञान तक सीमित न रखते हुए उनके व्यावसायिक और जीवन उपयोगी कौशलों का विकास किया जाए, जिससे वे आत्मनिर्भर बन सकें। प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र के द्वारा भारतीय कलाओं के उद्देश्य, क्षेत्र, स्रोत, वर्गीकरण, एवं उनके वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्य में प्रासंगिकता पर प्रकाश डाला गया है।

कुंजीशब्द : भारतीय कलाएं, कौशल विकास एवं राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति-2020, कलाओं के उद्देश्य, कला का क्षेत्र, कलाओं के स्रोत, कलाओं का वर्गीकरण, कलाओं का महत्व।

## प्रस्तावना

प्राचीन भारत में ज्ञान की दो शाखाएँ थी एक विद्या और दूसरी उपविद्या। विद्या के अंतर्गत पारलौकिक आनन्द एवं मोक्ष की प्राप्ति और उपविद्या के अंतर्गत कला और शिल्प कला को शामिल किया गया था। पाश्चात्य विद्वान ने कला को दो भागों में विभक्त किया है ललित कला और उपयोगी कला। विद्वानों ने कला के अर्थ भिन्न – भिन्न प्राप्त किये हैं कला शब्द कल् + क्व् + टाप् से निष्पन्न हुआ है "कं लाति या सा कला" अर्थ - आनन्द प्राप्ति। मूलरूप से किसी भी कार्य को कुशलतापूर्वक करने की क्रिया का नाम कला है (तिवारी, पृ० 6)

कला अर्थात् शिल्प कला, ललित कला, संगीत, काव्य, चित्र स्थापत्य, मूर्तिकला इत्यादि कलाएं इसमें शामिल हैं। शुक्रनीति में कलाओं के लक्षण के विषय में कहा गया है कि-

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\* शोधकर्त्री, शिक्षाशास्त्र विभाग, शिक्षापीठ, श्री लाल बहादुर शास्त्री राष्ट्रीय संस्कृत विश्वविद्यालय ( केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय ) बी-4 कुतुब सांस्थानिक, नई दिल्ली – 110016

भारतीय कलाएं: वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्य में प्रासंगिकता

"शक्तो मूकोऽपि यत् कर्तुं कलासंज्ञन्तु तत् स्मृतम् । (शुक्रनीति, 4.3.251)

अर्थात् जिसे गूंगा व्यक्ति भी हाथ-पैरों की सहायता से कर सकता है उसे कला कहा गया है। शुक्रनीति नामक ग्रन्थ में कलाओं के विषय में कहा गया है कि-

" पृथक् पृथक् क्रियाभिर्हि कलाभेदस्तु जायते ।

यां यां कलां समाश्रित्य तन्नाम्ना जातिरुच्यते ॥ " (शुक्रनीति, 4.3.66)

अर्थात् किसी भी कला का भेद अलग-अलग व्यापार से ही बोध होता है और जिन कलाओं का आश्रय लेकर लोग जीविका चलाते हैं, उस कला के नाम से उनकी जाति का बोध होता है। प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में कला से अभिप्राय कौशल विकास से है नीति-2020 में भी कला का अभिप्राय कौशल विकास से ही है। इसका अर्थ यह है कि शिक्षा केवल ज्ञान प्रदान करने तक नहीं होनी चाहिए बल्कि यह विद्यार्थियों को व्यावहारिक कौशल, शिल्प कौशल, डिजाइन और इनोवेशन, डिजिटल कौशल (जैसे कोडिंग, डेटा विश्लेषण), उद्यमशीलता (Entrepreneurship) जीवन कौशल, संचार कौशल, समस्या समाधान, आत्मनिर्भरता, बहुविषय शिक्षा, समग्र शिक्षा, नवचार, और सृजनात्मकता पर केंद्रित होनी चाहिए। कला का यही अर्थ हमें नीति-2020 में प्राप्त होता है। कला के माध्यम से ही छात्रों का चहुंमुखी विकास संभव है। कला ही छात्रों के सामाजिक, आध्यात्मिक, धार्मिक और व्यवसायिक दृष्टि से कौशल विकास में मददगार साबित होगी ।

