

**SRI AUROBINDO COLLEGE EVENING
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

ITIHAS DARPAN



ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



ODYSSEY

2024-25 THIRD EDITION

ODYSSEY

ANNUAL MAGAZINE OF

ITIHĀS DARPAN

ABOUT US

The name **Odyssey** for the Department of History's annual magazine draws inspiration from Homer's ancient Greek epic, *The Odyssey*, which recounts Odysseus' decade-long journey home after the Trojan War. This timeless tale symbolizes exploration, resilience, and the pursuit of knowledge—values central to the study of history. Just as Odysseus navigated uncharted waters and encountered diverse cultures, historians embark on intellectual journeys to uncover the past, unravel its complexities, and connect it to the present. The idea of history is shaped by the eternal quest for investigation, with the underlying objective to accentuate, preserve, and disseminate knowledge while generating consciousness about the past. **Itihās Darpan**, the Department of History at Sri Aurobindo College Evening, University of Delhi, apropos these ideals, is elated to announce the third issue of *Odyssey*—The Annual Magazine of the Department of History 2024–25. *Odyssey* reflects the spirit of discovery that defines historical inquiry, endeavoring to inspire students to become prolific young writers by venturing into the vast repository of the human past. Through carefully written articles, enriching columns, awe-inspiring pieces of art, and captivating fiction, *Itihās Darpan* aspires to capture the imagination of readers, nourish the ambition of scholars, and keep the spark of curiosity alive. By naming the magazine *Odyssey*, we honor the enduring legacy of Homer's epic and its themes of perseverance and transformation, reminding us that history is a dynamic journey of interpretation and insight. Together, we celebrate the richness of the past and continue the timeless quest for knowledge that defines both the historian's craft and the human experience.

ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙΑ

The Odyssey (; Greek: Ὀδύσσεια *Odýsseia*, pronounced [o.dy.sɛj.ja] in Classical Attic)

ITIHĀS DARPAN

THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

SRI AUROBINDO COLLEGE (EVENING), UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

Address: Shivalik, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-110017, Landmark : Malviya Nagar Metro Station

Nestled in the vibrant academic hub of Malviya Nagar, New Delhi, the **Department of History at Sri Aurobindo College (Evening), University of Delhi**, stands as a beacon of historical scholarship and intellectual exploration.

Known as **Itihās Darpan** (The Mirror of History), the department is dedicated to fostering a deep understanding of the past, its complexities, and its relevance to the present and future.

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THEYYAM

An ancient ritualistic Kerala dance form that elevates members of the lower castes to the stature of God, Theyyam is still seen as a warcry against the caste system and is undergoing a wave of resurgence. Theyyam is native to the northern part of Kerala (Malabar Region) and people perform the captivating Theyyam dance to venerate ancestors in the presence of groves, residences, and the village shrine. For natives, “Theyyam” means “God”. The core concept of the Theyyam performance revolves around man embodying a deity and engaging in worship and appeasement through dance. In return, the Gods promise prosperity and harmony for society. There are about 456 types of Theyyams documented, and among them, the Fire Wielder God, Thee Kuttichathan Thira, is portrayed here.

LEADING LETTERS

Dear readers, True education goes beyond textbooks — it is a journey of exploration that inspires us to question, scrutinize, and grow. Sri Aurobindo college (Evening), has always been devoted to nurturing an environment where knowledge extends beyond classrooms. We attempt to create an academic habitat that brings up critical reasoning, inventiveness, and integrated development. Our institution values academic superiority, ethnic expression, and a dedication for learning, ensuring the growth of students, both personally and professionally. I endorse the History department for bringing into view the third edition of ODYSSEY. This magazine is not just a collection of articles it is a presentation of meticulously examined standpoints, analytical research, and imaginative utterings. It's a platform for new purposes and suggestions, and a festivity of historical tales that build our understanding of the world. The invaluable contributions of our esteemed faculty members, whose expertise and mentorship permeate each page, further elevate the depth and credibility of this collective endeavor. To the editorial team, whose discerning eyes and unwavering rigor forge ideas into illuminating prose, and to the contributors, whose intellectual bravery and boundless creativity ignite these pages—your tireless dedication and relentless passion are the lifeblood of ODYSSEY. May it continue to encourage and grow with each edition.



Best regards,

**Prof. VIPIN
AGGARWAL**
PRINCIPAL, SRI AUROBINDO
COLLEGE (EVENING) UoD



PREFACE

NOTES FROM THE FRONTLINES

Dear readers, History is not merely a collection of dates and events it is a discourse between time, souvenirs, and identification. With enormous gratification, we present the third edition of ODYSSEY, the yearly magazine of ITIHAS DARPAN, the department of history, Sri Aurobindo college (Evening). This publishing is a reflection of our shared enthusiasm for chronicled inquiry, analysis, and intellectual dialogues. In this edition, you'll find a refining merge of analytical perspectives by students and faculty, unraveling case studies, remarkable biographies, thought-provoking short stories, thrilling travelogues, captivating cultural-heritage stories, and echoing lost or forgotten histories. Each contribution within these pages personifies the spirit of interest and encourages cavernous engagement with history. Each article considers rational diligence and dedication of our contributors, offering fresh insights into historical discourse. This venture would not have been possible without the commitment, enthusiasm, and collective efforts of our contributors, editorial team, and faculty members, whose allegiance to brilliance continues to inspire us. Their persistent efforts have moulded ODYSSEY into a plan of action where history is not just studied but also cross-examined, analyzed, and reconceptualized. We invite you to delve into these pages with a broad-minded and a keen sense of query. Whether you are a student, a researcher, or merely a curious reader, we hope ODYSSEY ignites your intrigue and deepens your apprehension of the past and its influence on this day and age.

Best regards,

Dr. MOHD WASIM
TIC, THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
SRI AUROBINDO COLLEGE (EVENING)

Editorial Board

ODYSSEY



Originals of greatness lie not in solitude, but in the alchemy of minds intertwined persisting, pivoting, pioneering. As we proudly present Odyssey, the annual magazine of Itihas Darpan, The Department of History at Sri Aurobindo College (Evening), University of Delhi, we invite you on an intellectual expedition where the past, present, and future converge in a symphony of scholarly excellence a bold declaration of our department's commitment to relentless curiosity, innovative discourse, and intellectual rigor. History, more than a record of events, is the lens through which civilizations critique, reinvent,

and redefine themselves, and Odyssey embodies this philosophy by curating narratives that challenge orthodoxies, amplify marginalized voices, and reimagine the grand mosaic of human experience. Each page, from groundbreaking research to evocative creative expressions, transforms history from a static subject into a dynamic, living dialogue designed to provoke thought and spark debate. As Editor-in-Chief, I extend deepest gratitude to our tireless editorial team, visionary Teacher-in-Charge, esteemed faculty members, and brilliant contributors whose passion and precision have shaped this collaborative endeavor a testament to countless hours of dedication, from writers unearthing forgotten stories to editors honing every word, and mentors steering this ship with wisdom. Odyssey mirrors the vibrant academic culture of our department, where debates flourish, ideas collide, and history is not merely studied but experienced. To our readers students, academics, or history enthusiasts I urge you to engage not as passive observers but as active participants: question narratives, draw connections, and let these pages ignite your intellectual curiosity. With Odyssey, we reaffirm our mission to make history not just relevant but revolutionary, for the past is no relic but a blueprint for the future. Dive in, explore, and rediscover history as you've never seen it before a journey where scholarship meets imagination, and every voice contributes to the ever-evolving story of humanity ■

Best regards,

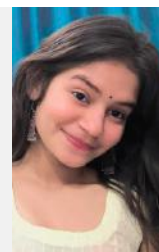
Mr. SHIDHIN CHACKO
(EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ODYSSEY &
PRESIDENT, ITIHAS DARPAN
THE DEPT. OF HISTORY)

History is the essence of human civilization, shaping our present and future. This magazine revives forgotten stories, explores cultural legacies, and highlights influential figures. Each article pays tribute to historians and scholars preserving our heritage. We invite you on this intellectual journey to understand history not just as the past, but as a guide for today and a vision for tomorrow. Let's embrace history's wisdom and learn from its lessons ■



NIKHIL PALIWAL
EDITOR
ODYSSEY

Tales are not just ink on a page they are echoes of the past, murmurs of beliefs, and sparks of curiosity. In Odyssey, we craft stories that linger, persuading you to consider, question, and uncover candour. Each of the segment blends meticulous research with authentic storytelling conveying you to mystifying realms. Follow your inquisitiveness through wisdom and fascination, and insight. Every narrative charts a course; every reader becomes an explorer ■



SRISHTI.B
EDITOR
ODYSSEY

This edition of Odyssey, celebrates the enduring spirit of creativity, resilience, and intellectual exploration. Within these pages, you will encounter bold ideas and untold narratives that challenge perspectives, provoke thought, and inspire reflection. Curated to transcend conventions and spark curiosity, this collection invites you to embark on a journey of discovery. We extend our gratitude for joining us in this adventure. Let's delve deeper ■



KARTIK SAINI
CO-EDITOR
ODYSSEY

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Dr. SUSANTA KUMAR BAG

PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



Professor Susanta Kumar Bag is a teacher in the subject of History with an erudite research scholarship in Modern Indian History. He is well known and generally recognized for his contributions to historical research, with a focus on Modern History of Odisha. He presently serves as the Professor of History at Sri Aurobindo College (Eve), University of Delhi, where he has been engaged in shaping youthful minds since 2006. From a humble beginning, his educational journey began in Odisha, where he achieved his

Master's Degree before proceeding to *Jawaharlal Nehru University*, New Delhi, to get his M.Phil and Ph.D degrees in Modern Indian History. As a research scholar in Modern Indian History, Prof. Bag devotedly has a phenomenal collection of publications which establish him as a noteworthy figure in modern historical discourse. His works not only enhance the educational community but also contribute remarkably to the conservation and understanding of Odisha's historical traditions. Some of his outstanding publications comprise: *Colonial State, Agrarian Transition and Popular Protest in Orissa: 1921-47*, which turned out to be a bestseller in 2016. *Dynamics of Politics in Orissa: 1947-67* (2018). *Princes, Raj and Swaraj in Odisha: c. 1930's-c. 1940's* (2020). *Covid-19: Disease to Disaster—A Study on India* (2022). Moreover, he has co-edited the pedagogical volume *Facets on Odishan History* (2022), an array of essays that has accumulated notable recognition in academic circles. His latest publications in prestigious journals include "Postcolonialism: An Alternative Discourse Theory" in the *International Journal of Novel Research and Development* (April 2024), and "Popular Movement in Nilgiri State of Odisha: 1938-39" in the *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research* (August 2024). His contributions extend beyond publications. As a devoted researcher, he has made remarkable contributions to historical scholarship, effectively completing two UGC-sponsored research projects and publishing nearly twenty researched papers in reputable national and international journals. Professor Bag also served as a Resource Person for the lecture titled "*Understanding Peasant and Tribal Movements in India: Resistance of Shri. Birsa Munda to Colonial Hegemony*," organized by the IGNOU Regional Centre, Madurai. His research contributions have gained significant attention, with his ResearchGate profile amassing 1000 reads. His prowess has been further acknowledged via his role on the Review/Referral board of several esteemed international journals. He has presented papers at various academic forums. Recently he participated and presented a research paper on "*Beyond the Border: Syama Prasad Mukherjee*" at the Ninth Yuva Itihaskar Rashtriya Sangoshthi held in February 2025 in Udaipur, Rajasthan. He also delivered the Kasturi Misra Memorial lecture on the "*Tribal Movement in Koraput District of Odisha*" at the South Indian History Congress in November 2024 in Malabar Christian College, Calicut, Kerala. Professor Bag actively participates in educational discussions at national and international conferences. He contributed to the 5th National Seminar on Sarvapath Samanyaro Thakura, Jagannatha at Sri Jagannath Temple, New Delhi (Jan 2025), shaping historical perspectives. He also chaired a session on *The Philosophical Foundation of the Constitution—Democratic Principles of Ancient Republic: Governance in Mahabharata and Ramayana* at the 9th Young Historians National Conference.

His scholastic influence extends to his role as an editorial reviewer for *IJ Publications Bhavnagar*, Gujarat, *CARI Journal* (USA), *Studies in History Journal*, and *History and Culture Journal*, Department of History, Berhampur University, Odisha, which are considered to be highly indexed and reputed online multi-disciplinary journals. In recognition of his enthusiasm and academic contributions, Professor Bag has received numerous accolades for his academic contributions, including the *Distinguished Researcher Award and Best HoD Award (2017-18)* from Sri Aurobindo College, University of Delhi, along with nominations for the *Best Teacher's Award (2015)* and *Teacher's Excellence Award (2019)*. His notable honors include the *Bharat Gaurav Ratna Shree Award (2023)* by the Govt. of India, the *Indian Glory Award (Lifetime Achievement) (2023)*, the *Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Best Teacher & Researcher Award (2022)*, and the *Best Young Professor of the Year (2023)*. He was also recognized with the *Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Award for Best Teacher in Modern Indian History (2022)* and the *Bharat Shree National Award (2023)* for his outstanding contributions to education. He has also been a member of a few highly engaging academic bodies that include the Life Member at Itihās Sankalan Samiti, Jhandewalan, New Delhi, Life Member South Indian History Congress, Life Member North Odisha History Congress, Life Member NBT, and casual Member of Indian History Congress. As a stalwart mentor and an inventive educator, Professor Susanta Kumar Bag has thoroughly influenced students, academia, and historical erudition. He is also a subject specialist for several universities and the State Civil Service Board. Through his unwavering dedication to historical research and knowledge, he continues to encourage and mould the next generation of historians, having an indelible mark on the academic circle.

Dr. ANISHA SRIVASTAVA

PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



A veteran with over three decades of academic experience, Dr. Anisha Srivastava holds the position of Professor of History at Sri Aurobindo College (Evening), University of Delhi. Her academic journey began with a Bachelor of Arts from Lucknow University in 1987, studying History and Political Science. She earned her Master's from the same institution before advancing to M.Phil and Ph.D studies. She then completed her M.Phil. and Ph.D. from the University of Delhi, with her research encompassing an in-depth analysis of the socio-demographic and psychological experiences of urban upper-caste women in the United Provinces during the early 20th century, and later, a critical exploration of gendered representations and cultural constructs within Hindi print culture between the 1890s and 1930s. Dr. Srivastava's research spans gender studies, caste, social inequality, and literary history. She has authored articles including "Gender Studies: Relocating Historical Enquiry" (2021, UGC CARE-listed), "Ambedkar and Dalit Women: Legacy of Women Empowerment" (2022), and "Autobiography and Gender History" (2025, Impact Factor: 2.7825). Her celebrated article "Amrit Lal Nagar's Karvat: 19th-Century Lucknow's Social Fabric" (2019, Impact Factor: 5.7631) blends literature and historical narrative. Other important writings include "A Study of Feminist Activism in Independent India," "Dinesh Nandini Dalmiya: 20वीं शताब्दी मारवाड़ी समाज और नारी चेतना," and "Understanding the Growth of Inequality in Neo-Liberal India," extending her scholarly reach into contemporary social disparity. In addition to journal articles, Dr. Srivastava has contributed book chapters on diverse themes such as European popular cultures (यूरोपीय जनसंस्कृतियों में विविधता) and French political history. Her teaching is reflective of her academic depth. Having served at various colleges of Delhi University for over 30 years, she has been a permanent faculty member at Sri Aurobindo College (Evening) since 2006. She has played a significant role in curriculum development, serving as convener of course revisions under UGC's LOCF and UGCF frameworks, and Nodal Officer for NEP-based VAC, SEC, and AEC courses (2022–23), introducing skill-based and interdisciplinary modules for 650 students. Her expertise was sought for the review of study materials for the School of Open Learning, especially for papers like "Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe" and "History of India (1700–1857)." Dr. Srivastava has served as a paper setter and examiner for the JNU Ph.D. entrance examination (NTA). Her academic engagement includes UGC-sponsored orientation and refresher courses, such as those at Jamia Millia Islamia (2009), Jamia (2007), and JNU (2011).

She has served on the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) and various student committees like the Debating Society, Gandhi Circle, and Gender Sensitization Committee. From 2015 to 2020, she was Teacher-in-Charge of the History Department, fostering intellectual and inclusive spaces. Mentorship is central to Dr. Srivastava's academic identity. She has guided 22 gold medalists and 7 Ph.D. scholars. Her role as an examiner for M.Phil. and undergraduate theses at B.R. Ambedkar University and St. Stephen's College showcases her commitment to student success. One of her significant contributions is the founding of *Odyssey*, the annual journal of the History Department, which has grown into a prominent space for experimental historiography, showcasing student research and alumni contributions. Dr. Srivastava's national and international presence includes invited talks and presentations at key academic conferences. These include "Spiritualism and Historical Thought: Sri Aurobindo" at Jawaharlal Nehru University (2024), "Re-inventing Gender Norms: Grassroots Women & Climate Change" at the G-20 Academic Summit (2023), and "Kumbh Mela: Ritual in Changing Times" (2014).

Dr. MOHD WASIM

ASST. PROF, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



Mohd Wasim is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Sri Aurobindo College (Evening), University of Delhi. With a good academic upbringing and regular involvement in historical analysis, he is seen as a sincere teacher and researcher. At present, he is also serving as the Teacher-in-Charge of the Department of History. He obtained his Ph.D. in History from the University of Delhi in 2022. His doctoral dissertation, titled “Chieftaincies Under the ‘Delhi Residency’: The Uprising of 1857 and its Aftermath,” critically explores the complex political dynamics and administrative responses during the revolt of 1857, with a specific focus on the Delhi Residency and the role of regional chieftaincies in shaping resistance and aftermath.

Dr. Wasim completed his undergraduate degree, B.A. (Hons) in History, in 2010, followed by an M.A. in History in 2013. He went on to pursue his M.Phil. in History, which he completed in 2016, and qualified the UGC-NET in 2014. His academic merit was recognized with the award of the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) by the Indian Council of Historical Research in the year 2016. Professionally, he has over five years of teaching experience. Before his current appointment, he worked as an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Shyam Lal College (Morning), University of Delhi, from August 2019 to December 2023. Since January 2024, he has been serving at Sri Aurobindo College (Evening), where he continues to contribute both inside and outside the classroom. He has actively participated in academic conferences and has presented several research papers over the years.

Dr. Wasim holds memberships in various academic and historical research bodies, including the Indian Council of Historical Research, the Rajasthan History Congress, and the Akhil Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana. At Sri Aurobindo College (Evening), he teaches subjects such as European history, key world events of the 20th century, and the regional history of Delhi. He also holds teaching expertise in Modern History. His teaching reflects a commitment to critical inquiry and contextual understanding, helping students engage meaningfully with the discipline of history.

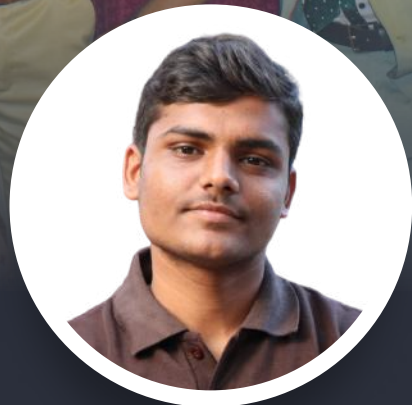
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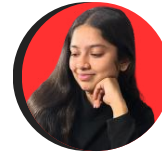
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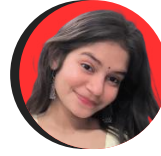
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Department Of History



Left to right 1st row —Srianya, Anamika, Tanushka, Srishti, Aasim, Anil kumar. Left to right 2nd row— Simran, Ekta, Pallavi, Khushi, bhaskar sir, Anisha Mam, Wasim, Prashant, Abhay, Puneet, Ankur, Ritesh, Nikhil. Left to right 3rd row— Bhavesh, Raj, Ritu, Susant, Shankar, Shidhin, Sourabh. 4th row— Kartik, Nandan, Anuj, Misbahul, Aditya Prakash, Ronak. 5th row— Parwez, Rashid, Gagandeep, Mebul. 6th row— Ansh, Ashutosh



ITIHĀS DARPAN

History is the science of men in time—a discipline that breathes life into the silent traces of the past. It demands not only the rigor of analysis but the empathy to hear the whispers of those long gone. The historian must be both detective and poet, reconstructing vanished worlds from fragmented evidence while resisting the tyranny of present-mindedness. We study history not to indulge in nostalgia or to pass judgment, but to grasp the complex web of human actions, where cause and consequence intertwine in unforeseeable ways. To ignore history is to sever our roots; to engage with it critically is to reclaim our shared humanity

— *Marc Bloch*, *The Historian's Craft*

Let these pages guide you through the echoes of time, where every event, every life, and every decision weaves the grand tapestry of our shared story. — team Itihās Darpan, Department of History

BRIHADEESWARA TEMPLE

THANJAVUR'S IMPERIAL SIGNATURE



Map showing the geographical boundary of THE GREAT CHOLA EMPIRE

LOCATION : THANJAVUR, TAMILNADU, INDIA
YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION : 1010
BUILT BY : RAJA RAJA I



Raja Raja Chola I
(Thanjavur palace museum)

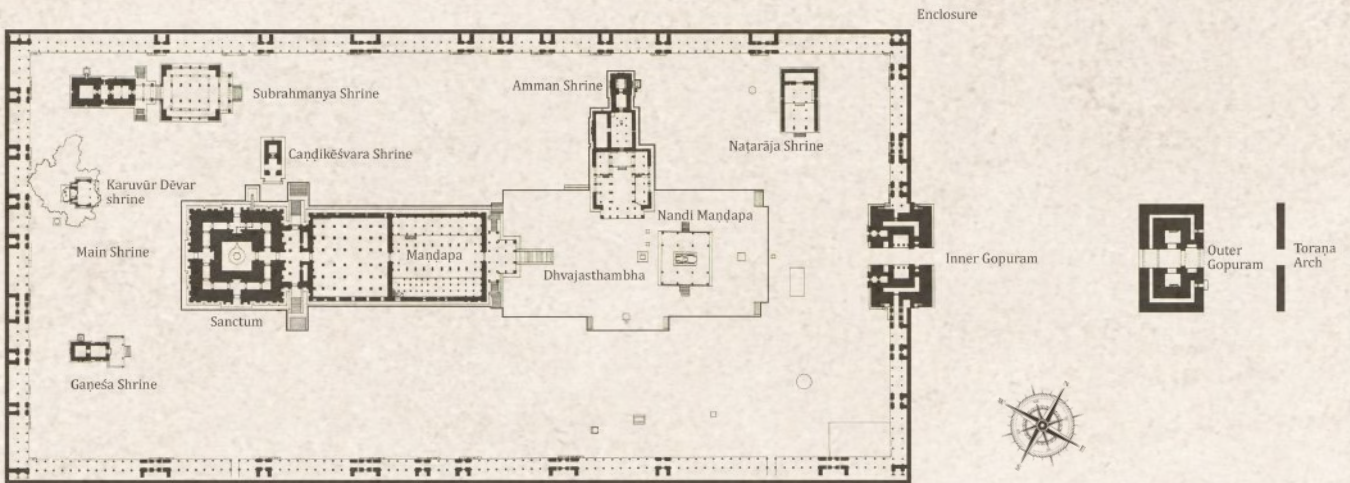
Often we recall the nature and extent of the efforts and sacrifices that must have gone into the construction of this magnificent temple... and the manner in which numerous villages all over the empire were linked with the daily routine of the temple... when we learning and the arts that flourished in the country were impressed into the service of the temple, we cannot fail to observe how the Great Temple had come to hold, from its very inception, a prominent place in the polity of the land. The temple was meant to dominate Thanjavur as Thanjavur dominated the rest of South India at the time: it was indeed the masterpiece of Rajaraja's rule." — K. A. Nilkanta Sastri



► Sanjay Kumar MS
(Dept. of Architecture and Planning,
NIT Nagpur) B. ARCH 3rd Year

INTRODUCTION TO ARCHITECTURE

The **Bṛihadeśvara temple at Tanjavur** is unanimously regarded as the greatest masterpiece of **Chōla art and architecture**. This is with regard to its plan for which there is neither antecedents nor successors. Long after the construction of the initial layout by the Chōlas, works were undertaken by the subsequent **Paṇdyas, Nayakas and Marāṭhās**, which to a considerable extent respected the initial plan. The Bṛihadeśvara temple is organized on a linear plan corresponding to the design which was already prevalent at that period. Around the sanctuary tower in front of the long and low hall, the enclosure describes a spacious rectangular courtyard extending from east to west and accessible by gateways which determine the centre of the eastern face. The major axis defined by this gateway and the main shrine coincides exactly with the symmetrical axis of the enclosure. Several structures constructed subsequent to the Cōla period have modified the character of the courtyard. Inside the enclosure, only the small Caṇḍikeśvara shrine, belong to the original design. Later, until the 19th century, several structures were added. The scale of the architectural layout exceeds significantly that of the large temples built more than two centuries earlier. The builders of this temple, despite little experience of raising high vimānas, could successfully develop the technical expertise to achieve solutions. They also incorporated the architectural and decorative elements already developed in temples.

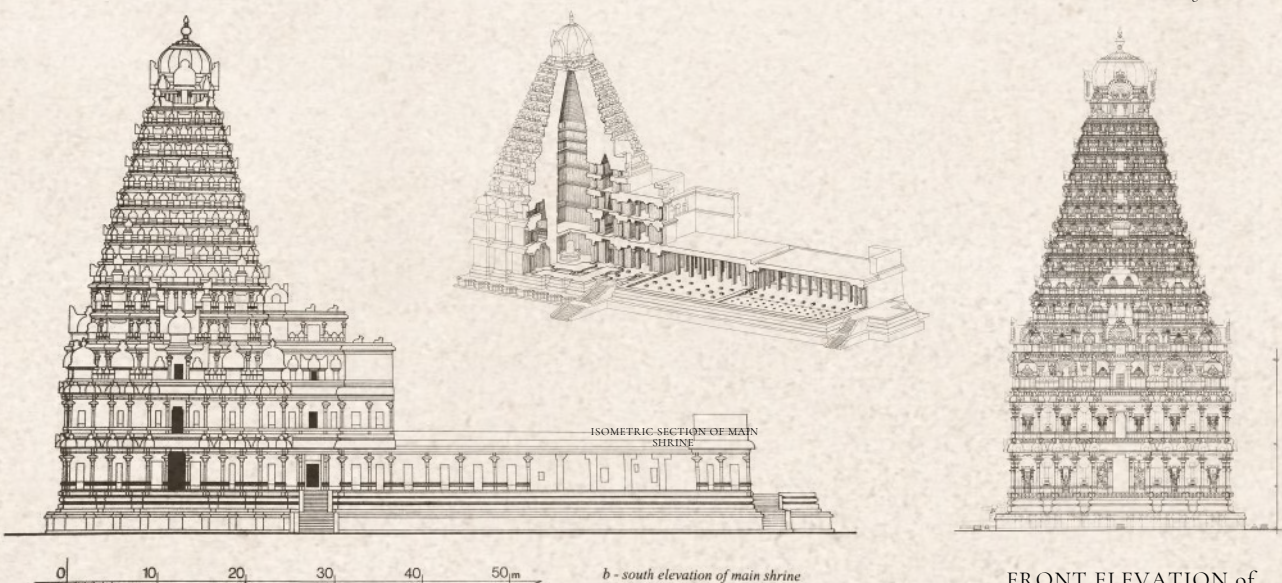


PLAN



LONGITUDINAL SECTION

drawing credits @www.ignca.in



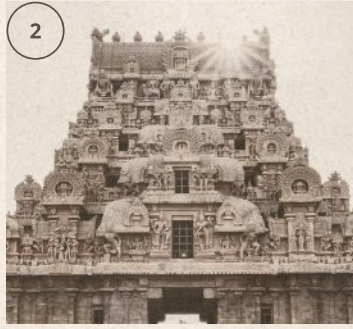
SIDE ELEVATION

b - south elevation of main shrine

FRONT ELEVATION of MAIN SHRINE



Torana Arch



Outer Gopuram



Inner Gopuram



Nandi Mandapa



Nandi



Dhvajastambha



Mandapa



Vimana

The temple's vimana (tower) is approximately 66 meters (216 feet) tall. It is one of the tallest temple towers in the world and is constructed entirely of granite.

The sikhara, a cupolic dome (25 tons), is octagonal and rests on a single block of granite, weighing 80 tons



The sanctum is at the center of the western square. It is surrounded by massive walls that are divided into levels by sharply cut sculptures and pilasters providing deep bays and recesses. Each side of the sanctuary has a bay with iconography. The interior of the sanctum sanctorum hosts an image of the primary deity, Shiva, in the form of a huge stone linga. It is called Karuvarai, a Tamil word that means "womb chamber". This space is called garbha griha in other parts of India. Only priests are allowed to enter this inner-most chamber. In the Tamizhan style, the sanctum takes the form of a miniature vimana. It has the inner wall together with the outer wall creating a path around the sanctum for circumambulation (pradakshina). The entrance is highly decorated. The inside chamber is the sanctum sanctorum, which houses the brihad linga. The main Vimana (Shikhara) is a massive 16 storeys tower of which 13 are tapering squares. It dominates the main quadrangle. It sits above a 30.18 metres (99.0 ft) sided square. The tower is elaborately articulated with Pilaster, piers (a raised structure), and attached columns which are placed rhythmically covering every surface of the vimana.

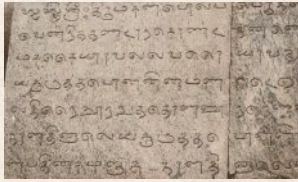
CONSTRUCTION

The Brihadeeswara Temple is a monumental example of ancient engineering and architectural brilliance. It is estimated that over 130,000 tons of granite were used in its construction, despite granite being unavailable locally. The builders ingeniously engineered an 8-kilometer-long incline to transport the massive granite stones to the top of the temple. The structure is constructed from massive interlocking granite blocks without the use of any binding material, ensuring its stability and longevity. At the apex of the temple's 66-meter (216-foot) tall vimana (tower) rests a single granite block weighing approximately 80 tons, an extraordinary feat of construction. Additionally, the vimana is hollow, a design choice that reduces its weight while maintaining strength and structural integrity. These features collectively underscore the advanced technological and architectural capabilities of the Chola dynasty.

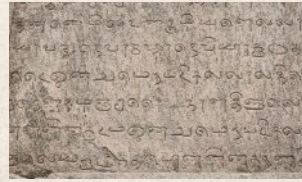


INSCRIPTION

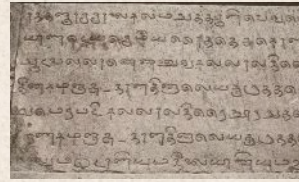
The temple walls have numerous inscriptions in Tamil and Grantha scripts. Many of these begin with customary Sanskrit and Tamil language historical introduction to the king who authorized it, and predominant number of them discuss gifts to the temple or temple personnel, in some cases residents of the city. The temple complex has sixty four inscriptions of Rajaraja Chola I, twenty nine inscriptions of Rajendra Chola I, one each of Vikrama Chola, Kulottunga I and Rajamahendra (Rajendra II), three of a probable Pandyan king, two of Nayaka rulers namely, Achyutappa Nayaka and Mallapa Nayaka.



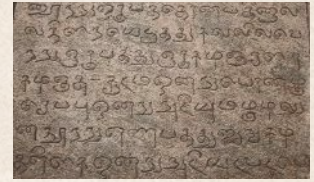
The land is as vast as the daughter of Swastishri.



The right of the mainland woman to own property



Kandalur Road
Kalamarutharuli Vengai



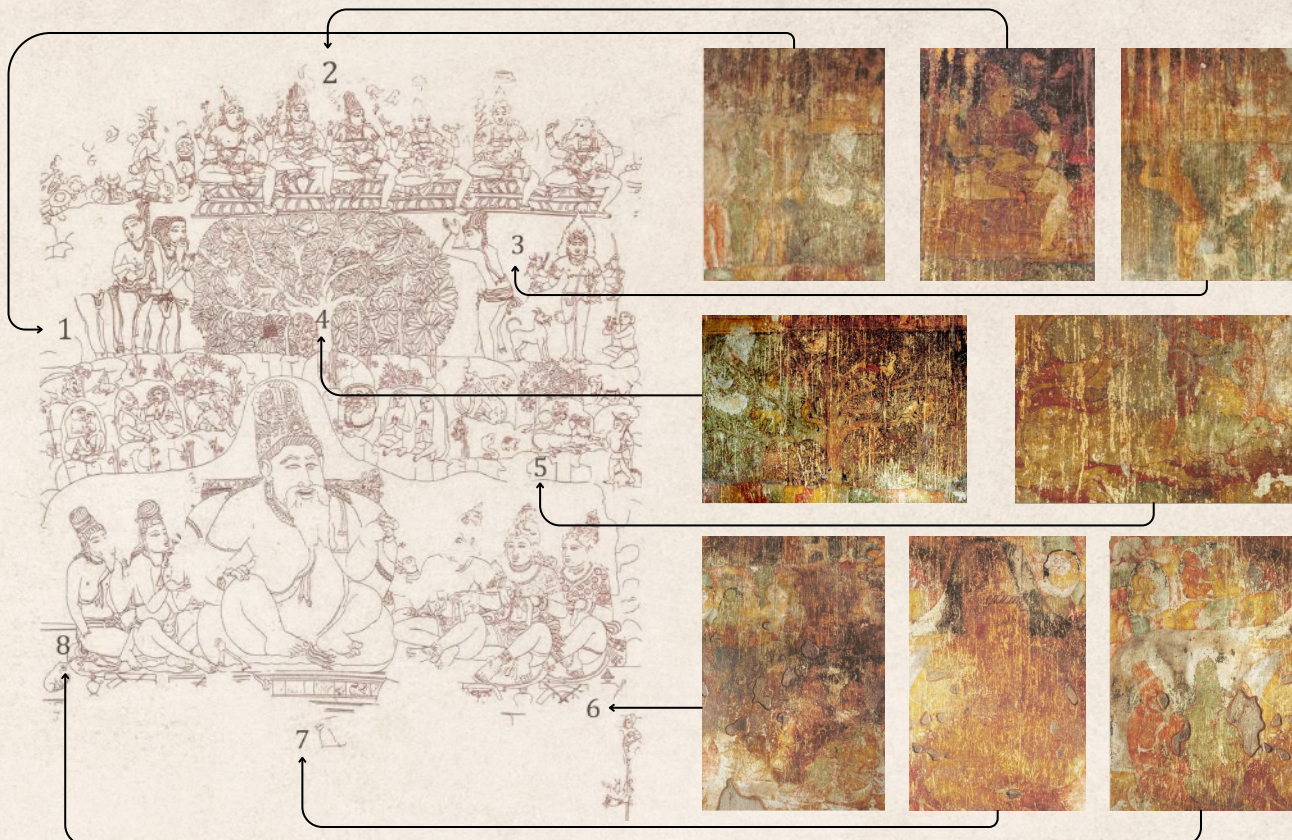
Wodeyar Srirajaraja
Cholan



An inscription on the north wall of enclosure, dated 1011 CE, gives a detailed accounts of people employed and supported by the temple. The inscription gives their wages, roles and names. It includes over 600 names including those of priests, lamp lighters, washermen, tailors, jewelers, potters, carpenters, sacred parasol bearers, dance gurus, dancing girls, singers, male and female musicians, superintendents of performance artists, accountants among others. Their wages was in parcels of land, so their temple employment was likely part-time.[47][49]

MURALS

The temple has an underneath layer of Chola frescoes on the sanctum walls along the circumambulatory pathway. These frescoes which cover floor to ceiling, were discovered in 1931 by S. K. Govindasami of the Annamalai University. The painters used natural pigments and infused it into the wet limestone layer as it was setting in. The Chola frescoes were largely of Shaivism themes. These were restored in the 2000s. The total Chola fresco area is about 670 square metres (7,200 sq ft), of which about 112 square metres (1,210 sq ft) had been uncovered as of 2010 in a method that preserves both paintings, a technique developed by Archaeological Survey of India. The frescoes narrate Hindu mythology.[43][45] According to Balasubrahmanyam, most frescoes are related to Shiva, but the 11th century Chola frescoes also show Vishnu, Durga and others, as well as scenes of Chola royalty, courtly and the common life ■



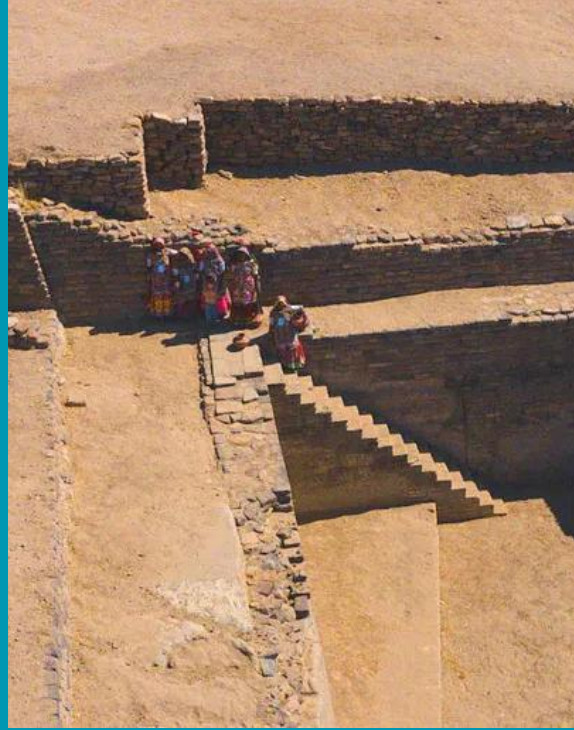
Dholāvira

WHERE TIME WHISPERED THE SECRETS OF THE INDUS VALLEY



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Dholavira, a treasure trove of the Indus Valley Civilization, is located in Gujarat's desert landscape. Thriving from 3000-1500 BCE on Khadir Island, this ancient city is celebrated for its urban planning and advanced resource management. A symbol of human adaptability and architectural inventiveness, Dholavira's legacy is immortalized through its remarkable artifacts and well-planned communal structure. In this travelogue, we will embark on a fascinating journey to the captivating world of Dholavira, a remarkable archaeological site that offers a window into the grandeur of the Indus Valley Civilization. As we explore its historical significance, we will uncover how Dholavira served as a thriving urban center, showcasing advanced town planning, water management systems, and intricate craftsmanship that set it apart as one of the most sophisticated cities of its time. The architectural marvels of Dholavira—from its massive fortifications and ceremonial grounds to its ingenious reservoirs—reflect the ingenuity of its builders and provide valuable insights into the daily lives, culture, and governance of its people. Along the way, we will delve into the intriguing story of Dholavira's rise to prominence, its period of prosperity as a hub of trade and innovation, and the mysterious factors that led to its eventual decline. Join us as we journey back in time, unraveling the secrets of this ancient city and piecing together the remnants of a civilization that continues to captivate historians, archaeologists, and curious minds alike, leaving an indelible mark on our understanding of human history.



