

Characteristics of Indian Culture, Significance of Geography on Indian Culture

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ABSTRACT: Indian culture is rich and diverse, shaped by a multitude of historical, religious, and socio-cultural influences. This study explores the characteristics of Indian culture and highlights the significance of geography in shaping and preserving its distinct identity. Indian culture is characterized by its deep-rooted traditions, religious practices, and linguistic diversity. The country's history has witnessed the influence of various civilizations, including the Indus Valley, Mauryan, Gupta, Mughal, and British periods. These diverse influences have contributed to a unique blend of customs, rituals, arts, music, dance forms, and cuisine. Religion plays a central role in Indian culture, with Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity being the major religions. Each religion brings its own set of beliefs, rituals, and values, contributing to the religious pluralism and cultural diversity of India. Geography has played a significant role in shaping Indian culture. The vast and varied landscape, ranging from the Himalayan Mountains to the fertile Gangetic plains and the coastal regions, has influenced the lifestyles, occupations, and cultural practices of different regions. For example, the agricultural practices of rural communities in the fertile plains differ from the fishing communities along the coastal regions.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Indian Culture, Religion.

INTRODUCTION

The term "culture" relates to the way people think and act. It consists of moral principles, ethical standards, and organizational structures for the social, political, and economic spheres. These are transmitted via both official and informal mechanisms from one generation to the next. The manner in which we think and behave as members of a society make up culture. Thus, culture is the general term used to describe all of a group's accomplishments. The non-material, higher accomplishments of collective life (art, music, literature, philosophy, religion, and science) are considered as different from culture, which is left with the material parts of culture, such as scientific and technical triumphs. Such an institution produces culture, which manifests itself via language, the arts, philosophy, and religion. It also manifests itself via political, economic, and social structures as well as social practices and traditions.

There are two categories of culture: (i) material and (ii) non-material. Technology, tools, consumer products, home design and architecture, forms of production, trade, commerce, welfare, and other social activities are all included in the first category. Norms, values, beliefs, myths, legends, literature, ritual, art forms, and other intellectual-literary pursuits are included in the later. In most cultures, the tangible and immaterial components are intertwined. However, there are

instances when material culture changes swiftly and non-material culture changes more slowly. Indian culture, according to indologists, represents a spiritual underpinning of life as well as a conventional social order [1], [2].

The culture of India is a priceless asset to our civilization. Of all the cultures in the world, Indian culture is the oldest. Even though Indian culture has seen many ups and downs, it still shines with all of its majesty and splendor. Culture is a country's essence. We may experience a culture's history and current wealth on the basis of that culture. Culture is a collection of human values that uniquely and ideally sets a group apart from other social groupings.

The Idea of Culture

The Latin word "cult" or "cultus," which means to till, cultivate, refine, and adore, is where the English word "culture" comes from. In a nutshell, it refers to developing and honing anything to the point that the result inspires awe and respect in us. 'Sanskriti' in Sanskrit is almost the same as this. It is a way of life, culture. Aspects of culture include the food you eat, the clothing you wear, the language you speak, and the God you serve. We may define culture as the manifestation of our thoughts and behaviors in very basic words. It also includes the items that we have acquired as societal members. Culture may be used to describe all of humankind's accomplishments while living in social groupings. Culture may be seen as

having elements like music, literature, architecture, sculpture, philosophy, religion, and science. But culture also refers to a person's view on different aspects of life as well as their conventions, traditions, festivals, ways of life, and methods of living.

Thus, the term "culture" refers to a man-made environment that contains all of the tangible and intangible byproducts of social interaction that are passed down from one generation to the next. The majority of social scientists agree that culture is made up of learned explicit and implicit behavioral patterns. These make up the distinguishing accomplishments of human communities and may be communicated via symbols, even when they take the form of artifacts. Thus, the finer concepts that are passed down within a group—both historically derived and chosen with their associated value—represent the basic core of culture. More recently, the term "culture" has come to refer to historically passed-down symbolic meaning patterns that people use to communicate, perpetuate, expand their knowledge of, and express their attitudes toward, life [3].

Culture is the way we live and think that expresses our nature. It may be found in our literature, in religious rituals, and in pleasure and leisure activities. The two separate parts of culture are material and non-material. Objects associated with the material side of our lives, such as clothing, food, and domestic items, make up material culture. Non-material culture is made up of principles, beliefs, and concepts. From place to location and nation to country, cultures differ. Its growth is dependent on the historical process that is now taking place at the local, regional, or national level. For instance, our greeting routines, attire, eating habits, and social and religious activities are different from those in the West. In other words, every nation's citizens are distinguished by their own cultural traditions.