### कौशल विकास एवं राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति-2020

किसी भी कार्य को प्रभावी ढंग से पूर्ण करने के लिए कौशल विकास की आवश्यकता होती है। कौशल विकास प्रक्रिया छात्रों को ग्रेड से परे सोचने में मदद करती है। यह उन्हें अपनी क्षमताओं का उपयोग करने, वास्तविक जीवन कौशल, कौशल सामाजिक, संवेगात्मक कौशल तार्किक, समस्या समाधान कौशल, रचनात्मक कौशल, चिंतन कौशल और पारस्परिक संबंध कौशल विकसित करने और अपनी पसंद के करियर में सफल होने के लिए खुद को तैयार करने में मदद करता है। कौशल आधारित शिक्षा से रोजगार में सुधार होता है और युवाओं को - कमाने में मदद मिलती है। अधिक कौशल विकास का उद्देश्य सभी युवाओं को परिष्कृत कौशल, ज्ञान, राष्ट्रीय व अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्वीकृत योग्यताओं के द्वारा सशक्त बनाना जिससे वे उचित रोजगार पा सकें व वैश्विक बाजार में भारत की प्रतिस्पर्धात्मकता को बढ़ा सकें। नीति-2020 का उद्देश्य सभी के लिए जीवन भर कौशल अर्जित करने हेतु - अवसरों का सृजन करना, विशेष कर युवाओं, महिलाओं व वंचित समूहों हेतु और उच्चगुणवत्ता वाले कुशल - उद्यमियों को विकसित करना जो बाजार की वर्तमान व उभरती हुई मांगों के अनुरूप हों

## भारतीय कलाओं के उद्देश्य

भारतीय कलाओं का उद्देश्य कौशल विकास के सन्दर्भ में अत्यधिक महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि ये छात्रों के जीवन को बहुत हद तक प्रभावित करती है। यह न केवल छात्रों के रचनात्मक और व्यवसायिक कौशल निखारती है बल्कि उन्हें आत्मनिर्भर और चहुंमुखी व्यक्तित्व बनाने में भी मददगार है। कला और कौशल विकास का यह सम्बन्ध व्यक्तिगत, सामाजिक और व्यावसायिक दृष्टि से भी गहरा प्रभाव डालता है। जीवन में रंग भरने का काम कलाएं ही करती हैं। भारतीय कलाएं कौशल विकास में अपना योगदान देती हैं तथा भारतीय कलाएं वर्तमान परिपेक्ष्य में भी प्रासंगिकता हैं।

## भारतीय कलाओं के क्षेत्र

भारतीय कला अर्थात् ऐसी कला कृति जो मानवीय क्रिया से उत्पन्न होती है और जो आनन्दायक है “कलाकृति इन्द्रिय सुख का साधन है।” यही कारण है कि भारतीय कलाओं का क्षेत्र अत्यंत व्यापक और विविधतापूर्ण है जो प्राचीन काल से आधुनिक काल तक अपनी अनूठी पहचान बनाए हुए है। इसका क्षेत्र इतना विस्तृत है। कि यह न केवल भारत में बल्कि विश्वभर में एक प्रेरणा स्रोत है, यही कारण है कि कला, वाणिज्य और विज्ञान क्षेत्रों के विकास में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दे रहा है।

## भारतीय कलाओं के स्रोत

भारतवर्ष की सांस्कृतिक परम्परायें अत्यन्त प्राचीन हैं और उतनी ही प्राचीन कला परम्परा भी है इसका ज्ञान आधुनिक पुरातत्वविभाग के अन्वेषणों तथा प्राचीनतम साहित्य के अध्ययन से प्राप्त होता है। वेद सबसे प्राचीन ग्रन्थ है वेदों में भी कला का वर्णन मिलता है वर्तमान कालीन सुसंस्कृत तथा सभ्य समाज जिन कलाओं को जानते हैं और जिनका व्यवहार में प्रयोग करते हैं। उनमें से मुख्य रूप से विशेष कलायें वैदिक युग में प्रसिद्ध थी इससे यह ज्ञान प्राप्त होता है कि भारतीय विद्वानों ने कलाओं का वर्णन अपने लगभग सभी ग्रंथों में किया है चाहे वेद हो या उपनिषद्, काव्य ग्रन्थ हो या नाटक सभी में कला का वर्णन प्राप्त होता है। कुछ ने इसे आनन्द प्राप्ति की दृष्टि से महत्वपूर्ण माना और कुछ ने उपयोगिता की दृष्टि से महत्वपूर्ण माना है। यही कारण है कि विद्वानों में कलाओं की संख्या को लेकर मतों में मत भेद है जो नीचे दी गई तालिका में देखे जा सकता है।