Dholavira as a Hub of Ancient Trade: The significance of Dholavira in the Indus Valley Civilization extends beyond its architectural splendour to its pivotal role in ancient commerce. Ideally positioned on the trade routes, Dholavira was a vital link between the Indus Valley Civilization and other ancient empires in Mesopotamia and Central Asia. This commercial hub, bustling with activity, facilitated the exchange of ideas, goods, and culture. Archaeological evidence suggests a city flourishing with trade, where local products like pottery and textiles were exchanged for exotic goods from distant lands, underlining its role as a cornerstone in the economic dynamics of the period.

A Journey Back in Time: My journey to Dholavira began with a sense of excitement and curiosity. Nestled in the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, India, this ancient city of the Indus Valley Civilization has long been a site of fascination for historians, archaeologists, and travelers. Upon reaching Dholavira, the first thing that caught my attention was the vast, arid landscape enveloping the site. The desert seemed to stretch endlessly, yet within this environment lay the leftovers of a once-thriving metropolis. The archaeological site of Dholavira is divided into various sections, each revealing unique aspects of its urban planning and architectural brilliance. The city state is divided into three main sections: The Citadel, The Middle Town and the Lower Town. Each area is marked by walls and gateways reflecting a well thought out city layout that addressed various social and functional needs.

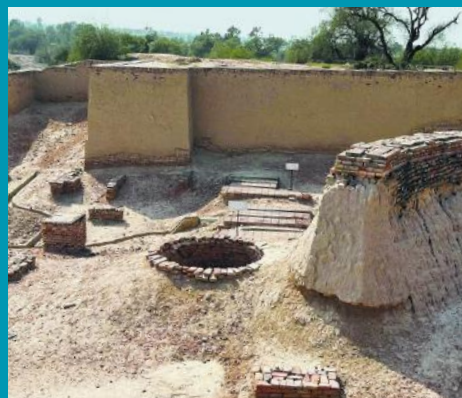
The Citadel: My exploration commenced at the citadel, the heart of Dholavira. This elevated area served as the city's administrative and ceremonial center, showcasing its advanced engineering and architectural skills. As I wandered through the ruins, I could almost hear the echoes of ancient rituals and the lively activities of the city's elite.



The Middle Town: The Middle Town in Dholavira was an essential part of its urban planning, positioned between the Citadel and the Lower town. It served as a residential and administrative area likely inhabited by officials, traders and important citizens. Houses and public buildings in the Middle Town were made of stone, unlike other Indus Valley cities that primarily used mud bricks.

The Lower Town: The Lower Town was the largest and most populous part of Dholavira located south of the Middle Town. It housed common people including artisans, laborers, and traders. It had a well-planned streets with a grid system and drainage. Connected to the city's advanced water management and sewage system. Served as the economic and residential hub for the working class. Despite being lower in hierarchy, the Lower Town reflected a sophisticated urban lifestyle with planned structures and sanitation.

Water Management: A Marvel of Ancient Engineering: As I continued my journey, I stumbled upon one of Dholavira's most sensational features: its advanced water management system. The city boasted an extensive network of reservoirs, step wells, and channels crafted to capture and store rainwater. This ingenious system was a testament to the ingenuity of its ancient inhabitants.



Dholavira, one of the largest and most prominent sites of the ancient Harappan Civilization (dating back to 3000-1500 BC), holds immense historical significance as a testament to the advanced urban planning, water conservation systems, and unique architectural features of the Indus Valley Civilization. Its recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site on 27 July 2021 further underscores its global importance. Beyond its archaeological wonders, Dholavira offers rich cultural experiences, particularly during the vibrant Rann Utsav festival, where visitors can immerse themselves in local crafts, savor traditional Gujarati delicacies, and interact with skilled artisans, providing a fascinating blend of history and living traditions ■

Travel Tips: The best time to visit Dholavira is during the monsoon season (July–September) for cooler weather, as it's advisable to avoid the scorching summer months (April–June). In terms of accessibility, Dholavira can be reached by road from Ahmedabad (approximately 335 km), by rail via Bhuj, or by air through the Rudra Mata airport in Bhuj.

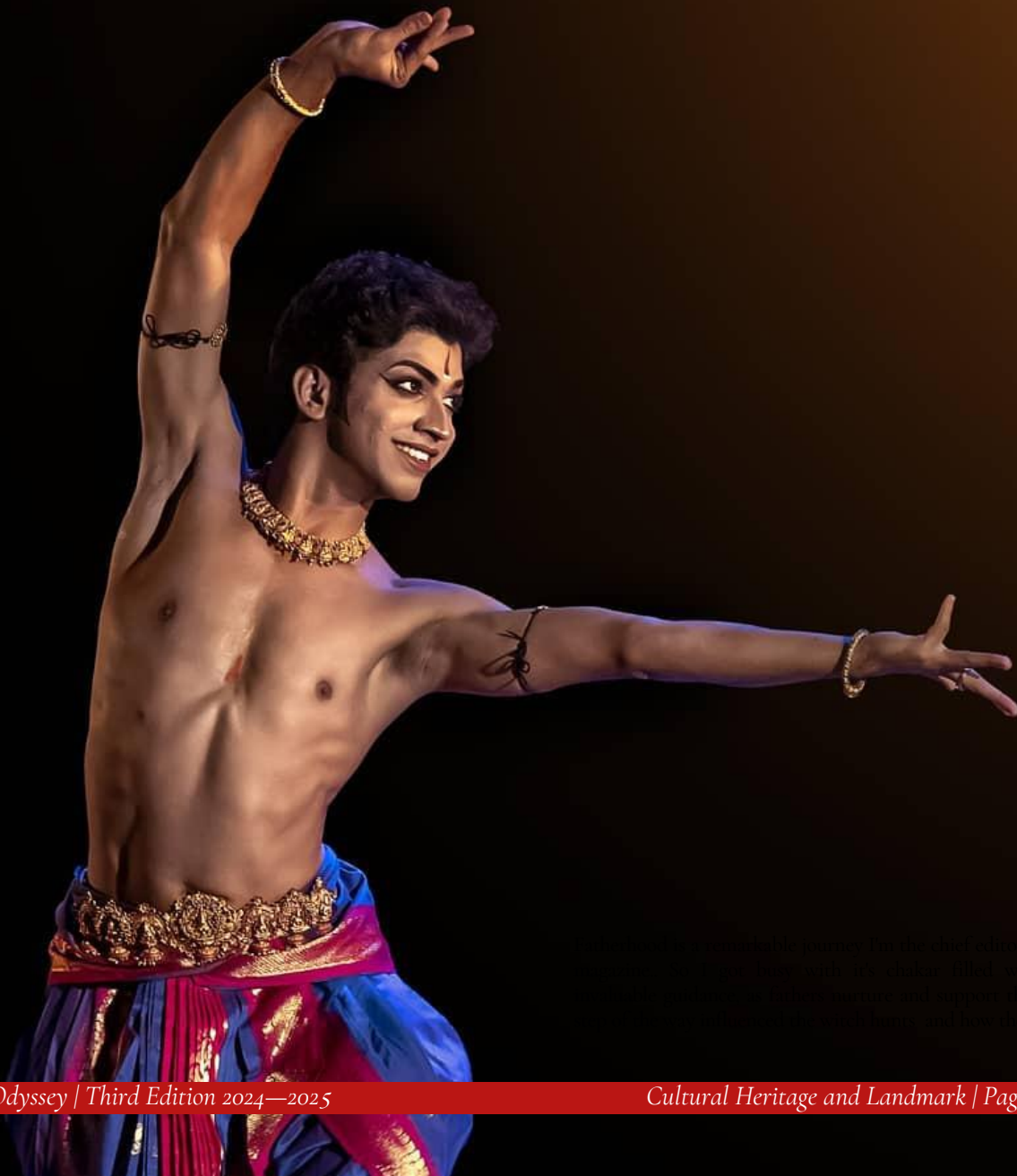
SYMPHONY OF MUDRAS: Exploring India's Classical Dance Forms



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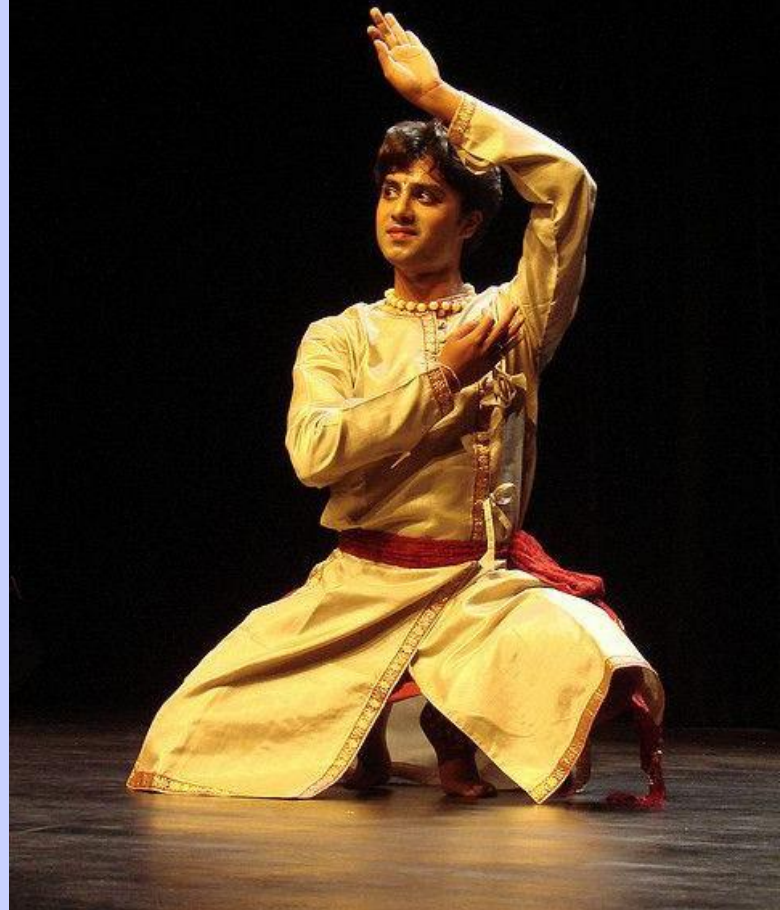
India, a land of diverse cultures and traditions, is home to some of the most exquisite classical dance forms in the world. These dances are not merely performances but are deeply rooted in spirituality, mythology, and ancient scriptures. They serve as a medium to express emotions, tell stories, and connect with the divine. Among the many classical dance forms of India, Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam, Kuchipudi, and Kathak stand out for their unique styles, intricate movements, and rich histories. This article delves into the origins, characteristics, and significance of these four classical dance forms.

Bharatanatyam: The Dance of the Devadasis— Bharatanatyam, often referred to as the "dance of the devadasis," is one of the oldest classical dance forms in India, with its roots tracing back to the temples of Tamil Nadu over 2,000 years ago. Traditionally performed by Devadasis, temple dancers dedicated to serving deities, it was codified in the ancient text *Natya Shastra* by Bharata Muni, from which it derives its name. This dance form is characterized by a fixed upper torso, bent legs, and intricate footwork, blending three core elements: *Nritta* (pure dance), *Nritya* (expressive dance), and *Natya* (dramatic storytelling). The precise, geometric —



movements, along with hand gestures (*mudras*) and facial expressions (*abhinaya*), are used to convey emotions and narrate stories, often drawn from Hindu mythology. A traditional Bharatanatyam performance follows a structured sequence, beginning with *Alarippu*, an invocation to the gods, and progressing to *Jatiswaram*, a pure dance sequence. The theme is introduced in *Shabdham* through song and expression, while the central piece, *Varnam*, combines complex footwork, expressive gestures, and storytelling. The performance concludes with lighter pieces like *Padam* and *Tillana*, showcasing the dancer's skill and grace. More than just a dance, Bharatanatyam is a spiritual practice, a means of connecting with the divine and expressing devotion. Over centuries, it has evolved while retaining its traditional essence, and today, it captivates global audiences with its beauty, depth, and timeless appeal.

Kuchipudi: The Dance-Drama of Andhra Pradesh — Kuchipudi, named after the village of *Kuchipudi* in Andhra Pradesh, is a classical dance form that combines dance, drama, and music. Originating in the 17th century, it was traditionally performed by male Brahmins as a form of worship and was developed by Siddhendra Yogi, who created the first Kuchipudi dance-drama, *Bhama Kalapam*. Known for its vibrant and dynamic movements, Kuchipudi blends *Nritta* (pure dance) and *Natya* (dramatic storytelling), characterized by fast footwork, intricate hand gestures, and expressive facial expressions. A unique feature of the dance is the *Tarangam*, where the dancer performs on a brass plate while balancing a pot of water on their head, showcasing immense skill and precision. A traditional Kuchipudi performance begins with an invocation to the gods, followed by *Jatiswaram*, a pure dance sequence. The theme is introduced in *Shabdham* through song and expression, while the central piece, *Varnam*, combines complex footwork, expressive gestures, and storytelling. The performance concludes with lighter pieces like *Padam* and *Tillana*, highlighting the dancer's skill and grace. Celebrating the rich cultural heritage of Andhra Pradesh, Kuchipudi brings together music, dance, and theater to narrate stories from Hindu mythology. Over the centuries, it has evolved, with women now taking on leading roles, and continues to captivate audiences with its vibrant energy and dramatic storytelling.



Kathak: The Storyteller's Dance — Kathak, meaning "storyteller," is a classical dance form that originated in North India, rooted in the tradition of Kathakars—traveling bards who narrated stories from Hindu epics like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Over centuries, it evolved under the influence of both Hindu and Mughal cultures, particularly flourishing in Mughal courts where it absorbed elements of Persian dance and music. Known for its intricate footwork (*Tatkaar*), fast spins (*Chakkars*), and expressive gestures (*Abhinaya*), Kathak is a dynamic blend of rhythm and storytelling. Dancers often engage in a playful dialogue with the tabla player, showcasing their rhythmic prowess, while subtle yet powerful facial expressions and hand gestures (*mudras*) add depth to the narrative. A traditional Kathak performance begins with an invocation to the gods, followed by *Thaat*, a slow, graceful sequence that introduces the dancer. It then progresses to *Aamad*, where the rhythm and tempo are established, leading to the central piece, *Tarana*, which combines complex footwork, spins, and expressive gestures. The performance concludes with *Tihai*, a rhythmic sequence ending in a dramatic flourish. Celebrating the rich cultural heritage of North India, Kathak is a dance of storytelling, conveying emotions and ideas through movement and expression. Over time, it has adapted to changing eras while retaining its traditional essence, and today, it continues to captivate global audiences with its beauty, grace, and timeless appeal.





Mohiniyattam: The Dance of the Enchantress — Mohiniyattam, which translates to "dance of the enchantress," is the classical dance form of Kerala, believed to have originated in the 16th century. Traditionally performed by women in the temples of Kerala, it is closely associated with the legend of *Mohini*, the female *avatar* of Lord Vishnu, who used her charm to enchant and defeat demons. This dance form is characterized by its graceful, swaying movements that mimic the gentle waves of Kerala's backwaters, embodying the *Lasya* (feminine) style, which emphasizes softness, grace, and fluidity. The movements are circular and flowing, often accompanied by a gentle smile, while the hand gestures, or *mudras*, are similar to those used in Bharatanatyam but rendered in a more subdued and lyrical manner. A traditional Mohiniyattam performance begins with *Cholkettu*, an invocation to the gods, followed by *Varnam*, which blends pure dance with expressive storytelling, and *Padam*, where emotions are conveyed through song and gesture. The performance concludes with *Tillana*, a fast-paced, rhythmic piece that showcases the dancer's technical skill and leaves the audience captivated. Mohiniyattam is more than just a dance form; it is a celebration of femininity, grace, and the cultural essence of Kerala. Over the centuries, it has faced challenges, including periods of decline, but it has been revived and now flourishes as a cherished art form performed by dancers across the world. With its gentle movements, lyrical style, and profound emotional expression, Mohiniyattam continues to enchant audiences, preserving the rich traditions of Kerala while captivating hearts with its timeless beauty and elegance.

Conclusion: Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam, Kuchipudi, and Kathak are not just dance forms; they are a reflection of India's rich cultural heritage. Each dance form has its unique style, technique, and history, but they all share a common goal: to connect with the divine and express the beauty of life through movement and expression. These classical dance forms have stood the test of time, evolving and adapting while retaining their traditional essence. They continue to inspire and captivate audiences around the world, serving as a testament to the enduring power of art and culture ■

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Bihari Baroque: OPULENT AANGAN ALCHEMY IN VILLAGE VERNACULAR



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The rich cultural tapestry of Bihar is not just confined to its historical monuments or vibrant festivals; it extends to its exquisite art forms as well. From the intricate patterns of Madhubani to the rustic charm

of Patna Kalam, Bihar paintings offer a kaleidoscope of colors, narratives, and traditions. Among these, the diverse array of paintings stands as a testament to the state's artistic heritage. From Madhubani to Maithili and from Manjusha to Patna Kalam each style tells a unique story, reflecting the traditional beliefs and everyday life of the people.

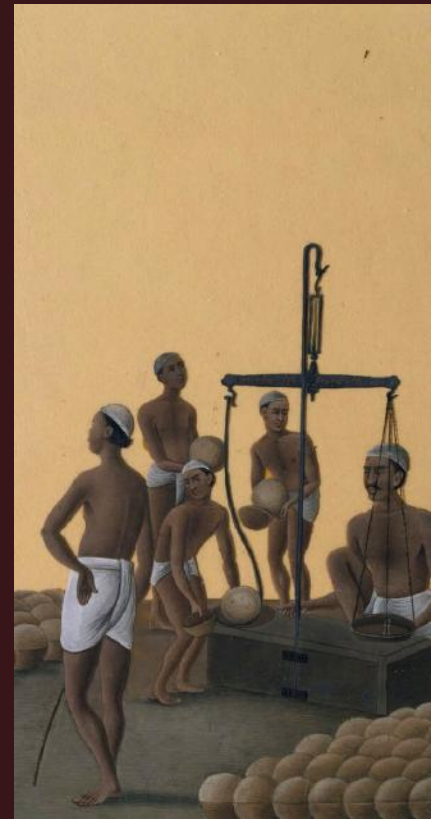
Brief History of Patna Kalam: Patna has been widely known by many names for various reasons in Indian history. The details of its ancient existence can be found in the writings of Brahma Khanda from Bhavishya Purana. Before Christ, the city was known as Patli Gram. It is believed that the name of the

daughter of a mighty King Gadhi named Kush, who was the father of Saint Vishwamitra, was Patli. King Gadhi established the city Patliputra pleased at the birth of a baby boy to his daughter. Alternatively, it is also believed that may be the city then came to be known as Patli due to the abundance of Patli trees in the area. Eventually the same city Patli came to be known as Patligram, Pushp-pur, Kusumpur, Pushpawati, Pushphayapur, Srinagar, Patliputra, Polybroth, Polymbroth, P-Liyane-fu-Palin, Azimabad and Patna. Patna Devi is the guardian deity of this city. According to the Shershahi calendar, the city got its name, Patna around the year 1541 AD. Though, after Aunrangzeb's son Azim-Us-Shaan was appointed as the governor of the city, it was known as Azimabad for a few years thereafter. Presently, this historical city is the capital of a prominent state of the Indian Republic, Bihar. The city also happens to be the birthplace of Acharya Panini the author of Ashtadhyayi, which is the definitive work of Sanskrit grammar.

In fact the word 'Shilp' was used for the first time in his famous epic volume Ashtadhyayi, which literally translates to 'Fine Arts'. It is a widely known fact that during the Mughal era, painting art was at its pinnacle. But after Shahjahan's son Aurangzeb took the seat of Delhi, painting art was one of the most affected. After the end of the kingdom, the royal musabirs and painters had to flee Delhi in search of livelihood. In the beginning of the 17th century, Aurangzeb assumed the throne of Delhi, most of his time was spent in wars and he was also indifferent to any form of fine arts. One group of painters moved towards the eastern hills of Basohli, Kangra, Garhwal, Jammu, Chamba,

Kullu and the others reached Udaipur in Rajasthan, Mathura, Faizabad, and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and Murshidabad in Bengal. In those days, Mir Zafar, the Nawab of Murshidabad was a big patron of arts. Attracted by the very fact a group of artists reached here. The Nawab settled these artists in Balchak on the banks of river Ganga. The artists groups prospered under the patronage of Mir Zafar.

Evolution Of Patna Kalam: Those nobles slowly started coming in contact with the English officials from the East India Company as well as the local businessmen. Resultantly, the artists not only started



conversing in English but also began creating art in accordance with their interests. Over the period of time the political scenario changed which also had a distinct effect on the artists. Nawab Mir Jafar placed his son Miran on the throne. Miran was absolutely uninterested in arts. Hence, the artists had to face the issue of relocation once again. Patna was a prosperous city during that period it was the centre of business-commodities like cotton garments, sugar, indigo, opium, shora and spices. Since the city was the chief business centre, the Dutch, Chinese and Portuguese businessmen used to stay here for long periods in their own accommodations. Bihar was slowly progressing on the path of development. It started becoming the centre of new activities. The artists from Murshidabad found it to be the perfect place for settlement. In 1760, these artists migrated from Murshidabad to Patna. The artists coming from Murshidabad, found Patna the perfect place in all aspects. This artist group came and settled in the localities of Patna city namely Macchhar-hatta, Lodi Katra Chowk and Diwan Mohalla. The artists began creating portraits according to the taste of the local Kings, Nawabs, Landlords, Officers, Businessmen and the Soldiers. There was also a military camp in Danapur, inside the periphery of Patna. The local Nawabs, Landlords and Businessmen were patrons of art. The other artists went to the smaller provinces namely Bettiah, Darbhanga, Purnia, Gaya and Ara. They became painters for the royal courts. Some artists of Patna Kalam also took shelter in the court of Raja Ishwari Narayan Singh of Varanasi, and the king himself was a

huge patron of art and got several works of Patna kalam done from the artists. Artists from Patna included Dallulal, Ulaslal and Chhaganlal, Sewak Ram, Shiva Lal.

Salient Feature Of Patna Kalam: The Patna Kalam art form is an amalgamation of Persian, Mughal and British styles of art. This art form not only grew and prospered on this land but also achieved its worldwide fame by the name of Patna Kalam. In the world of paintings, the word Qalam/kalam essentially refers to a distinct style and form of art. The colours of Mughal style and shades of the company (British) style could be clearly seen in these portraits. The backgrounds from the Patna Kalam were mainly white whereas the borders in the Mughal were exquisite and artistic. Slowly, the concept of borders in Patna Kalam went absolute and got primarily focused on the subject. The artists practicing this particular style also started creating portraits with a business point of view. Therefore, some art enthusiasts recognized them as Firka and market style paintings. The Britishers used their art as a form of remembrance. It was the first time in the history of the fine arts when the Patna Kalam showcased the life of Commons instead of the royals, prospered and reached its pinnacle. The Patna Kalam came into being in 1760 for the first time and it is believed that Patna Kalam started from Murshidabad. An easy estimation of the then prevailing environment, the clothing, livelihood, festivals and fauna can be easily done through the medium of paintings from Patna kalam.

Unique facial features: The background of most of the portraits from this style of art was kept white so that the enthusiasts could stay focused on the subject. The shorter form of arts from this style can be mainly found on paper, mica, tusk, silk and taant. The paper used was made either from bamboo shoots or brought in from Nepal. The blue stones were pasted over one another and were polished using the carnelian Stones.

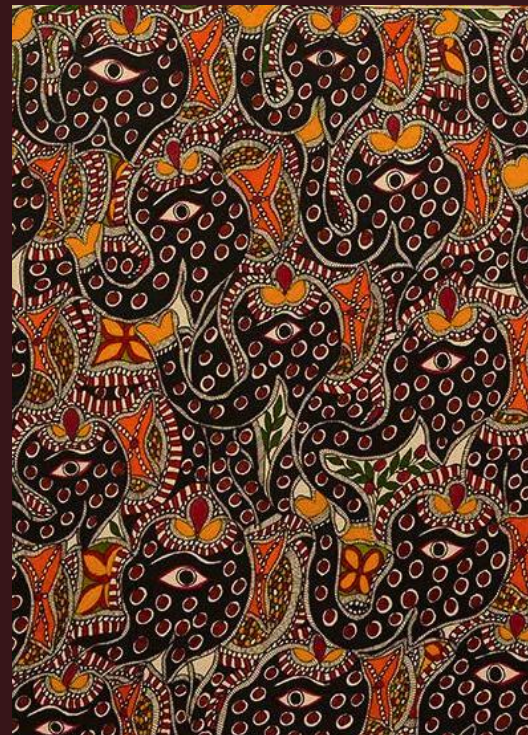
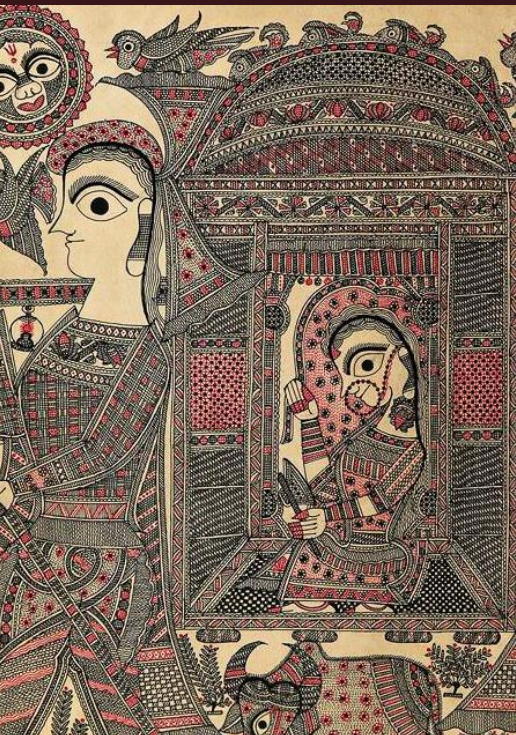
The paintings of this style found on transparent mica were roughened using the sea froth, so that the colour of water could be easily on them. A circumference of 1-3 inches was used to create art on the elephant tusks. Importance of Patna Kalam paintings on the tusk were made for the Britishers. Paintings were made on the ground shape of the tusk which were used on a long court in the form of a brush. Some paintings of the Patna Kalam are also available on silk and tant. Where a mix of rice stock and blue stones were pasted on the fabric. They were further polished using cornelian stones to create the portrait. The artists of this style used to create their own brushes. For this, the artist used squirrel or horse's hairs boiled in water tied to eagle or pigeon feathers thereby creating brushes of the required thickness. Especially when we look at a bird's feather, you can see that the white central stem of the feather is always hollow. Squirrels hair was tied in bunches at the end of it and then inserted inside the hollow quill. One amazing fact about the artists of Patna Kalam is that sometimes they used just a single hair for strokes in their creations. Those artists even created their own colors to paint. Mostly mineral and/or natural mediums were used. The juices acquired from colored flowers, fruits and barks of tree trunks. Yellow color was prepared by rubbing the Hartal stone, blue from the blue stones and red color was obtained from the red soil. Black color was obtained from the wick of an oil lamp and white was obtained by burning the white shells. For a bright yellow color, the cows were fed turmeric. The urine thereafter was preserved for several days that caused the turmeric to settle down, which was then filtered through a muslin cloth, mixed with glue from the Acacia tree to create the final color. The Vocabulary used in Patna kalam is similar to the Mughal and completely different from the European, like Safed Udiya / urdiya- was for white color, green was called Hara Mata, brown color for Mungfali, golden for Harkari Sona and Rupahri for silver colour. Traditional preparation for every color was different from each other. The artist mostly worked behind creating colors in the monsoon. The main reason behind this was to

avoid the dust particles. The colors were mainly mixed in the morning. During the summer, paintings were sprayed with goat's milk, dried as preserved. The application of colors on the paintings was done during the winters. Artists of this style used cardamom seeds and slanting brush strokes to create the effects of lights and shadows. In this way artists of Patna Kalam were dedicatedly involved with the continuous process of creation.

Decline of Patna Kalam: In 1861, the English businessman and a high level art enthusiast, Mr. Charles D. Aisle, established a litho press in Gulzarbagh, that started printing the copies of Patna Kalam. This was the first litho press of Bihar. As a result, the huge demand for these paintings in foreign was being fulfilled seamlessly. In Patna Kalam works of some female painters have also been discussed, Sonabibi and Dacchhobibi amongst them are well known for their prominent works. Both of these painters created their works from home. The end of this style of art was evident from the fact that the paintings were recreated quickly and the technical growth was ceased. Later days saw very less incoming and outgoing of foreign tourists and businessmen. The increasing number of litho presses affected the artists a lot. The invention of photo-graphic cameras also had an adverse effect on the artists. Now, people prefer to buy print copies instead of handmade paintings of Patna kalam. It was during the same time, when paintings of Raja Ravi Verma created through litho press were on sale. Our painters were unable to compete with the technology. The Patna Kalam born in the lands of Patna also saw its golden period and wrote its own story of elevated success. The prospering Patna Kalam (1760 AD-1950 AD) finally died with the demise of the last artist of its era, Ishwari Prasad Verma ■

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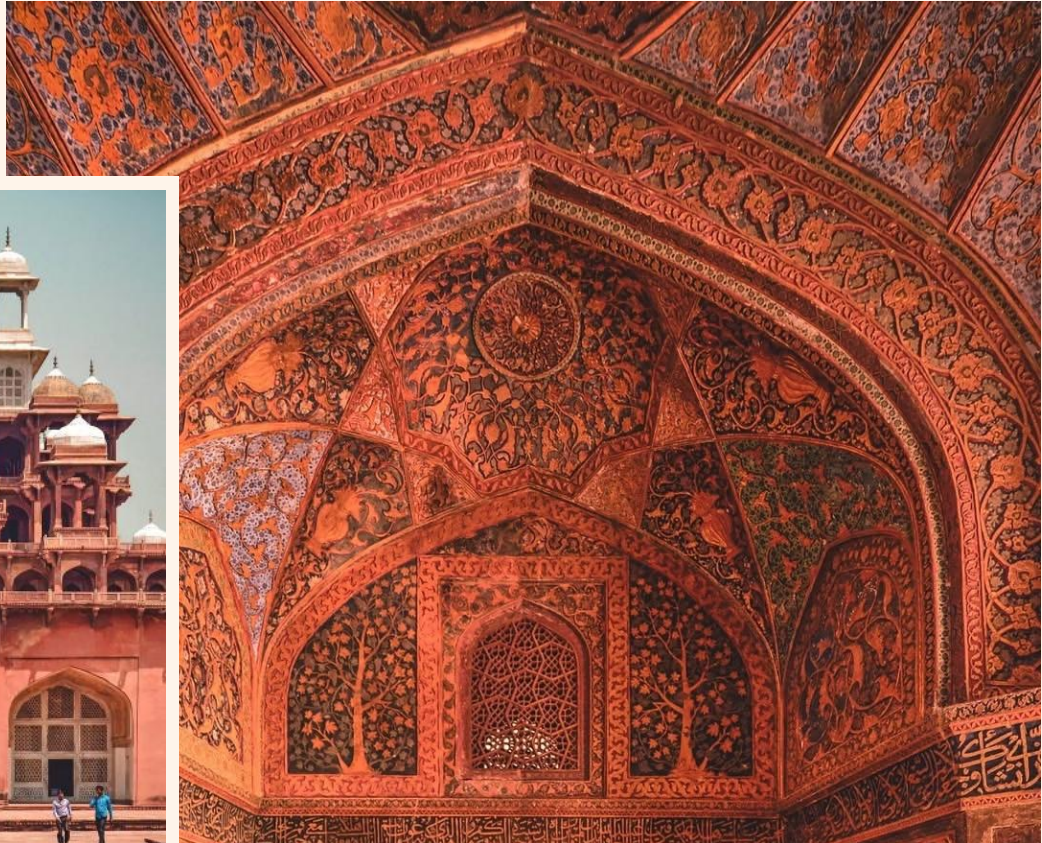
مغل فن تعمیر

مغل वास्तुकला इतिहास और विरासत

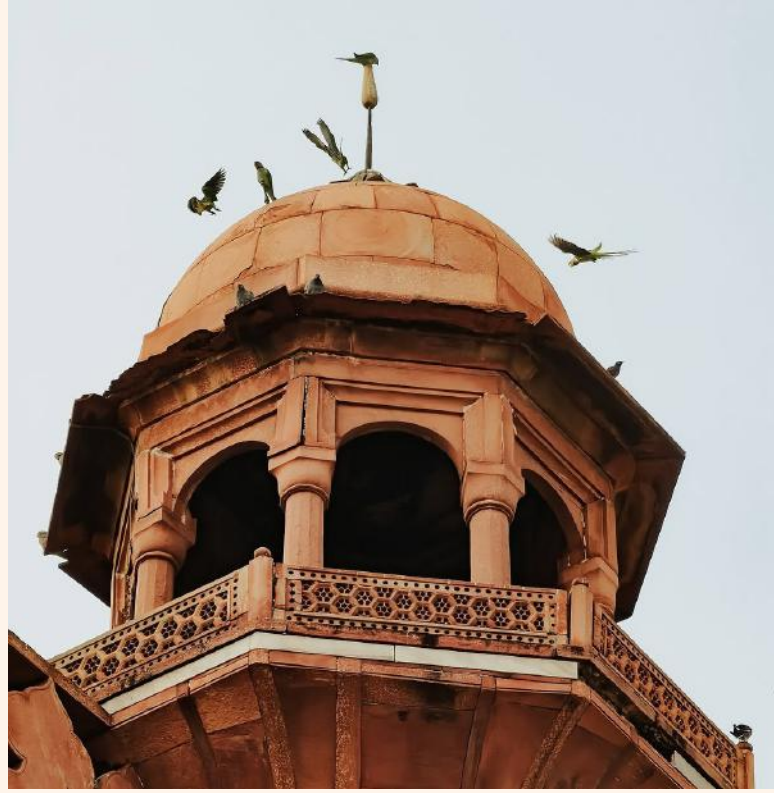
अगर फिरदौस बार रुये जमीन अस्त हमी अस्त-ओ हमी अस्त-ओ हमी अस्त
اگر فردوس بار روئے زمین است. حمین است. ای حمین است. ای حمین است.
"If there is paradise on earth, it is here, it is here"