DISCUSSION

Heritage and Culture

The emergence of culture is a historical process. Our forebears picked up a lot from their predecessors. With time, they also contributed from their own experience and abandoned those they did not think were helpful. Our forefathers taught us a lot, and we have learned a lot from them. We constantly add new ideas and concepts to those that already exist, and we sometimes let go of those that we no longer seem helpful. This is how culture is passed down and continued from one generation to the next. Our cultural legacy is the culture that we inherited from our ancestors.

There are several degrees of this heritage. A culture that may be referred to as human legacy has been passed down to humanity as a whole. A culture may be considered a part of a nation's national cultural legacy. Cultural heritage is made up of all the facets or ideals of a culture that have been passed down from one generation to the next. They take great pride in the uninterrupted continuity with which they are loved, safeguarded, and kept. It would be beneficial to include a few instances to assist explain the idea of heritage. The Taj Mahal, Jain caves at Khandagiri and Udayagiri, Bhubaneswar, Sun Temple Konarak, Puri, Lingaraja Temple, Jagannath Temple, Bhubaneswar, Red Fort of Agra, Delhi's Qutub Minar, Mysore Palace, Jain Temple of Dilwara (Rajasthan) Nizamuddin Aulia's Dargah, Golden Temple of Amritsar, Gurudwara Sisganj of Delhi, Sanchi Stupa, Christian Church in Goa, India Gate etc., are all important places of our heritage and are to be protected by all means.

In addition to intellectual accomplishments, philosophy, information riches, and physical artifacts, legacy also includes scientific breakthroughs and discoveries. The contributions made by Baudhayana, Aryabhatta, and Bhaskaracharya to Indian context in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, and astrology; varahmihir to physics; nagarjuna to chemistry; susruta and charak to medicine; and patanjali to yoga are profound treasures of Indian cultural heritage. While culture is subject to change, our ancestry never does. We as people who identify with a certain culture or group may pick up or adopt some cultural characteristics from other groups or cultures, but our Indian cultural background will always be a part of who we are. Our shared Indian cultural history will bond us together. For instance, Indian literature and texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, and Yoga System have made significant contributions to civilization by offering the proper information, conduct, and practices [4], [5].

Culture is learned in the sense that certain behaviors are passed down via families. While certain traits are passed on from parents to their offspring, socio-cultural norms are not. Family members, friends, and the community in which they live teach them these. It follows that the physical and social environments in which people live and work have an impact on their cultures.

1. A notion or activity is considered to be cultural if it is shared by a group of individuals and is believed in or practiced by that group.

2. Culture is cumulative: Knowledge that is ingrained in a culture may be handed down from one generation to the next. As time goes on, more and more information on the specific culture is provided. Problems in life that are passed down from one generation to another may be solved by each individual. As the specific culture develops through time, this cycle continues.
3. Culture shifts: As new cultural characteristics are introduced, some information, ideas, or customs are lost. As time goes on, there is a chance that the specific culture may undergo cultural changes.
4. Culture is fluid: No culture exists in a static condition. Culture is always evolving as new concepts and methods are introduced throughout time, updating or replacing the conventional wisdom. This is a trait of culture that results from the overall strength of the culture.
5. Culture provides us with a variety of acceptable behavioral patterns. These patterns include how an activity should be carried out and how a person should behave correctly.
6. Culture is diverse: It is a system made up of a number of interconnected pieces. Despite being distinct, these components work together to build culture as a whole.

Culture's Importance in Human Existence

Life and culture are strongly related. It is not an accessory or decoration that we as people can make use of. It adds more than just a hint of color. We are human because of it. Humans wouldn't exist without culture. Traditions, values, and lifestyles from the most spiritual to the most materialistic make up culture. It provides us purpose and a way of living. Culture is created by humans, yet culture also defines who we are as people. The topic of religious belief and its symbolic manifestation is a key component of culture. We must respect religious diversity and be conscious of ongoing attempts to advance what is essentially an intercultural discussion. We cannot just believe that there is one proper way of life or that any one is legitimate since the world is getting more and more global and we are coexisting on a more global level. The coexistence of cultures and beliefs is required for coexistence. The greatest thing we can do to avoid making such errors is to learn about other cultures while simultaneously learning about our own. If we don't really understand our own culture, how can

we communicate with people from different cultures? Culture is strongly related to the three timeless, universal ideals of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Through philosophy and religion, culture helps us get closer to the truth; it infuses our lives with beauty through the arts and transforms us into aesthetic beings; and it helps us become ethical beings by bringing us closer to other people and instilling in us the values of love, tolerance, and peace [6], [7].