क्रम.स.	ग्रन्थ का नाम	संख्या
1.	शुक्लयजुर्वेद	28
2.	कामसूत्र	64
3.	शुक्रनीति	64

भारतीय कलाएं: वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्य में प्रासंगिकता

4.	प्रबंधकोश	72
5.	कादम्बरी	64
6.	कलाविलास	64
7.	ललितविस्तर	86
8.	अभिज्ञानशाकुन्तल	50
9.	मृच्छकटिक	58
10.	उत्तररामचरित	47

अधिकांश भारतीय विद्वानों ने भारतीय कलाओं की संख्या 64 मानी है। राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति-2020 में पृष्ठ संख्या 57 पर भी कादंबरी में निहित 64 कलाओं का ही वर्णन किया गया है जिन्हें कौशल विकास से जोड़ा गया है और प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में भी इन्हीं 64 कलाओं का अध्ययन किया गया है जो हमें जीवन उपयोगी कौशल प्रदान करती है जिससे हम किसी भी कार्य को अधिककुशलता से पूर्ण कर सकते हैं।

### भारतीय कलाओं का वर्गीकरण

भारत में कला को केवल क्रिया कलाओं की अनुभूति नहीं बल्कि योगसाधना माना गया है यह मानव के विचारों का दृश्य रूप है। कला के माध्यम से छात्रों की कल्पना शक्ति, आदर्शप्रियता और सृजनशक्ति प्रकट होती है। ऐसी मान्यता है कि वैदिक युग में कलाओं का कोई वर्गीकरण नहीं किया गया था उस समय कलाओं की उपयोगिता के आधार पर उनकी सराहना की जाती थी यही कारण था की उस समय सभी कलाएं महत्वपूर्ण थीं और सभी कलाओं को मानव उपयोगी माना जाता था। उस समय कलाकारों को भिन्न-भिन्न प्रकार के सम्मान से सम्मानित किया जाता था यह तो हम आधुनिक समय में भी देख सकते हैं कि वर्तमान समय में भी कलाकारों को राष्ट्रीय और अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय इत्यादि स्तर पर सम्मानित किया जाता है। कलाओं का सर्वप्रथम वर्गीकरण 'मूल' तथा 'अंतर' के आधार पर हुआ था जिसे बभ्रुपुत्र पांचाल ने किया था इन्हें वात्स्यायन से भी पूर्व का माना जाता है। इनके पश्चात भरतमुनि ने भी कलाओं का वर्गीकरण किया है इन्होंने कलाओं को दो भागों में वर्गीकृत किया 'मुख्य' तथा 'गौण'। भरतमुनि ने नाट्यकला को अधिक महत्वपूर्ण माना है। वात्स्यायन के द्वारा मुख्य रूप से कलाओं की गणना 64 की गई इन्होंने कलाओं के पांच भागों में वर्गीकृत किया – काव्य अथवा नाट्यकला, संगीत कला, वास्तुकला अथवा स्थापत्यकला, मूर्तिकला और चित्रकला। इन्हीं सब कलाओं के पांचो वर्गीकरण को ललितकला कहा गया। इसी प्रकार भारतीय कलाओं का वर्गीकरण विभिन्न विद्वानों ने भिन्न भिन्न प्रकार से किया है। उन्हीं में से एक वर्गीकरण "ब्रज की कलाओं का इतिहास" नामक ग्रंथ में भी किया गया है परन्तु इस ग्रन्थ में