मगल वास्तुकला, फारसी, इस्लामिक और भारतीय शैलियों का एक शानदार संगम, मुगल साम्राज्य की कलात्मक और सांस्कृतिक उत्कृष्टता का प्रमाण है, जिसने 16वीं से 18वीं शताब्दी तक भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप पर शासन किया। अपने भव्यता, समरूपता और जटिल विवरणों के लिए प्रसिद्ध, यह वास्तुशैली साम्राज्य की ऐश्वर्य और विविध प्रभावों को एक सुसंगत और मनमोहक सौंदर्य में समाहित करने की क्षमता को दर्शाती है। ऊंचे गुंबदों, पतले मीनारों, विस्तृत उद्यानों और सफेद संगमरमर तथा लाल बलुआ पत्थर जैसी सामग्रियों के भव्य उपयोग से चित्रित, मुगल वास्तुकला अपने विशाल पैमाने और उत्कृष्ट शिल्प कौशल के लिए मनाई जाती है। ताजमहल, हुमायूं का मकबरा और लाल किला जैसे प्रतिष्ठित स्मारक न केवल उस युग की तकनीकी और कलात्मक प्रतिभा को प्रदर्शित करते हैं, बल्कि मुगल विरासत के स्थायी प्रतीक के रूप में भी काम करते हैं। ये वास्तुशिल्प चमत्कार, अपने जटिल पिएत्रा झूरा नक्काशी, चारबाग (चार-भाग वाले उद्यान) और अलकृत जाली (जालीदार) डिजाइनों के साथ, दुनिया को मोहित करते रहते हैं, जो साम्राज्य की समृद्ध सांस्कृतिक विरासत और भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप के वास्तुशिल्प परिदृश्य पर इसके गहरे प्रभाव की झलक प्रदान करते हैं।

मगल वास्तुकलाओं की संरचना: मुगल वास्तुकला ने अकबर, जहांगीर और शाहजहाँ जैसे सम्राटों के संरक्षण में अपने चरम पर पहुंची, जिनमें से प्रत्येक ने इसके विकास में विशिष्ट योगदान दिया। सम्राट अकबर, जो अपने धर्मनिरपेक्ष दृष्टिकोण के लिए जाने जाते थे, ने फतेहपुर सीकरी जैसे संरचनाओं का निर्माण करवाया, जो आगरा के पास स्थित एक गढ़वाली शहर है और हिंदू तथा इस्लामिक वास्तुशिल्प तत्वों को मिश्रित करता है। 54 मीटर ऊंचा बुलंद दरवाजा (गेट ऑफ मैग्निफिसेंस) अकबर की वास्तुशिल्पीय महत्वाकांक्षा का एक प्रमुख उदाहरण है, जो साम्राज्य की सैन्य और सांस्कृतिक विजय को प्रतीकात्मक रूप से दर्शाता है। इसी तरह, फतेहपुर सीकरी में स्थित जामा मस्जिद, अपने विशाल आंगन और जटिल नक्काशी के साथ, मुगलों के सामुदायिक स्थलों और धार्मिक समावेशिता पर जोर को प्रतिबिंबित करती है। जहांगीर के शासनकाल में, मुगल वास्तुकला ने सजावटी कलाओं में परिष्कार देखा, जिसमें उद्यानों और प्राकृतिक सुंदरता पर अधिक ध्यान केंद्रित किया गया। लाहौर में स्थित शालीमार बाग, अपने सीढ़ीदार लेआउट, बहते हुए पानी के चैनल और हरे-भरे वनस्पतियों के साथ, मुगलों की प्रकृति और समरूपता के प्रति प्रेम को दर्शाता है। जहांगीर के शासनकाल में फ्रेस्को और फूलों के आकृतियों का उपयोग भी देखा गया, जिसने संरचनाओं में एक नाजुक सुंदरता जोड़ी। हालांकि, शाहजहाँ के शासनकाल में मुगल वास्तुकला ने अपने सबसे प्रतिष्ठित रूप को प्राप्त किया। ताजमहल, एक यूनेस्को विश्व धरोहर स्थल, मुगल डिजाइन का शिखर है, जो फारसी गुंबदों, भारतीय शिल्प कौशल और इस्लामिक सुलेख को एक सामंजस्यपूर्ण कृति में मिलाता है। शाहजहाँ का दिल्ली में स्थित लाल किला, अपने दीवान-ए-आम और दीवान-ए-खास के साथ, साम्राज्य की प्रशासनिक भव्यता और कलात्मक परिष्कार को प्रदर्शित करता है। सफेद संगमरमर, पिएत्रा झूरा नक्काशी और जटिल जाली स्क्रीन का उपयोग उनके युग की पहचान बन गए



मुगल वास्तुकला की विशेषताएं : मुगल वास्तुकला अपनी विशिष्ट शैली और भव्यता के लिए जानी जाती है, जिसमें गुंबद और मीनारें प्रमुख तत्व हैं। गुंबद अक्सर बड़े और भव्य होते थे, जबकि मीनारें ऊंची और सजावटी होती थीं, जैसा कि ताजमहल के गुंबद में देखा जा सकता है, जो इसका सबसे प्रसिद्ध उदाहरण है। मुगल बागों में चारबाग शैली का उपयोग किया गया, जिसमें बाग को चार समान भागों में बांटा जाता था और उन्हें पानी की नहरों से सजाया जाता था। यह शैली फारसी वास्तुकला से प्रेरित थी। मुगल वास्तुकला में लाल पत्थर और सफेद संगमरमर का व्यापक उपयोग हुआ, जैसे कि लाल किला और आगरा किला लाल पत्थर के उत्कृष्ट उदाहरण हैं, जबकि ताजमहल संगमरमर का सबसे प्रसिद्ध नमूना है। मुगल इमारतों में जाली का काम और नक्काशी बहुत सुंदर ढंग से की गई है, जो ताजमहल और फतेहपुर सीकरी में देखी जा सकती है। इसके अलावा, मुगल वास्तुकला में समरूपता पर विशेष ध्यान दिया गया, जिसमें इमारतों का डिजाइन बहुत ही संतुलित और सममित होता था।



मुगल वास्तुकला ने न केवल भारत बल्कि पूरे विश्व को प्रभावित किया। इसकी भव्यता और सुंदरता ने इसे विश्व धरोहर का हिस्सा बना दिया। ताजमहल, जो मुगल वास्तुकला का सबसे प्रसिद्ध नमूना है, को विश्व के सात अजूबों में से एक माना जाता है। मुगल वास्तुकला ने भारतीय वास्तुकला को एक नई दिशा दी और इसके तत्व आज भी आधुनिक वास्तुकला में देखे जा सकते हैं। मुगल वास्तुकला न केवल एक कला शैली बल्कि भारतीय इतिहास और संस्कृति की एक महत्वपूर्ण धरोहर है। इसकी भव्यता और सुंदरता आज भी दुनिया भर के लोगों को आकर्षित करती है। ■


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मुगल वास्तुकला का प्रभाव (निष्कर्ष): मुगल वास्तुकला की विरासत इसकी स्मारकीय संरचनाओं से कहीं आगे तक फैली हुई है। इसने क्षेत्रीय शैलियों को प्रभावित किया, राजपूत, सिख और बाद में औपनिवेशिक वास्तुकला को प्रेरित किया। मुगल डिजाइन में विविध सांस्कृतिक तत्वों का संश्लेषण साम्राज्य के बहुलवादी चरित्र को दर्शाता है, जो इसे भारत की समृद्ध वास्तुशिल्प विरासत का एक कालातीत प्रतीक बनाता है। आज, ये संरचनाएं लोगों को आश्चर्यचकित करती रहती हैं, और मुगल साम्राज्य की कलात्मक दृष्टि और उपमहाद्वीप के सांस्कृतिक परिदृश्य पर इसके स्थायी प्रभाव की याद दिलाती हैं।





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Following the Mauryan period, the rulers of the Gupta era attempted to unite the entire Indian subcontinent under a single political entity and empire. Colonial historians referred to this period as the "Dark Age," but nationalist writers described it as the "Golden Age" of Indian history. This is because of the unprecedented development witnessed in art, literature, and architecture during this time. Many literary works were produced in this era, earning it the title of the "Brahmin Renaissance Period." Additionally, significant scientific discoveries were made during this time. The Gupta era saw the rise of several great rulers, such as Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, and others, who expanded the Gupta Empire. This period is considered highly significant from economic, political, cultural, and social perspectives. As a result, it holds an important place not only in Indian history but also in global history. Marxist historians, while analyzing history, have referred to this era as the period of Indian feudalism.

Political System and Governance: Although the Gupta Empire was established by Shri Gupta, Chandragupta I is considered the true founder of the Gupta Empire. He was given the title of "Maharajadhiraj". During his reign, Magadha (present-day Bihar) remained the center of the empire. After Chandragupta I, his son Samudragupta ascended the throne. Samudragupta gained recognition throughout India for his valor and conquests. He is often referred to as the "Napoleon of India", a title given by V. A. Smith. Samudragupta expanded his empire to southern India and, through diplomacy and military skill, incorporated many states into his empire. During the reign of Chandragupta II, also known as Vikramaditya, the Gupta Empire reached its zenith. He defeated the western regions and established Ujjain as the capital of his kingdom. Under his rule, India experienced not only political stability but also cultural and economic prosperity. The administrative system of the Gupta rulers was decentralized; however, they managed to unite their empire under a single political framework. Local rulers and feudal lords were granted autonomy, which provided flexibility and stability in governance. Their political and administrative systems were highly sophisticated and robust.

Literature and Scientific Achievements: The Gupta period is considered a golden age in the field of literature. During this time, Sanskrit literature reached unprecedented heights. Kalidasa, often referred to as the "Shakespeare of Indian Literature," composed masterpieces like *Abhijana Shakuntalam*, *Meghaduta*, *Raghuvamsa*, and *Kumarasambhava*. The Nalanda University was established during this period by Kumaragupta I, which later faced destruction by Bakhtiyar Khilji in the 1190s. At its peak, Nalanda was one of the most prominent centers of learning, housing over a hundred thousand books, many of which were burned during its destruction. In the field of science, this era was highly significant. Scholars like Aryabhata and Varahamihira made remarkable contributions to mathematics and astronomy. Aryabhata introduced the concept of "zero" and wrote the treatise *Aryabhatiya*, which stated that the Earth is spherical. Varahamihira authored *Brihat Samhita*, which discussed astronomy, astrology, and geology. Religion and Philosophy: The Gupta period saw a resurgence of Hinduism. Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shakti worship were widely promoted. During this time, epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* were compiled and the *Puranas* were written, which hold immense significance in Hindu religious literature. However, Buddhism and Jainism also flourished during this period. Institutions like Nalanda and Takshashila became key centers of Buddhist education. These institutions attracted students not only from India but also from other parts of the world.

THE GLORIOUS GUPTAS

Economic Prosperity: The economic prosperity of the Gupta Empire was based on agriculture and trade. Gupta rulers paid special attention to irrigation and land reforms, leading to increased agricultural production. Trade also flourished during the Gupta period. Trade relations were established with Rome and Southeast Asian countries. Gold coins (*dinars*) and silver coins (*rupyakas*) were introduced during this time, reflecting the economic strength of the Gupta rulers. Handicrafts, such as textile production, jewelry, and sculpture, also saw significant development.

Society and Culture: Society during the Gupta era was divided into four *varnas* (classes), but the social structure was relatively flexible. The status of women and *Shudras* improved compared to earlier periods. They were allowed to listen to the *Vedas* and *Puranas*, and upper-class women had access to education and actively participated in art and literature. Culturally, this era was extremely rich. Music, dance, and drama were highly encouraged. This period became a symbol of India's cultural unity.

Conclusion: In conclusion, it would not be wrong to say that the Gupta Empire gave Indian civilization its "Golden Age." The achievements of this era in art, literature, science, and religion are unparalleled. The Gupta rulers played a crucial role in uniting the Indian subcontinent and promoting cultural progress. The contributions of this era are not only significant in Indian history but also hold a valuable place in world history. The Gupta Empire truly represents a period in Indian history that established India's identity on the global stage. ■

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India: A Nation Before The Raj?

EXPLORING PRE COLONIAL IDENTITY AND THE RISE OF NATIONALISM

India is a vibrant tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditions, where every corner tells a unique story of diversity and heritage. Valentine Chirol, a British journalist and writer, in his work *Indian Unrest* (1910), remarked, “There is more similarity between the Germans and the Portuguese in Europe than between the Bengalis and the Marathis in India.” This statement underscores the immense diversity within India and raises questions about how the country achieved unity and how nationalism emerged. Is nationalism purely a European concept, or has it existed in India since ancient times? These questions, among others, often arise when examining Indian nationalism.

The origins of nationalism and its rise remain a debated topic in Indian history. Nationalism, as a concept, is fundamentally rooted in the European experience. It emerged in Europe alongside the decline of feudalism and the rise of capitalism, leading to the creation of nation-states with definite geographical boundaries, centralized administrations, cultural uniformity, and linguistic homogeneity. Monarchs, such as Louis XIV of France, even equated themselves with the state, famously declaring, “I am the state.” However, while these nation-states had centralized governments and linguistic uniformity, a collective sense of belonging was absent. The late 18th and 19th centuries witnessed transformative events like the French Revolution and the American Revolution, which abolished feudal privileges and proclaimed the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.” Subjects of monarchies became citizens with a shared sense of belonging, marking the rise of modern nationalism. Eric Hobsbawm succinctly noted, “History is as important for nationalism as the poppy is for an opium addict.” In contrast, the nation-building process in India was facilitated by its long cultural heritage and rich history. Unlike Africa, where arbitrary colonial boundaries created deep tribal divisions, India’s historical and cultural continuity provided a foundation for unity. As historian and political scientist Benedict Anderson coined the term “Imagined Communities” in his work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* in 1983. He argued that nationalism is a socially constructed entity that exists not as tangible communities where everyone knows one another but as mental constructs created and sustained through shared cultural practices and communication. For Africa, common histories often had to be invented to foster a sense of belonging.

In India, early resistance to colonial rule, such as peasant and tribal revolts of the 18th and 19th centuries, reflected proto-nationalist sentiments. Bipin Chandra observed that while European nationalism was intertwined with the transformation from feudalism to capitalism, Indian nationalism arose from resistance to colonial exploitation. Early reactions to colonialism, though limited in scope and objectives, laid the groundwork for modern nationalism. The advent of English education exposed Indian intellectuals to Western liberal ideas like rationalism and humanism, further shaping nationalist thought. By the late 19th century, a model of nationalism began emerging in India, comparable to European standards but rooted in indigenous contexts.

However, early Indian nationalism was limited to elites and urban centers. Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership bridged this gap, making nationalism more inclusive and



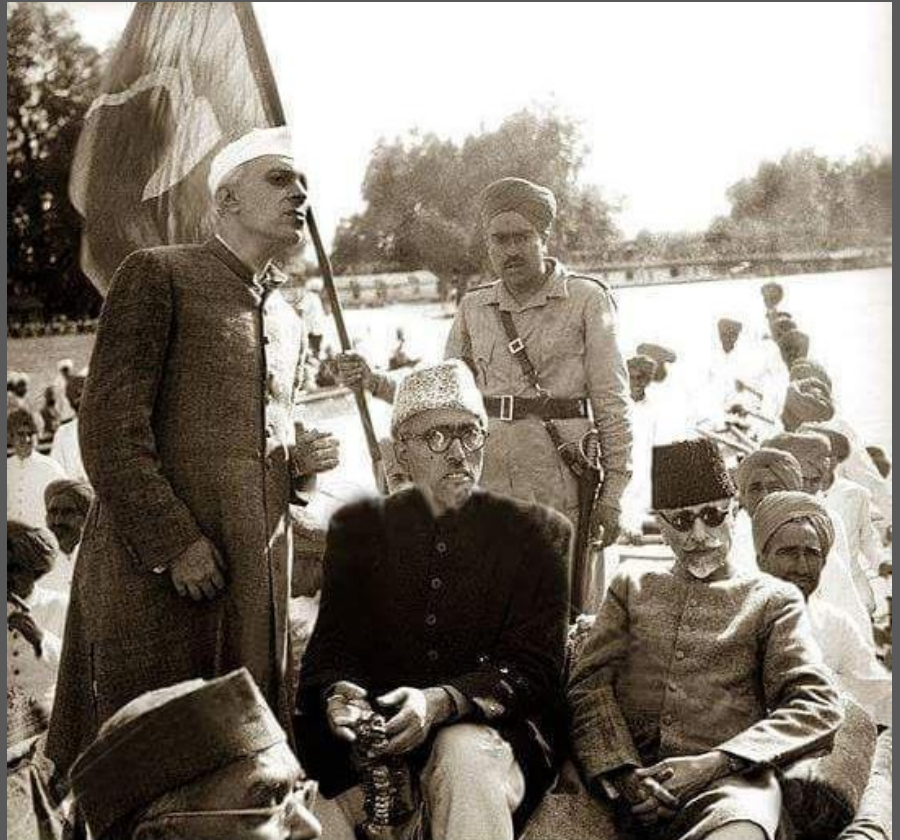
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connecting it with the masses. By the time of independence, India had emerged as a unified nation, with its liberation movement and nation-building process evolving simultaneously.

Western scholars often evaluated Indian nationalism through their own lenses. Valentine Chirol dismissed Indian nationalism, citing linguistic and cultural diversity. Similarly, John Strachey and Rudyard Kipling doubted its feasibility. Strachey remarked in his Cambridge lectures, published as *India: Its Administration and Progress* (1890), "India can never be a nation. It is a continent consisting of different nations." Kipling dismissed Indian nationalism, stating that India's ancient civilization could learn nothing new, including nationalism. Conversely, Benedict Anderson acknowledged India's emergence as a nation but attributed it significantly to British contributions, such as the introduction of print media, western education, maps, and censuses.

Even some imperialist scholars also have also tried to establish that the emergence of modern nationalism in India was a result of competition between elites that have organised themselves into political groups to secure concessions from the British colonial government and were conflicting with each other to corner a big piece of the pie of the British patronage. In this preposition, the feeling of patriotism is conveniently put aside and modern Indian nationalism is portrayed as simply as conspiracy by the elite class. But this is a mono-dimensional view because it neglected the philosophical underpinning of modern nationalism and the aspiration of common Indian peoples that provided muscles to Indian nationalism.

Though we cannot rule out the importance and decisive contribution made by the instruments of newspaper and literature to the development of modern ideas, at the same time, we should note that the successive governor journals from Lord Wellesley to Lord Curzon actually try to strangle the nationalist newspapers. Additionally, as historian Partha Sarthi Gupta argue, the education in India at that time was so narrow base that the modern western idea could not percolate out of the coteries of few educated Indians. Hence, the contribution of English education and hereby western idea cannot be overestimated for the growth of Indian nationalism. Also, there are some Indian scholars like Shashi Tharoor in his book "An era of darkness" who try to percolate that India developed a sense of nationalism from ancient onward. In ancient literature, there was the use of the term Jambudweep, which symbolises the whole Indian subcontinent and the ruler of Jambu Deep was characterised as Chakravarthy ruler. So far as the British census given the credit of encouraging nationalism consciousness through making India an enumerated community. But here we also cannot ignore the fact that the method of census was based on caste and religion, which was a more destructive force than Unified. The role of western thoughts and factors in the



development of Indian nationalism cannot be ruled out. As we know, modern railway, roads, print media, English education, census, etc., played noticeable roles in the organization of India as a modern country. But we cannot downplay the fact that Indian nationalism emerged from the Indian soil. Since ancient times, words like 'Aryavarta' and 'Bharata' have been in circulation.

A British scholar, Christopher Bayly, accepts that the ideas like motherland, good governance and nationhood have been present in India for a long time and have inspired the native people time and again to resist the foreign invaders and tyrants. Diana L. Eck, in her book 'India: A Sacred Geography', sees the strands of modern nationalism in India's ancient heritage and culture. During the medieval period in India, the Bhakti Movement that emerged as a cultural movement spread from Kashmir in the North to Tamil Nadu in the south and from Gujarat in the west to Bengal in the east. This also inspired the cultural homogeneity of the Indian nation. We should remember that Raja Rammohan Roy had started the socio-religious reforms movement in Calcutta even before he came in contact with the western culture. At that time, only eastern cultures—Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit—had influence over him.

In the light of the above facts, we can say that there was sufficient contribution of indigenous elements to the development of Indian nationalism, and even if British rule had not been imposed on India, she would have still emerged as a modern nation ■

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The Edible Archive: WHAT FORGOTTEN MENUS FROM THE PAST TELL US ABOUT OURSELVES

Food is far more than something consumed to sustain man; it explains how human societies have been affected by geography, trade, technology, and changes in culture over time. From early agricultural developments, modern sustainability emerged from changes and evolution that human societies have experienced in their history. The way foods were produced, prepared, and consumed began changing due to such forces as migratory patterns for humans, wars, industrialization, and innovations in trade.

Trade Routes And Colonization: Maritime and Silk Road trade provided free circulation of flavourings and spices around the world. Indian black pepper, Sri Lankan cinnamon, and saffron from Persia were in the highest demand by European markets. Colonization also altered the face of cuisines globally. Portuguese traders introduced chili peppers to Asia and Africa, and the Columbian Exchange brought tomatoes, potatoes, and cacao to Europe and Asia and traded over culinary traditions. Migration and diaspora have significantly shaped food culture. Chinese immigrants in the United States modified their recipes to suit local tastes and created recipes such as General Tso's chicken. Indian diaspora in the Caribbean created dishes such as

Trinidadian curry that had assimilation of two flavors together. Italian immigrants in Argentina helped popularize the mozzarella and prosciutto-filled empanadas, which combined their Italian taste with South American influences. Geography also greatly influences food cultures. For instance, Mediterranean cuisine relies on olive oil, sea fish, and citrus fruits, while Nordic cuisine is based on preserving techniques such as curing and pickling to survive cold winters. Japan uses its natural resources like the sea and forests, bringing about umami rich flavors that relate to fermentation methods from ancient lands.





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इतिहास मे नगरीकरण को एक जटिल सामाजिक प्रक्रिया माना गया है। बदलती हुई परिस्थितियों में इसमें परिवर्तन होते रहते हैं। नवीन शासकों द्वारा नगरीय प्रशासनिक तंत्र में परिवर्तन अक्रिय नहीं होता। नगर व्यवस्था, नगरीय समाज की संरचना, सामाजिक वर्गों की उपसतिथि सामाजिक वर्गों के आचार विचार, धर्म, जाति, व्यवसाय, इत्यादि के आधार पर एक नए राजनीतिकरण का जन्म लेना, इत्यादि सभी इससे प्रभावित होते हैं। इसी लिए यह ऐतिहासिक अध्ययन के दायरे में आ जाते हैं। इतिहास मात्र घटनाओं एवं तारीखों का दस्तावेज नहीं है। बीसवीं शताब्दी के सातवें दशक से ऐतिहासिक अध्ययन ने मानव अस्तित्व से जुड़े अंगिनीत सामाजिक-आर्थिक एवं सांस्कृतिक मुद्दों को अपना केंद्र बिन्दु बनाया। इनमें सामाजिक संरचना की रूप रेखा, विभिन्न सामाजिक वर्गों के वृतांत, समाज में सत्ता तंत्र, जाति, धर्म, भाषा, जेन्डर संबंध, परंपरा, संस्कार, अंधविश्वास का सामाजिक अध्ययन एवं सामाजिक चेतना में इनका औचित्य इत्यादि कुछ रोचक विषय हैं। मानव का भावनात्मक गठन एवं नैतिक मूल्यों पर उसकी आस्था समाज और परिवार के दायरे में ही पनपती है और वर्तमान और भविष्य के इतिहास पर अपनी छाप छोड़ती है। अतः यह भी ऐतिहासिक अध्ययन का हिस्सा है। प्रसिद्ध फ्रांसीसी इतिहासकार मार्क ब्लॉक ने अपनी कृति *Historians Craft* में कहा था, की इतिहासकार एक दानव के समान है। जहां भी उसे मानव गंध का बोध होता है वो झटपट उसे अपनी अध्ययन के दायरे में संमलित कर लेता है। अक्सर वर्तमान की परिसतिथियाँ और विकास बीते हुए कल से नए सवाल पूछने के लिए प्रेरित करती है। निःसंदेह इतिहासकार ई एच. कार ने सच कहा है की इतिहास वर्तमान के दायरे में बीते हुए कल का अध्ययन है। समय के साथ इतिहास के इस ब्रह्म दायरे ने आधिकारिक स्रोतों (अभिलेख, सरकारी रिकार्ड सरकारी रिपोर्ट, सरकारी लिखा पढ़ी इत्यादि) में उपलब्ध जानकारी को सीमित करार किया है। इतिहासकार के लिए समाचार पत्र, व्यक्तिगत डायरी व्यक्तिगत लेख देसज भाषा में लिखी गयीं पत्र पत्रिकाएं साहित्यकारों की कहानियाँ, कविता, उपन्यास, व्यंग्य, लोकगीत, लोक कथाएं इत्यादि सभी महत्वपूर्ण हो गए हैं। वर्तमान में ऐतिहासिक साक्ष्यों में



नगरीकरण, इतिहास और हिन्दी उपन्यास: कुछ विचारबिन्दु

मौखिक इतिहास भी संमलित हो गया है। इस प्रक्रिया के तहत अतीत की घटनाओं में भाग लेने वालों की आवाजों और यादों को इकट्ठा करना, संरक्षित करना और उनकी व्याख्या करना शामिल है। आज का शोध अंतर विषयक अध्ययन के कारण और अधिक परिपक्व हुआ है। साहित्य, समाज शास्त्र, मनोविज्ञान, राजनीति शास्त्र इत्यादि के सिद्धांतों ने मानव जीवन और सोच की जटिलताओं को बेहतर समझने का अवसर प्रदान किया है। उपन्यास लेखन एक साहित्यिक शैली है। सरल शब्दों में कहा जा सकता है कि उपन्यास महत्वपूर्ण लंबाई और जटिलता की गढ़ी गई गद्य कथा है जो मानवीय अनुभव के कल्पनात्मक रूप से संबंधित है। 1870-1940 के बीच संयुक्त प्रांत में नगरीकरण की प्रक्रिया एवं औपनिवेशिक समाज में मध्यक वर्ग की बढ़ती कशमकश को कुछ हिन्दी उपन्यासों में बड़ी कुशलता से परिलक्षित किया गया है अन्य प्रदेशों की भांति संयुक्त प्रांत भी औपनिवेशिक राज्य के दौर में अनेकों परिवर्तनों से गुजरा। 'भारत एक खोज' में जवाहर लाल नेहरू ने कहा था की संयुक्त प्रांत (दिल्ली को मिलाकर) के नगर में हिन्दू फारसी एवं पाश्चात्य संस्कृतियों का समागम मिलेगा। दिल्ली आगरा लखनऊ इलाहाबाद मुगल काल, उत्तर मुगल काल एवं तत्पश्चात औपनिवेशिक दौर में अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण रहे हैं। इतिहासकारों ने 1857 के विद्रोह के उपरांत संयुक्त प्रांत के शहरों में हुई तहस नहस को भली प्रकार परिलक्षित किया है। न केवल बड़ी मात्र में लोगों की मृत्यु हुई, बल्कि संपत्ति के विनाश का तांडव भी रचा गया। तत्पश्चात ब्रिटिश सरकार ने औपनिवेशिक प्रजाजनों के जीवन संचालन हेतु कचहरी, नगर पालिका अंग्रेजी शिक्षा प्रणाली पर आधारित विद्यालय एवं विश्वविद्यालय की स्थापना की। एक रोचक उपन्यास में नगर के बदलते परिवेश को अक्सर उपन्यासकार एक प्रष्टभूमि अथवा मंच के रूप में उपयोग करके विभिन्न मुद्दों, सामाजिक वर्गों की प्रतिक्रिया, उनके लिए पैदा होती नई चुनौतियाँ, सामाजिक संरचना में होने वाली उथल पुथल, औपनिवेशिक सरकार की कूटनीतिज्ञता, उससे जन्म लेने वाली नई देशज विचारधाराएं प्रभावित होने वाले समुदाय की मनोदशा, सामाजिक नैतिकता के बदलते मापदंड इत्यादि जैसे अंगिनीत पक्ष पाठक के समक्ष जीवांत प्रस्तुत हो जाते हैं उपरोक्त कथनों को बेहतर समझने के लिए प्रेमचंद की एक चर्चित उपन्यास सेवा सदन को चुना गया है। धनपत राय श्रीवास्तव अथवा मुंशी प्रेमचंद (31 जुलाई 1880-8 अक्टूबर 1936) हिन्दी साहित्य जगत के एक अविस्मरणीय कथाकार एवं उपन्यासकार हैं। बहुत ही कम ऐसे साहित्यकार हैं जो उनकी श्रेणी के कहे जा सकें। उनकी सबसे बड़ी विशेषता थी उनकी सहज और जीवांत सोचा उनके आख्यान में अनगिनत परिसतिथियां का ताना बाना होता है किन्तु हर दृश्य का केन्द्रबिन्दु साधारण और रोजमर्रे में संघर्षरत पुरुष और स्त्री ही होते हैं। सेवा सदन, प्रेमाश्रम, रंगभूमि निर्मला, गबन, कर्मभूमि गोदान इत्यादि उनके कुछ चर्चित उपन्यास हैं।

¹ यह लेख Vasudha Dalmia की कृति *Fiction as History: The Novel and the City in Modern North India* (2017), Permanent Black: New Delhi से प्रेरित है।

सेवासदन नामक उपन्यास सुमन नाम की एक स्त्री के इर्द गिर्द केंद्रित है। सम्पन्न घर की होते हुए भी परिसरतिथीवश उसका विवाह एक अंधेड़ उम्र के पुरुष से हो जाता है जिसके फलस्वरूप वह बनारस आ जाती है। दुखी होने के बावजूद वह एक आदर्श पत्नी के समान अपने कठोर पति की सेवा में लगी रहती है। किन्तु असन्तुष्ट सुमन जब यह पाती है की उससे कम सुंदर और कम कुशल भोली नामक एक वैश्या अधिक समृद्धि, और अधिक सामाजिक सत्कार की मालकिन है, तो न चाहते हुए भी वो उससे प्रभावित होती है। एक दिन क्रुद्ध पति द्वारा बेघर कर देने पर उसके कदम दाल मंडी अथवा बनारस के चौक की ओर अपने आप बढ़ जाते हैं। बनारस का चौक वह इलाका था जहां हिन्दू एवं मुस्लिम दुकानदारों और व्यापारियों के सम्पन्न व्यापार के अतिरिक्त वैश्याओं का भी बसा बसाया व्यापार था। यहाँ की वैश्याएं संगीत नृत्य, कला और सुंदरता की स्वामिनी मानी जाती थीं। बनारस के सम्पन्न परिवारों के पुरुष इन वैश्याओं की संगत मात्र शारीरिक आनंद के लिए ही नहीं बल्कि इसलिए भी करते थे क्योंकि यह वैश्याएं उत्कृष्ट संस्कृति की स्वामिनी मानी जाती थीं। मंदिरों में हर पूजा पाठ एवं तीज त्योहार इनके प्रदर्शन के बिना सम्पन्न नहीं माना जाता था। बड़ी बड़ी कोठियों में हर आयोजन पर इन्हे विशेष न्योते दिए जाते थे धीरे धीरे सुमन भी एक प्रसिद्ध वैश्या में गिनी जाने लगती है। पूरे शहर में उसके चर्चे थे। इस तारतम्य में परिवर्तन तब आया जब ब्रिटिश सरकार ने वैश्याओं को सभ्य समाज के लिए एक कलंक माना। वैश्याओं की उपसतिथि को 'सभ्य' समाज के दायरे में कंटक करार किया गया। सुधारवादी समुदाय ने इनके व्यवसायों की अवहेलना की। धीरे धीरे आधुनिक समाज इस विचार पर पहुंचा की वैश्याओं को शहर के केंद्र (अथवा चौक) से हटा कर शहर के परिधीय इलाके में बसाया जाए ताकि इनका साया भी नई पीढ़ी पर न पड़े और न ही वह उनकी चकाचौंध से भ्रमित हों। उनके धंधे को बंद करने के हर तरीके जुटाए गए। अंत में साधु बन गए सुमन के पति 'सेवासदन' नाम की एक संस्था खोलते हैं जहां वैश्याओं के बच्चों को पढ़ने लिखने और स्वावलंबी बनने के हुनर सिखाए जाते हैं। सुमन उसी विद्यालय में कार्यरत हो जाती है।

उपन्यास की पूरी कहानी उनीसवीं शताब्दी के अंत और बीसवीं शताब्दी के प्रारंभ में परिवर्तन शील बनारस के इर्द गिर्द केंद्रित है। उत्तर भारत का सबसे पवित्र नगर बनारस आधुनिकता के द्वार पर खड़ा था। 1857 के विद्रोह के उपरान्त बनारस को भी नाश एवं पुनर्निर्माण के दौर से गुजरना पड़ा। 1857 से पहले अधिनियमों ने नगर निवासियों को नगर प्रशासन और व्यवस्था बनाए रखने का दायित्व दे रखा था। किन्तु यह व्यवस्था उनीसवीं शताब्दी के अंत तक रद्द हो गई। 1868 में उत्तर पश्चिमी अधिनियम IV ने नगर पालिकाओं की स्थापना की। इसका नियंत्रण डिस्ट्रिक्ट मैजिस्ट्रेट के हाथों में दिया गया। उन्हीं की सिफारिश से सदस्यों का चुनाव होता। यह पूर्णतः केन्द्रीकृत व्यवस्था थी। लॉर्ड रिपन के समय 1883 में उत्तर पश्चिमी एवं औद्योगिक नगर पालिका अधिनियम पारित हुआ। हालांकि डिस्ट्रिक्ट मैजिस्ट्रेट प्रधान रहे लेकिन नामांकित सदस्यों के साथ निर्वाचित सदस्यों का भी प्रावधान रखा गया। 1900 तक नगर पालिका को पूर्ण प्रशासन का कार्य सौंप दिया गया। समय के साथ साथ 1909, 1916 में निर्वाचित सदस्यों की संख्या बढ़ती गई। किन्तु इसका अर्थ यह कतई नहीं था की सदस्य सुयोग्य नगरीय व्यवस्था को कायम रखना अपना उद्देश्य मानते थे। बीसवीं शताब्दी के आरंभ में हालांकि बनारस में पुराने सामाजिक वर्ग जैसे राय, जमींदार एवं व्यापारी अभिजन समाज का प्रभुत्व था, किन्तु ब्रिटिश शासन के अधीन पनपने वाले नए सामाजिक वर्ग जैसे पेशेवर लोग या कचहरी में काम करने वाले वकील इत्यादि की उपसतिथि भी बढ़ रही थी। नगर पालिका का सदस्य गण इस मिश्रित समाज का ही हिस्सा था। स्वाभाविक सी बात है की नगर व्यवस्था के मुद्दों पर निर्णय लेते समय विभिन्न सामाजिक वर्गों के अपने हित भी आड़े या जाते थे। इससे आपस में टकराहट स्वाभाविक थी। निर्वाचित सदस्यों की बढ़ती संख्या ने धर्म, व्यवसाय, जाति इत्यादि के आधार पर बनी विभाजन रेखाओं और गुटबंदी को और सुदृढ़ किया। इस उपन्यास में नगर पालिका की संरचना हेतु जन्म लेने वाली गुटबंदी एवं विचारों की टकराहट को भली भांति दिखाया गया है। जब वैश्याओं को दाल मंडी से हटाने का मसला उठा तो सब से ज्यादा विरोध व्यापारी वर्ग ने किया। इसमें दोनों -हिन्दू और मुसलमान-व्यापारी शामिल थे। न केवल इससे उनका व्यवसाय प्रभावित होता बल्कि मंडी की रौनक भी चली जाती। कुछ कट्टरपंथी मुसलमानों ने इसे यह कहकर सामुदायिक संकट माना कि अधिकतर वैश्याएं मुसलमान थीं। यह रवैय्या मुसलमानों को अपमानित करने और मुसलमानों की संख्या घटाने हेतु था। किन्तु नए सामाजिक वर्गों ने इस मसले का खुल कर स्वागत किया। मुसलमानों और हिंदुओं में नए

सामाजिक वर्गों ने इस आधार पर वैश्याओं को हटाने के मुद्दे का समर्थन किया कि, वैश्याएं समाज की गंदगी थीं जो अनैतिकता फैलाती थीं। कुछ मुसलमानों ने यह भी कहा की तवाइफों का मुसलमान होना मुसलमान समुदाय का दुर्भाग्य था। कुछ उदारवादी हिन्दू और मुसलमान सुधारकों का यह कहना था की वैश्याओं को अपना चाल चलन सुधारना चाहिए, और इसके लिए शिक्षित समाज को आगे बढ़कर उनकी सहायता करनी चाहिए, उनका पुनर्विवाह होना चाहिए। प्रेमचंद ने अपने उपन्यास में नए समाज और पुराने समाज की इस टकराहट को भली प्रकार दृष्टिगोचर किया है। सभी महत्वपूर्ण प्रदेशों की भाँति संयुक्त प्रांत के अधिकतर महत्वपूर्ण नगरों के सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र में विचारों का आदान प्रदान बदलते हुए बौद्धिक माहौल का सूचक था। पुराने समाज के अनेक तौर तरीकों का तिरस्कार किया जा रहा था। वैश्याओं का संतान करने वाले लोगों को मनोरंजन के 'सभ्य' तरीके अपनाने के लिए प्रेरित किया जा रहा था। उन्हें कहानी और उपन्यास पढ़ने के लिए प्रेरित किया जा रहा था। नगरों में नैतिकता के नए मापदंड तय किए जा रहे थे। संगीत को वैश्याओं के दायरे से निकाल कर व्यवस्थिक तरीके से युवा युवतियों को इसकी शिक्षा देने की बात की जा रही थी। अंततः वैश्याओं को नगर से बाहर करने के मत की जीत हुई। साथ में उन्हें नगर के किसी भी सार्वजनिक स्थान में जाने की आज्ञा नहीं थी। उन्हें मुजरे इत्यादि में बुलाने वालों पर अत्यधिक कर लगाने का प्रावधान किया गया। इस प्रकार से वैश्याएं जो पुराने बनारस के सांस्कृतिक, सामाजिक और धार्मिक जीवन का अभिन्न हिस्सा थीं- उन्हें नैतिकता के मुद्दे की दुहाई देकर पूर्णतः निस्कासित कर दिया गया।

इस प्रकार से उपन्यास युग विशेष के सामाजिक इतिहास को एक बहुत बड़ी आधार सामग्री उपलब्ध करती है। भले ही उपन्यासों की पटकथा काल्पनिक हो, भले ही इसमें उपन्यासकार का अपना दृष्टान्त संमलित हो किन्तु इससे इतिहासकार के लिए उपन्यासों की महत्वता कम नहीं होती। इतिहास में मानव समाज के परिवर्तनशील प्रसंगों को समझने के लिए इतिहासकार उपन्यास के कथानक को अनुभवजन्य वास्तविकता के लिए उपयोग नहीं करता। यह देखा गया है की अधिकतर वही उपन्यास लोकप्रिय होते हैं जो उस समय के सांस्कृतिक माहौल को वास्तविक तौर से व्यक्त करें। वैकल्पिक रूप से एक लोकप्रिय उपन्यास का उपन्यासकार जिस सांस्कृतिक ढांचे में अपने चरित्रों को ढालता है वो चयनीत दौर में उपलब्ध सांस्कृतिक प्रतिमान के बहुत समान होता है। और इसी की समझ इतिहासकार को वह अंतर्दृष्टि उपलब्ध करती जो एक परिपक्व जनमानस के इतिहास की रचना में सहायक होती है। ■

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Gendered Anxieties and the Witch Hunts:

AN INTERSECTIONAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE





Witchcraft in early modern Europe was deeply intertwined with gender dynamics, reflecting societal norms and anxieties of the time. The witch hunts, which peaked between the 15th and 18th centuries, predominantly targeted women, revealing a complex relationship between gender, power, and societal fears. Witchcraft in early modern Europe was not merely a matter of superstition or belief in the supernatural; it was a phenomenon deeply embedded in the social, religious, and cultural fabric of the time. The witch hunts that swept across the continent were driven by a confluence of religious fervour, societal instability, and entrenched gender biases. Women, particularly those who were marginalised or deviated from societal norms, bore the brunt of these persecutions. The period between the late 15th and 18th centuries, often referred to as the early modern era, was one of profound transformation. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation fractured religious unity, while the rise of the nation-state and the decline of feudalism reshaped social structures. In this climate of upheaval, witchcraft became a convenient scapegoat for a host of anxieties, from economic hardship to political uncertainty. Although belief in witches was not new, the scale and intensity of the witch hunts during this period were unparalleled.