Culture of India

One of the oldest civilizations in the world is Indian culture. Only the ruins of the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, Rome, and other places have survived. However, Indian culture is still present today. Its underlying ideas are the same as they were in the past. Village panchayats, caste structures, and the joint family system are all visible. The teachings of Buddha, Mahavira, and Lord Krishna continue to be relevant and inspiring today. People in this country are still inspired by spirituality, praying in nature, belief in karma and reincarnation, non-violence, the truth, not stealing, chastity, and a lack of acquisitiveness, among other ideals. Civilization refers to the use of things, whereas culture refers to the art of living, conventions, and traditions. Up to a point, material development is conceivable. This explains why ancient civilizations perished whereas Indian culture has persisted to the current day because spirituality rather than materialism served as the foundation for growth. Indian culture is thus considered to be an old civilization whose history is still evident today. Pallavaram, Chingalpet, Vellore, Tinnivalli near Madras, the Sohan River valley, the Pindhighev area in West Punjab, the Rehand area of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh, the Narmada Valley in Madhya Pradesh, Hoshangabad, and Maheshwar all contain evidence of the stone age, demonstrating that India has been the site of the development and expansion of human culture [8], [9].

Characteristics of Indian Culture:

Indian culture is rich, diverse, and deeply rooted in ancient traditions that have evolved over thousands of years. It is characterized by several key aspects:

Diversity: India is known for its cultural diversity, with numerous languages, religions, and regional customs coexisting harmoniously. The country is home to a vast array of cultural practices, art forms, music, dance, and cuisines.

Spiritual and Philosophical Traditions: Indian culture is deeply influenced by spiritual and philosophical traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism,

Jainism, and Sikhism. Concepts of karma, dharma, and spirituality permeate various aspects of life, shaping values and beliefs.

Festivals and Celebrations: India is renowned for its vibrant festivals celebrated throughout the year. Diwali, Holi, Eid, Christmas, Navratri, and Pongal are just a few examples of the diverse range of festivals that reflect the cultural fabric of the country.

Joint Family System: The joint family system, where several generations live together under one roof, is a prominent feature of Indian culture. This tradition emphasizes strong family bonds, respect for elders, and collective decision-making.

Art and Architecture: Indian culture is renowned for its exquisite art and architecture. From ancient cave paintings to intricately carved temples and magnificent Mughal palaces, Indian art forms reflect a rich artistic heritage.

Significance of Geography on Indian Culture:

The geography of India has played a significant role in shaping and influencing its culture throughout history. Here are some key ways in which geography has impacted Indian culture:

Regional Diversity: The diverse geographical features of India including mountains, rivers, deserts, and coastal regions, have given rise to distinct regional cultures. Each region has its unique traditions, languages, cuisine, and art forms.

Cultural Exchange and Trade Routes: India's strategic location along ancient trade routes, such as the Silk Road, facilitated cultural exchange with neighboring regions and countries. This exchange influenced art, architecture, language, and religious practices.

Influence of the Himalayas: The mighty Himalayan mountain range has not only shaped the physical landscape but also influenced spiritual and philosophical traditions. Many revered pilgrimage sites are located in the Himalayas, attracting devotees and fostering spiritual practices.

Coastal Influences: India's vast coastline has facilitated trade, cultural exchange, and the blending of different cultures over centuries. Coastal regions have developed unique art forms, cuisine, and maritime traditions.

Agrarian Culture: India's predominantly agrarian economy has been shaped by its fertile river valleys, such as the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra. Agriculture has played a crucial role in shaping cultural practices, festivals, and religious rituals.

Influence on Art and Architecture: The geography of India has inspired magnificent architectural

wonders. For instance, the rock-cut cave temples of Ellora and Ajanta, as well as the intricate carvings of ancient temples in Hampi and Khajuraho, showcase the integration of geography, culture, and art.

Ecological Consciousness: The diverse ecosystems and natural resources of India have fostered a deep connection between the people and the environment. Traditional practices, such as sustainable agriculture and conservation of forests and wildlife, are deeply rooted in Indian culture.

CONCLUSION

The persistence of local languages, dialects, art forms, and traditional vocations is evidence of geography's cultural importance. Due to the geographical characteristics and historical setting, each area in India has a distinct cultural identity. For instance, the desert terrain is reflected in the art and architecture of Rajasthan, while Kerala's backwaters have influenced the traditional houseboat lifestyle. Additionally, India's festivals and festivities are inextricably linked to its cultural past. Festivals like Diwali, Holi, Eid, Christmas, and Navratri are just a few of the lively and colorful ones celebrated across the nation. The cultural variety and peaceful cohabitation of many faiths and local groups are reflected in these events. The preservation of natural and historical landmarks demonstrates the importance of geography to Indian culture. These attractions, which include the well-known Taj Mahal, the historic sites of Hampi, and the unspoiled grandeur of the Himalayas, serve as symbols of the nation's rich history and draw visitors from all over the globe.