कलाओं का वर्गीकरण काल के आधार पर किया है- आदिकाल, प्राचीनकाल, मध्यकाल, मध्योत्तरकाल और आधुनिककाल | सामान्यतः इस ग्रन्थ में कलाओं को स्थापत्य एवं मूर्ति, चित्रकला, गायन एवं विद्या यंत्र बजाने की कला, नृत्य एवं नाट्य कलाएं और अन्य कलाएं एवं विद्या में वर्गीकृत किया गया है। ऊपर लिखित विद्वानों के वर्गीकरणों के अध्ययन और नीति-2020 के पश्चात् प्रस्तुत शोध में कलाओं का वर्गीकरण किया गया है प्रस्तुत शोध पत्र में नीति में दी गयी कादम्बरी की 64 कलाओं का ही वर्गीकरण किया गया है। इन्हें आठ भागों में बांटा गया है - कलात्मक कौशल (Artistic Skill), शरीर की सफाई और सौंदर्यीकरण में कुशलता (Skill in Cleaning and Beautifying Body), सजाने का कौशल (Skills of Decoration), पाक कौशल (Culinary Skills), खेल और मनोरंजन कौशल (Play and Entertainment Skills), बौद्धिक गतिविधियों के लिए कौशल (Skills for Intellectual Pursuits), इंजीनियरिंग और तकनीकी कौशल (Engineering and technical Skills) और विशेष असामान्य कौशल (Special Uncommon Skills) | कलाओं के इस वर्गीकरण में 64 कलाओं को वर्गीकृत किया गया है, इन्हीं कलाओं को आवश्यक माना गया है |

कलाओं का वर्गीकरण		
क्रम.स.	कलाओं का विभाजन	कलाओं की संख्या
1.	कलात्मक कौशल (Artistic Skill)	8
2.	शरीर की सफाई और सौंदर्यीकरण में कुशलता (Skill in Cleaning and Beautifying Body)	9
3.	सजाने का कौशल (Skills of Decoration)	6
4.	पाक कौशल (Culinary Skills)	3
5.	खेल और मनोरंजन कौशल (Play and Entertainment Skills)	8
6.	बौद्धिक गतिविधियों के लिए कौशल (Skills for Intellectual Pursuits)	10
7.	इंजीनियरिंग और तकनीकी कौशल (Engineering and technical Skills)	14
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## भारतीय कलाओं की वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्य में प्रासंगिकता

भारतीय कला केवल इतिहास का हिस्सा नहीं है, बल्कि यह आज भी हमारी संस्कृति, अर्थव्यवस्था और आधुनिक जीवन में गहराई से जुड़ी हुई है। पारंपरिक और आधुनिकता के संगम से यह और अधिक समृद्ध हो रही है और वर्तमान समय की आवश्यकता के अनुसार छात्रों में कौशल विकास कर रही है साथ ही छात्रों के लिए नई-नई संभावनाओं के द्वार भी खोल रही है। भारतीय कलाएँ अपनी समृद्ध परंपरा और सांस्कृतिक विरासत का प्रतिनिधित्व करती हैं। इसी कारण वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्य में कलाओं की प्रासंगिकता कई पहलुओं में देखी जा सकती है जो इस प्रकार है

- भारतीय संस्कृति तथा कला एक सिक्के के दो पहलू होने के कारण भारतीय कलाओं में भारतीय संस्कृति के तत्त्वों का साङ्गोपाङ्ग चित्रण करने की क्षमता है।
- भारतीय कला और सौन्दर्य को एक दूसरे के पूरक माना गया है यह कहा गया है कि यह सृष्टि ईश्वर की अद्वितीय कला है और प्रकृति का एक-एक कण उसकी लीला का सौन्दर्यबोध कराता है पाश्चात्य विचारक अरस्तू प्लोटाइनस तथा काण्ट आदि के भी दृष्टिकोण भारतीय दृष्टिकोण से मिलते हैं।
- संस्कृत साहित्य हो या हमारा जीवन कलाओं का स्थान बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि ये जीवन को बहुत अधिक प्रभावित करती है। यह जीवन में रंग भरने का काम करती है। और छात्रों को सार्वभौमिकता, प्रतीकात्मकता, धार्मिकता और आध्यात्मिकता संस्कृति की संवाहिका तथा सौन्दर्यानुभूति कराती है।
- कलाओं के द्वारा छात्रों और अध्यापकों का कौशल विकास होता है। कौशल विकास प्रक्रिया किसी भी कार्य को प्रभावित ढंग से करने में मदद करती है और यह छात्रों को ग्रेड से परे सोचने में भी मदद करती है। यह उन्हें अपनी क्षमताओं का उपयोग करने, वास्तविक जीवन कौशल, सामाजिक कौशल, संवेगात्मक कौशल, रचनात्मक कौशल, समस्या समाधान कौशल, तार्किक चिंतन कौशल और पारस्परिक संबंध कौशल विकसित करने और अपनी पसंद के करियर में सफल होने के लिए खुद को तैयार करने में सहायता प्रदान करती है।
- कलाकारों का सहयोग के लिए आधुनिक कलाकार पारंपरिक शैलियों को अपनाकर उन्हें समकालीन स्वरूप दे रहे हैं जिससे उनका विकास होता है।
- कौशल-आधारित शिक्षा से रोजगार में सुधार होता है और युवाओं को अधिक कमाने में मदद मिलती है। कौशल विकास का उद्देश्य सभी युवाओं को परिष्कृत कौशल, ज्ञान, राष्ट्रीय व अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्वीकृत