Outcasts and Oracles: The Gendered Nature of Witchcraft Accusations: Central to the phenomenon of witchcraft was the issue of gender. The vast majority of those accused—historians estimate between 75% to 80%—were women. This disproportionate targeting reflects the deeply patriarchal nature of early modern European society, where women were often perceived as inherently weaker, more susceptible to temptation, and closer to the supernatural. Such stereotypes were reinforced by the association of women with nature and the domestic sphere, roles that were both revered and feared. Women who defied these expectations whether as healers, midwives, or simply as individuals living on the margins of society were frequently viewed with suspicion. Widows, the elderly, and those without male protection were especially vulnerable to accusations. The witch hunts, therefore, were not merely a product of irrational fear; they were a manifestation of broader gender dynamics, revealing how societal anxieties could be projected onto women who challenged or fell outside the established order. In this way, the history of witchcraft offers a profound insight into the interplay of power, prejudice, and fear in shaping human behaviour and societal structures.

Women and Property Rights: Economic factors played a crucial role in the targeting of women during the witch hunts, particularly in relation to their property rights and financial vulnerability. In numerous regions across Europe, women's property rights were severely restricted, leaving them reliant on their husbands or male relatives for financial support. This dependency created an environment where women who owned property or wealth especially those who had inherited land or assets from their families were often viewed with suspicion and hostility. As a result, accusations of witchcraft became a convenient tool for dispossessing these women, allowing others to seize their property and wealth under the guise of moral or social justification. This intersection of economic interests and gender dynamics not only fueled the witch hunts but also highlighted the precarious position of women in a patriarchal society.

The Church and the Construction of Witchcraft: The Christian Church played a pivotal role in shaping attitudes towards witchcraft and gender, profoundly influencing the societal landscape of early modern Europe. Theologians and clerics propagated the notion that women, due to their perceived moral and spiritual



inferiority, were more susceptible to the temptations of witchcraft. This belief was epitomised in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, a treatise published in 1487 by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, which not only served as a guide for identifying witches but also reinforced the idea that women were inherently more prone to diabolical practices. The Church's endorsement of witch hunts lent legitimacy to the persecution of women, fuelling widespread hysteria and embedding these ideas deeply into the cultural consciousness.

Women were disproportionately targeted during the witch hunts, a phenomenon rooted in the rigid gender norms and societal expectations of the time. In a world where women were often viewed as inferior to men and confined to domestic roles, the figure of the "witch" became a vessel for societal anxieties about female autonomy and sexuality. Women who deviated from traditional norms—whether by being outspoken, assertive, or living independently—were particularly vulnerable to accusations. These women were seen as threats to the established order, and their marginalisation reinforced the perception of witches as malevolent figures. Traits such as overt sexuality, assertiveness, or even nonconformist behaviour were often interpreted as evidence of witchcraft, reflecting broader fears about women who strayed from prescribed roles. Cultural perceptions further exacerbated this targeting, as women were frequently depicted as weaker and more susceptible to the devil's influence.

The dynamics of accusation were equally complex, with many charges originating from other women, revealing intricate social relationships, rivalries, and community tensions. Additionally, the distinction between magic and witchcraft played a significant role in shaping societal attitudes. While magic was often viewed as a natural or neutral practice, witchcraft was explicitly associated with evil and malevolence. This dichotomy influenced the acceptance or rejection of various magical practices, depending on their perceived morality and intent. Together, these factors created a climate in which women, particularly those who defied societal norms, were systematically scapegoated and persecuted, illustrating how deeply intertwined gender, power, and fear were in the witchcraft phenomenon of early modern Europe.

The Dynamics of Witch Trials: Regional Disparities, Legal Contexts, and Cultural Narratives: The intensity of witch trials varied significantly across Europe, with France experiencing a higher number of trials compared to Spain and Italy, while the Holy Roman Empire witnessed substantial witch hunts, particularly during the 16th and 17th centuries. The legal systems of the time were predominantly male-dominated, and texts such as the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487) reinforced the notion that women were inherently more susceptible to witchcraft. These witch hunts were exacerbated by social, economic, and religious upheaval, leading to widespread fear and paranoia surrounding witchcraft. Additionally, early depictions of witches in literature and art often mirrored societal fears and fascinations with female power and sexuality, further contributing to the demonization of women accused of witchcraft.

Warlocks and the Witchcraft Hysteria: A Gendered Paradox— The history of warlocks, originating in Europe long before the Middle Ages, is marked by a complex interplay of fear, persecution, and supernatural belief. Initially viewed as practitioners of sorcery, warlocks—predominantly male—were believed to wield magical powers for both benevolent and malevolent purposes. They could cast spells, summon spirits, and offer insights into astrology and herbal medicine, often serving as healers or advisors. While women constituted the majority of accused witches, men made up 20-30% of cases, particularly in regions like Iceland. Male witches often belonged to distinct groups, such as cunning men, shamans, or vagrants, whose roles deviated from patriarchal expectations. During large-scale witch panics, torture-induced confessions

implicated increasing numbers of men, including elite figures. However, patriarchal structures generally ensured that women remained the primary victims. The rise of the Church's influence led to the demonization of warlocks, who were frequently accused of witchcraft, particularly during the Witchcraft Trials of the early modern period. In 1604, King James I enacted a royal decree making witchcraft punishable by death, a law that remained in effect until 1736 and contributed to over 300 recorded executions. Thus, the legacy of warlocks is intertwined with themes of fear, societal control, and the tragic consequences of superstition and scapegoating.

The Devastating Impact of Witch Hunts on Women: The witch hunts of the past had profoundly devastating consequences for women, marked by widespread accusations that often led to torture, imprisonment, and execution, frequently without the benefit of fair trials. The stigma associated with these accusations resulted in long-lasting repercussions, further entrenching the marginalization of women within society and contributing to the broader suppression of their rights and autonomy. Notable witch trials, such as the Pendle witch trials in England (1612) and the Salem witch trials in colonial America (1692), exemplify the gender dynamics of this tumultuous period. In Pendle, a group of women, including the elderly and those living on the fringes of society, were accused of witchcraft, reflecting the community's fears of the unknown. Similarly, the Salem trials disproportionately targeted women, with many accusations arising from personal vendettas and social rivalries. These historical events underscore the intersection of gender, power, and societal fear, highlighting the enduring impact of witch hunts on women's lives and rights.

Conclusion: The intersection of witchcraft and gender in early modern Europe illuminates profound insights into the societal dynamics of the period. The witch hunts were not merely a reaction to supernatural beliefs but a manifestation of entrenched anxieties concerning gender, power, and social order. By examining the historical context and the role of gender in these events, we discern how societal fears can materialise into violence and persecution. The enduring legacy of the witch hunts serves as a poignant reminder of the necessity to scrutinise the interplay of gender, power, and societal norms in our historical understanding.

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Colonialism's Queerphobia:

HOW EMPIRE SHAPED ANTI-LGBTQ+ LAWS



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Writing this feels personal, like flipping through an album filled with the memories of our community's shared struggles and victories. As a 20-year-old trans woman myself, this history isn't just something distant; it feels deeply connected to my own journey of self-discovery. For me, queer history isn't only about landmark moments or famous figures—it's about the everyday people who resisted, survived, and loved in ways that shaped the world for all of us. As a feminist, I see queer history and feminist struggles as deeply intertwined. Both are battles against rigid patriarchal systems that police bodies, identities, and desires. Queer liberation is feminist liberation—because neither can be achieved while society continues to uphold structures that enforce gender hierarchies and control marginalized identities. When I first started exploring my identity, I felt lost and unsure whether I had a place in this world. Learning about our history changed that. It made me realize we've always existed, even when the world tried to erase us. Our past is rich, complex, and diverse, just like our community today.

Ancient India: A Tradition of Acceptance: In ancient India, the understanding of gender and sexuality was far more fluid than it is today. The *Kamasutra*, a famous Sanskrit text, openly talked about same-sex relationships, while temple carvings like those at Khajuraho

beautifully depicted queer love. Transgender people, especially the *Hijra* community, played important roles in cultural and spiritual practices. Stories of gods like Ardhanarishvara—half Shiva, half Parvati—celebrated the union of masculine and feminine energies, showing a divine acceptance of gender fluidity. These tales remind us of a time when gender and sexual diversity weren't just acknowledged but celebrated. Feminist thought encourages us to reclaim this heritage and challenge modern systems of oppression that suppress such diversity.

Queer Narratives Across the Globe: Around the world, different cultures embraced people who challenged traditional gender and sexual norms. Native American tribes honored Two-Spirit individuals, who were seen as embodying both masculine and feminine qualities. They often became respected leaders or healers in their communities. Ancient Greece, known for its art and philosophy, also accepted same-sex relationships, particularly in mentorship and military contexts. The Sacred Band of Thebes, for instance, was a group of male couples celebrated for their bravery in battle. However, these histories often excluded women and their experiences. Patriarchy has always worked to silence voices that challenge the gender binary or subvert male dominance. Feminist historiography seeks to unearth these hidden—





stories, ensuring queer women, trans people, and nonbinary identities aren't erased in retellings of history.

The Role of Colonialism: Colonialism had a devastating impact on queer communities worldwide. When the British colonized India, they imposed rigid gender roles and strict laws against same-sex relationships. The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 targeted Hijras and other gender-nonconforming people, while Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code criminalized same-sex acts. These laws and attitudes erased centuries of cultural acceptance and replaced them with prejudice that still lingers today. Colonialism wasn't just about economic exploitation; it was also about cultural dominance, where patriarchal ideals were imposed to control marginalized groups, attacking especially women and queer individuals. These systems of oppression continue to shape societal attitudes even today worldwide and in India, making feminism an essential ally in dismantling the colonial legacies that persist in our laws and norms.

The Global LGBTQIA+ Rights Movement: The fight for LGBTQIA+ rights gained momentum in the mid-20th century. In 1969, the Stonewall Riots in New York City became a turning point for queer liberation, led by figures like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. Their bravery sparked Pride marches and activism worldwide, showing how queer and feminist struggles align in resisting oppressive systems. Ever since then, pride marches have taken place across the world every year, not just as an event celebrating sexual and gender identities, but as a protest as well. In India, the queer rights movement grew slowly but steadily. Organizations like the Humsafar Trust and Naz Foundation fought tirelessly to decriminalize Section 377, which finally happened in 2018 after decades of struggle. However, many queer women and trans women remain sidelined even within the larger LGBTQIA+ movement, reflecting a need for intersectionality in our activism.

Intersectionality in Queer and Feminist Struggles: Feminist thinker Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality during the third wave of feminism to highlight how systems of oppression overlap and amplify each other. This concept is crucial to understanding the unique struggles faced by individuals at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities. For instance, queer Dalits in India experience both caste-based oppression and homophobia. Queer women face misogyny alongside homophobia, and trans individuals may encounter violence for both their gender identity and sexual orientation. Feminism that excludes these voices fails its purpose—because none of us are free until all of us are free.

Challenges and Progress: Despite significant milestones, trans individuals especially trans women in India continue to face harsh realities. Marginalization, systemic neglect, and violence are daily struggles for many. The lack of reservation policies in education and employment leaves trans people without the opportunities they need to thrive. Many are forced into unsafe and exploitative work simply to survive. Patriarchy plays a central role in this violence. Trans women, in particular, are often attacked for defying traditional gender roles. The societal expectation that women must conform to specific norms of femininity and dependence adds another layer of discrimination. Feminism must address these issues by challenging the systems that enforce binary gender roles and deny autonomy to marginalized individuals.

A Personal Reflection: As someone who's been lucky enough to have access to the internet and supportive friends, I know my privilege. Platforms like Discord and Reddit gave me spaces to connect with others, learn about my identity, and feel seen. But not everyone in the LGBTQIA+ community has that. Many queer people, especially in conservative areas, remain isolated and lack access to safe spaces or resources. These challenges remind me that our fight isn't just about legal rights—it's about changing societal attitudes and creating a culture of acceptance. Feminism teaches us that every battle is interconnected. Fighting for queer liberation means fighting for women's rights, and vice versa.

Looking Ahead: Queer history is a story of resilience, love, and hope—one deeply intertwined with feminist struggles for dignity and freedom. From ancient traditions of acceptance to modern struggles for equality, our community has faced immense challenges but never stopped fighting. As we move forward, it's important to remember where we've been and honor the people who made our progress possible. Feminism and Queer liberation are two sides of the same coin. Both demand a world where everyone—regardless of gender, sexuality, caste, or class—is free to live authentically and without fear. Through education, advocacy, and solidarity, we can create a future where these interconnected struggles lead to true liberation for all ■

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The Women's Trade Union League:

LABOR ACTIVISM AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS



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The origins of the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) trace back to a British organization with the same name, founded three decades earlier. Initially, the British League championed the idea of a separate women's labor movement. However, by the 1890s, it had merged its objectives with the broader British labor movement, becoming an umbrella for women's trade unions. In 1903, the WTUL was formed at the American Federation of Labor (AFL) convention. Its early years were spent attempting to build relationships with the AFL leadership. By 1907, the WTUL saw its mission as supporting the AFL and encouraging women to join its ranks. That year, their constitution emphasized helping to organize women into trade unions and ensuring those unions were, whenever possible, affiliated with the AFL. Despite their efforts, the AFL leadership largely ignored the League. In 1905, when the WTUL held its annual conference in a separate location from the AFL, Samuel Gompers, the AFL president, was enraged and refused to attend. Still, the League managed to push the AFL toward supporting women's suffrage and succeeded in bringing more women into the Federation than ever before. The WTUL drew inspiration from the pioneering efforts of activists in the settlement house movement, like Jane Addams and Florence Kelley, as well as from early unions in industries with a high percentage of female workers, such as garment and textile manufacturing. The League's leadership was a mix of upper-class philanthropists and working-class women with experience in union organizing. Among them were some of the most prominent female labor leaders of the era, including Rose Schneiderman. The League's peak came between 1907 and 1922, under the leadership of Margaret Dreier Robins. During this period, the WTUL took the lead in organizing women workers into unions, pushing for protective legislation, and raising awareness about the challenges faced by working women. In those years, the WTUL achieved several key legislative victories, including the eight-hour workday, minimum wage laws, and the abolition of child labor. After the tragic Triangle Factory Fire in 1911, the League played a central role in a four-year investigation that eventually led to the establishment of new industrial safety regulations. The WTUL also helped women gain access to labor unions, trained them for leadership roles within those unions, and provided support for unemployed women in the trade union community.

At a time when organized labor adhered to the "family wage" concept—believing that men should earn enough to support an entire family without needing their wives to work—and feared that increasing the number of women in the workforce would lower wages for men, traditional unions were reluctant to admit women into their ranks. When women did form



unions and went on strike, the WTUL was often one of the few groups offering support where others held back. Perhaps most importantly, the WTUL became a key gathering place for reform-minded women passionate about labor issues. It was within the League that many of these women forged important political relationships. In 1922, Eleanor Roosevelt became an active member, strengthening her ties with influential figures like Rose Schneiderman and Margaret Dreier Robins. These relationships eventually positioned the WTUL as an essential voice in shaping labor policy in Washington, particularly during the Roosevelt years. Despite their closeness to the White House, the League's influence began to wane as traditional labor unions started to allow women to join more freely. Financial difficulties and declining membership also contributed to the League's diminishing relevance. Even though Eleanor Roosevelt remained a supporter until the very end, the WTUL was forced to disband in 1950 due to its dwindling resources and personnel.

Key Figures and Leadership: Shaping the Women's Trade Union League— The Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) was defined by the unwavering commitment of its leaders, many of whom were trailblazers in both labor activism and the broader movement for women's rights. These influential figures not only fought for fair wages and improved working conditions but also advanced the cause of women's political empowerment and social equality. At the forefront were leaders like *Mary Kenney O'Sullivan*, a trailblazer in labor organizing who pushed for the inclusion of women in trade unions, and *Jane Addams*, whose work in social reform and the settlement house movement brought the issues of industrial workers to the broader public. These women, alongside others like *Mary McDowell*, recognized the intersection of gender and labor, understanding that women's economic independence was essential to their social emancipation. In addition to the well-known figures, there were countless other women, like *Agnes Nestor*, whose quiet yet fierce leadership helped lay the groundwork for future generations of labor activists. Their efforts within the WTUL went beyond the realm of simply pushing for better working conditions; they were also championing the belief that women's rights and labor rights were inseparable. These leaders not only shaped the trajectory of the WTUL but also helped spark a broader movement for women's empowerment, both in the workplace and in society.

Major Campaigns and Achievements: The Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) was founded in 1903 with one clear mission: to fight for the rights of working women. At a time when factories were dangerous, hours were long, and wages were low, the WTUL stood up for women who had little power to demand better conditions. They believed every woman deserved fair pay, a safe workplace, and a voice in decisions that affected their lives. To make this happen, they

organized protests, supported strikes, and pushed for new labor laws. One of their biggest battles was for an eight-hour workday. Many women, especially those in garment factories, worked exhausting shifts in unsafe environments. The WTUL helped organize strikes and pressured lawmakers to create fairer work-hour laws. Their efforts played a key role in shaping future labor protections. Fair pay was another major issue. Women were often paid far less than men for doing the same work. The WTUL fought for minimum wage laws, arguing that women should earn enough to support themselves and their families. Their persistence helped pave the way for wage reforms that brought greater economic security to working women. Then came tragedy. In 1911, a fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, killing 146 workers—most of them young immigrant women. The factory owners had locked the doors to prevent workers from leaving, trapping them inside. The disaster horrified the nation and revealed just how dangerous factory conditions were. The WTUL used this moment to demand change, pushing for fire escapes, proper ventilation, and workplace inspections. Their activism led to real improvements in worker safety laws.

The WTUL also encouraged women to join labor unions, recognizing that strength came from unity. They played a major role in strikes like the famous 1909 "Uprising of the 20,000," where thousands of female garment workers walked off the job to demand better conditions. With legal and financial support from the WTUL, these women proved that collective action could create real change. But the WTUL knew labor rights weren't enough—women needed political power, too. Many of its members joined the fight for women's suffrage, believing that the right to vote would give women the ability to push for better labor laws. This link between labor activism and political rights helped shape future movements.

Intersection with the Women's Suffrage Movement— At the turn of the 20th century, working-class women in America fought a battle on two fronts: the right to fair wages and conditions, and the right to vote. The Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) emerged as a bridge between these struggles, recognizing that economic justice and political power were deeply intertwined. For many women laborers—garment workers, textile mill employees, and domestic servants—their harsh realities extended beyond the workplace. Without the right to vote, they had little influence over the laws that dictated their wages, work hours, and safety standards. The WTUL, composed of both working-class and middle-class women, sought to correct this imbalance. Its members didn't



just fight for unionization; they actively participated in suffrage marches, realizing that only through political voice could labor reforms be truly secured. One of the most striking examples of this unity was the 1909 “Uprising of the 20,000,” where young, mostly immigrant women in New York’s garment industry staged a mass strike. Many suffragists, including wealthy reformers like Alva Belmont, supported these striking women, providing legal aid and financial backing. This solidarity between suffragists and labor activists fueled both movements, reinforcing the idea that justice in the workplace and in the voting booth were inseparable. However, tensions existed. Some suffrage leaders prioritized the vote over labor issues, while some labor organizers feared suffrage wouldn’t immediately improve working conditions. Despite this, the WTUL persisted, proving that women’s rights had to be fought for on multiple fronts. Today, their struggle reminds us that economic and political justice are not separate fights but part of the same long journey toward equality.

Challenges Faced by the WTUL— The Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL) faced significant internal and external challenges that shaped its journey in advocating for labor rights and women’s suffrage. Internally, the league grappled with class tensions between working-class women, primarily factory workers, and middle- to upper-class women who had differing priorities. The working-class members focused on immediate needs like better wages and working conditions, while the middle- and upper-class women were more concerned with long-term reforms such as women’s suffrage and education. This divide sometimes created friction, as the working-class women felt the middle-class members were disconnected from the harsh realities of factory life, while the more affluent members considered the working-class demands too radical. Another challenge was balancing the dual focus on gender equality and labor rights. While these causes were interconnected, disagreements arose over how to prioritize them. Some members were more concerned with improving conditions for working women, while others advocated for broader social reforms like suffrage and educational rights. These debates often created internal divisions within the league. Externally, the WTUL faced resistance from both employers and male-dominated unions. Employers, particularly in industries like garment manufacturing, viewed the league’s advocacy as a threat to profits and often took measures like strikes or legal action to undermine its efforts. Male-dominated unions were also hesitant to support the WTUL, believing that women’s participation in the workforce would lower men’s wages and distract from broader labor movements. Leadership struggles within the organization also hindered progress, as the differing visions of leaders from varying socioeconomic backgrounds created rifts. While upper-class women sought political alliances, working-class members were focused on direct actions like strikes.

The Legacy of the WTUL and Its Influence Today: The legacy of the Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL) remains a profound force in both labor movements and the fight for women’s rights, leaving an indelible mark on contemporary activism. Established in 1903, the WTUL was pivotal in securing critical reforms for women, including fair wages, improved working conditions, and reduced hours. What set the league apart was its ability to bridge divides, bringing together women from varying social classes—uniting working-class women in labor struggles with their more affluent allies in the suffrage movement. This fusion of labor and gender advocacy set the stage for organizations like the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), which continues the work of advancing equality within unions today. Beyond immediate reforms, the WTUL’s influence stretched across the



broader labor movement, advocating for workplace safety and the right to organize. The tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911, which claimed 146 lives, many of them women, underscored the need for change. This tragedy ignited the efforts of the WTUL and other labor groups, pushing forward reforms that continue to shape labor laws. Today, the WTUL’s influence is evident in how women’s labor rights are framed within the larger fight for gender equality. Modern labor leaders, many of them women, draw on the WTUL’s unwavering resolve to improve conditions and empower women in male-dominated fields. The league’s core principles of equality, justice, and solidarity continue to guide the ongoing struggle for both workers’ rights and gender equality—a testament to the enduring relevance of its vision and impact ■

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BEYOND BINARIES

Hijra Identities in Ancient Indian Society



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In the contemporary discourse, gender is increasingly recognized as a spectrum rather than a rigid binary of male and female. This understanding challenges traditional categorization and opens space for recognizing the fluid and diverse expression of identity that have always existed. Ancient Indian society, with its complex and inclusive perspectives on gender, provided a compelling lens to explore these ideas. Among the most vivid representations of non-binary identities are the 'Hijras', a community with a history deeply interwoven into India's cultural and social web. Classical texts, temple sculptures, and folklore reflect a nuanced understanding of gender fluidity, highlighting the presence and reverence of non-binary figures in religious and social narratives. This article tries to explore Hijra identities in ancient Indian society, uncovering a rich tradition of gender fluidity that defies modern binary constructs and offers critical insights into evolving discourse on non-binary existence and gender justice today.

In ancient Indian society, the identities of Hijras and other non-binary figures find deep-rooted references in mythology and religious scriptures, offering a window into a cultural framework that recognized them. In *Mahabharata*, Shikhandi, born female but raised as a male warrior and later transformed through a divine intervention, exemplifies a pivotal character whose non-binary identity determines the fall of Bhishma in the Kurukshetra War. It also resonates with contemporary discussions of FTM (Female to Male) and MTF (Male to Female) transformations. Similarly, Arjun, one of the Pandavas, assumes the form of 'Brihnala', a eunuch-like identity during his incognito exile, serving as a dance and music teacher. In *Ramayana*, Lord Rama's blessing of the Hijras for their loyalty during his fourteen year exile symbolizes divine acceptance of their devotion and grants them a revered place in the society. Beyond the epics, the religious texts like *Kamasutra* discuss the existence of 'tritiya-prakriti' (third nature), acknowledging the fluidity of sexual and gender expressions.

Additionally, in the temple traditions, Hijras were associated with the fertility cults and believed to possess spiritual powers to bestow fertility and prosperity. They were also connected to rituals of childbirth and marriage. Their presence was deemed auspicious, and they were invited to bless new borns and newly weds, a practice that persists in many parts of India even today. Their ritualistic performances, characterized by singing, dancing, and offering blessings, highlight their social integration as mediators of fortune and fertility. Hijras' power to bless and curse remains a fascinating aspect of their socio-religious function. It was believed that their blessings could ensure prosperity and fertility, while their curses could bring misfortune. This dual power established a form of societal negotiation, where their marginality was balanced by their perceived mystical authority. Such beliefs underscore their liminal status, bridging the sacred and profane. The treatment of eunuchs and non-binary individuals in ancient Indian society has been intricately tied to the legal and social frameworks of the time, particularly as outlined in *Dharmashastra* texts. These legal codes, including the *Manusmriti*, *Narada Smriti* and *Yajnavalkya Smriti*, provide insights into the perception, regulation, and lived experiences of individuals outside the binary framework of male and female. The *Dharmashastras*, which guided social and moral conduct, categorize people into different varnas and ashrams, offering distinct roles and

rights to individuals, often referred to as *napunsakas*, were recognized in these texts. According to *Manusmṛiti* (Ch 9), *Napunsakas* were often placed outside the traditional framework of marriage and inheritance. *Manusmṛiti* explicitly denies them rights to certain forms of ritual participation and property ownership, reflecting a form of social exclusion. Similarly, the *Narada Smṛiti* restricts *napunsakas* from performing sacrifices or receiving ancestral rites, underlining a limited religious agency. However, while these texts impose restrictions, they also acknowledge the existence and social roles of non-binary individuals recognizing them within a structured hierarchy rather than outright erasure. The *Manusmṛiti* remains the most referenced text in discussion of gender norms and legal restrictions. Critics like Patrick Olivelle, in his translation and commentary on *Manusmṛiti*, highlight how the text reflects a patriarchal society with rigid gender roles. The marginalization of *napunsakas* in *Manusmṛiti* stems from an emphasis on reproductive heteronormativity, where individuals outside the paradigm were seen as socially unproductive. *Manusmṛiti*'s classifications of *napunsakas* range from congenital to behavioural, indicating an early awareness of gender diversity, albeit framed within a normative and hierarchical worldview. In contrast, the *Kamasutra* by Vatsyayana, though not a legal text, offers a more nuanced view of third gender identities. It recognized the roles of *klibas* (eunuchs or non-binary individuals) in sexual and social life. The text acknowledges same-sex relationships and the existence of individuals with both male and female characteristics, reflecting a degree of social complexity often absent in the Dharmashastras.

The concept of gender fluidity and non-binary identities has deep roots in Hindu philosophy particularly in the exploration of Shiva as 'Ardhanarishwara' and the broader frameworks of Vedic and Tantric traditions. The figure of 'Ardhanarishwara', a composite deity embodying both Shiva (the masculine) and Parvati (the feminine), represents the philosophical concept of gender complementarity and the unity of opposites. The literal meaning of 'Ardhanarishwara' is "the Lord who's half woman". In this form, Shiva's right half is male, symbolising power and consciousness, while the left half is female, symbolising creation and nurturing energy. This duality conveys that masculine and feminine energy are interdependent and that creation requires the harmonious union of both. Ardhanarishwara's iconography, with a clear demarcation between male and female halves, transcends gender distinctions embodying a divine androgyny. The form has been interpreted by scholars as metaphor for fluidity of gender and transcendence of dualistic categorization, reinforcing that gender is not a rigid binary but a continuum of possibilities.

Philosopher Alain Daniélou, in his work *The Myth and Gods of India*, argues that 'Ardhanarishwara' symbolizes the cosmic principle of balance and non-duality, suggesting that human beings also possess both masculine and feminine traits. This portrayal legitimizes the existence of gender fluid and non-binary identities as part of sacred, universal order. Vedic philosophy offers foundational ideas about gender as a fluid and dynamic concept rather than a fixed binary. The *Rigveda*, one of the oldest texts, contains, hymns that reference the interplay of *Purusha* (spirit or cosmic order) and *Prakriti* (nature or matter), indicating a balance between masculine and feminine principles within creation. This philosophical framework does not rigidly confine individuals to specific gender roles but instead emphasizes the fluidity and interconnectedness of these energies.

In Tantric traditions, gender fluidity is even more pronounced. Tantra explores the union of *Shakti* (feminine power) and *Shiva* (masculine consciousness) as essential to spiritual enlightenment. Tantric texts often describe the practitioner's journey as involving a merging of dualities – male and female, light and dark, body and spirit into a state of oneness. Gender in this context becomes symbolic rather than literal, spectrum that reflects the multiplicity of human experience. Hindu mythology is replete with gender-fluid deities, each embodying aspects of gender non-conformity and reinforcing the legitimacy of diverse identities. For example, Vishnu, the preserver God, transforms

into 'Mohini', a beautiful woman to seduce demons and restore cosmic balance. This transformation underscores the fluidity of divine gender and legitimacy of non-binary roles in mythological narratives. In many stories, Krishna as well as Shiva (Gopeshwara) adopts female attire of 'Gopis', illustrating that identity is transcendent and flexible. Another prominent example is 'Bahuchara Mata', worshipped by the Hijra community, the goddess is associated with androgyny and gender transformation. These presence of gender-fluid deities and metaphysical principles in Hindu philosophy challenges modern conceptions of gender as rigidly binary. By acknowledging gender as a spectrum, these traditions offer a spiritual and cultural framework for understanding non-binary identities not as deviations but as expressions of cosmic truth. During the Mughal period and in other Islamic courts, Hijras held prestigious roles as performers, musicians, and even military and political advisors. The eunuchs, often conflated with Hijras in historical records, guarded royal harems and served as confidants to emperors. In Mughal chronicles, figures like Khujwa Sara Itimad Khan, a eunuch who became a trusted advisor to Emperor Aurangzeb, illustrate their prominence. Their talent in poetry and music also earned them positions as patrons of art and literature. In this context, Hijras were cultural connoisseurs, shaping the aesthetic sensibilities of their time. Some were celebrated poets, composing verses that reflected themes of love, longing and mysticism, that subtly reflected themes of gender fluidity and spiritual transcendence. Sufi poetry, in particular, blurred the lines between earthly and divine love, often employing imagery that defied rigid gender norms. The works of Amir Khusrau, who admired Nizamuddin Auliya, and the mystical verses of Jamali are part of a larger tradition that celebrates love beyond binaries. The symbolism of love and longing in Sufi literature has often been interpreted as a metaphor for the soul's desire for union with the divine, rather than a mere romantic trope. Such mystical concepts provided space for gender-nonconforming individuals to find a spiritual voice. The Hijra community, being marginalized in many societal structures, often identified with the Sufi path of divine love and surrender, which transcended worldly identities. Themes of concealment and revelation, common in Sufi poetry, resonate with the lived experiences of Hijras, whose lives were often marked by navigating hidden truths and societal expectations. The spiritual focus on inner truth over outward appearance in Sufism aligns with the broader struggles of gender identity and acceptance.

Jamali (Shaikh Fazlullah), a Sufi poet of the Lodi and early Mughal era, is known for his poetry exploring mystical themes. His association with Kamali, whose identity remains ambiguous in history, has often invited interpretations surrounding gender and sexuality. Their tomb in Mehrauli, Delhi, symbolizes a bond that transcends traditional notions of companionship. Some scholars and modern interpretations suggest that this relationship may reflect early expressions of queer love within the spiritual and cultural framework of Indian society. Similarly, Amir Khusrau's verses like:

*Aaj rang hai, re maa rang hai ni,
(Today is a day of colour, O mother, a day of colour),
Mere Mehbub ke ghar rang hai ni.
(There is joy and festivity in the house of my beloved)*

written in Braj Bhasha and Hindavi, expresses the spiritual ecstasy and divine love experienced by Khusrau upon meeting his beloved. The beloved is Khusrau's spiritual master, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, while the house represents the spiritual sanctuary where one finds divine love and bliss. Khusrau was so close to Nizamuddin Auliya that Nizamuddin Auliya once

said he wished to be buried with Khusrau if the shari'ah allowed it. Although the nature of the relationship between Amir Khusrau and Nizamuddin Auliya remains uncertain, there are subtle hints that suggest a potential connection rooted in queer love. While definitive evidence is lacking, these traces in their interactions and expressions invite contemplation on the depth and complexity of their bond.

However, with the advent of British colonial rule, the nuanced positions of the Hijras were dismantled by a legal framework rooted in Victorian morality, which viewed gender variance and non-heteronormative sexual practices as deviant. Section 377, which criminalised “carnal intercourse against the order of nature”, became a tool for targeting same-sex relations and non-binary identities, branding Hijras as immoral and unnatural. The law facilitated widespread policing, harassment, and the social ostracization of Hijra communities, casting them as criminals rather than as respected members of society. Michel Foucault’s concept of power and marginalization offers a valuable lens to analyze the control and subjugation experienced by Hijras during and after colonial rule. Foucault posited that power operates through societal norms, and institutional mechanisms, shaping knowledge systems that define and regulate bodies and behaviours. In colonial India, British legal codes functioned as instruments of biopower—categorizing and controlling populations through a binary understanding of sex and gender that marginalized those who existed outside these constructs. By criminalising non-heteronormative sexuality, the state exercised disciplinary power over Hijras, policing their identities and curtailing their freedoms. This subjugation was reinforced through Census categorizations and surveillance mechanisms, which sought to fix Hijras within stigmatised identities, stripping them of their agency and social legitimacy.