In conclusion, the variety, religious plurality, and regional uniqueness that define Indian culture. It is impossible to ignore the role that geography has had in forming and maintaining Indian culture. The varied topography, geographical differences, and historical backdrop have all had an impact on the nation's customs, traditions, languages, and cultural activities. Fostering cultural peace, protecting history, and encouraging cultural tourism all depend on an understanding of the unique aspects of Indian culture and the importance of geography.

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A Fundamental Study on Characteristics of Indian culture

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ABSTRACT: Indian culture is renowned for its rich heritage, diversity, and distinct characteristics. This abstract provides an overview of the key features and characteristics that define Indian culture, highlighting its religious, linguistic, artistic, and social aspects. One of the prominent characteristics of Indian culture is its religious diversity. Hinduism, the largest religion in India encompasses a wide range of beliefs, rituals, and practices. Other major religions such as Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity also contribute to the cultural tapestry of the country. This religious pluralism fosters a spirit of tolerance and coexistence among different communities. Language and linguistic diversity are integral to Indian culture. The country boasts a vast number of languages, with Hindi and English serving as the official languages. Additionally, there are numerous regional languages, each with its own script and unique linguistic traditions. These languages reflect the regional identities and cultural nuances of different states and communities.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Indian Culture, Religion.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Indian culture encourages moral qualities and the attitudes of charity, simplicity, and frugality due to its general focus on the spiritual. The following are some notable aspects of Indian culture that are present across its many castes, tribes, ethnic groupings, and religious organizations and sects. Indian culture is deeply rooted in the arts and literature. Traditional art forms, such as classical dance (e.g., Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi), classical music (e.g., Hindustani and Carnatic), and intricate craftsmanship (e.g., textiles, pottery, jewelry) showcase the creativity and aesthetic sensibilities of the Indian people. The ancient texts, including the Vedas, Ramayana, and Mahabharata, have provided a rich literary and philosophical foundation for Indian culture [1], [2].

A Universe Vision

The foundation of Indian culture situates humans within a view of the cosmos as a work of divine creation. It is not exclusively anthropocentric (focused on humans) and sees the divine in all things, both living and non-living. As a result, it upholds God's plan and encourages coexistence. Thus, this perspective combines God, nature, and people into a single, cohesive totality. The concept of satyam-shivam-sundaram reflects this.

Sense of Balance

The goal of Indian philosophy and culture is to bring harmony and order to the universe as a whole. Indian culture holds that morality and social order are based on the innate cosmic order that exists in all of creation. The basis for exterior harmony is thought to be inner harmony. Inner harmony will naturally lead to external order and beauty. Purushartha is a perfect example of how Indian culture strives to synthesise and balance the material and spiritual [3].

Tolerance

Tolerance is a significant aspect in Indian culture. In India all faiths, castes, groups, etc. are tolerated and liberalized. Indian civilization provided every culture with the possibility to thrive as a result of the invasion of several alien cultures. Shaka, Huna, Shithiyar, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Jain, and Buddhist civilizations were all welcomed and valued by Indian society. An amazing aspect of Indian civilization is the spirit of tolerance for all faiths. According to the Rigveda, "Truth is one, although scholars explain it in numerous ways. This idea represents the extreme of tolerance, as expressed by Lord Krishna in the Gita when he states, "Those praying others are actually praying me." In India several faiths live peacefully and all have an impact on one another, albeit this tradition has been severely harmed by operations of converting religion by certain religious organizations. India respects each and every one of its current faiths equally. Indian culture embraces the diversity of reality and incorporates a wide range of attitudes,

behaviors, rituals, and institutions. The goal is not to promote uniformity at the expense of variety. The guiding principle of Indian culture is variety in unity as well as unity in diversity.

Stability and Persistence

The tenets of Indian culture are still as much in use now as they were in the beginning. The continual flow of Indian culture is one of its unique features. Indian culture is always evolving since it is founded on ideals. Even though many centuries have gone, much has changed, and many foreign invaders have been repelled, Indian culture continues to shine today. Indian culture may be understood by looking at its current cultural norms. No scholar can finish its history like that of the civilizations Egypt, Greece, Rome, Sumer, Babylon, and Syria since it is still in the building period. The flame of old Indian culture is still burning brightly. Although there have been several invasions, changes in governing bodies, and laws, traditional institutions like as religion, epics, literature, philosophy, and traditions are still in existence. The administration was unable to entirely change the circumstances. Even now, Indian culture is unmatched for its consistency. Change within continuity has long been valued in Indian culture. It is in favor of reform or progressive transformation. It does not support sudden or immediate change. Therefore, rather from being brought about by original systems of thinking, most changes in thought have been brought about through commentary and interpretation. Synthesis of the old and new is favored over replacement of the old by the new in areas of behavior as well.