योग्यताओं के द्वारा सशक्त बनाना जिससे वे उचित रोजगार पा सकें व वैश्विक बाज़ार में भारत की प्रतिस्पर्धात्मकता को बढ़ा सकें।

- स्कूल पाठ्यक्रम में भारतीय कलाओं को एनसीईआरटी और अन्य बोर्डों ने कला को अनिवार्य विषय बनाया है इससे छात्रों में इन विषयों के प्रति रूचि और अधिक बढ़ रही है। वर्तमान समय में विभिन्न प्रकार की वर्कशॉप और ट्रेनिंग प्रोग्राम भी चलाए जा रहे हैं जो ऑनलाइन और ऑफलाइन माध्यम से ट्रेनिंग दे रहे हैं।
- तकनीकी युग में भी भारतीय कलाओं को नए प्लेटफार्म मिल रहे हैं। जिससे भारतीय कलाओं के माध्यम से छात्रों के विकास में मानों पंख लग गए हैं।
- NFT और ब्लॉकचेन के माध्यम से डिजिटल कलाओं को भारतीय कलाकार अपनी कृतियों को NFT के रूप में बेच सकते हैं।
- भारतीय कलाओं के माध्यम से पर्यावरण के प्रति जागरूकता बढ़ने के साथ-साथ भारतीय पारंपरिक कला को भी पर्यावरण के अनुकूल बनाया जा रहा है। प्राकृतिक रंगों के उपयोग से पारंपरिक चित्रकार रासायनिक रंगों के बजाय प्राकृतिक रंगों का उपयोग कर रहे हैं। जिससे प्रकृति को नुकसान से बचाया जा सकता है। इससे इको-फ्रेंडली हस्तशिल्प, मिट्टी, बांस, प्राकृतिक रेशों से बने उत्पादों की माँग बढ़ रही है।
- स्थानीय उत्पादों का प्रोत्साहन भी मिल रहा है। स्वदेशी कला और शिल्प को बढ़ावा देने से स्थानीय कारीगरों की आजीविका सशक्त हो रही है।
- सोशल मीडिया की सहायता से कलाकार इंस्टाग्राम, फेसबुक, यूट्यूब जैसे प्लेटफार्मों के माध्यम से अपनी कला का प्रदर्शन कर सकते हैं।
- भारतीय कलाओं को भारतीय स्कूलों और विश्वविद्यालयों में पारंपरिक कलाओं को पाठ्यक्रम का हिस्सा बनाया जा रहा है, जिससे नई पीढ़ी इन्हें सीखकर आगे बढ़ा रही है।
- भारत सरकार की "हस्तशिल्प एवं हथकरघा विकास योजना" और "एक जिला, एक उत्पाद (ODOP)" जैसी योजनाएँ कलाकारों के विकास में इनकी सहायता कर रही हैं।
- संग्रहालय और गैलरी आदि भी कई राष्ट्रीय और अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर के संग्रहालय भारतीय पारंपरिक कलाओं को संरक्षित कर रहे हैं।