In post-colonial societies, the legacy of colonial power structures continues to influence the marginalization of Hijras. Despite the partial decriminalisation of section 377 in 2018 in India, deep seated social stigmas persist. Foucault’s notion of pervasive nature of power helps explain how societal institutions including law, media, and religion continue to reproduce marginalising discourses. The historical criminalization of Hijras under British law entrenched stereotypes that frame them as deviants and outsiders, reinforcing cycles of discrimination and exclusion. Movements and legal reforms aimed at restoring dignity to non-binary communities in India have gained significant momentum in recent years, driven by activism, judicial intervention, and increasing societal awareness. Historically marginalized, non-binary and transgender individuals in India have often faced systemic discrimination, social ostracization, and limited access to basic rights. The landmark 2014 judgment by the Supreme Court of India in *National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India* (NALSA) recognized transgender people as the third gender, affirming their right to self-identify and emphasizing the need for affirmative action in education, healthcare, and employment. This judgment laid the groundwork for subsequent legislation, including the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which aimed to prohibit discrimination and ensure welfare measures for transgender individuals. Despite its progressive intent, the Act has been critiqued for its inadequacies in truly empowering non-binary persons, particularly for requiring a district magistrate’s certification for gender identity recognition.

Grassroots movements have also played a pivotal role in advancing dignity and rights for non-binary communities. Organizations such as the Naz Foundation, Humsafar Trust, and the Kinnar Akhara work tirelessly to advocate for inclusion, policy reforms, and societal acceptance. Pride parades across major cities have become symbolic of a larger struggle, creating visibility and solidarity while highlighting the multifaceted nature of gender beyond the binary. Community-led initiatives, including skill development programs and healthcare camps, aim to uplift non-binary individuals, offering them spaces where their identities are celebrated rather than erased. Understanding the ancient acceptance can inspire modern



frameworks of inclusivity, promoting a shift from tolerance to affirmation. Contemporary inclusivity must move beyond legal reforms to transform societal attitudes and dismantle stereotypes. Educational institutions, workplaces, and media representation need to embrace non-binary narratives, normalizing diverse expressions of gender. By integrating traditional cultural respect for fluid identities with modern human rights frameworks, India can envision a future where dignity and equality for non-binary communities are fully realized, honouring both its historical roots and progressive aspirations. The vibrant fabric of ancient Indian culture, with its recognition of diverse gender expressions, reaffirms the deep-rooted cultural acceptance of non-binary and fluid identities. Figures from mythology and revered traditions, along with the historical prominence of Hijra communities, reflect a heritage where gender was understood as a spectrum rather than a binary construct. Recognizing and respecting Hijra identities today is not merely an act of social justice but a reclamation of India’s inclusive past, restoring dignity to a community that colonial laws and modern prejudices marginalized. Continued research into gender diversity in Indian history, greater societal awareness, and sustained efforts toward legal and social reforms are imperative to building a more just and equitable future. By embracing this inclusive vision, India can honour its heritage while fostering a progressive and compassionate society that respects all expressions of gender ■

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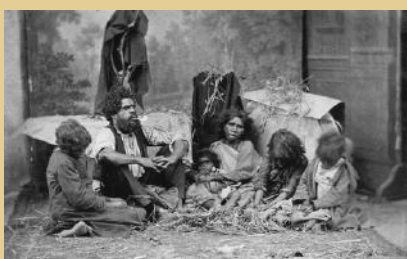
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Caste Was Never JUST RELIGION:

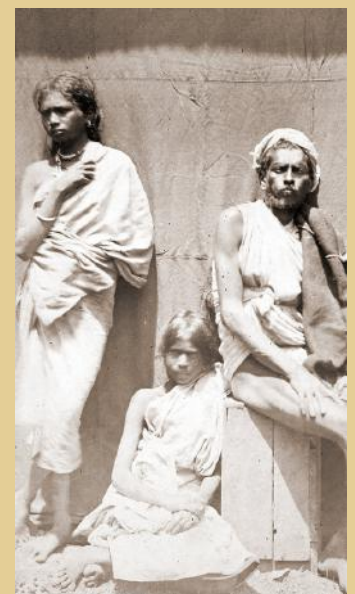
A HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS



The Indian caste system has been one of the world's ancient and dominating aspects of social stratification for thousands of years. Tracing its origins back to the ancient Vedic period, the system segregated and dictated the profession a person can work in, along with whom they can marry. Initially in the ancient Vedic period, the society categorized into four main varnas: *Brahmins* (priest and scholars), *Kshatriya* (Warriors and rulers), *Vaishyas* (Traders and merchants), and *Shudras* (Laborers and artisans). Beyond this system lies the oppressed, Persecuted and marginalized communities of Dalits (also known as the "untouchables") and Adivasi (indigenous tribes). The concept of sub-castes emerged which were generally designated by the term "*Jati*". The system has its origins in ancient India, and was transformed by various ruling elites in medieval and early-modern India, with evolution the system through history saw it become increasingly rigid and hereditary. The first school of thought focuses on the Varna System came from ancient Vedic period dated back from



(c. 1500-500 BCE). The rig Veda ancient Indian collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns (*sūktas*), mentions the concept of *varna* (Sanskrit: "color") but functionally it refers to classification. The class distinctions were originally based on differences in degree of skin pigmentation, too segregating them into four varnas this hierarchical structure was initially fluid, with social mobility based on merit rather than birth. The system divides Hindus into rigid hierarchical groups based on their *Karma* (work) and *Dharma* (Religion), this caste distinction has become more rigid with time. *Manusmriti*, (c 200 BCE -200CE) is widely regarded to be the most important and authoritative book on Hindu law and dating back to at least 1,000 years, justified hereditary occupation and caste based social order. Across the reign of the Maurya and Gupta empires (4th century BCE - 6th century CE), the system became deeply rooted. The various ruling elites transformed it to consolidate power, granting special rights to *Brahmins* in exchange for ideological support. Despite some rulers, like Emperor Ashoka (r. 268-232 BCE), aim for social reforms and foster inclusivity through Buddhism, the caste system remained to be a dominant force in Indian society. During the early mediaeval period (7th-12th century CE), the caste divided into thousands of *jatis* (sub-castes), determined by occupation and region. Challenging the rigidity of the caste



system, the *bhakti* movement (7th - 17th century CE) emerged as a spiritual resistance, emphasizing devotion (*Bhakti*) over birth-based hierarchy. Influential saints viz Kabir, Basava, and Mirabai stood against *Brahminical* dominance, and emphasized equality and inclusivity in religious practices. During the reign of the Mughal empire, spanning from (16th-18th century), the varna system expanded and brought new dynamics. Theories made some lower caste Hindus converted to Islam to escape social discrimination. On the other hand, *Abu al-Fazl Ain-i Akbari* provides a historical record and census of the Jat (caste), where the tax collecting nobles (*zamindars*), the armed cavalry and infantry (warrior class) doubling up as the farming peasants (working class), were all of the same caste in the 16th century. For centuries the *Bhakti* and Sufi movements opposed the hierarchical structure, to promote the spiritual resistance and emphasizing devotion. However, these movements failed to break the chain, largely remaining intact with *Brahmins* maintaining ritual authority and *shudras* continuing hereditary occupations.

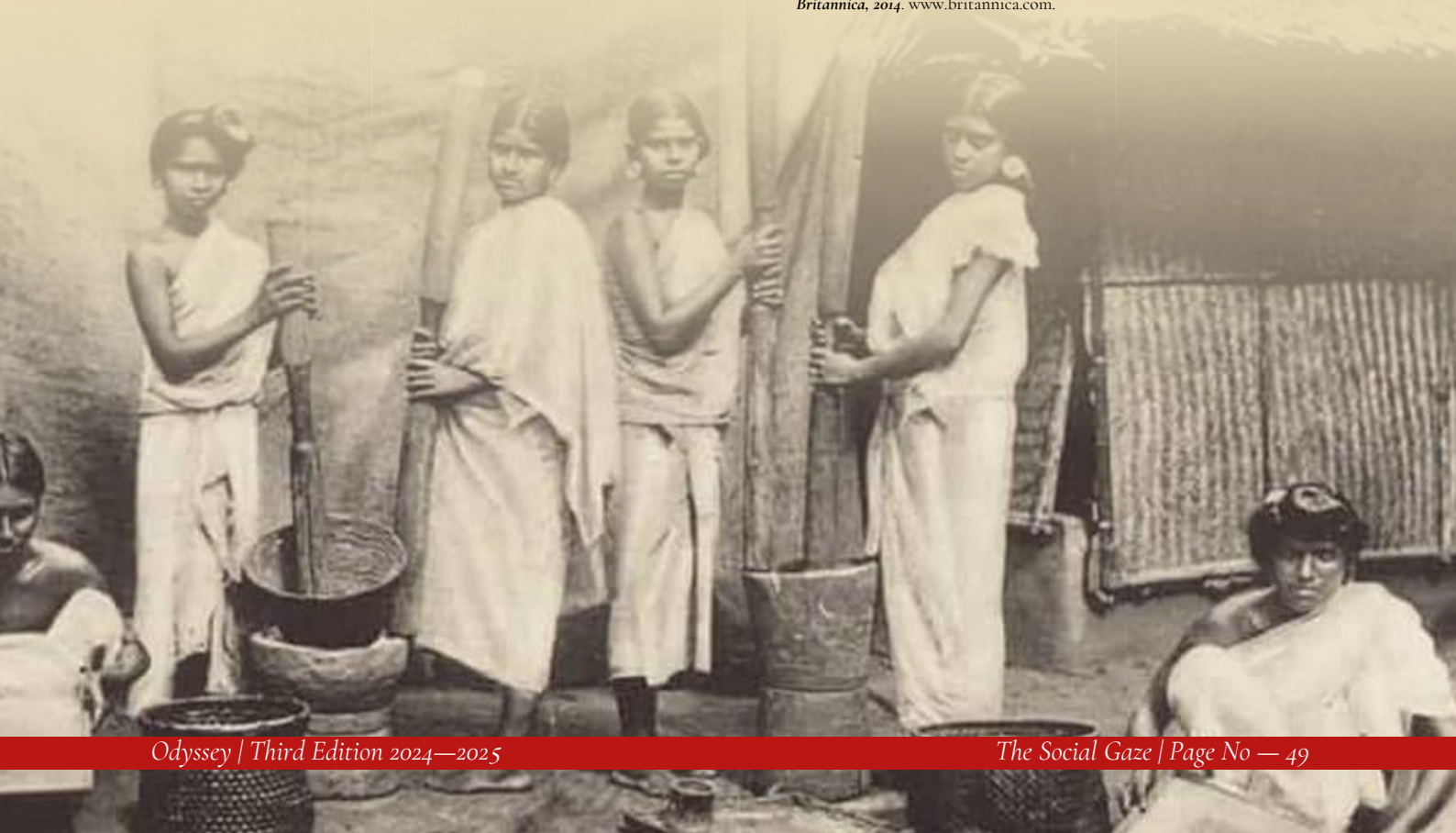
Socio-political Implications—Caste As A Political Institution: Indian society, indeed caste itself, was shaped by political struggles and processes. Kings were killed, and it cleared the way for the transformation of the caste under colonial rule. Caste was refigured as a distinctly religious system. In the West civil societies, liberal phenomena were being introduced; however, in India, caste was understood always to have resisted political intrusion; it was already a kind of civil society in which it regulated the private domain, such as it was. Under colonialism caste was made far more pervasive, far more tantalizing and far more uniform than it had ever been before. Under colonialism caste was made far more pervasive, far more tantalizing and far more uniform than it had ever been before. At the same time, it was defined as a fundamentally religious social order. In fact, however, caste had always been political- it had been shaped in fundamental ways by political struggles and processes. In pre-colonial India, the units of social identity had been multiple, and their respective relations and trajectories were part of complex, conjectural, constantly changing political world. The referents of social identity were not only heterogeneous; they were also determined by context. Temple communities, territorial groups, lineage segments, family units, royal retinues, warrior sub-castes, “little” kingdoms, occupational reference groups, agricultural or trading associations, devotionally conceived networks and sectarian communities; even priestly cabals were just some of the significant units of identification, all of them at various times for more significant than any uniform metonymy of endogamous caste “groupings”.

It shows that caste, or rather some of the things that seem most easily to come under the name of caste, was just one category among many others, one way of organizing and representing identity of the people of the time. The idea of the varna- the classification of castes into four hierarchical orders with the Brahmins on the top could conceivably organize the social identities and relations of all Hindus across the civilization expanse of the Indian subcontinent was only developed under the particular circumstances of British colonial rule even though hierarchy in the sense of rank or ordered difference might have been a pervasive feature of old Indian society. Caste had been political all along, but under colonialism was anchored to the service of colonial interest in maintaining social order, justifying colonial power, and sustaining a very particular form of indirect rule. Religious symbols, organizations and spectacle convert into political ones.

Conclusion: There were so many revolutions in order to evict caste difference and discrimination from the Hindu social system and there were so many reformative actions and reservations carried out, even in the leadership of the father of Indian nation, Mahatma Gandhi, but caste did not die, it did not fade away, and it could no longer be diagnosed as benign. At the same time caste remains the single most powerful category for reminding the nation of the resilience of poverty, oppression, domination, exclusion and the social life of privilege. Caste is not a basic ancient expression of Hindu tradition but is a modern phenomenon, that it is, specifically, the product of an historical encounter between India and Western colonial rule. Under the British rule “caste” became a single term capable of expressing, organizing and above all systemizing the diverse forms of social identity, community and organization of the Indian sub-continent. It was during 200 years of British domination, colonialism that made caste what it is today throughout the sub-continent. In fact, religious rites have become political rights in Hindu society ■

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Textiles In Tyranny:

HOW FABRIC DICTATED POWER IN EMPIRES AND REVOLUTIONS



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Fashion is more than just clothing; it's a powerful reflection of the era in which it exists⁷. Fashion is a way for individuals to express their culture, society, and one's own style. It has been significant in human history and has been impacted by various experiences from ancient times to the present, the style has changed with innovation, society, economy and art, shaping how we dress and decorate ourselves. In this article, we'll explore how fashion evolved during specific historical periods, shedding light on how clothing encapsulated the challenges faced by society, and how it responded to transformative cultural shifts.

Ancient Civilizations—The Origins Of Style: Returning to the ancient times, clothing was much more than just a cover to protect a person from the elements ; it symbolized a lot about who the person was — their social status, profession, and even their religious beliefs. Individuals made clothes casually from materials like wool, linen, and silk in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. In Egypt, for instance, linen was used by the elites, while commoners wore simpler, coarser clothes. The Greek drape to the Roman toga represents the Western civilization ideals of philosophy and democracy. These ancient societies used color, jewelry, and intricate garments that weren't used just for ornamentation, but to demonstrate wealth and power. This showed how skilled they were at working with materials. Moreover, individuals in these societies deemed that clothing was vital and full of deep meaning. The rich and influential people wore extremely extravagant clothes for unique occasions or events.

Medieval Age—Fashion As A Reflection Of Hierarchy: As Europe entered the middle ages, clothing became much more formal, and garments were fashioned to express both piety and class distinctions. The use of wool became widespread, the wealthy people dressed in fine silk and velvet fabric with rich embroidery, all meant to represent wealth and status. In disparity, the poor people wore plain clothes in dull colors, made of rough wool and linen. Fashion used to be about more than just looks. It was also about highlighting one's social status and indicating one's place in society. Dress indicated their status and values in medieval Europe, as seen in how merchants, clergy, and knights dressed. At the same time, the church played a significant role in influencing fashion, with modesty being appraised a virtue. Women's clothing covered almost every inch of the body, emphasizing their role in religious and familial duties. Men's fashion, on the other hand, evolved into sharply tailored tunics designed to



accentuate the body's form while adhering to the idea of masculinity and strength.

Renaissance Era And Baroque; Flourishing Of Artistic Expression: The Renaissance and baroque times brought up significant changes. This was a crucial moment in the history of fashion, symbolised by a renewed interest in art and culture. Individualism bounced back a more expressive style of dress—one that was interested in personal identity as much as social status. Sumptuous fabrics were lavishly adorned with brocade like- silk in an intricate pattern. In Italy, rich colors and lavish ruffs were symbols of wealth and refinement, whereas in Northern Europe, doublets and hose became the standard male dress. The splendor of these costumes was not only a manifestation of the wearer's wealth but also a reflection of the growing sense of individual achievement and humanist philosophy that defined the period. The baroque phase made fashion considerably fancier, with abundant decorations such as pearls, ruffles and bows. Individuals wore these outfits to fancy parties and masquerade balls. Fashion became a consideration and a symbol of status through their sumptuous clothing.

Rise Of Industrial Revolution; From Handicraft To Mass Production: The fashion industries changed significantly with the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th

centuries. Increased production led to greater availability, and individuals began purchasing more goods. New machines like the spinning jenny and power loom made it practicable to produce large quantities of cloth quickly and efficiently. As a result, cotton and wool fabrics became more accessible and more affordable than ever before. This shift made fashion more available to a wider audience and allowed middle class people to afford trendy clothing. Ready-made garments became more common than custom-made ones. Large shops and catalogs made it simpler for people to purchase a variety of accessories and clothing. Fashion was no longer absolute to the wealthy – it became something that everyone yearned for.

Ornamentation And Excess—Baroque And Rococo: The 17th century, particularly its Baroque and rococo periods, witnessed a flamboyant effusion of extravagance and lavishness in fashion. Clothing gave back the era's love for drama and Splendor. Fashion became a showcase of high society, featuring elaborate dresses, intricate lace, and the towering powdered wigs—marks of authority and elegance. For women, panniers were wide and dresses had voluminous skirts. Men wore richly decorated coats and breeches, paired with lace cravats. The rococo style was marked by pastel colors, asymmetrical designs, and playful embellishments—a departure from the heavy,

structured lines of earlier periods.

The Enlightenment And Neoclassicism—Rationality And Simplicity: In the late 18th century, the enlightenment's focus on reason and order began influencing fashion. In contrast to the gaudy excess of baroque and rococo, the neoclassical movement promoted a shift towards simpler, more structured forms. Fashion drew inspiration from classical Greek and Roman styles, particularly in women's dress, which adopted a loose, flowing silhouette inspired by the toga.

Birth of Fashion and its reflection of modernity: The industrial revolution brought tremendous changes to fashion. Developments in textile production made fabrics more affordable and readily available, while the introduction of ready-to-wear clothing made fashion accessible to a wider segment of society. Women's clothing evolved toward a more rigid silhouette, with the corset shaping an hourglass figure and the crinoline creating voluminous skirts. Meanwhile, men's fashion saw the birth of the modern suit, with tailored jackets and trousers becoming the standard. As industrialization spread, fashion became increasingly democratized, with Paris emerging as the center of global fashion. Iconic designs like Charles Frederick Worth began to establish haute couture, further cementing fashion as





both an art form and a business. Forging ahead at breathtaking speed in matters of innovation, the history of 20th-century fashion reflects revolutions in both clothing design and radical changes in human attitudes toward life. Modernity and flappers dominated the fashion scene for the early decades of the century. As society evolved, the way individuals dressed changed dramatically during the 1900s. At the outset, notable fashion brands like Chanel, Dior, and Givenchy began creating truly unique clothes for women. Their new designs changed people's opinion on what women should wear. After World War II, people started dressing more comfortably for sports and leisure activities, as free time became increasingly important in urban areas. After the war, fashion became accessible to more people, as ready-to-wear clothes became more affordable and easier to find. In the 1960s and 1970s, young individuals embraced individuality, rejected traditional norms of dress and behaviour. They carried out tests with bold, new styles to exhibit their remarkable characters. Fast fashion acquired popularity due to globalization and innovation in the second half of the century. This caused trends to change rapidly but also increased concerns about what it means for the environment and its moral implications. The post-World War II period also marked a shift toward casual and youth-oriented styles, epitomized by jeans, t-shirts, and sneakers, heralding a new era of youthful rebellion. During the late 20th century, fashion diversified into several subcultures, and designers began experimenting with deconstruction, asymmetry, and unconventional matters. The global fashion market became interconnected. Fashion no longer just reflected personal style but was also used as a form of political expression and social change.

21st Century: Fashion In The Digital Age: Today, fashion continues to evolve in response to technological innovation and societal shifts. The digital revolution has transformed how we design, produce and consume

clothing, with social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube influencing trends at a rapid pace. Sustainability has also become a key concern, as both designers and consumers are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of fast fashion. In the modern era, fashion is more inclusive than ever before. Today, various representations of gender, body types, and cultures influence the design process. Additionally, the idea of blending traditional craftsmanship with cutting-edge technology, such as 3D printing and AI, promises bright new frontiers in the world of fashion.

Conclusion— Continuing Legacy: Fashion is something other than looks. It shows the complexity of society and culture. Over time, fashion has changed significantly due to societal circumstances, economic factors or sources, and technological advancements. It demonstrates how people express their identity, social position, and personal style. Whether it's the fancy attire people wore in the past or the trendy styles we have today, fashion continues to fascinate, inspire, and excite ■

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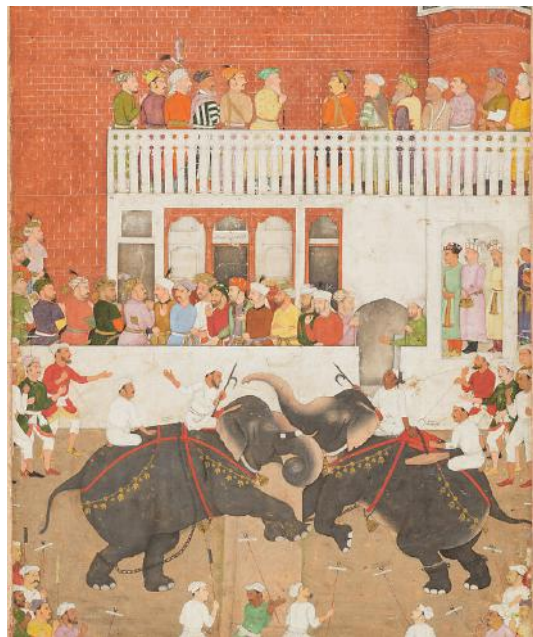
The Dialectics Within Domination

ELEPHANT NECROPOLITICS FROM RAJPUTANA TO THE SAHYADRI

Elephant poaching in India, fueled by persistent demand for ivory and its derivatives, represents a critical threat to the survival of Asian elephant populations. This case study methodically traces the trajectory of poaching, from its historical roots in royal—hunts to modern-day criminal enterprises, with a concentrated analysis of the Western Ghats region and the Kerala Poaching Scandal (2015–2018). It dissects the dual drivers of poaching—economic imperatives and entrenched cultural traditions—while exposing the escalating sophistication of poaching tactics, including advanced weaponry and organized trafficking networks. The study unequivocally documents the cascading ecological consequences, such as disrupted biodiversity and destabilized forest ecosystems, alongside the socioeconomic toll on indigenous communities dependent on these habitats. The Kerala scandal, emblematic of systemic corruption and enforcement failures, underscores the vulnerabilities in current conservation frameworks. By synthesizing these insights, the analysis asserts the non-negotiable necessity for rigorous anti-poaching measures, transparent governance, and community-driven strategies to dismantle illegal trade networks. Only through decisive, coordinated action can India safeguard its elephant populations and preserve ecological integrity for future generations.

Introduction: India is home to a substantial portion of the global Asian elephant population, with estimates suggesting around 29,000 wild elephants inhabiting its diverse ecosystems. These majestic creatures are integral to the nation's cultural heritage, revered in various traditions and celebrated in religious practices. However, this admiration contrasts sharply with a troubling history of exploitation, particularly for their ivory. The demand for ivory has historically driven poaching, as artisans craft intricate carvings and ornamental pieces that symbolize wealth and status. This duality where elephants are both venerated and victimized complicates conservation efforts. While they are celebrated in festivals and considered sacred by many, the persistent demand for ivory has led to a rise in poaching activities. Classified as Endangered by the IUCN and protected under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act (1972), the Asian elephant faces significant threats. The Indian subcontinent is estimated to host approximately 27,000 to 29,000 elephants, representing nearly 50% of the global population, distributed across four key regions: northeast, east-central, northwest, and south India. Population dynamics vary widely, with some groups declining, others stable, and many remaining uncertain. Furthermore, the Asian elephant is one of the most conflict prone species in India, with nearly 400 human and 100 elephant fatalities annually, highlighting the urgent need for strategies to ensure human elephant coexistence.



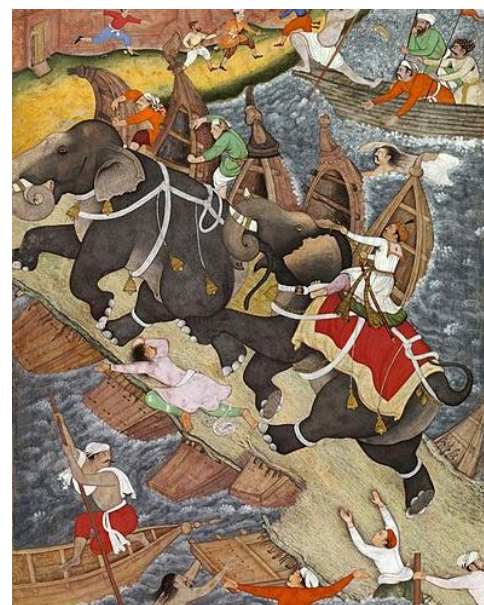
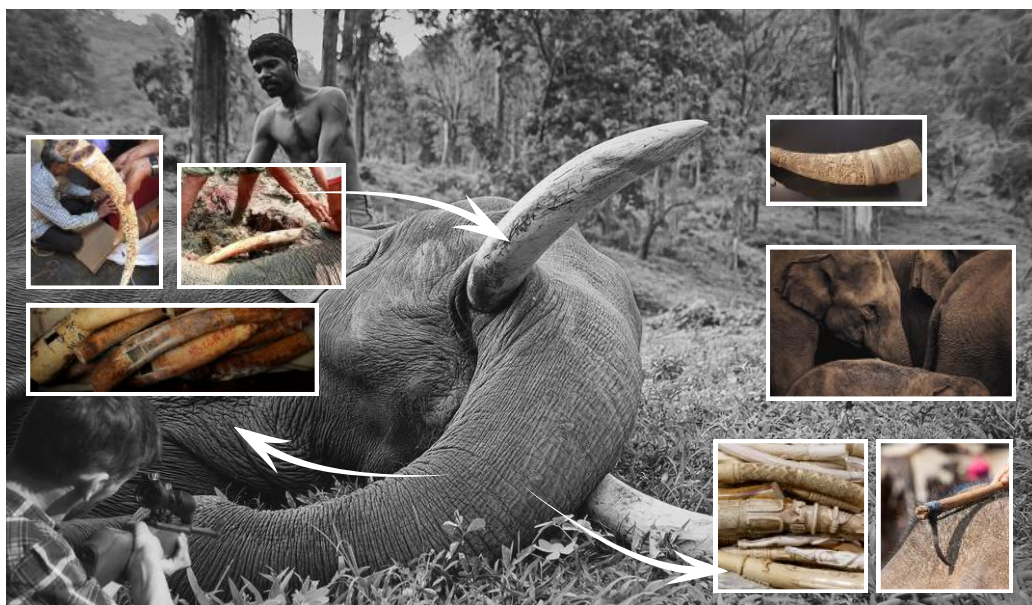


The Era of Royal Hunts: Elephants as Emblems of Power and Divinity

— In ancient and medieval India, elephants embodied power, prestige, and divine authority, transcending mere utility to become central pillars of cultural, religious, and political identity. Revered by dynasties from the Mauryas to the Mughals, they served as instruments of warfare, symbols of sovereignty, and sacred icons, deeply entrenched in the subcontinent's ethos. Their dual role as divine intermediaries and tools of statecraft rendered them indispensable, shaping not only military conquests but also the spiritual and sociopolitical imagination of the era. Elephants occupied a sacred space in Hindu mythology, epitomized by deities like Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, and Indra, whose celestial mount Airavata symbolized divine kingship. This spiritual veneration manifested in royal iconography, with temples and palaces adorned in elephant motifs—such as the intricately carved elephant friezes of Khajuraho and the monolithic stone elephants guarding South Indian gopurams. Their presence in grand processions, such as the Mughal Durbar ceremonies or the temple festivals of Tamil Nadu, reinforced the ruler's divine legitimacy, blending spectacle with—

sacrality. Beyond symbolism, their strategic value was systematized through practices like the *Khedda* method perfected by the Vijayanagara Empire and adopted by the Mughals which involved corralling wild herds into enclosures for capture rather than slaughter. While less lethal, this method strained elephant populations, reflecting the tension between exploitation and reverence. The Vijayanagara kings, for instance, deployed thousands of laborers to orchestrate these drives, turning elephant procurement into a state-sponsored industry that supplied armies and enriched royal treasuries.

Royal hunts (*shikar*), practiced by dynasties such as the Mauryas, Guptas, and Cholas, were both sport and statecraft. Ashoka's early reign exemplified this tradition, with edicts detailing hunts to procure elephants for his vast army—a practice he later renounced upon embracing Buddhism, pivoting toward *ahimsa* (non-violence) and establishing early precedents for wildlife protection. The Mughals, however, elevated hunts into spectacles of imperial grandeur. Akbar's *Shikargah* (hunting grounds) spanned vast—forests, where elephants—



were both quarry and collaborators. Chroniclers like Abul Fazl documented how these expeditions doubled as military exercises, testing the coordination of troops and elephants while projecting the emperor's dominion over nature and rival kingdoms.

In warfare, elephants functioned as mobile fortresses: Mauryan and Gupta armies deployed thousands to crush enemy lines, their tusks fitted with iron spikes and bodies armored in chainmail. The Battle of Hydaspes (326 BCE), where Alexander the Great first encountered war elephants, underscored their psychological impact—a lesson Indian dynasties leveraged for centuries. Under Akbar, Mughal stables housed over 1,000 elephants, each assigned a rank and wage, reflecting their status as both weapons and courtly assets. Beyond battlefields, Rajput kingdoms and rulers like the Jaipur royals leveraged elephants in ceremonial processions, weddings, and festivals, intertwining their utility with displays of wealth. The Amber Fort's Ganesh Pol (Gate of Ganesha), flanked by marble elephants, stands as a testament to this enduring fusion of power and piety. Despite systemic exploitation, informal conservation emerged. Cultural taboos, such as the Hindu belief that killing an elephant invited divine wrath, and royal mandates like the Chola-era penalties for harming temple elephants discouraged killing. Live elephants held unmatched value: they could be trained, traded, or gifted as diplomatic tokens, fostering a pragmatic balance between use and preservation. The Mughal *Ain-i-Akbari* even codified their care, mandating diets of sugarcane and ghee for royal elephants. This exploitative yet restrained approach prevented drastic population declines, sustaining their availability for elite needs. However, ecological pressures persisted: habitat loss from expanding agrarian lands and selective capture of prime males disrupted herd dynamics, foreshadowing modern conservation challenges. Thus, elephants were neither passive symbols nor mere tools; their dual role as sacred icons and instruments of statecraft shaped India's ecological and sociopolitical landscapes. The Mauryas' militarized herds, the Mughals' opulent processions, and the temple elephants of Vijayanagara collectively wove a narrative of reverence entangled with calculated exploitation—a legacy that underscores humanity's complex relationship with nature, where awe and utility coexist in fragile equilibrium.

Guns, Greed, and Governance: The Colonial Roots of India's Elephant Crisis— British colonial rule in India radically transformed the human-elephant relationship, replacing centuries of cultural reverence with extractive exploitation. Viewing elephants as mere economic commodities, the colonial administration commercialized ivory and labor, triggering ecological devastation and a demographic crisis for elephant populations. The British systematized the ivory trade, capitalizing on global demand for its use in luxury goods, piano keys, and ornamental carvings. Hunters targeted male elephants for their larger tusks, decimating herds and destabilizing social structures within elephant populations. By the late 19th century, India's elephant numbers had collapsed, prompting the hollow gesture of the Indian Elephant Preservation Act (1879). However, the law's enforcement was crippled by corruption and apathy—colonial officials often turned a blind eye to poaching, while local communities, burdened by heavy taxes on elephant ownership, had little incentive to protect them. The colonial regime institutionalized exploitation through policies that prioritized profit over preservation. Firearms, introduced and popularized by the British, revolutionized hunting efficiency, enabling mass slaughter previously unthinkable with traditional methods. Simultaneously, taxes on ivory and elephant ownership created perverse incentives: hunters and landowners were driven to kill or sell elephants to avoid financial ruin. This utilitarian approach starkly—

contrasted with pre-colonial norms, where cultural taboos and royal mandates had discouraged killing. The ecological fallout was catastrophic—forests were stripped of mature trees, disrupting breeding cycles, while surviving herds were pushed into fragmented habitats, intensifying human-elephant conflicts. The mid-20th-century decline of the British Raj did little to alleviate pressures on elephants. Post-independence India inherited a legacy of plundered ecosystems and a booming illegal ivory trade, now fueled by globalization. International markets, particularly in Europe and East Asia, coveted ivory as a status symbol, driving prices to unprecedented heights. Modern poaching networks, armed with advanced weapons and smuggling routes, exploited regulatory vacuums. Meanwhile, rapid deforestation for agriculture and infrastructure projects—a continuation of colonial-era land-use policies—further eroded elephant habitats. By the 1970s, India's elephant populations hovered on the brink, their decline emblematic of a broader ecological crisis. In response, conservation efforts emerged, albeit unevenly. The Wildlife Protection Act (1972) outlawed ivory trade, and Project Elephant (1992) sought to safeguard habitats and corridors. Yet, these measures grappled with colonial-era scars: corruption, bureaucratic inertia, and the lingering perception of elephants as economic burdens rather than cultural treasures. The British colonial interlude thus marked a pivotal rupture—reducing elephants from revered icons to exploited resources, a legacy that modern India continues to reckon with as it balances development with ecological stewardship.

The Western Ghats: A Biodiversity Hotspot Under Siege— The Western Ghats, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is one of the world's most ecologically significant regions. Stretching along India's western coast, this mountain range is home to an extraordinary diversity of flora and fauna, including the endangered Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*). Spanning six states, including Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, this region's dense forests, rivers, and grasslands provide ideal habitats for elephants, making it a cornerstone of their conservation. However, the Western Ghats is also a region of intense anthropogenic pressure. Rapid urbanization, agricultural expansion, and infrastructure development have led to widespread habitat fragmentation and escalating human-elephant conflicts which created a precarious situation for elephants. Poachers, often operating in organized networks, exploit the vulnerabilities of these majestic animals, driven by the lucrative black market for ivory and other elephant products. The Western Ghats' unique geography and socio-economic challenges have made it a focal point for both conservation efforts and poaching activities.

The Silent Carnage: How Kerala's Ivory War Exposed a Nation's Broken Pact with Nature— In 2015, as Kerala's monsoon clouds loomed, a darker shadow crept over its emerald forests. The state, revered for its sacred bond with elephants emblems of divinity and ecological guardians witnessed a betrayal that shook India's conservation conscience. A former forest watcher's confession unraveled a chilling saga: organized poaching syndicates had turned Kerala's jungles into killing fields, slaughtering elephants for ivory with industrial precision. The unraveling began with Kunjumon Devasey, a 62-year-old who had been hired as a cook for the poachers and detailed the gang's operations, including the locations of their camps in the Vazhachal forests and the methods they employed to kill the elephants turned informant whose testimony initially dismissed as ramblings exposed a network spanning Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. Led by Aikaramattom Vasu, a poaching kingpin, gangs operated like ghost armies, camping in dense forests, ambushing elephants with rifles, and



smuggling tusks to covert markets. Over two years, they butchered dozens of elephants, exploiting migratory routes and bureaucratic apathy. Corpses rotted undetected until Devasey's persistence forced authorities to confront the carnage: shoot, strip tusks, vanish. Operation *Shikar*, a six-month probe led by Surendra Kumar, who now works as a senior technical advisor at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) became a monsoon-soaked reckoning. Teams combed treacherous terrain, uncovering carcasses and tracing ivory trails to interstate hubs. The arrests read like a thriller—24 poachers, including Eagle Rajan, an ivory trader, and Umesh Aggarwal, a smuggling maestro. Over 400 kg of ivory, equivalent to 50 elephants, were seized. Yet the plot twisted when Vasu, the ringleader, was found dead in a farmhouse—his suicide underscoring the syndicate's ruthless grip. The ecological toll was visceral: elephants, architects of Kerala's forests, disperse seeds and forge ecosystems. Their absence risks unraveling habitats, leaving forests silent and barren. For villages, the crisis was dual-edged. Collapsing ecotourism threatened livelihoods, while farmers, already battling crop raids by displaced herds, grew wary of conservation rhetoric. The irony cut deep communities that once revered elephants now viewed them through a lens of fear and resentment. Kerala's response blended desperation and innovation. Drones scanned canopies; satellite maps flagged poaching hotspots. The state partnered with NGOs like the Wildlife Trust of India to safeguard corridors and mediate human-elephant conflicts. Compensation schemes aimed to pacify farmers, while community patrols turned villagers into forest sentinels. Yet systemic rot persisted: underfunded departments, porous borders, and a legal system where poachers often walked free with paltry fines. Globally, the scandal mirrored a sinister truth. Kerala's ivory fed demand in Asia and Europe, proving how local crimes fuel transnational greed. India's role in CITES agreements meant little without grassroots enforcement. While international task forces shared intelligence, the real battle lay in altering mindsets curbing consumerism that treats tusks as trophies, not tokens of extinction. Five years later, scars linger. Vasu's gang is dismantled, but smaller networks persist. Kerala's forests, though quieter, bear witness to a fragile recovery. The crisis became a parable—

a society's reverence for nature means little without vigilance. Elephants, once icons of cultural pride, now symbolize a paradox—how tradition and modernity collide in the fight for survival. The 2015 poaching epidemic was more than a crime wave; it was a mirror. It reflected a world where profit trumps preservation, where rituals honoring elephants coexist with bullets tearing through their hearts. Kerala's lesson is universal: saving giants demands more than laws it requires reimagining humanity's place in nature's tapestry. As long as ivory glints in shadow markets, the war for the wild remains unwon.