Adaptability

The capacity to adapt greatly contributes to the immortality of Indian culture. The capacity to change in accordance with location, time, and circumstance. It is a crucial component of any culture's longevity. Indian culture has a special ability to adapt, and as a consequence, it has survived until the present day. Indian institutions such as the caste system, religion, and families have evolved through time. The continuity, usefulness, and activity of Indian culture are still extant because of its flexibility and coordination. When explaining the flexibility of Indian culture, Dr. Radha Krishnan said in his book "Indian Culture: Some Thoughts" that all people, whether they are black or white, Hindus or Muslims, Christians or Jews, are brothers and that our nation is the whole globe. We should be devoted to those things that are beyond the purview of our understanding and are difficult to express. Our faith in humanity was founded

on the reverence and adherence that individuals had for one another's points of view. No attempt should be made to impose our opinions on others [1], [4].

Receptivity

An essential aspect of Indian culture is receptivity. Indian culture has always embraced the positive aspects of occupying cultures. Indian culture may be compared to an ocean where numerous rivers converge. Similar to how all castes fell victim to Indian culture, they quickly disintegrated into Hindutva. Indian culture has always adapted to various civilizations, and it is best at maintaining unity despite everyone's differences. Everyone in the world values the dependability that this culture has evolved as a result of its responsiveness. We have always included elements from many civilizations. The essence of Indian culture is found in Vasudaiva Kutumbakam. Indian culture has always responded and evolved by absorbing and incorporating features from other civilizations. Muslim civilizations have left their mark on Indian culture, which has never shied away from incorporating beneficial aspects of other cultures. Because of this, it continues to be useful and active today. This culture has the potential to endure in any circumstance due to its flexibility and receptivity. Due to this quality, Indian culture has withstood foreign invasions without ever being destroyed. In actuality, Indian culture and society helped foreign invaders by bringing them near and into intimate relationships with them, and by doing both giving and receiving.

Spirituality

Indian culture's spirituality is its core. Here, the soul's existence is acknowledged. So, instead of seeking out material luxuries, man's ultimate goal should be self-realization. In his book "Hindu Civilization," Radha Kumud Mukerjee analyzes how Indian culture, which preserved its own specialties, brought the whole country together in such a manner that everyone universally agreed that the two were interdependent. Nation turned into culture, and culture turned into nation. Beyond the physical realm, the country assumed the shape of the Spiritual realm. The Rigvedic era is when Indian culture first emerged, and through time it extended to Saptasindhu, Bramhavarta, Aryavarta, Jumbudweepa, Bharata Varsha, or India. Because of its might, it extended itself beyond of India's boundaries as well.

Dominance of Religion

In Indian culture, religion plays a significant role. Indian culture is influenced by the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Mahabharata, Gita, Agama, Tripitak, Quran, and Bible. Optimism, theism, sacrifice, penance, restraint, good behavior, honesty, compassion, genuineness, friendship, forgiveness, etc. have all been established via these texts. Monier Williams is correct when he says, "Although there are 500 or more dialects in India there is only one religious language, and there is only one holy literature, in which all Hindus, regardless of caste, language, social standing, or political views, believe and worship with devotion. Sanskrit is the language, while Sanskrit literature is the genre. It is the sole Vedic or other knowledge dictionary. It is the only repository of Hindu philosophy and religion and the only mirror that accurately represents Hindu values, beliefs, and practices. It provides material for the development of regional languages as well as for the publishing of significant religious and scientific ideas.

Karma and Reincarnation Theories

In Indian culture, the ideas of Karma (doing) and reincarnation are very significant. One is said to earn virtue via good deeds, take birth in a higher birth order, and live a pleasant life. The person who does a wicked deed is born in a lower birth order in his subsequent birth, suffers agony, and has an unhappy existence. The Principle of Fruits of Action, according to the Upanishads, is accurate. A guy reaps the benefits of his actions. Man must thus alter his behavior in order to better future generations as well. He will get salvation, which is to say that he will be freed from the cycle of birth and death, if he consistently acts righteously throughout all of his births. This idea is the cornerstone of Jainism, Buddhism, and other religions in addition to the Upanishads. In this sense, the idea of reincarnation is linked to the idea of doing something. The deeds committed in the previous life are what trigger rebirth.