### भारतीय कलाएं: वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्य में प्रासंगिकता

- कौशल विकास पर नीति-2020 का उद्देश्य सभी के लिए जीवन भर कौशल अर्जित करने हेतु अवसरों का सृजन करना, विशेष कर युवाओं, महिलाओं व वंचित समूहों हेतु और उच्च-गुणवत्ता वाले कुशल उद्यमियों को विकसित करना जो बाज़ार की वर्तमान व उभरती हुई मांगों के अनुरूप हों यह भारतीय ज्ञान प्रणाली में निहित ६४ कलाओं द्वारा ही संभव है।
- प्रत्येक कला शिक्षक, छात्र और विभिन्न व्यक्तियों का कौशल विकास करती है इन सभी कलाओं के माध्यम से ही वर्तमान में उभरती हुई मांगों के अनुरूप ही कौशल विकास किया जा सकता है।
- भारतीय कलाओं की उपयोगिता कई क्षेत्रों में देखी जा सकती है, जैसे कि समाज, शिक्षा, अर्थव्यवस्था, आध्यात्मिकता और सांस्कृतिक धरोहर को संरक्षित करने में।
- भारतीय कला जैसे शास्त्रीय नृत्य, संगीत, चित्रकला, मूर्तिकला, और वास्तुकला देश की समृद्ध सांस्कृतिक विरासत को संरक्षित करने में सहायक है। ये कलाएं पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी भारत की परंपराओं और मूल्यों को आगे बढ़ाती हैं।
- भारतीय कलाएं छात्रों की रचनात्मकता और कल्पनाशक्ति को बढ़ाती हैं। संगीत और नृत्य के अभ्यास से अनुशासन और समर्पण विकसित होता है जबकि चित्रकला और मूर्तिकला तार्किक और सौंदर्यबोध की समझ को बढ़ाती हैं।
- भारतीय कलाएं योग, मंदिरों की मूर्तिकला, और मंत्रों पर आधारित संगीत मानसिक शांति प्रदान करती हैं। भारतीय शास्त्रीय संगीत (जैसे राग चिकित्सा) और नृत्य (जैसे भरतनाट्यम और कथक) ध्यान और आत्मिक विकास में सहायक माने जाते हैं।
- भारतीय कला और शिल्प उद्योग, जैसे हस्तशिल्प, और पारंपरिक चित्रकला (मधुबनी, वारली आदि), ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था को सशक्त करते हैं। पर्यटन भी भारतीय कला के कारण समृद्ध होता है जिससे देश की आर्थिक वृद्धि होती है।
- भारतीय कलाएं भारत के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों और समुदायों को जोड़ने का कार्य करती हैं। वे राष्ट्रीय एकता को मजबूत करती हैं और सांस्कृतिक विविधता को एक सूत्र में पिरोने में मदद करती हैं।

- भारतीय कलाएं सिनेमा, रंगमंच, लोककथाएँ, कठपुतली कला, और लोकनृत्य मनोरंजन के साथ-साथ सामाजिक संदेश देने का भी काम करती हैं। बॉलीवुड और अन्य क्षेत्रीय फिल्म उद्योग कला के माध्यम से विचारों को संप्रेषित करने का महत्वपूर्ण माध्यम हैं।
- भारतीय वास्तुकला (जैसे अजंता-एलोरा गुफाएँ, खजुराहो मंदिर, दक्षिण भारतीय मंदिर) न केवल ऐतिहासिक धरोहर हैं, बल्कि पर्यावरण के अनुकूल निर्माण के उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण भी हैं। भारतीय चित्रकला और मूर्तिकला में भी प्रकृति का गहरा प्रभाव देखा जा सकता है। इस प्रकार, भारतीय कलाएँ न केवल सौंदर्य और रचनात्मकता का माध्यम हैं बल्कि समाज, शिक्षा, आध्यात्मिकता, अर्थव्यवस्था और पर्यावरण के विकास में भी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती हैं।

### निष्कर्ष

64 कलाओं का महत्व प्राचीन समय में जितना था उससे कहीं अधिक वर्तमान समय में है। वर्तमान समय में इन्हें पाठ्यक्रम में भी पढाया जाता है। कलाएं छात्रों में उमंगता के साथ आगे बढ़ने के लिए अग्रसित करती है और यह जीवन में सृजनात्मक क्षमता को बढ़ाने का कार्य करती है। यह जीवन को आदर्शमय बनाती है। यह छात्र और शिक्षक दोनों के विकास में सहायक है। नीति-2020 प्राचीन भारतीय 64 कलाओं के महत्व को स्वीकार करते हुए आधुनिक शिक्षा प्रणाली में उन्हें पुनर्स्थापित करने का प्रयास करती है। यह नीति शिक्षा को व्यावहारिक, रोजगारोन्मुख और सांस्कृतिक रूप से समृद्ध बनाने की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण कदम है। इससे छात्रों में पारंपरिक और आधुनिक कौशलों का संतुलित विकास होगा, जिससे वे न केवल आत्मनिर्भर बनेंगे बल्कि भारतीय सांस्कृतिक धरोहर को भी आगे बढ़ा सकेंगे।

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