Conclusion: Elephant poaching in India—a scourge stretching from royal indulgence to modern criminal syndicates—epitomizes the collision of greed and governance. The ecological unraveling of the Western Ghats and the brazen Kerala Poaching Scandal (2015–2018) lay bare systemic failures: corruption, global ivory demand, and apathy toward conservation. India's path forward demands unrelenting rigor—strengthened legal frameworks, community-led habitat protection, and global collaboration to dismantle trafficking networks. Development must coexist with ecological stewardship, safeguarding elephants as keystone species and cultural emblems. Their survival is not optional; it is India's duty to its natural heritage and future generations. Act now, or witness the erasure of an icon ■

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Fyodor Dostoevsky



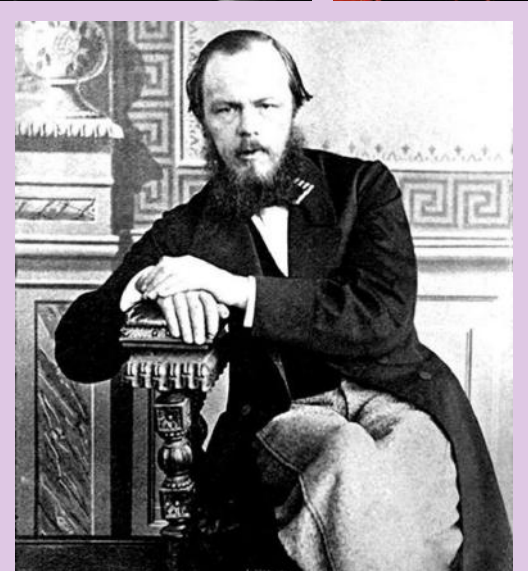
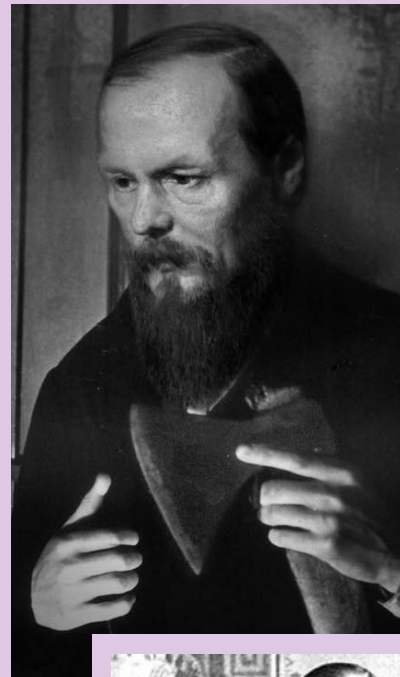
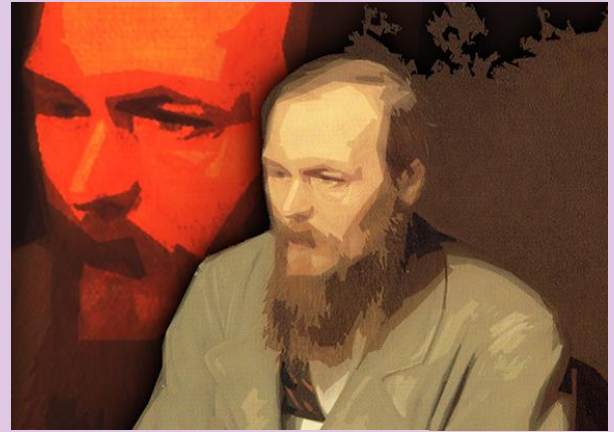
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THE MAN WHO FOUGHT AGAINST HIS FATE

What compel a man to hunt through mankind's stygian pondering and nevertheless find recompement in its mayhem?" Fyodor dostoevsky found the answer in his own agony and persistent forage for connotation within it. His private life is — recognised by heartfelt misfortune, pecuniary ruin and expatriation; which pervades his works with vulnerability, crudeness and genuineness. Dostoevsky's life was thunderous and mystifying just like the characters he built so adroitly. He moulded some pre-eminent dramatic, literary, poetic works in history, ranging over the concerns of ethicality, asceticism and the entangled convolutions of the human surroundings. Dostoevsky's works are not simply stories ; they are the towpath to explore the everlasting skirmish between gleam and dullness, the two enclosed by humans and the community as a whole. Dostoevsky is not just a novelist, he's a soothsayer of the human environment. His writings are not merely tales of people but an inspection of ubiquitous human predicaments. Dostoevsky's work vocalizes the hushed conflicts engraved within the psyche— clashes of culpability, isolation and the hunt for elucidation in a world filled with mayhem. For writing a biography, an individual can't proceed towards dostoevsky without conceding his unbeaten efforts to composition and ideology. His works are more than literary procurements. Dostoevsky's noteworthiness lies in his potential to ask questions that go beyond time and customs : what compels an individual to execute abominable acts? Can one perceive vindication by being in pain? These subject matters imbue his most remarkable compositions, entailing, Crime and punishment; originally published in the year 1866 which tells us about the suffering of a student whose illegal actions initiated a voyage of psychic awakening. Even his minuscule compositions like notes from the underground published in 1864, divulges a comprehensive scuffle with the severance and risibility of the contemporary human exposure, which helped dostoevsky in receiving recognition as an advocate of free will.

The Tale Of Morosest Dreamer: Fyodor mikhailovich dostoevsky was born on 11 November, 1821, in the capital of Russia; Moscow. His family members were self-deprecating but had plentiful cerebral and racial assets. His father—Mikhail Andreevich dostoevsky, was an extremely devout doctor and his mother— Maria fyodorovna, was a lenient and adoring woman of imaginative tendency. Dostoevsky's fostering was a contrast of ascendancy, as his father was harsh and had an autarchic complexion while his mother was crammed with cordiality and sensitivity. This difference of influence later moulded dostoevsky's considerateness of human complexion, where he brilliantly apprehended the copresence of gloominess and empathy in his characters. Fyodor's family lived in the Mariinsky hospital where Mikhail, his father performed duties as a physician. The environment and surroundings of the was a religious conformist Christian who inculcated his children with high regards for religion, worship and pedagogy. His mother introduced Fyodor to creative writing, literature and compositions at an early age. She made him read russian folktales, works of pushkin, which exploded his fondness for narration. After the death of Maria, dostoevsky's mother, in 1837; Mikhail sent Fyodor and his sibling to an engineering institution in St. Petersburg. Although he had very little interest in engineering, his father saw it as a secure and reputable profession.

Roots Of Brilliance: At the educational institution, Dostoevsky outshined subjects like mathematics but continued to be extremely incurious in his selected field. Regardless, he submerged himself in literature, and spent numerous nights going through the work of Goethe, Balzac, Hugo. The amorous epitomes of these literates enchanted Dostoevsky. He also came across russian writers such as Nikolai Gogol. His sardonic portraits of community



and evocative presentations had a heartfelt impact on Fyodor's early style. Dostoevsky's father passed away in 1839 while he was at the —academy. Mikhail dostoevsky was executed by his vassals whilst some reports give the idea that he might have died of natural roots. His father's death extremely disturbed Fyodor, and crammed him with sorrow and culpability. In spite of the unbending formation of the institution, Fyodor grew up with his affection for literature and writing. He graduated in 1843 and served as an engineer for a short period of time but soon ditched this line of work to follow writing. Dostoevsky was fit up not just with abilities but also with drastic vulnerability towards the entanglements of human extant. His early experiences and influences inculcated him with an extreme sympathy for human infirmness and interest in righteous and psychic questions, which described his further works. Regardless of his early achievements, dostoevsky's private life continue to be full of complications. His next composition, *The Double* published in 1846- an intellectual story of a man sinking into insanity, failed to reverberate with bookworms. The strident recipience gave out a grievous move to dostoevsky's credence, which left him worried and made him question his own qualities and abilities as a writer. Also, his health was weak and he was suffering from a thunderous monetary circumstances. Inclined to epilepsy- a state that can plague a person for his entire life, dostoevsky was enthusiastically as well as palpably void. Moreover, his fondness for gambling and penurious monetary decisions usually left him to pay due amounts and forced him to depend on early payments from publishers and sometimes lending money from friends. In the 1840s, Dostoevsky connected with the petrashevsky circle, a class of nobles who had consultations about liberal and non-materialistic ideas. The tsarist dominion eyed this class as a menace. In the year of 1849, dostoevsky was taken into custody in company with other people to judicial execution for accused revolutionary Ventures.

Fyodor and the other jailbirds were placed in town square, sightless and ready for the death penalty. Nevertheless, their judgements were travelled to expulsion and toiling in Siberia - a cancellation of punishment arranged by Tsar Nicholas I. This disturbing occurrence of facing loss of life, left an inerascable trace on dostoevsky. It intensified his perception of human agony and recoupment. The time period of siberian exile, became a span of massive private and sacred modification for dostoevsky. Throughout these years, he evolved sincere sensitivity for the scuffles of common human beings. He also developed belief in conformist christianity that became the foundation of his further analytical and artistic inspections. Dostoevsky came back to St Petersburg in the year of 1859 and he was now a Man who has undergone inexpressible deprivation and came out with a cavernous perception of life. Dostoevsky's way from anonymity to pre—eminence was

suffused with difficulties and struggles which later moulded his brilliance. The concerns of isolation, pain and retrieval became the inner light of his significant compositions. These themes secured Fyodor's legacy as a literary and considered the entanglements of the human psyche.

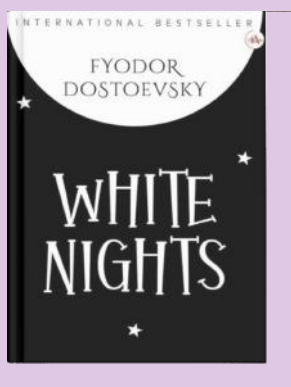
EPILOGUE: Fyodor dostoevsky's entity and writings were an attestation to an individual's spiritual magnitude to tolerate and fabricate in the middle of agony. He moved from the unlit cloister of penury and banishment to the crest of Belletristic perpetuity. Dostoevsky did not just perceive life, he lived its furthest point; encountering the rift of anguish and the peak of psychic superiority. Dostoevsky tried to untangle the enigma of mankind's binary nature- toleration of brutality and elegance, distress and desire, crime and escape. His characters grappled with the queries that provide the description of human incidents. His perception into isolation, theoretical fanaticism and the delicacy of the human soul utters to the contemporary set of affairs as vigorously as they did to his coevals. In spite of his imaginative achievements, his health continued to be perilous. He was suffering from persistent sickness, entailing serious epilepsy and pulmonic difficulties. Dostoevsky perished at the age of 59 due to a pulmonic bleeding, on 9 February, 1881. Dostoevsky's life was a testimony to the life-changing potential of anguish and the pliability of the human psyche. His writings and compositions keep on stimulating, demanding, and cast light upon vision of people, unraveling the convolutions of extant ■

As dostoevsky himself wrote—

“The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for.”

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Sri Aurobindo

A BROAD OVERVIEW OF THE GREATEST VISIONARY



In the entire history of humanity, only a handful of people have been able to achieve the level of greatness which was attained by the venerated Indian spiritual leader, Sri Aurobindo. He was a great Indian nationalist, who played a pivotal role in India's Independence while paving paths for a modern India with the help of his unique philosophy, work and teachings. Apart from being a towering nationalist, he is also revered as an eminent spiritual leader, adept yogi, poet and profound philosopher. Sri Aurobindo made significant contributions to India's nationalist movement and spiritual philosophy, leaving a lasting impact on Indian history. Aravinda Akroyd Ghose was born on 15th August 1872 in a prosperous and well-regarded Bengali family in the city of Calcutta. His father, Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghose, and his mother, Swarnalata Devi, christened him with the name because they thought the name was unique and would bring glory to their newborn son. However, Sri Aurobindo dropped his Western middle name, Akroyd, following his return from England to India. He was the second youngest among four siblings, with two older brothers and a younger sister. As a child, he received a Western education and was sent along with his elder brothers, Bony Bhusan and Mono Mohan, to Darjeeling in 1877 to study in a convent school run by Irish Nuns. His father was a great admirer of Western culture and would later take all three of his sons to England in order to provide them with a European education for better prospects. In 1879, Sri Aurobindo along with his two elder brothers were brought to Manchester, England by his father, who entrusted them under the care of Rev. Drewett and Mrs. Drewett. His father was well acquainted with Mr. Drewett, a cousin of Magistrate Glazier, who was stationed at Rangpur. Mrs. Drewett took care of the young Aurobindo while his elder brothers enrolled in the Manchester Grammar School. At home, Mr. Drewett and Mrs. Drewett taught and made Sri Aurobindo skilled in subjects like Latin, English, French, Arithmetic, History and Geography. During this time, he also became keen on literature and acquired a taste for great English poets such as Keats, Shelly and Shakespeare. Subsequently, upon Rev. Drewett's resignation from his pastoral position at the church and relocation to Australia, his mother assumed responsibility for overseeing the welfare of the brothers. In 1884, the elderly lady relocated to London, where she took Aurobindo and his brothers under her care. In September 1884, Aurobindo and his brother Manmohan were enrolled at St. Paul's School in London. Aurobindo underwent an examination conducted by Dr. Walker, the Headmaster, who was thoroughly impressed by his command of Latin and other subjects. Dr. Walker took a personal interest in Aurobindo's education and even undertook the task of teaching him Greek —

during his five-year tenure at St. Paul's. Aurobindo pursued studies in Classics and received accolades such as the Butterworth Second Prize in Literature and the Bedford Prize in History. His rapid advancement through the school's academic hierarchy was facilitated by the Headmaster's desire to provide him with ample opportunities for intellectual growth. Aurobindo actively participated in the Literary Society at St. Paul's, showcasing his oratory skills in debates. Noteworthy instances include his distinguished involvement in debates on 'Swift's Political Views' on November 5, 1889, and on 'Milton' on November 19 of the same year. St. Paul's operated as a day-school, affording Aurobindo considerable time for extracurricular pursuits. During the preceding three years, his academic commitments occupied a minimal portion of his schedule, as his proficiency in various subjects rendered extensive study unnecessary. Instead, he devoted significant time to broadening his intellectual horizons through extensive reading, encompassing English poetry, literature, fiction, French literature, and the historical narratives of ancient, medieval, and modern Europe. Additionally, he pursued the study of Italian, German, and, to a lesser extent, Spanish.

Sri Aurobindo joined King's College, Cambridge after securing an open scholarship while simultaneously getting qualified to receive a stipend for preparing I.C.S exams. Despite the scholarship and stipend, he had to go through a lot of difficulties in making ends meet, because his father was going through a financial crisis and was facing problems in sending money to him and his brothers. It must be a very strenuous period for them. However, this did not stop Sri Aurobindo from performing well in the college. He was able to win several awards owing to his good command of the English language and literature. Apart from English, his niche was in the Classics and many of his English classmates considered him to be a very good scholar in the subject. The following quote from one of his English classmates is worth mentioning here, which gives an insight in his erudition at a young age: "He was a very able Classical Scholar, easily first in this subject in the Entrance Scholarship Examination, and probably only the fact that, to satisfy the regulations of the Indian Civil Service, he had to take the University Tripos after two years (instead of the usual three) prevented him from being in the top division of the first Class in the final test...With regard to his life at Cambridge, a complete lack of interest in games must have lessened his enjoyment of the life of the place. His interests were in literature : among Greek Poets for instance he once waxed enthusiastic over Sappho, and he had a nice feeling of English style. Yet for England itself he seemed to have little affection; it was not only the climate that he found trying: as an example, he became quite indignant when on one occasion I called England the modern Athens. This title, he declared, belonged to France; England much more resembled Corinth, a commercial state and therefore unattractive to him. I only hope that his views of the English race are more charitable now than they were in the 'nineties.'" (Das 34-35). It is important to note that Sri Aurobindo held opposition to the imperialism practiced by the British ruling classes, yet harboured no biases towards the English race. In later years, he made reference to the English as possessing a "constitutional mind," which he regarded as characteristic of a "decent people." He remarked that England appeared comparatively less corrupt and praised the English for their adeptness in operating the Parliamentary System. From a very early age, Sri Aurobindo was keen on politics and was familiar with the ongoing political upheaval in England as well as in India. He understood the unjust policies and laws imposed on his motherland and constantly thought of India's liberation. Therefore, just after enrolling himself in college he joined a committee called Indian Majlis which comprised of students deeply involved in issues concerning freedom of India. There he participated in debates and gave speeches filled with revolutionary fervour condemning British colonisation of India. These speeches were so powerful that it fell on the ears of authorities and he was barred from giving the riding test for the Civil Service exam. The turning point in his career came when he met Gaekwar of Baroda while in London, leading to his appointment in the Baroda service. He returned to

India in 1893 and worked in various departments of Baroda service for almost thirteen years. During these years he also had an opportunity to teach and impart knowledge at Baroda College, eventually ascending to the post of principal. This was also the time when Sri Aurobindo got deeply involved in Indian literature while composing poetry. While living in England, he underwent a purely Occidental education as per his father's wishes leaving him devoid of any exposure to Indian or Eastern cultures. Upon his arrival in Baroda, he diligently cured this deficiency by acquiring proficiency in Sanskrit and several contemporary Indian languages. Additionally, he immersed himself in the essence of Indian civilization, acquainting himself with its historical and modern relevance. His return to India marked the beginning of his active involvement in the nationalist movement. Sri Aurobindo joined the struggle for independence around 1902 but carried out his political activities behind the scenes because of his position in the Baroda Services. As soon as he resigned from his post in 1906, he came to Bengal and joined the Indian National Congress party. He became increasingly involved in many political movements such as the Swadeshi and Non Cooperation movements. Nonetheless, he also wanted to reform the movement by making it more direct and forward politically rather than being slow, passive and pacified as practised by the party. Sri Aurobindo made amends to the leaders in Bengal to emerge openly as a nationwide party with a clear and bold agenda. He advocated placing Tilak, the esteemed Maratha leader, at its helm, and encouraged them to challenge the prevailing dominance of the Moderate (Reformist or Liberal) oligarchy of seasoned politicians. The objective was to wrest control of the Congress and the nation from them. This period saw the emergence of a major ideological divide between the Moderates and the Nationalists (often referred to as 'Extremists' by critics), reshaping Indian political discourse over the next two years. Sri Aurobindo urged the INC leaders of Bengal to unite publicly as a nationwide party. He wanted Bal Gangadhar Tilak to become the forefront of the party since he was a very popular and capable leader. His goal was to challenge the moderate leadership of the seasoned and shrewd politician in the party and bring changes both in Congress and the country. This sparked a significant conflict within the party but it also transformed the Indian politics of those times.

His political advocacy influenced the Indian National Congress to formally demand Swaraj (independence), shifting from its earlier stance of seeking limited self-governance under British rule. His main agenda was to establish Congress as an informal state or a second state of political action within the British state to influence and manipulate policy-making and eventually gain freedom. He also convinced the party to officially adopt and fund the newly established daily newspaper, *Bande Mataram*, where he served as the acting editor at the time. *Bande Mataram*, under his complete guidance from early 1907 until its sudden closure in 1908 due to Sri Aurobindo imprisonment, swiftly gained circulation across India. In its brief yet impactful tenure, it revolutionized India's political discourse, leaving a lasting mark found also in later developments of the freedom movement. In 1907, Sri Aurobindo faced sedition charges but was acquitted. Since he had become the main leader in Bengal and started speaking publicly many arrest attempts were made by the government. In 1908, he got caught up in the Alipore Conspiracy Case, accused of involvement with his brother's revolutionary group. He was arrested but acquitted due to lack of evidence in 1909. Following his acquittal in the Alipur Trial, Sri Aurobindo's mission took a significant turn. He felt inwardly assured of India's forthcoming freedom and made the liberation of not just a country but the whole of humanity his goal. In 1910, Aurobindo stepped away from politics and took refuge in Chandannagar at Motilal Roy's home, evading British authorities who sought to charge him with sedition over an article published in *Karmayogin*. His disappearance halted legal proceedings, and when a warrant was—

issued on April 4, 1910, he had already reached Pondicherry, a French colony, beyond British jurisdiction. The warrant against him was later withdrawn, marking a significant turn in his path toward spiritual pursuits. In Pondicherry, Aurobindo focused wholeheartedly on his spiritual and philosophical works. In 1914, he started the monthly magazine *Arya*. Though *Arya* ceased publication in 1921, it gave birth to several renowned book series, including *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and *Essays on The Gita*, leaving an enduring legacy in spiritual literature. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram was founded in 1926, coinciding with Sri Aurobindo's adoption of the title "Sri" as a mark of respect. Alongside his spiritual partner, Mirra Alfassa, known as The Mother, he guided a community of disciples, focusing on spiritual growth and education. Despite stepping away from politics, Sri Aurobindo remained involved in India's affairs. On 15 August 1947, he opposed India's partition, hoping it wouldn't be permanent. He was nominated twice for the Nobel Prize. When he passed away on 5 December 1950, thousands gathered to bid him farewell. Leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajendra Prasad praised his contributions to philosophy and India's independence struggle. Sri Aurobindo's life was extraordinary, marked by his nationalist fervour, spiritual pursuits, and intellectual achievements, leaving a lasting legacy ■

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Your practice of psycho—analysis was a mistake. It has, for the time at least, made the work of purification more complicated, not easier. The psycho—analysis of Freud is the last thing that one should associate with yoga. It takes up a certain part, the darkest, the most perilous, the unhealthiest part of the nature, the lower vital subconscious layer, isolates some of its most morbid phenomena and attributes to it and them an action out of all proportion to its true role in the nature. Modern psychology is an infant science, at once rash, fumbling and crude. As in all infant sciences, the universal habit of the human mind—to take a partial or local truth, generalise it unduly and try to explain a whole field of Nature in its narrow terms—runs riot here. Moreover, the exaggeration of the importance of suppressed sexual complexes is a dangerous falsehood and it can have a nasty influence and tend to make the mind and vital more and not less fundamentally impure than before.

— Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

Khudiram Bose

AN UNSUNG REVOLUTIONER



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Bose "An Unsung Revolutioner" was a 18 year who brought himself happily to the shamble's gate to ignite the fire of Nationalism in youths but nowadays Youth is busy in making reels, dating, making eachother's fun and games. The sacrificing story of Khudiram should be the motivation to them. He was born on 03 december 1889 in the Midnapore district of bengal province. When Khudiram borns his parents already lost their two sons due to some disease so they decided to do the ritual to save khudiram from that disease. They sell Khudiram in three fist rice (in his locality known as khudi) due to which he gets the name khudiram. At the age of 6 he lost his parents. He start living in the security of his elder sister who admissioned him in local school. His childhood is full of Sacrifices. When he was in class 9th, he decided to Join the yugantar party in revolt of division of Bengal against british government in 1905. seeveral movements came forward in response of bengal division in which foreign goods are burnt out. Newspaper was a prominent way of spreading revolution all over the India those days. Khudiram Bose with some of his friends secretly reads the newspaper of great philospher Sri Aurobindo Ghose named bandemattaram. During the days, a british judge Doughlas Kingsford was atrocited towards

revolutionaries and gives the cruel Punishments to them. Khudiram Bose Decided to Assassinate Kingsford. He got the news that Kingsford is Going Somewhere from His Carriage. Khudiram throw the bombs on the carriage but mistakenly in carriage their is a wife and daughter of a British official. Due to some conspired Peoples Khudiram Bose was arrested and Presented to Court Where He gets the punishment of execution. Khudiram Accepted the Punishment with a smile on his Face, He has No regretion of what he has done. Khudiram asked the judge If he permits him then He Can Show How he prepares the Bombs. These words are remarked as his last words. On 11 August 1908 in Muzzafarpur He was hanged. Khudiram Became Invincible in the history with the title of youngest revolutioner to be executed. In his last time too Khudiram wants to ignite the fire of nationalism in more of the teenagers but sadly In our history books there no khudiram mentioned and very few of us knows him. I request you to know about these revolutionaries who disappears from our history books but their contribution shouldn't be disappears from our memories ■

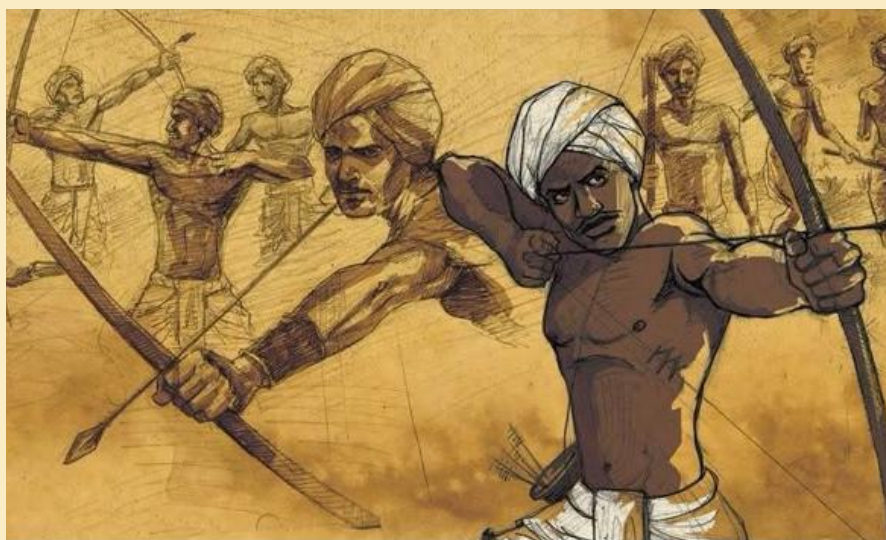
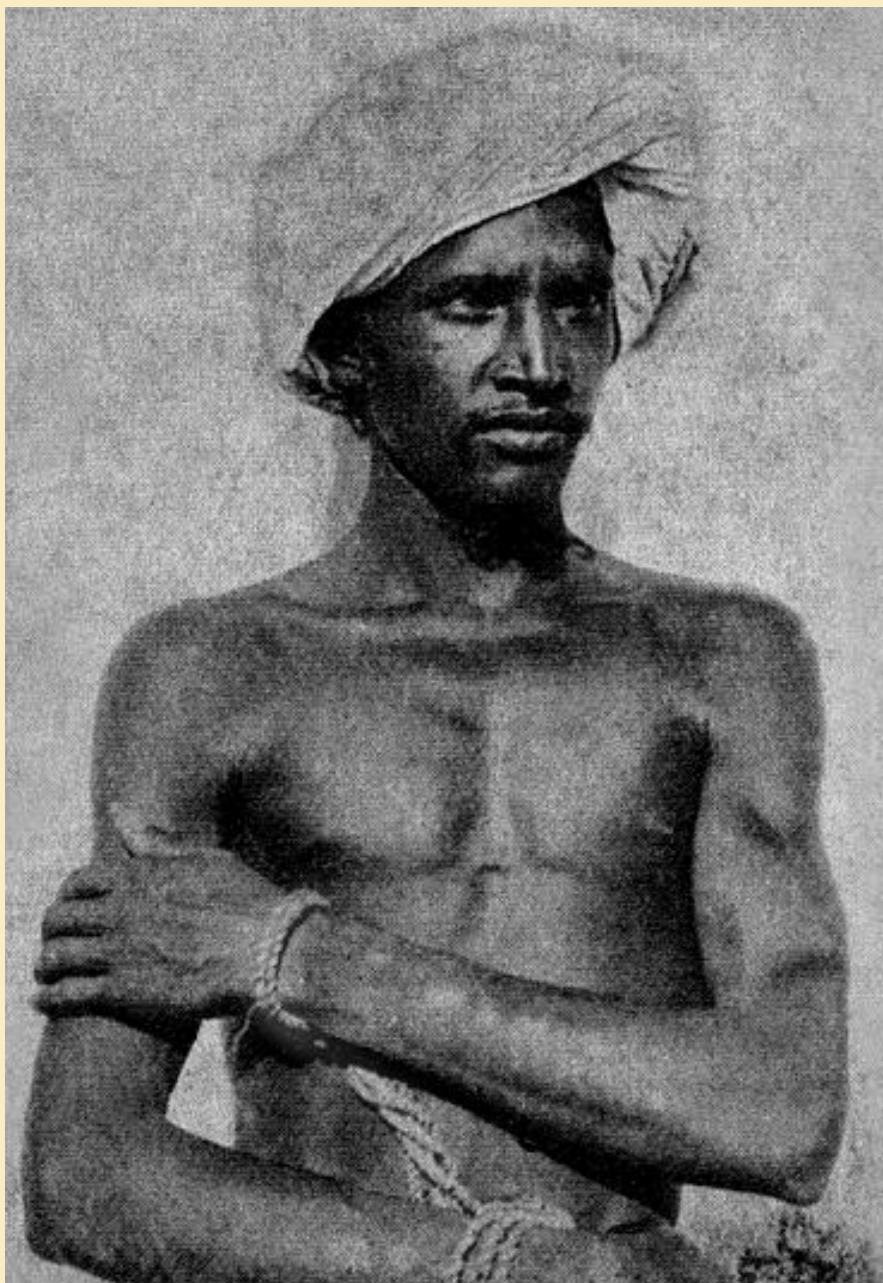
Dharti Aba Birsa Munda: A Martyr



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Bhagawan Birsa Munda popularly known as 'Dharti Aba' (saviour of earth) was born on 15 November 1875 at Ulihatu village of Khuti police station of Chottanagpur and perhaps poisoned to death on 9th June 1900 by the British colonial power. He died a martyr's death at the age of only 25 in Ranchi jail of present Jharkhand, part of South Bihar for restoration tribal identity and culture. His childhood was full of obscurity and challenges but the adversities never stopped him to become a champion of Adivasi's of Chottanagpur of South Bihar. Since his childhood he was quite sensitive to the sufferings of the Adivasi's of Chottanagpur region at the hands of the Dikus (outsiders) i.e. the local landlords, moneylenders other revenue agents and the hegemonic British colonial power. These Dikus exploited them on the basis of agrarian and forest revenues but also on other inhuman exploitations during nineteenth century. Birsa in his formative years of life came across the incidents of prolonged resistance of the tribals of Chottanagpur against the 'Dikus'. These incidents indeed had a seminal impact on Birsa. Due to agrarian exploitations the tribals of Chottanagpur were under severe debt trap and became landless labourers living under abject poverty and starvation and many had to leave their own native place in search of alternative job for livelihood. The socio-economic as well as cultural subjugation lead to insult, personal humiliations to life and dignity of the tribals. This ruthless exploitation by the Dikus was going beyond all limits of forbearance by the beginning of 19th century. Accordingly there were persistence revolts of the tribals against the outsiders but last not the least the revolt was 'Munda Revolt' during 1889-94 led by Bhagwan Birsa Munda to end the

socio-economic miseries and cultural subjugation of tribals of Chottanagpur. The opportunity for Birsa to fight against British came when Sardari Larai Movement (1858–1895 — Munda and Oraon tribes) took place in Chottanagpur to protect the rights of Adivasis from land grabbing of the landlords and other authorities. Around that Birsa was widely accepted by the tribal community as their leader as he possessed supernatural power. He was well considered by his community as a religious guru—“Bhagawan” or “Dharti Aba”. Birsa devised his own religious tenets from Hinduism, Christianity and Munda belief and drew support of the tribal masses to fight against the hegemonic British imperialism as well as against landlords, moneylender and etc. His emergence as a tribal leader terrified the colonial power. During Sardari movement besides Birsa few of his followers were arrested 24th September 1895 and imprisoned for 2 years and later released in 1897. Then he waged total armed struggle known ‘Ulgulan’ in Mundari language. Birsa organised secret meetings in secluded jungles and hills of Dombari or Sail Raqeb and his first attack came on 1st October 1894 for remission of forest cess. He gave his clarion call to the tribals in his own Mundari language ‘Maharani raj tundu janaoro abua raj ete jana’. The British made earnest efforts to suppress the movement and Birsa was caught treacherously on 3rd March 1900 and was imprisoned in Chaibasa jail. Later perhaps was poisoned to death. Though Birsa’s revolt failed to liquidate the foreign rule, but it brought about many changes in the socio-economic and cultural policies of colonial government. *Bhagawan Birsa was thus a true patriot*, legend and became martyr who laid down his life for the Adivasi’s of Chottanagpur. Birsa Bhgawan still is fondly remembered in the popular memories of tribals of Jharkhand and people of India. He was a true ‘Messiah’ who saved the tribals from the age-long sufferings and exploitation from the outsiders—the Dikus. His contribution thus is immense to save tribal identity and culture and his valour and sacrifices are inspiration to the youths of the nation today



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Napoleon

THE FLAME OF FRANCE AND THE FIRE OF EUROPE

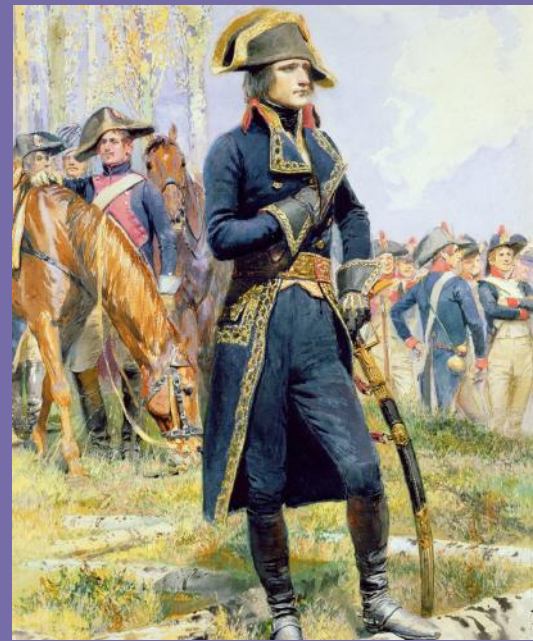
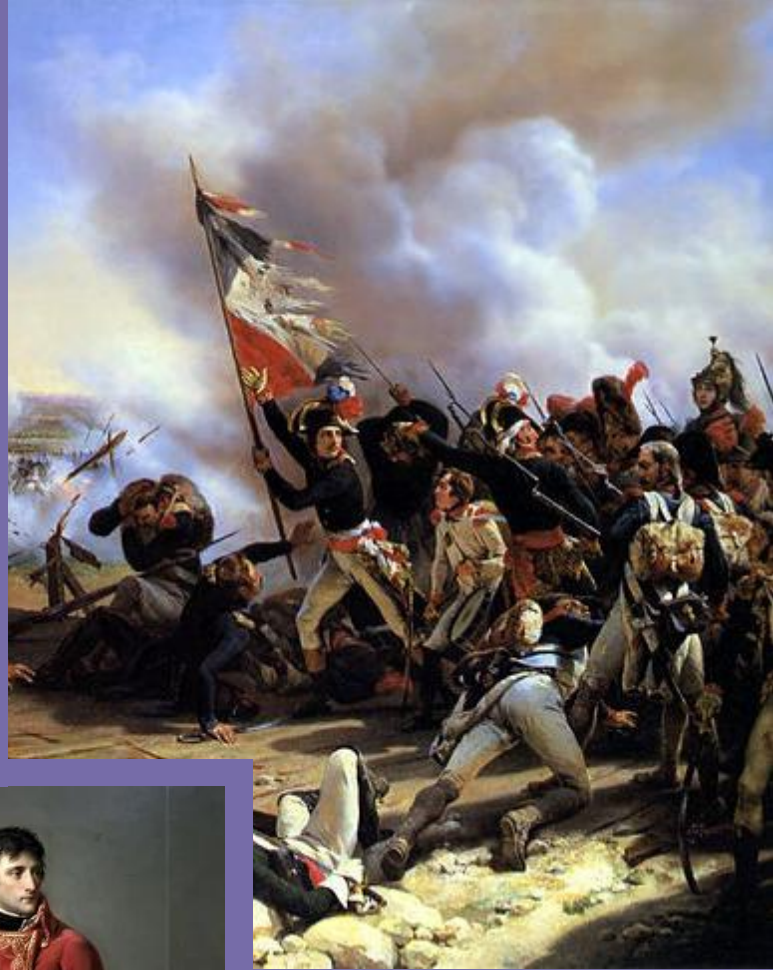


► Bhavesh Lalwani

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Napoleon Bonaparte was born on 5 May 1769 in Corsica Island that was owned by France at that time. France acquired Corsica from the republic of Genoa in 1768, a year before Napoleon Bonaparte was born. As a child, he was shy in nature. He enjoyed studying history and geography, and often read about great figures like Alexander and Julius Caesar. Napoleon attended the Brinne military academy of France where many aristocratic children studied. He was often mocked by his peers and these experiences contributed to his opposition against the class system.