Focus on Duty

Indian culture places more stress on dharma, or moral obligation, than rights. It is regarded that carrying out one's obligations is more important than standing out for one's rights. Additionally, it emphasizes the interdependence of one's obligations and those of others. Therefore, Indian culture encourages interdependence rather than individual independence and autonomy via the focus on communal or familial duties.

Optimal Joint Family Structure

In India there is a lot of diversity at the marital level. But there is a startling commonality at the familial level. For instance, practically every Indian adheres to the ideal or standard of the united family. Even if not everyone lives in a combined family, the concept of a joint family is still favored. The family is what makes Indian culture unique. Indians distinguish between familial identification and individual identity, yet the Western-style individualism is uncommon in Indian society.

Caste Structure

Social stratification is another aspect of Indian culture. In India there are around 200 castes in each area. The social structure is made up of thousands of these castes and subcastes that determine a person's social standing based on where they were born. E.A.H. Blount claims that "Caste is a collection of intermarried or intramarried organizations, which have a general name, whose membership is hereditary and set various prohibitions and regulations on its members living socially together. As a result, Indian culture has a unique system of stratification wherein its members either engage in conventional commerce or stake a claim to their shared society.

Four Tasks

A person may practice their faith while enjoying physical luxuries and can ultimately find salvation by doing their duty. Indian culture places a high value on doing one's duty. Four factors are taken into account in this: Dharma (religion), Arth (money), Kama (desire), and Moksha (salvation). Religion and upholding moral obligations are connected. All requirements are linked with the availability of money. Lust is connected to enjoyment of life. The ultimate objective is salvation. All of these motivate a person to carry out his responsibilities and lead a disciplined life in society. In the course of human history, we have seen two opposing ideas: first, that the world and life are transient and brittle, and second, that the success of life relies on pleasure. Western philosophy is its finest illustration. However, Indian culture shows how the two are coordinated. To understand the true essence, significance, and purpose of human existence, both should be combined. The Principle of Efforts is how this coordination is expressed [5], [6]. It is thought that a country that has lost its culture is no longer a living one. He often emphasized the worth of Indian cultural values. Those who favor financial progress might be intolerant. People who support the development of weapons may be distant. Liberals are

those who see damage done to others for their personal benefit as excusable. However, Indian culture is unique in that, although considering worldly possessions to be important, it does not make them the center of its religious beliefs. Even though it has employed force, it has thought about its own wellbeing. For its own benefit, it has seen damage done to others as unforgivable. The ultimate aim of life in this place is not luxury and wants, but self-realization and self-sacrifice.

DISCUSSION

The Culture of India in the Modern Era

The historic Indian culture's classical social structure was mostly associated with rulers, priests, monks, munis, sadhus, professors, guild leaders, and other affluent classes. The link between the classical and the folk did not change throughout the medieval era. There were streams of the classical heritage connected with Pali and Tamil in addition to the Sanskrit language in ancient India. The Mahayana Buddhist tradition, various Jain scientific systems, and the traditional Hindu tradition all originated in Sanskrit. The Theravadi Buddhist tradition was carried by Pali, whereas the South Indian classical legacy was carried by Tamil. The connection between the English-representative classical legacy and the local folkways has disintegrated over the contemporary era. Different modernizing processes and variables have had an impact on traditional equilibrium. The link between classical and folk traditions has been strained as a result of the influence of contemporary societal pressures. A new middle class has been forming in the cities, taking on the responsibility of upholding the classical legacy. The worldview and viewpoint of the middle class are very different from those of the folk tradition's keepers. English has taken over as their primary language, and they are primarily the carriers of Western cultural values, conventions, ideas, outlooks, and institutions. The folk and tribal customs have mostly remained undisturbed by changes in political systems throughout history. With shifts in the governmental power structure, the significance of classical traditions has sometimes changed, while folk and tribal traditions have stayed vibrantly alive. The folk and tribal cultures have always been valued and given room by the classical traditions in ancient India. On the other side, the upholders of the contemporary Western classical cultural heritage have sometimes shown less tolerance for the folk and tribal customs. In compared to contemporary society, they often characterize traditional culture as primitive, barbaric,

and superstitious. All the components and streams of Indian culture are being attempted to be modernized and westernized. Different facets of Indian culture are being influenced by the processes of westernization, industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and democratization today. However, these processes of modernization and secularization have not yet severed the connection between current Indian culture and its traditional and cultural foundations. The old cultural mediums are still there today, and some of its elements have even been creatively blended into a newly forming popular and classical culture.

Diversity in Unity

India's unity in diversity is one of the things that people most often comment on. This overused cliché has shaped India's sense of self. India is a sizable subcontinental nation. Over the years, individuals from various origins have interacted and cultures have intertwined from the north to the south and from the east to the west. Nevertheless, there has remained a continuity in identity at the core. There aren't many nations with the kind of vast cultural variety that India does. Underneath this enormous country's astonishing variety of religion, language, and traditions comes a tremendous sense of solidarity [7], [8]. The concept of oneness has a long history, according to historians. With the administrative cohesion brought forth under British rule and with the development of India as a modern sovereign country after independence, the underlying cultural homogeneity was further enhanced. It has always been intriguing to see how strong Indian unity has remained. Certain historical elements that are evident in many facets of Indian social life are what led to the nation's unification. It seems as if the people are woven together into a lovely tapestry from the Himalayas in the north to Kanyakumari in the south and from Kutch in the west to Arunachal in the east. Indian civilization has evolved a culture that is defined by consistent pluralistic tendencies. However, the objective of increasing economic, political, and social unity is not diminished by our support of cultural plurality.

A society's unity in European sociology is defined in terms of linguistic nationality or political sovereignty. Therefore, a country is the main source of unity. But many Indian sociologists contend that the bond between India and the rest of South Asia dates back to the dawn of civilization and has persisted to the present. Thus, although South Asia is united on a cultural level, it is now separated into several countries including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. The many communities and countries of South

Asia have a basic commonality in terms of social structures including the family, caste, and lifestyles. In traditional India the practices of intercultural dialogue and interaction were a significant source of togetherness. According to sociologists, the development of shared cultural traditions is facilitated by merchants, storytellers, artisans, and artists, such as potters, singers, and dancers in ancient India. Another connection for fostering intercultural harmony is provided by the institutions of pilgrimage, fairs, and festivals. In addition to these organizations, the social structure and economy created connections between groups, regions, and cultural traditions that were based on reciprocity and interaction [9].

Indian civilization has been characterized by accommodation without absorption. Through the social process of accommodation, many societal components may be incorporated while maintaining their own identities. On the other side, assimilation is a kind of integration in which the previous identities of the parts are lost. In Indian history and culture, the inclusion of new elements has not necessitated the erasure of earlier ones. The underlying philosophy has been one of accommodating difference, and a variety of social and cultural aspects have contributed to the resilience of Indian unity. Instead of being largely maintained by the government, social, cultural, moral, and technical institutions of Indian civilisation were responsible for maintaining order and stability. Indian culture provided sufficient flexibility for the practice of any lifestyle, despite the fact that many customary practices were organized in a hierarchy. As a result, both inequality and integration were generated.

India's variety is its most notable characteristic, which is a result of the country's diverse geography and sizable population. It is difficult to see the wide area that runs from east to west and from north to south as one continuous region. It is more than 10 times the size of the whole British Isles and is approximately fourteen times larger than Great Britain. Severe heat and severe cold are experienced. India is home to polar, tropical, and temperate climates. There is variability in the population's look, color, height, and other physical characteristics. However, it seems that geography was crucial in creating Indian unity and a feeling of Indianness. India is clearly defined as a geographical entity, cut off from the rest of Asia by the impassable walls of the great Himalayas and surrounded by oceans and the ocean on all other sides. Nature has graciously provided all the resources needed for humans to live full and creative lives within the bounds of her territories, which are also clearly

delineated from the rest of the world. Indian topography has so aided in the unification and continuity of the nation's history. The majority of attempts to either partition the nation or extend it beyond its natural borders have failed.

Indians were impacted by the size of the land in two different ways. The wide range of scenery, climatic, and living situations equipped the mind to be open to diversity. Additionally, the open areas allowed for modest influxes of immigrants and unrestricted local development along distinct lines. The people's economic lives have been impacted by the country's geographic unity. The size and quality of the land allowed for a steady rise in population and growth of farming. The richness and tenacity of India's culture and customs may be somewhat explained by the fact that her agricultural economy has been continuously created and sustained for approximately four or five thousand years [10]. Due to the agricultural economy's dominance, a set of shared traits and perspectives have emerged. Given India's size and diversity, it is easy to overlook the country's geographic unity. The network of shrines and holy sites dispersed throughout the nation is a permanent and distinctively Indian representation of oneness. Indians travel often because it is a religious obligation to visit sacred sites. Similar to this, a great number of people's geographic awareness is influenced by the abundance of monuments connected to many religious groups that have graced the area.