Napoleon Bonaparte, born in 1769 on the island of Corsica, grew up with a deep sense of Corsican identity. In his youth, he was an outspoken Corsican nationalist, advocating for independence from France. However, as political tides shifted, so did his loyalties. During the French Revolution, he embraced its radical ideals and aligned himself with the Jacobins, who sought to dismantle the monarchy and establish a republic. His ambition initially led him to pursue a career in the French Navy, but he was instead selected for the artillery, a decision that would later define his military career. In 1785, at the age of 16, he became a second lieutenant in the French Army. His mathematical skills and strategic thinking made him an exceptional artillery officer, and the revolution soon provided him opportunities to prove his capabilities. The French Revolution erupted in 1789 when the Third Estate declared itself the National Assembly, demanding an end to tyranny and advocating for Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. France plunged into political and social chaos as factions like the Girondins and Jacobins struggled for control. Meanwhile, European monarchies, including Russia, Austria, and Prussia, feared that revolutionary ideals would spread beyond France and actively opposed the movement. As a result, France faced both internal turmoil and external threats, creating a perfect battleground for emerging leaders like Napoleon. In 1793, during the Siege of Toulon, he implemented a bold plan to capture a strategic hill, using artillery fire to force the British to retreat. His brilliant tactics led to the city's recapture, earning him recognition and the rank of Brigadier General. This victory marked the beginning of his meteoric rise.







He got popular in the people of France they thought he protected the territory of France but also keep the honour of France. In 1795, he again showed his superior military skills when he cleared the road of Paris from the royalist supporter within hour. He become much popular in the people that people started seeing him as their leader. After which he the whole responsibility of the whole Italy regiment in which he won the important states like the NICE and SAVOY. in his first Italian campaign Napoleon defeated the Austria and signed the treaty of CAMPO FORMIO in which Rhine River is considered as the natural boundary of France. The respect for the napoleon in France is rising due to his work. Due to increases in popularity Napoleon was kept away from France and was sent on an Egyptian expedition. In 1798 AD, He led a military campaign in Egypt and Syria during the French revolution War. The campaign included the battle of the Pyramids and the battle of the Nile. He lost the battle of the Nile due to the weak navy of France against the strong navy of the British. After the defeat in Egypt, Napoleon took a debatable and courageous decision to return to France without his force. Despite the failure in Egypt Napoleon was welcomed as a hero. The public was happy after his return he knew this is the best time to overthrow the directory. With his supporters he removed the Directory by coup in 1799 and he established the council system. New constitution is made and the voting system took place and He become the First Council for ten years later in May 1804 he became the Emperor of the French under the name of Napoleon I

The downfall: Napoleon, who maintained peace in Europe in his initial days, sought the hegemony of France over the whole of Europe. England knew about the plan of Napoleon and they knew they had to stop him. England made an alliance with Austria and Russia and

formed a group against France. He started his campaign and with his 40000 troops attacked Austria and defeated Austria in 1805. England's navy was best during the period of Napoleon and he knew it very well despite fear he surrounded the navy of the British near Spain in the Atlantic Ocean near cape Trafalgar. In the battle he got defeated by the British navy in "the war of third collation". After the defeat he stepped backed and delayed the plan of attack on England at the same time Russia and Austria attack Napoleon thinking he will lose but Napoleon first annex the Germany and signed the treaty of Rhine river next, he defeated both the army of Russia and Austria empire in the "Battle of Austerlitz". Austria gave Vienna to France and signed the treaty of Pressburg. In 1807 he attacked Russia and captured some of the territory of Russia and signed the Treaty of Tilsit. He captured many small and big countries of Europe till 1810 he captured Russia, Belgium, Netherland, Spain, Germany, Poland and many Balkan countries except England Napoleon almost occupied the whole of Europe by 1810. Napoleon enforced the continental system against the British force. He started the economic war in which he stopped any trade with England and attacked every ship of England but later Portugal rejected the plan he then annexed both Spain and Portugal but a wild resistance arose in both the countries against the occupation. Arthur Wellesley sent a containment of troops for the help of Spain and Portugal and due to the ban on the British the product value of the British goods increased. Europe's economy started to fall —

down due to the ban on the product. People have to buy things from the blank market. Gradually, Napoleon started to witness the resistance in each occupied region of Europe; he used force to shut them down. Later he wanted someone to continue his empire and he married Marie Louise the daughter of the king of Austria. In 1812 he placed 6 lakhs troops on the Russia borders on the successful economic blockade of Britain. Spain Napoleon's army was defeated and in Russia he attacked Moscow but winter was close so he had to return but when Napoleon was returning after winning Moscow, the Russian army attacked then in which France suffered heavy losses. Later in 1813 German states along with other countries started attacking France in which Napoleon suffered a huge defeat in the Battle of Leipzig. Other countries captured Paris and Napoleon got prisoned but in march he escaped and in June 1815 he attacks Belgium with his army but got defeated in the battle of Waterloo in 1815. Napoleon was subsequently exiled to the island of Saint Helena in the Atlantic Ocean. Napoleon died on May 5, 1821 on the island of st. Helena because of stomach cancer ■

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22 February 1985, leaving behind a remarkable legacy of advancement and contemporaneity. Pooradam Thirunal Sethu Lakshmi Bayi is recalled as one of the greatest regents in Indian history. Her rule was marked by: Progressive policies which developed and modernized Travancore, revolutionary social and judicial reforms, empowering women through education and legal rights, abolition of oppressive practices like the Devadasi system. Her reign is often regarded as a golden era in Travancore's history, which also paved the way to later reforms such as the *Temple Entry Proclamation* and advancements in women's rights. Her vision of an equal, progressive, and just society continues to be celebrated today ■

Pooradam Thirunal Sethu Lakshmi Bayi was born on 19 November 1895 into the prestigious Travancore Royal Family, one of the most powerful dynasties in South India. She was the granddaughter of Bharani Thirunal Lakshmi Bayi and was adopted into the Travancore royal lineage along with her cousin, Sethu Parvathi Bayi, following the matrilineal traditions of the kingdom. The Travancore royal family followed the unique *Marumakkathayam* system, in which royal succession was through the female line. This meant that Sethu Lakshmi Bayi and her cousin were designated as the Senior and Junior Maharanis of Travancore respectively. While her cousin Sethu Parvathi Bayi gave birth to Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, the future Maharaja, Sethu Lakshmi Bayi was chosen as the Regent of Travancore due to her seniority when the throne became vacant in 1924. Sethu Lakshmi Bayi was highly educated, well-versed in administration, and trained in governance from a young age. Her intellectual upbringing and progressive outlook would later define her regency.

Era of Transformation and Major Policies (1924–1931): Sethu Lakshmi Bayi assumed the role of *Regent* of Travancore on 7 August 1924, following the death of Maharaja *Moolam Thirunal*. Since the heir, Chithira Thirunal, was still a minor, she was endowed with ruling Travancore until he came of age. Her regency marked one of the most growing periods in Travancore's history. Her regime was identified by judicial, social, economic, and infrastructural developments. She realised the need to instigate new legal and administrative systems in Travancore in order to develop it and launched a new penal code for improving the efficiency and fairness of the judicial system. She worked on nourishing the local self—governance allowing municipalities to have more autonomy. Focusing on defence, she initiated reforms for the police force for ensuring better law enforcement across the kingdom. One of the key aspects of her regency was her devotion to education, particularly for women. She believed that women's education was the key to social progress and established numerous schools and colleges, solely for women. She uplifted girls from all castes to enroll in schools, smashing traditional bars, handed scholarships and impetus for women's higher education. She played a vital role in ending the Devadasi system (practice that had led to the exploitation of young women in temples). She then imposed strict laws barring this system and introduced mending programs for former Devadasis marking one of her most notable contributions to the realm of women's rights in India. She knew the importance of agriculture and initiated irrigation projects which ensure a better water—management. She refined road networks, connecting rural areas with the urban—centers that helped in the exchange of ideas and set government—schools for all castes, executed—policies to improve the status of lower caste communities, giving them better access to the resources.

End of Regency and Lasting Legacy: After stepping away from the political scene, she chose to settle in Bangalore, where she led a simple life. Yet, she remained engaged in social causes, certainly those concerning women's education and welfare. Despite her absence from active politics, her contributions and policies towards people continued to inspire future generations. She passed—away on



Reformer SETHU LAKSHMI BAYI



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BHIKAIJI CAMA

The Forgotten Fire of India's Dawn

In a world shrouded by colonial might,
There rose a soul, burning bright.
A voice for the voiceless, a beacon of fight,
Bhikaiji Cama, our guiding light.

She stitched a flag with courage bold,
Threads of saffron, green, and gold.
A symbol of hope, a nation's claim,
Yet her deeds remain without acclaim.

From Europe's halls to India's soil,
She waged her war with endless toil.
A voice of freedom across the seas,
Demanding justice, sowing the seeds.

In conferences grand, she took her stand,
An exiled daughter of her motherland.
With fiery words and a heart of flame,
She fought for freedom in history's name.

Yet in the annals of our past,
Her story fades, her shadow cast.
Uncredited, forgotten, her valor concealed,
But the truth of her spirit cannot be repealed.

Bhikaiji, mother of India's dream,
Your sacrifice flows in our stream.
The flag you raised, the fight you led,
Lives on, though your name is unsaid.

So let us honor, let us reclaim,
The uncredited, yet eternal flame.
For Bhikaiji Cama, our pride shall soar,
Your spirit lives on, forevermore.



► **Harsh Shandilya**
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College (Day), University of Delhi

I'M NOT A REAL PERSON

I sometimes feel like an extraterrestrial because
I'm unsure if I want to be with a boy, a girl, or anyone else.
My face floods pink when people find out that I am not
sexually active, even with myself, and I try to explain.
"I have no urge," however, they stare as if they
were spectators at a circus performance.
Statistically, I am a gold mine and a pink star diamond.
A rare occurrence. I feel that my lack of a crucial
programming component renders me useless.
I think it's impossible to be nothing, but actually,
I am just another empty space on this planet.
Concrete roads bring back memories of my heart's
once solid state, and puddles that are the size of
ponds remind me of my mind's melting.
My heart and mind are like oil and water. They mix, but
never connect. They will never merge.
I find my hands to be strange. Have they always been this
small? This fragile? I long for them to be more robust.
I have no idea how my legs have survived all these years
without breaking.
I've always been a heavy lift.
The ground has always sunk under my feet.
Although the crack opens wider, it appears to be accepting
me instead of engulfing me. In what way do I believe?



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Lessons From The Ancients

STORIES FROM INDIA'S GREATEST FABLES

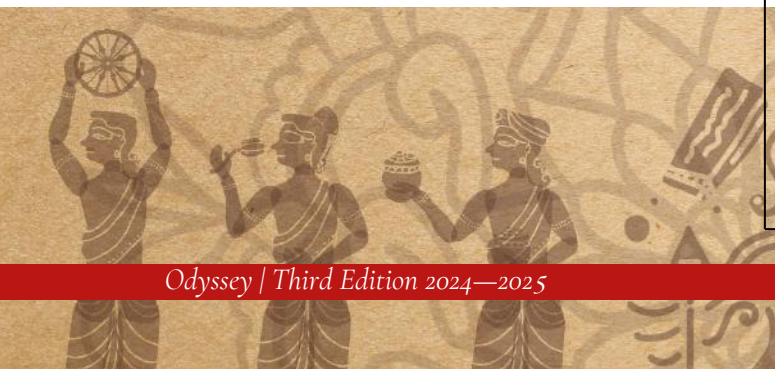
PANCHATANTRA

The *Panchatantra* is an ancient Indian collection of interrelated animal short stories in Sanskrit verse and prose, arranged within a frame story. The surviving work is dated to about 300 CE, but the short stories are likely much more ancient. The text's author is unknown till date. It is likely a Hindu text, and based on older oral traditions with "animal short stories that are as old as we are able to imagine". It is "certainly the most frequently translated literary product of India", and these stories are among the most widely known in the world. It goes by many names in many cultures. There is a version of Panchatantra in nearly every major language of India, and in addition there are 200 versions of the text in more than 50 languages around the world.

Here's a story from Panchatantra:

ELEPHANTS AND THE KING OF MICE

There was a village which was ruined by a strong earthquake. With the houses and the streets shattered, the villagers abandoned the village to settle elsewhere. Despite being shattered, the vacant houses of this village had become homes for a large number of mice. The mice found the place very comfortable and grew in numbers after some time. There was a lake on the outskirts of the village, where a herd of elephants used to visit regularly to drink water and bathe. These elephants used to travel through the abandoned village to reach the lake. But as the herd of elephants travelled through the abandoned village, everyday many mice got trampled. This posed a problem for the mice. So, the king of mice decided to confront the elephants and request them to act accordingly. Next day, as the herd of elephants approached, the king of mice met the elephants cordially and said, "O Sirs, we live in the ruins of this abandoned village and as you travel through this village, everyday many mice get trampled. Therefore, I request you to change your route to the lake. If you do so, I shall remember to return the favour in your time of need." At this the king of elephants laughed, "O king of Mice, there will be no such favour that we, the giant elephants, will require from you, small mice. However, I will honour your request and we will change the route to the lake from today. You will not have to worry about any danger caused by us anymore." The king of mice thanked the "king of the





Hitopadesha is an Indian text in the Sanskrit language consisting of short stories with both animal and human characters. It incorporates maxims, worldly wisdom and advice on political affairs in simple, elegant language, and the work has been widely translated. Little is known about its origin. The surviving text is believed to be from the 12th-century, but was probably composed by Narayana between 800 and 950 CE. The oldest manuscript found in Nepal has been dated to the 14th century, and its content and style has been traced to the ancient Sanskrit treatises called the Panchatantra from much earlier.

Here's a story from Hitopadesha:

A HUNTER TRAPPED DOVES AND A MOUSE

On the banks of the river Godavari, there was a large silk cotton tree where resided a huge fleet of doves with their king. A hunter who had spotted the large flock of birds thought to himself "if only I had a few of these birds, I can make good money selling them in cage". Thus thinking he hit upon a plan and left. The other day he came with some grains of rice, scattered them on the ground and then spread out his net over the grains. Having had done this, he hid himself behind the tree. Just then, the king of doves with his courtiers was flying around in search of food. He saw the grains of rice and said to his followers, "How strange! Grains of rice in an uninhabited forest? Let's see what this is all about. I smell a rat!" But being hungry, the doves didn't listen to their king and flew down to pick up the grains of rice. Whoops! In a trice, they were all caught in the net. A terrific commotion broke out amongst the trapped doves. Then the king cried out, "Friends, we are in great danger. Unless we pull ourselves together immediately and think of a way to get out, there's no doubt that we shall all be dead. Now I propose that we all catch hold of the net at the same time and fly upwards together." The birds agreed. They caught hold of the net and together flew away with it.

When the hunter saw this, he was spellbound and didn't know what to do. But he soon came to himself and began to run after them, thinking, "These birds have managed the escape because they are united. But when they come down, I'll have them in my power!" However, the doves flew very fast and were soon out of sight. They then asked their king, "What shall we do now?" "I have a very dear friend," he said, "a mouse who lives on the banks of the river Godavari. We'll go to him. I know he will find a way to free us!" So, they all flew to the place where the mouse lived. When the mouse saw the birds flying down towards him, he got frightened and ran inside his hole at the root of a tree. But the king of doves called out, "My friend! Don't you know me? Come —

elephants for his consideration, and the herd of elephants never entered the village anymore. After some time, the herd of elephants fell into traps set by elephant-hunters. Many of the elephants, including their king, got entangled in the nets. They struggled hard but could not set themselves free from the strong nets. Suddenly, the king of the elephants remembered the promise of the king of mice. He summoned another elephant who had not got trapped to remind the king of mice of his promise and plea for help on his behalf. As soon as the elephant informed the king of mice of the situation, the king of mice summoned all mice at once. He said, "Now is the time for us to return the favour of the elephants. We should go immediately" And so, the elephant brought the mice to the place where the other elephants had been trapped. All the mice started nibbling on the strong nets and cut them loose. The elephants broke loose from the nets and were grateful to be free again. The king of elephants thanked the king of mice for his timely help, and became great friends thereafter.

Moral: Never underestimate anybody by their appearances.

and set us free.” When the mouse heard this, he recognized his friend's voice and came out quickly. The king of doves told him all that had happened and the mouse immediately started nibbling at the strings of the net and set the birds free.

Moral: A friend in need is a friend indeed.

JATAKA

Jataka tales are a collection of Buddhist stories about the previous lives of Gautama Buddha. The stories are a significant part of Buddhist literature and art. Jataka tales describe the Buddha's previous births as a Bodhisattva, a being who is not yet enlightened. The stories depict the Buddha's lives in both human and animal forms. The stories explain how practicing virtues can help people attain enlightenment and escape samsara, the cycle of rebirth.

Here's a story from Jataka:

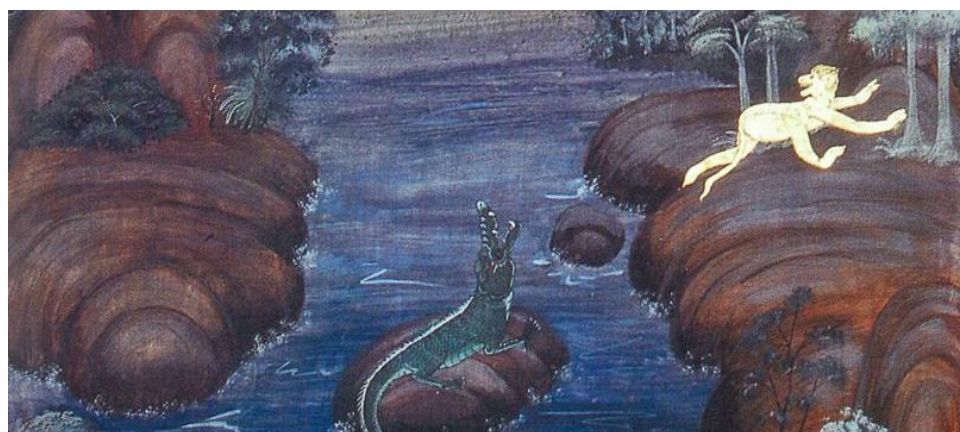
THE MONKEY AND THE CROCODIL

Once upon a time, a clever monkey lived on a huge mango tree by a river. The tree bore the sweetest fruits, and the monkey spent his days eating happily. One day, a crocodile swam to the riverbank, looking tired and hungry. The kind monkey offered him some mangoes. The crocodile was delighted and returned every day to eat the delicious fruits. Over time, they became good friends. The crocodile often carried mangoes home for his wife. However, his greedy wife was not satisfied. She wanted to eat the monkey's heart, believing it would be as sweet as the mangoes. She pressured the crocodile to bring the monkey to her. The crocodile was reluctant but gave in to his wife's demand. He invited the monkey for a ride across the river, saying he wanted to introduce him to his family. The innocent monkey agreed and climbed onto the crocodile's back.

As they reached the middle of the river, the crocodile revealed his true intentions. “My wife wants to eat your heart, dear friend. I am sorry, but I must take you to her.” The quick-witted monkey remained calm and said, “Oh, my friend! You should have told me earlier. I left my heart on the tree because I don't carry it all the time.

Let's go back, and I'll give it to you.” The foolish crocodile believed him and swam back to the shore. As soon as they reached the tree, the monkey leaped to safety. Climbing to the highest branch, he scolded the crocodile, “You betrayed my friendship! Go back to your greedy wife, and never trust a liar like you again.” The crocodile realized his mistake but it was too late. He swam away in shame, while the wise monkey lived happily on his mango tree.

Moral: Intelligence and presence of mind can help overcome difficult situations. Never trust those who deceive you.





Mathura

THE LAND OF LEGEND



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Mathura is one of the most significant ancient cities of India, situated 150 km south of Delhi, in the Ganga—Yamuna doab region. It has been culturally prosperous and traditionally important in Indian history. Known as the birthplace of Lord Krishna, Mathura is also somewhere connected with various personalities such as Buddha, Parshvanatha, Mahavira, Shatrughna and Satvata. This city has been mentioned in many religious scriptures related to Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism and foreign accounts of famous traveller like Hiuen Tsang(602-664 CE), Faxian(337-422 CE), Megasthenes(350-290 BCE), etc. Mathura is explicitly imprinted on the minds of all of us; thanks to India's orally transmitted traditional education system! Now, the question that arises is why do we even need these tales and legends, mostly, mentioned in religious texts. Moreover, what is its relevance to the students of history? As the famous historian Jean-Pierre Vernant emphasizes, *“tales, legends and myths have always been the means by which history has been passed down throughout generations.”* That's why these tales should not be considered as just concocted fables; however, they must be studied as important literary sources and historical records, critical in the interpretation of ancient Indian history. These legends often resonate with the archaeological evidence to provide a clear picture of the political set-up, social structure, prevalent mode of subsistence and ways of religious affairs. For instance, Gerald Haussman's observation of the three shrines A,B and D in Surkh in Afghanistan, suggests the possibility that the devakula in Mat was the temple enshrined Sri. Further, these devkulas can be associated with Dipankar buddha's visit to Mathura. Similarly, other important sources such as the lawbook of manu, Astadhyayi, Anguttarnikaya etc, enlighten us about patronage of Brahmanism during Kushana period, reputation of the city, Yaksha worship and more. Thus, to revisit the many layers of this city's past, a selection

of Mathura's countless stories has been gathered here.

Foundation of the town of Mathura: This tale finds its roots in the age of Rama. Harivamsa Purana and Uttarkanda of Ramayana describe the foundation and nomenclature of the city Mathura. Among the descendents of Ikshvaku, who reigned at Ayodhya, it was Harysya who accepted Madhumati, the daughter of giant Madhura, as his wife. Being expelled from the throne by his elder brother, the king fled for refuge to the court of his father-in-law, who received him affectionately and ceded to him most of his dominions except Madhupura, which he reserved for his son, Lavana. In the reign of Lavana, Rama (the son and successor of Harysya) the then sovereign of Ayodhya commissioned his younger brother Shatrughna to destroy fort Madhubana and erect the town of Mathura. Shatrughna attacked and killed the asura Lavana, cleared the forest of Madhuvana and established the city of Mathura. After the departure of Rama and his brothers to Vaikuntha, Mathura was annexed by Bhima, the third descendent from Yadu and son of Harysya and it continued in the possession of his descendents till Vasudeva. The following verse of Harivamsa Purana gives its evidence:

शत्रुघ्नो लवणम् हत्वा चिच्छेद स मधुर वनम्
तस्मिन् मधुवने स्थाने पुरीं च मथुरां इमां ।
निवेशयमास विभुः सुमित्रानन्दिवर्धनाः पर्याये
चैव रामस्य भरतस्य तथैव च सुमित्रा सुतयो
चैव प्राप्तयो वैष्णवं पदं भीमेनेयं पुरी तेन
राज्यसम्बन्धकारणात् स्ववशे स्थापिता पूर्व
स्वयमध्यासिता ते तथा ।

Above verse explains the story of the name Mathura as well as the lineage from Haryśva to Yadus. Mathura is also known as the land of sursenoi, which is believed to be named after one of the two sons of Shatrughna. Moreover, clearing of forests may be associated with the advent of iron tools and new settlements. The building of a city by Shatrughna suggests the importance of Mathura as a royal capital and significant commercial centre. Another view of this city accounts for its basis upon the physical features of a wide extent of Pasture lands and cattles. It is considered that Mathura name is derived from the word 'Math' which means 'To churn', denoting the surplus availability of Milk, agriculture and cattles.

Buddha's Visit To Mathura: In Anguttara Nikaya, Buddha's only visit to Modhura (modern day Mathura) and the interpretation of the city is mentioned. "Mathura has five disadvantages: the ground is uneven, there is a lot of dust, the dogs are fierce, there are evil spirits and it's difficult to get alms food." In Manorath Purani of Buddhaghosha, which is a commentary on Anguttara Nikaya (2.646), a famous encounter between Buddha and a naked Yakshini can be seen. "According to this story, when Buddha visited Mathura, he experienced an Unpleasant moment. He saw a fearsome Yakshini who was naked, with her hands outstretched and tongue sticking out a traditional representation of fear and discomfort. Buddha decided to take up residence in a nearby monastery rather than in the city after seeing such display of public indecency. This story highlights Mathura's reputation of the period, in certain Buddhist texts. The interesting fact to note here is that such depiction of feminine structure is quite contradictory as compared to the description of Mathura in Panini's Astadhyayi and Patanjali's Mahabhasya, which assign this city a better position than ever. Similarly, other archaeological evidence such as Feast of the senses, Pillars of intimacy, pillars of pleasure etc. depicts that Patrons celebrated art sensuality of feminine beauty.

Mahākātyāyana In Gundavana, Mathura: The Majjhima Nikaya (Madhuriya Sutta, MN 2.4.4) mentions Mahakatyayana, one of Buddha's closest disciples, residing at Gundavana, a sacred grove in Mathura. Maha Katyayana lived in Gundavana. The Local people there were initially not keen about his teachings. Using his Upaya (skillful means), he presented Dharma resonating with their cultural values and understanding. Through relatable examples, He emphasized on Morality (Sila), concentration (Samadhi) and wisdom (panna) and attracted the people of Gundavana towards the Buddhist path. This story showcases the propagation of Buddhism in Mathura and the religious syncretism between Buddhism and local beliefs.

Mahāvīra And Mathurā: A legend comprising the birth of Mahavira is mentioned in Kalpasutra and is evident by four mutilated statues at the Mathura museum as pointed out by Buhler. "According to Kalpasutra, A goat-headed deity, Heringameshi, transferred the embryo of Mahavira from the womb of Devananda to Trishala." The story of transfer of embryos is virtually replicated by the Jain artists of Mathura. As Buhler observes, there are four mutilated statues at Mathura museum. Two figures are of goat-headed males and two are females, each holding an infant in a dish. This infant is none other than Lord Mahavira himself. Additionally, the story of Parsvanatha's visit to Mathura is recorded in the Nayadhammakahao and of Mahavira in Vipakasruta. These legends and evidence indicate the spread of Jainism in Mathura during the Pre-kushana period.

Krishna And Mathura: Although Vedic literature doesn't mention Mathura or its variant as Madhura. But various other sources show the prevalence of a lineage system in Yadavas tribe. Following stories cover the origin of Krishna's tribe and his association with the kauravas and pandavas. Yadavas were divided into various septs. Andhakas and Vrsnis originated from Satvata, the yadavas prince. According to satapatha brahmana, the satavata was defeated by Bharatas and the horse of the Ashwamedha sacrifice was taken away from him. Epic and Puranic traditions place Satavata in Mathura

district. Andhaka sept reigned at Mathura and among the descendents of Andhaka, was the tyrant ruler Kamsa. Kamsa was the maternal uncle of the vrsnis hero Krishna who is known as the incarnation of Vishnu. Krishna killed kamsa in order to liberate the people from his tyrant rule. Afterwards, he crowned kamsa's father Ugrasena, who had been imprisoned by kamsa. Death of kamsa roused the wrath of Jarasandh (who was relative of kamsa) against krishna. Jarasandh attacked Mathura. Krishna and other members of Vrsnis sept resisted it for sometime but later they migrated to Dwarka. This event brought the name Ranchhod to Krishna. In later turns of events, Krishna, the incarnation of Narayana, played the role of a sympathetic kinsmen to Pandavas against the Kauravas in the battle of Mahabharata at Kurukshetra." Earlier, to ease conflicts and tensions particularly for political power, Pandavas built a new capital at Indraprastha, which is considered a major reason for the Mahabharata. Vishnu Purana, Harivamsa purana and the Bhagwat purana stresses upon the association of Yadavas tribe with Mathura. The migration from Mathura to Dwarka can also be viewed through the lens of archaeological sources. The possibility of major hydraulic changes in the area and the desiccation and changes in the river course would have caused major population movement.

These were very few of the uncountable tales about Mathura. Every particle of this land is filled with numerous fascinating stories about Buddhism, Jaina tradition, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranic epics, narratives and so on. The enchanting image of Kanhā resides in every heart and soul of Mathura. Many poet saints of Medieval period such as Surdas, Mirabai, Raskhan, Bihari and Andal have dedicated hundreds of verses in praise of Sri Krishna and land of Mathura. Mathura has retained its legacy as a pilgrimage, spiritual centre and a land of legends & temples. It attracts millions of tourists every year who come here in search of mental peace and spiritual attainments. They gain and acknowledge these mesmerizing tales of Mathura, Vrindavana and Braj Mandal with utmost devoutness from the local residents in authentic Braj language. These tales are not mere religious fables, but also fruitful evidences of foundation, society, culture, religion, administration, subsistence patterns, art & architecture of Mathura. These prove to be critical sources for the reconstruction of the past. Thus, through the legends of this land, scholars of history acquire notable assistance to reinterpret the past and carry on their research about cultural, political and economic history of the town ■

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APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS: A Home to Great Legends of the Cherokee People.



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The Appalachian Mountains are an ancient range that vastly extends over the eastern territory of the US. The mountain range holds an immense amount of significance—be it in a geographical, cultural or historical context. To put it in an actual perspective the mountain range dating back to 480 million years; formed due to the tectonic collision of the African and American continental plates in the ancient Pangaea. Since then apart from their rugged beauty and ecological diversity the mountains have held a deep history of culture and traditions that root in the presence of several Native American groups that have inhabited the region over the period of time. As one of the most prominent Indigenous tribes in North America, the Cherokee people have lived in and revered this region for centuries. The Cherokee not only called these mountains home but also imbued them with myths, legends, and spiritual beliefs, shaping their cultural identity and worldview.

This paper aims toward excavating and understanding the symbiotic relationship between the Appalachian Mountains and the Cherokee people by examining their relationship with the mountains, and the myths and legends that epitomize their spiritual connection to this land.

The Origin and Settlements: The Cherokee are a part of the Iroquoian language family and are believed to have inhabited the southeastern United States for thousands of years. Several anthropological reports suggest that their ancestors have had migrated from the Great Lake region of the Northern America, where other Iroquoian-speaking tribes originated, to the Appalachian region. Eventually in the southeastern United States, the Cherokee became one of the most dominant tribes by the 16th century. The Cherokee referred to the mountains as “Shaconage”, that translates to “Land of the Blue Smoke”, which is a reference to the misty appearance of the Smoky Mountains, one of the sub ranges. Traditional Cherokee life and culture greatly resembled that of the Muscogee and other peoples of the Southeast. The Cherokee had an agronomic approach towards life and they maintained a harmony with the land. They cultivated crops like crop, beans, and squash (infamously called the three sisters) and their hunting practices included hunting deer, turkey and small games. Their settlement patterns included permanent villages, often situated along rivers and in valleys.

The Role of the Appalachian in Cherokee Life: The Appalachian Mountains were more than just a geographical feature for the Cherokee; they were the lifeblood of their culture. The mountains serve as the ancient most guardian that holds the Cherokee stories and way of life in every single inch of its existence. The mountains provided natural resources for survival; from wood that came in handy for building homes to herbs and other edible items necessary to sustain a country life. However, the views of the Cherokee regarding the mountains were not just limited to a source of material gain; they regarded it as source of spiritual significance. Moreover, the Appalachians played a pivotal role in Cherokee cosmology. Sacred sites, such as Clingmans Dome and Kituwah (believed to be the “Mother Town” of the Cherokee) located near the Tuckasegee River in present day North Carolina, were places of ceremonies and rituals. The mountains were also perceived as a physical boundary between the human and spiritual realms.

Colonization and Displacement: The arrival of European settlers in the 18th century introduced significant transformations to the Cherokee way of life. The tribe initially engaged in trade with settlers, exchanging goods such as animal pelts for metal tools and firearms. However, as settlers advanced westward, conflicts emerged concerning land and resources. The Appalachian region became a disputed area, with the Cherokee striving to preserve their ancestral lands. The coerced relinquishment of land commenced in the late 1700s and escalated with the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Despite incorporating elements of European-American culture, including a written language and constitution, the Cherokee faced displacement. Between 1838 and 1839, they were forcibly removed from their homelands during the Trail of Tears, a difficult journey to designated Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River.



Thousands perished during this ordeal, yet a small fraction of Cherokee succeeded in evading removal, seeking refuge in the remote Appalachian Mountains, where their descendants known as the Eastern Band of Cherokee—continue to reside today.

Myths and Legends from Cherokee Folklore: The Cherokee folklore is deeply rooted in their relationship with the Appalachian Mountains. These age old tales are not merely amusement but they are pieces of sacred narratives that convey morality, spiritual truths and a reflection of the tribe’s worldly outlook.

How the World was made — According to the Cherokee mythology the Earth is envisioned as an island floating in water, held up by four cords from the sky vault made of solid rock. When the world becomes old and the cords break, the Earth will sink into the ocean, and everything will revert to water. The Cherokee have a horrific fear regarding this eventuality. In the beginning, all was water, and the animals lived in Galun’lati, beyond the arch. Overcrowded, they wondered what lay beneath the water. Dayuni’si, the little Water-beetle, volunteered to explore. After diving and finding no solid ground, it surfaced with mud, which grew into the Earth, fastened to the sky with four cords. The Earth was initially flat, wet, and soft. The animals sent birds to check if it was dry, but they couldn’t land. Eventually, the Great Buzzard was sent to prepare the land. As he flew low near the Earth, his wings created valleys and mountains in the Cherokee country, which remain mountainous today. When the Earth was dry, the animals descended, but it was too hot. The sun was moved higher in the sky until it was placed seven handbreadths above the Earth, at a height called “the seventh height.” This placement made the temperature tolerable, and the sun moved daily from east to west under the sky arch. Below the Earth, there exists a world similar to ours, with different seasons. Streams lead to this underworld, and one must fast and be guided by an underground spirit to enter. The water in springs stays warmer in winter and cooler in summer, signifying the different seasons. When the animals and plants were created, they were instructed to stay awake for seven nights. Only a few, like the owl and panther, stayed awake and were granted powers to see in the dark. The plants that endured also retained their greenery. Humans appeared next, with a brother and sister who multiplied rapidly, leading to the rule that women would only have one child per year thereafter.



The Story of Kanati and Selu – Kanati and Selu are key characters in Cherokee mythology, symbolizing the ideal first man and woman. Kanati, the Great Hunter, and Selu, the Corn Mother, instructed the Cherokee on how to coexist harmoniously with the earth. Selu's power to generate corn from her body represents the richness of nature, while Kanati's hunting abilities illustrate the significance of honoring the animals hunted for food. In one retelling of the tale, their playful sons inadvertently uncover their mother's secret of cultivating corn. Afraid that they might misuse this blessing, Selu offered herself, directing her sons to inter her remains. From her tomb sprouted the first corn plants, guaranteeing the existence of the Cherokee people. This story underscores concepts of sacrifice, renewal, and the sacred connection between humanity and nature.

The Legend of the Uktena and Ulunsuti – The Uktena, a creature both feared and revered in Cherokee mythology, is a colossal serpent believed to inhabit the depths of the Appalachian Mountains. This legendary serpent is depicted with shimmering scales, a striking crystal embedded in its forehead, and a toxic bite. The transparent crystal, referred to as the "Ulunsuti" is thought to possess incredible power, granting those who possess it wisdom, strength, and the ability to command spirits. Legend has it that the Uktena was formed when a Cherokee medicine man failed to complete a task assigned to him by the Great Spirit. As a form of punishment, he was transformed into this terrifying serpent. Tales warn of the Uktena's menacing existence, often linking it to taboo caves or secluded mountain summits. Nonetheless, some courageous warriors have embarked on treacherous quests to harness the Ulunsuti's power.

A well-known legend recounts the experience of a Cherokee hunter who came across the Uktena while foraging for food. With cleverness and spiritual guidance, the hunter Agra nunitsi succeeded in outwitting the creature and acquiring the crystal. Once he returned to his village, he became a prominent leader, utilizing the Ulunsuti's power to safeguard his people. This narrative highlights the themes of bravery, wisdom, and the equilibrium of strength.

Conclusion: The Appalachian Mountains are deeply intertwined with the history, culture, and spirituality of the Cherokee people. Their sacred locations and ancestral territories, along with myths featuring serpents, spirit guardians, and corn mothers, illustrate the Cherokee's lasting heritage associated with these mountains. In spite of the adversities brought about by colonization and displacement, the Cherokee have preserved their bond with the Appalachians, ensuring that their stories and traditions endure for future generations. Grasping these tales and the Cherokee's connection to the Appalachians is essential to understanding the cultural and spiritual importance of this ancient mountain range and is an ode to the rather ignored Native American history. By respecting these narratives, we help guarantee that the rich heritage of the Cherokee continues to influence the identity of the Appalachian region ■

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Year's Major Highlights 24-25

The academic year 2024-25 was marked by a series of vibrant and engaging activities organized by the Department of History under its student-led body, Itihas Darpan. The department remained committed to academic excellence, creativity, and participatory learning through its events and collaborations. The session began with the departmental orientation titled "Kronos", organized on 21st October in the college Seminar Hall. The orientation served as a warm welcome for the new batch of students, introducing them to the structure, curriculum, and vision of the department. Faculty members addressed the gathering, and senior students shared their experiences, helping the freshers feel comfortable and informed. This initiative played a key role in creating a strong sense of belonging and academic motivation among newcomers. On the same day, to further enhance academic engagement, the department hosted "Itivrit", a quiz competition based on Indian History. The quiz witnessed enthusiastic participation from students of various courses, forming multiple teams that competed in a lively and educational environment. The competition aimed to test students' historical knowledge while encouraging teamwork and curiosity. Candidates securing the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd positions were awarded with certificates to recognize their efforts and excellence. The event not only sparked interest in Indian history but also created a platform for interactive learning outside the classroom. The Department of History at Sri Aurobindo College (Evening) curated a dynamic academic year filled with enriching events that blended historical scholarship with contemporary relevance. On Audit Diwas (14th November), the department partnered with the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India to present Anveshan: A Voyage of Discovery, a documentary screening that illuminated India's auditing mechanisms. The post-screening discussion, attended by Principal Prof. Arun Kumar Choudhary and faculty members, offered students critical perspectives on governance and transparency. The department's academic calendar gained further momentum on 23rd April with dual engagements. Students of the Gandhi and Education (VAC) course deepened their understanding of Gandhian philosophy through an immersive visit to the National Gandhi Museum, examining rare archival materials. Later, Dr. Om Jee Upadhyay, Member Secretary of ICHR, delivered an illuminating lecture on Bharatiya Gyan Parampara: A Historical Perspective, chaired by Principal Prof. Vipin Aggarwal, which sparked vibrant dialogues on India's knowledge systems. Sustained student engagement was achieved through regular social media updates and flagship initiatives like Kronos and Itivrit. The success of these endeavors was made possible by the concerted efforts of faculty members including Dr. Mohd Wasim (Teacher-in-Charge), Prof. Anisha Srivastava, and Prof. Susanta Kumar Bag, alongside the student leadership of Shidhin C (President), Office-Bearers, and Senators, whose coordination proved invaluable. As the year concluded, the department reaffirmed its dedication to fostering a vibrant academic culture, setting the stage for future intellectual pursuits.





TRAILBLAZING DISCOVERIES 25



Ancient Peruvian Throne: Archaeologists at Panamarca, a 1,600-year-old Moche site in northwestern Peru, have uncovered a painted throne room depicting a powerful female ruler. The adobe throne faces the Pacific Ocean and is surrounded by murals of a crowned woman raising a goblet, speaking to a bird-man, and overseeing a workshop of female weavers. This unprecedented discovery challenges previous notions of Moche gender roles, suggesting women held significant political power. Excavations also revealed the Hall of the Braided Serpents, adorned with snake and warrior imagery. Researchers from the Archaeological Landscapes of Pañamarca and U.S. institutions believe this find supports the presence of real female leaders, rather than just priestesses or deities. The throne, entombed for protection, was reburied for preservation, adding to the site's ongoing revelations about Moche civilization.



Da Vinci's Secret Tunnels: da Vinci's drawings lead to the discovery of hidden tunnels under Milan's Sforza Castle. A team of researchers has confirmed the existence of underground tunnels beneath Milan's Sforza Castle, long rumored due to a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci, and laser scanning, experts from Polytechnic

University of Milan and Codevintec mapped the tunnels, revealing a vast and intricate network. Originally reconstructed in the 1400s by Duke Francesco Sforza, the castle gained prominence when Ludovico Sforza commissioned da Vinci for artistic works. His sketches, recorded in Codex Forster I, depicted these tunnels, which likely served military and personal purposes. One passage connects the castle to the Basilica of Santa Maria delle Grazie, home to da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. Researchers plan to create a digital twin of the castle, using augmented reality to offer visitors an immersive experience. This discovery not only confirms da Vinci's observations but also unlocks new insights into Renaissance architecture and history.



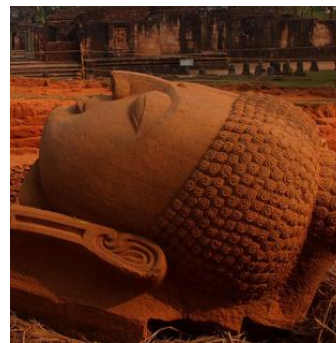


Marble God in Sewer: Archaeologists in Bulgaria have unearthed a 6.8-foot marble statue of Hermes in an ancient sewer in Heraclea Sintica. Likely hidden for safekeeping after a devastating 388 A.D. earthquake, the statue survived remarkably intact. With Christianity replacing Paganism, citizens may have concealed the idol to protect it from

destruction. Founded by Philip II of Macedon around 350 B.C., the city is now an archaeological site. Similar discoveries, like a Hercules statue in Rome's Appian Way, highlight ancient preservation efforts. The Hermes statue will soon undergo scientific analysis before being displayed in a local museum.



New Pyramid In Caral: A team from the Caral Archaeological Zone, led by Dr. Ruth Shady, has uncovered a pyramidal structure in Sector F of Chupacigarro, near the Sacred City of Caral-Supe in Peru. Featuring three platforms, a central staircase, and symbolic huancas, the pyramid highlights the site's ceremonial significance. The 38.59-hectare settlement includes public and residential structures, suggesting an urban center of the Caral civilization (3000–1800 B.C.). A newly discovered geoglyph in the Sechín style further emphasizes the site's ritual importance, linking it to Caral and coastal communities in the Huaura Valley.



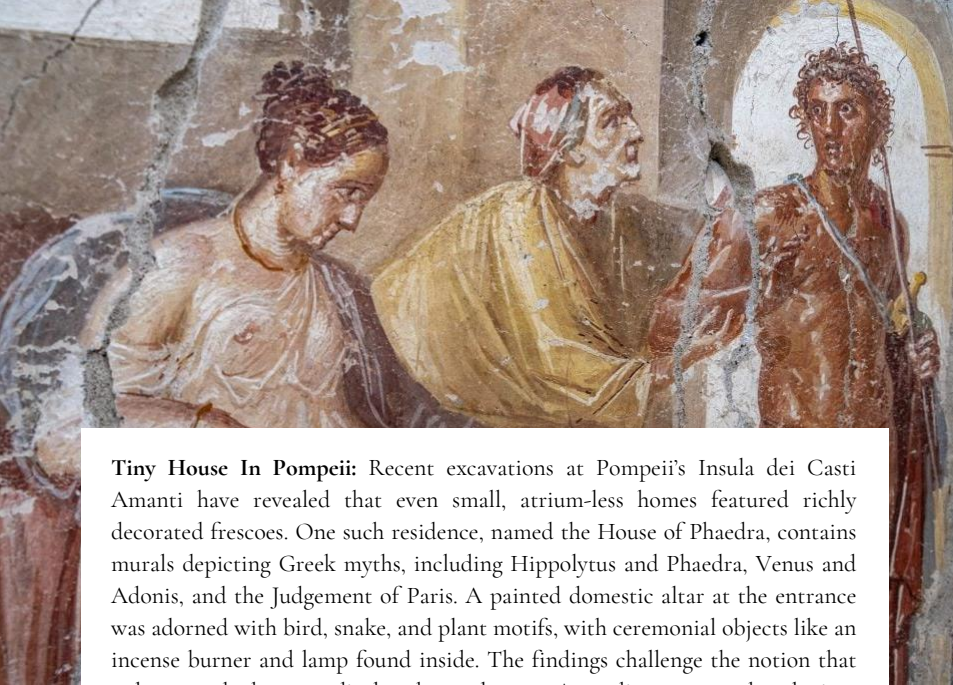
Relics of Ratnagiri: In a historic excavation at the Odisha's—Ratnagiri Buddhist heritage site, archaeologists uncovered a 1.4-metre-tall Buddha head, along with ancient tablets and stupas over 1,500 years old. This discovery has reaffirmed Ratnagiri's significance

as a major centre of Tantric Buddhism. The excavation, resuming after six decades in the district, has drawn scholars across the world, including Egypt. As archaeologists and students meticulously dug through the site, the intact Buddha head was found lying face down, a breathtaking testament to Buddhism's rich past. The find not only deepens our understanding of Buddhism's influence but also presents new challenges for historians in interpreting its historical context.

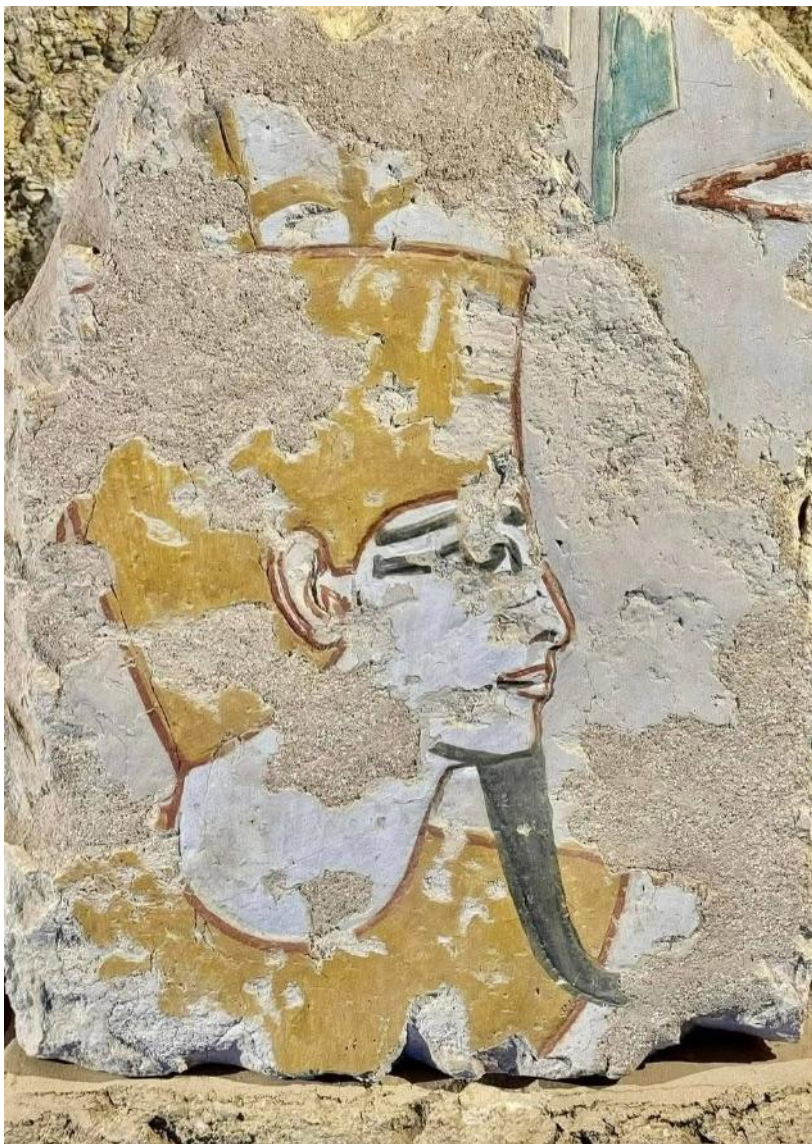


India's Ancient Iron Age: Recent archaeological findings in Tamil Nadu suggest the use of iron as early as the 4th millennium BCE, challenging the belief that the Iron Age began in Anatolia around 1300 BCE. Excavations at sites like Sivagalai, Adichanallur, and Mayiladumparai indicate that iron smelting technology was mastered over 5,000 years ago. The findings, backed by international validation, position TN as a pioneer in early metallurgy. If widely accepted, this discovery could redefine the global chronology of the Iron Age. Further studies are needed to explore the transition from the Bronze Age and the spread of iron culture across South India. Archaeologists urge the Central Gov, and ASI to expand research, emphasizing the immense significance of these discoveries in reshaping India's civilizational history.

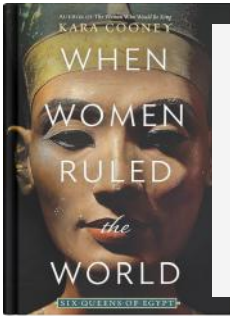




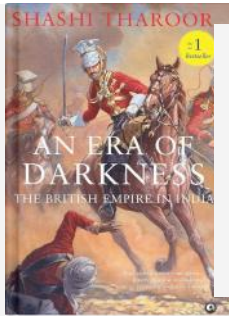
Tiny House In Pompeii: Recent excavations at Pompeii’s Insula dei Casti Amanti have revealed that even small, atrium-less homes featured richly decorated frescoes. One such residence, named the House of Phaedra, contains murals depicting Greek myths, including Hippolytus and Phaedra, Venus and Adonis, and the Judgement of Paris. A painted domestic altar at the entrance was adorned with bird, snake, and plant motifs, with ceremonial objects like an incense burner and lamp found inside. The findings challenge the notion that only grand homes displayed opulence. According to archaeologists, homeowners without atriums still showcased wealth through artistic decoration. Excavations continue, with raised walkways allowing visitors to observe the work. Pompeii’s Director, Gabriel Zuchtriegel, emphasizes the importance of public engagement in archaeology, calling it a “virtuous circuit” that connects conservation, research, and accessibility, highlighting why preserving ancient sites remains crucial for understanding the past.



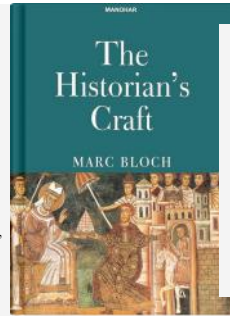
Lost Blocks of Hatshepsut: Archaeologists in Luxor, led by Zahi Hawass, uncovered intact sections of Queen Hatshepsut’s valley temple foundation and the nearby tomb of Queen Teti Sheri, grandmother of Ahmose I, founder of Egypt’s New Kingdom. The finds include over 1,500 decorated stone blocks—some exceptionally vibrant—and a tablet naming Hatshepsut’s architect, Senmut. Teti Sheri’s rock-cut tomb, hidden in a mudbrick chapel, features red-on-white wall drawings. These discoveries highlight Egypt’s golden age and its powerful queens.



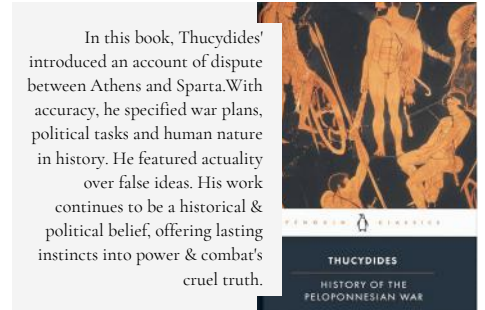
When women ruled the world, scrutinizes six female rulers perusing their mastery and challenges. Mingling history with modern cognates, the book is penetrating yet imaginary. It is appealing but arguable, it puts forward a fresh perspective. It won the 2019 Nancy Lapp popular Book Prize, for its reachable historical scrutiny.



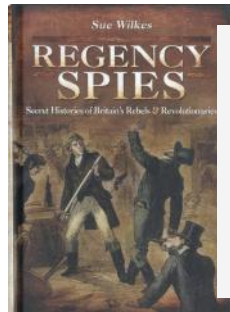
An Era of Darkness, titleholder of the Sahitya Akademi award (2019) is a blistering study of British rule that took apart the myth of their benignity in India. It highlights economic exploitation, ethnic destruction and orderly abuse, proving British rule voided India's riches, leading to food dearths and destroyed industries.



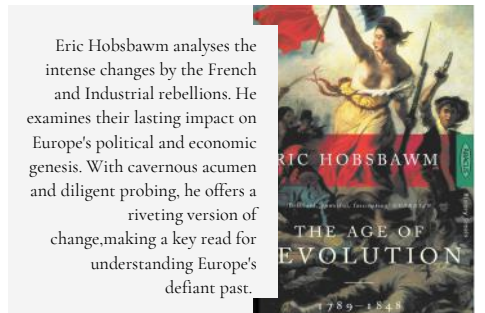
The Historian's Craft, penned down by Marc Bloch, offers keen acuity into ancient procedure, featuring crucial scrutiny and diversified approaches. Written amid World War II, it reflects his zeal to know history's role in human affairs. While it didn't win any specific awards, its impact on modern historiography remains vast.



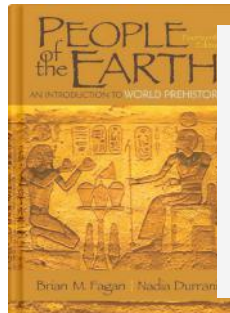
In this book, Thucydides' introduced an account of dispute between Athens and Sparta. With accuracy, he specified war plans, political tasks and human nature in history. He featured actuality over false ideas. His work continues to be a historical & political belief, offering lasting instincts into power & combat's cruel truth.



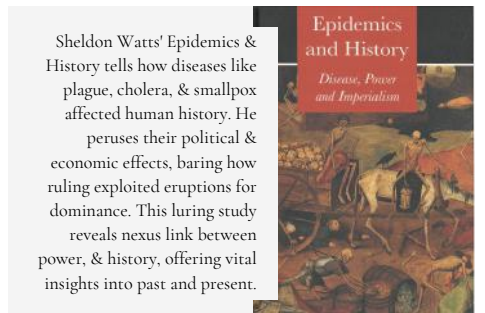
Sue Wilkes' Regency Spies divulges the shadowy world of British espionage during the Regency era, highlighting the real plots, traitors, and perfidies. Based on archival records and historical accounts, it's a riveting read for history admirers. Though it hasn't won formal awards, its depth and clarity have been widely valued.



Eric Hobsbawm analyses the intense changes by the French and Industrial rebellions. He examines their lasting impact on Europe's political and economic genesis. With cavernous acumen and diligent probing, he offers a riveting version of change, making a key read for understanding Europe's defiant past.

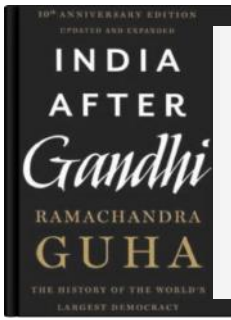


People of the Earth; by Brian M. Fagan and Nadia Durrani, is a thorough introduction to world prehistory, stretching from early human progenitors to ancient civilizations. Known for its coherence and depth, book is widely admired. Though, hasn't achieved specific awards, M.Fagan acquired the SAA Public Education Award in 1997.

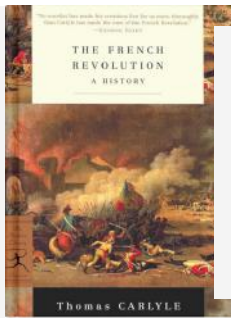


Sheldon Watts' Epidemics & History tells how diseases like plague, cholera, & smallpox affected human history. He peruses their political & economic effects, baring how ruling exploited eruptions for dominance. This luring study reveals nexus link between power, & history, offering vital insights into past and present.

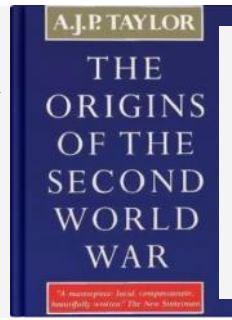
BOOK RECOMMENDATION



India After Gandhi by Ramchandra Guha, is a broad narrative of India's journey after freedom. It intricately details political developments, social shifts, and democratic pliability. Rich in research and insight, it is vital to understand modern India. The book was esteemed with the Sahitya Akademi Award for English in 2011.

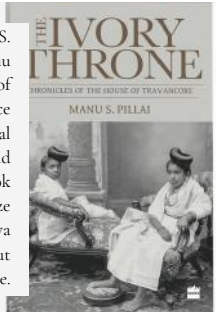


Thomas Carlyle's The French Revolution conveyed a gripping tale of the Revolution's chaos and potency. With poetic dialect and esoteric insight, he reviewed historical telling. Though not being praised, the book's legacy influenced generations, plus Dickens, & is a dominant classic in historical writings and literary artistry.



A.J.P. Taylor's The Origins of the Second World War reinterprets Hitler as an opportunist rather than a mastermind, blaming diplomatic blunders for the war's outbreak. Controversial yet inventive, the book reshaped historical debates. Though it received no awards, its bold thesis left a lasting mark on modern historiography.

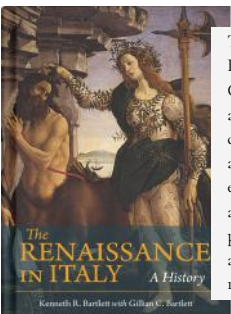
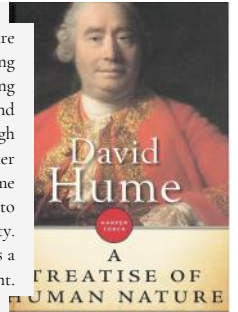
The Ivory Throne by Manu S. Pillai chronicles the life of Sethu Lakshmi Bayi, last female ruler of Travancore, unveiling palace fascinations, politics, and social reforms. Distinctly written and enormously researched, Book won the 2016 Tata Lit Live Prize and 2017 Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar for its powerful debut narrative.



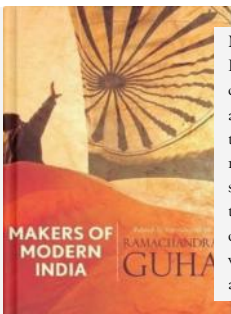
Darrin M. McMahon's Divine Fury traces the idea of genius from ancient times to today, revealing how societies have revered brilliance. With vivid storytelling and scholarly depth, it's a landmark work in conceptual history. It remains a widely acclaimed and influential scholarly achievement.



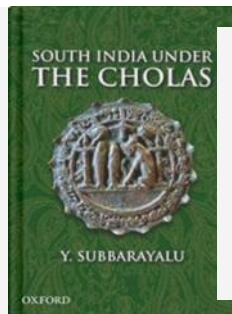
A Treatise of Human Nature (1739–40) is a groundbreaking work in philosophy, exploring empiricism, skepticism, and human psychology. Though initially overlooked, it later gained immense influence. Hume argues that reason is slave to passions and questions causality. It won no awards but remains a cornerstone of Western thought.



The Renaissance in Italy by Kenneth R. Bartlett and Gillian C. Bartlett offers a vivid, accessible introduction to Italy's cultural rebirth. Rich in visuals and historical insight, it explores art, politics, and society of the era. Though praised for its clarity and depth, it hasn't won any major awards.

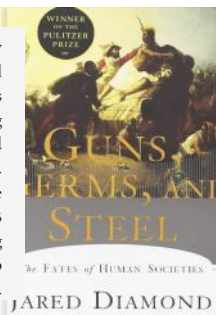


Makers of Modern India by Ramachandra Guha is a compelling collection of writings and profiles of key Indian thinkers and leaders who shaped modern India's political and social foundations. From Gandhi to Ambedkar, it presents their original voices. The book hasn't won major awards but is widely acclaimed.

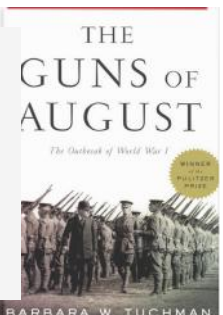


South India Under the Cholas by Y. Subbarayalu presents a detailed analysis of Chola administration, economy, and society using epigraphic evidence. It highlights local governance and temple-centric politics. The book won the V.K. Rajwade Award for its contribution to historical research.

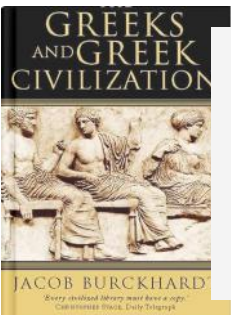
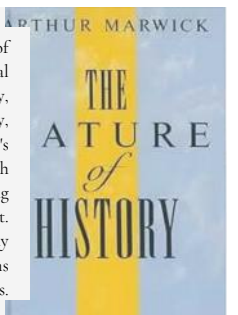
Jared explores how geography and environment shaped global power dynamics. It challenges racial theories, emphasizing agriculture, domestication, and disease in societal development. The book won the Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction in 1998 for its groundbreaking interdisciplinary approach to human history.



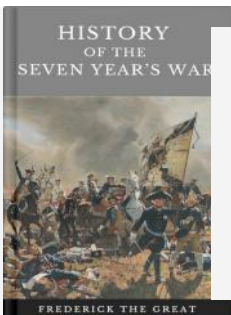
The Guns of August by Barbara W. Tuchman vividly narrates the events leading to World War I's outbreak, focusing on misjudgments and diplomacy failures. With rich detail and dramatic flair, it captures the war's chaotic beginnings. The book won the Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction in 1963.



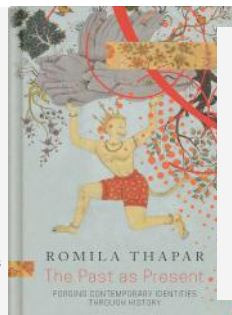
Arthur Marwick's The Nature of History offers a foundational understanding of historiography, emphasizing objectivity, methodology, and the historian's role. It is a guide for both students and scholars, balancing theory with practical insight. The book did not receive any major award but remains influential in historical studies.



The Greeks and Greek Civilization offers a profound exploration of ancient Greek. With rich historical insight, Burckhardt portrays the Greeks as pioneers of individuality and freedom. Though widely acclaimed, the book itself didn't win awards, as Burckhardt wrote in the 19th century before modern literary prizes.



Frederick the Great's History of the Seven Years' War provides a first-hand account of military strategy and leadership during the conflict. Written with precision, it reflects both personal perspective and political insight. While not awarded, it remains valuable for military and historical scholars as a monarch's wartime memoir.

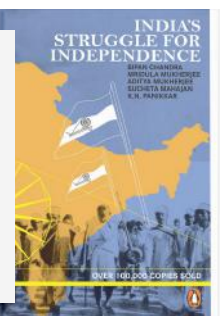


Romila Thapar's The Past as Present present challenges historical misrepresentations in modern India. Through essays on ancient history and historiography, she emphasizes critical inquiry. It's a significant contribution to public history. While it didn't win a formal award, Thapar is internationally recognized for her scholarly impact.

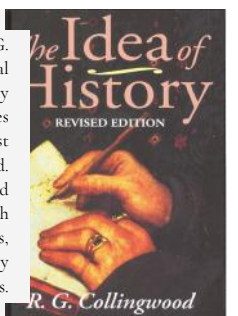
E.P. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class redefined social history by focusing on workers' consciousness and culture during industrialization. It humanized the working class as historical agents. Although it didn't win a specific award, it is considered a landmark work in Marxist and labor history.



India's Struggle for Independence by Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, Sucheta Mahajan, and K.N. Panikkar offers a detailed, scholarly account of India's freedom movement. Based on extensive research, it highlights both leaders and grassroots efforts. Though highly regarded in academia.



The Idea of History by R.G. Collingwood is a philosophical classic exploring how history should be studied. He emphasizes history as a re-enactment of past thoughts in the historian's mind. Deeply reflective, it reshaped modern historiography. Though influential in intellectual circles, it hasn't won any major literary awards.



The Editor's Picks Binge Box



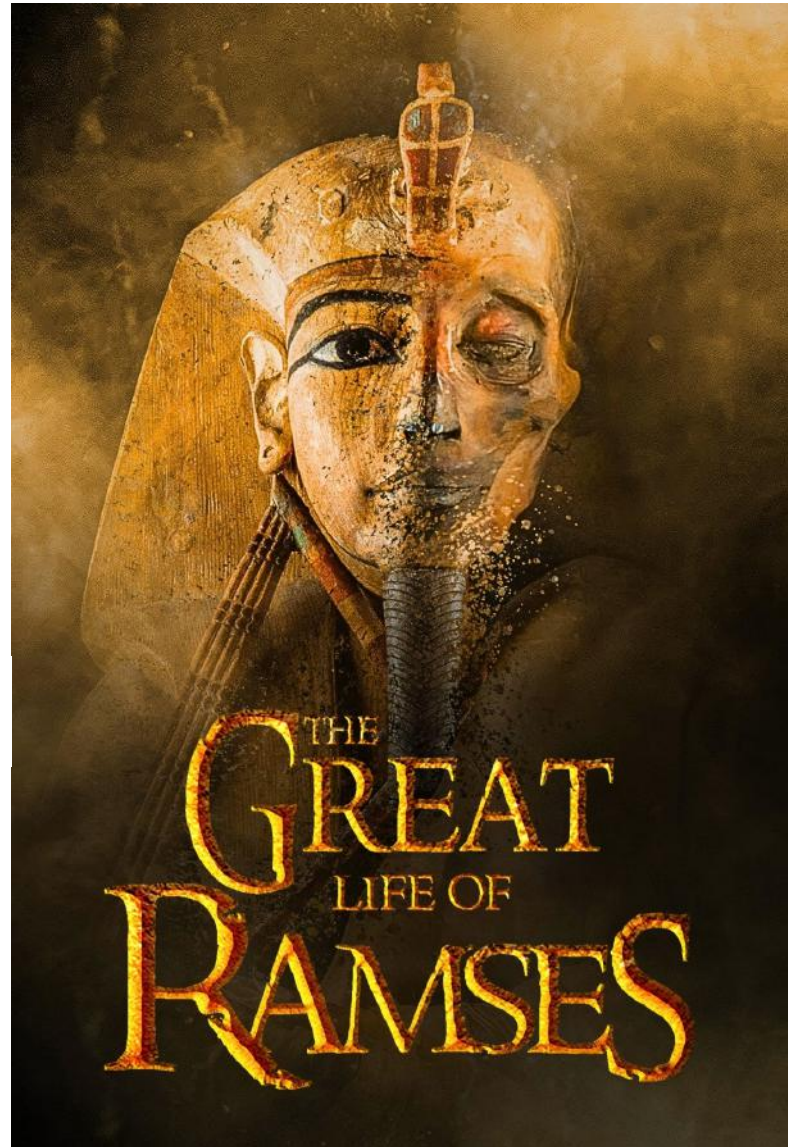
ALEXANDER THE GREAT PHARAOH

A DOCUMENTARY BY CURTIS RYAN WOODSIDE
WITH SOPHIA AZIZ & ALMER LAMAY BRAWLEY

ALEXANDER THE GREAT PHARAOH

★★★★☆ **DOCUMENTARY**

Alexander The Great Pharaoh explores Alexander's pivotal 332 BCE conquest of Egypt, blending dramatized reenactments with scholarly analysis. Liberating Egypt from Persian rule, Alexander was proclaimed Pharaoh, strategically embracing Egyptian theology to legitimize divine authority. Historians Dr. Salima Ikram and Professor Lloyd Llewellyn Jones dissect his political genius, including his pilgrimage to Siwa's Oracle, where priests hailed him as Zeus Ammon's son—a divine claim central to unifying Greco-Egyptian cultures. Archaeologist Calliope Limneos Papakosta's Alexandria excavations reveal his enduring legacy, though his tomb remains elusive. The documentary navigates Alexander's mythmaking, from coronation rituals to diplomatic savvy, while addressing historical debates: his relationships with Hephaestion and Ptolemy are contextualized within ancient norms, resisting modern labels. While critiqued for glossing over complexities, the documentary balances cinematic battles with academic discourse, underscoring his visionary leadership. By deifying himself as a bridge between gods and mortals, Alexander cemented a multicultural empire, blending Hellenistic and Egyptian traditions. The series highlights his paradoxical identity of a foreign conqueror turned immortal icon—through evocative reconstructions and expert commentary, offering a nuanced, if occasionally simplified, portrait of ambition, faith, and power that reshaped antiquity.



THE GREAT LIFE OF RAMSES

★★★★☆ **DOCUMENTARY**

The series chronicles Ramses II's 67-year reign, blending expert analysis, on-location shoots, and CGI to explore his military, diplomatic, and divine legacy. Hosted by Curtis Ryan Woodside the series traverses Egypt—Luxor, Abu Simbel, Per Ramessu—highlighting his contested victory at Kadesh, architectural feats, and propaganda genius. Archaeologists like Dr. Salima Ikram decode his strategic marriages, vast family, and god-king persona, while CGI revives sites like the Ramesseum. Though critiqued for dramatization, it balances rigor with storytelling, showcasing Ramses' role in Egypt's golden age: a warrior-pharaoh immortalized in awe-inspiring monuments. From Nile Delta excavations to eternalized cartouches, the documentary frames his ambition, piety, and political mastery.



THOSE ABOUT TO DIE

★★★★☆ **MOVIE**



GLADIATOR

★★★★☆ **MOVIE**



VERSAILLES

★★★★☆ **MOVIE**



HOUSE OF DAVID

★★★☆☆ **MOVIE**

20 DAYS IN MARIUPOL

★★★★☆  DOGO

This Oscar-winning documentary directed by Mstyslav Chernov, explores Russia's 2022 siege through harrowing footage and the survivor testimonies. The film which unflinchingly exposes the atrocities of bombed hospitals, mass graves, civilian deaths and Mariupol's resilience amid devastation. Chernov's lens captures war crimes: shattered families, urban erasure, and raw human suffering, countering propaganda with visceral truth. Beyond journalism, the film memorializes courage and demands global accountability, framing the Mariupol's destruction as both geopolitical crime and universal warning. It immortalizes the loss and resistance, urging the world to witness, remember, and act. A tribute to humanity's undaunted spirit amidst pervasive inhumanity.



QUEEN CLEOPATRA

★★★★☆  SERIES

Queen Cleopatra, a four-part docudrama, blending-historical reenactments with expert commentary to explore the life of Egypt's last pharaoh, focusing on her political alliances, romances with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, and struggle to protect her throne and legacy. Starring Adele James as Cleopatra, the series sparked controversy for casting a Black actress, challenging traditional depictions rooted in her Macedonian Greek heritage, which drew criticism from Egyptian authorities and audiences while igniting debates about race and historical representation. Despite its glossy production and James's praised performance, critics noted uneven pacing and a disjointed tone between dramatic flair and didactic narration. Now streaming on Netflix.



QUEEN CHARLOTTE

★★★★☆  MOVIE



Created by Shonda Rhimes, is a Netflix limited series and Bridgerton prequel that intertwines romance, power, and societal transformation. Set across dual timelines, it follows young Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz as she navigates her arranged marriage to King George III, whose hidden mental health struggles strain their passionate yet turbulent bond. In the 19th-c timeline, an older Charlotte confronts a royal succession crisis after her granddaughter's death, pressuring her children to secure the monarchy's future. The series explores Charlotte's rise as a formidable queen, her advocacy for George amid his illness, and the origins of the Bridgerton universe's racially integrated ton—sparked by Princess Augusta's "Great Experiment" to elevate people of color.



MARY AND GEORGE

★★★★☆  SERIES

A seven episode starz miniseries, dramatizes the scandalous rise of Mary Villiers and her son George in the 17th-century Jacobean court. Based on Benjamin Woolley's *The King's Assassin*, the series follows Mary's ruthless ambition as she molds George into the charismatic lover of King James I, exploiting the monarch's rumored bisexuality to secure power, wealth, and titles. Blending historical intrigue with audacious fiction, the show depicts poisonings, political machinations, and steamy liaisons, framed by Moore's chilling performance as a mother weaponizing her son's beauty. While liberties are taken like implying George's role in James's disputed death the series thrives as a darkly witty, visually sumptuous psychodrama, pragmatism against the era's opulent excess. Critics praise its propulsive storytelling and Moore's magnetic dominance, though historical purists note oversimplifications of George's cunning and the Stuarts' complex legacy. A raucous blend of the *Favourite's* rigor and *Bridgerton's* sensuality.



ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

★★★★☆  MOVIE



SCHINDLER'S LIST

★★★★☆  MOVIE



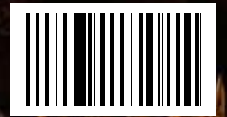
FREEDOM AT THE MIDNIGHT

★★★★☆  SERIES



THE YOUNG KARL MARX

★★★☆☆  MOVIE



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