CONCLUSION

Indian culture has a great emphasis on the importance of the family, respect for authority figures, and a feeling of community. The joint family structure, in which many generations coexist, is crucial for maintaining customs, transferring cultural information, and developing close bonds between people. Festivals and festivities unite communities by offering chances for cross-cultural dialogue and group joy. Indian culture is also known for its cuisine. Because each location has its own culinary specialities, spices, and cooking methods, the world's cuisine is both varied and flavorful. Indian food is renowned for its use of flavorful spices, eye-catching hues, and a delicious fusion of salty, spicy, sour, and sweet tastes. Indian culture also has a profound love for spirituality and environment. The holistic approach to wellbeing and the interrelationship between the mind, body, and spirit are reflected in the practice of yoga, meditation, and traditional medicine known as Ayurveda. The moral and ethical standards of the

culture are also influenced by the notions of reincarnation and karma (the rule of cause and effect). In conclusion, the religious diversity, linguistic variety, artistic traditions, social ideals, and gastronomic pleasures of India are what define its culture. Indian culture has developed through thousands of years under the influence of historical, social, and geographic elements. A better respect of the country's variety and cultural legacy results from embracing and comprehending Indian culture's distinctive elements.

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Indian Culture: Religious Factors

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ABSTRACT: Religion plays a significant role in shaping Indian culture, serving as a cornerstone of its social fabric, traditions, and daily life. This abstract explores the religious factors that contribute to the richness and diversity of Indian culture, focusing on Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity. The religious factors of Indian culture provide a rich tapestry of beliefs, practices, art forms, and festivals. They contribute to the cultural diversity, tolerance, and coexistence that define India. These religious traditions have transcended boundaries, influencing art, music, dance, architecture, literature, and cuisine, creating a unique and vibrant cultural heritage.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Indian Culture, Religion.

INTRODUCTION

India is a pluralistic nation. In India there are seven main religions. The vast majority of people in India are Hindu. The second most numerous religious group is the Muslims. Despite their small numbers, the Jews, the Zoroastrians or Parsis, the Animists, the Christians, the Sikhs, the Buddhists, the Jains, and other groups like the Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and Parsis have made substantial contributions to India. In Indian society, religion contributes to both variety and unification. Every religious organization is unique within itself. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism all have castes or status groupings that resemble castes. Religion may be very integrating within a monotheistic culture, but it can also become contentious and cause problems in a multireligious society. In India several religious communities have historically coexisted in a more or less harmonious manner.

Any religion has two main facets: the spiritual and the temporal. All faiths have a lot of similarities in terms of their spiritual components. Every religion places a strong focus on moral behavior and the transcendence of the self-centered ego. While the temporal part of religion is constantly connected to the collective identity and cohesion is sustained by religious rituals and communal beliefs, the personal aspect of religion is a question of devotion to one's own personal god. Different religious groupings are distinct from one another on a temporal level. In addition to the fact that there is a high level of religious tolerance in India among the many religious groups, several holy sites have developed a reputation and appeal that transcends a particular religion. Similar to this, many religious groups observe certain religious holidays, at least in

part. These holy hotspots include Varanasi, Ujjain, Amritsar, Mathura, Bodhgaya, Vaishno Devi, Tirupati, and Ajmer Sharif. For instance, many Hindus also go to the Muslim pilgrimage site of Ajmer Sharif. Additionally, these religious centers often employ business owners and service providers who practice different faiths. Hindu Saints and Muslim Sufis have a great deal in common when it came to bhakti and devotion. Religious celebrations like Diwali, Dushehera, and Holi contain both liturgical and cultural components. The ceremonial part is unique to Hindus, although other cultures more or less celebrate the cultural aspect. The various religious groups also celebrate Christmas and Id-ul-Fitr in a variety of locations. Kabir, Akbar, Dara Shikoh, and Mahatma Gandhi all contributed to the creation of a shared ethos across India's many religious faiths. In India Persian Sufism acquired a fresh hue. Poets and religious figures like Ramanand and Kabir attempted to merge the greatest aspects of Islam and Hinduism while denouncing their worst aspects [1].

1. India's dominant religion, Hinduism, is ingrained in many facets of Indian society. Its adherence to the concepts of karma, dharma, and moksha has an impact on moral standards, societal structures, and personal behavior. Hindu festivals, rituals, and pilgrimage destinations play a significant role in the cultural calendar and help devotees feel a feeling of community and shared identity.
2. The second-largest religion, Islam, has had a significant impact on Indian culture. Islamic legacy is reflected in the magnificent mosques and mausoleums built during the Mughal Empire, the lively qawwali and Sufi music traditions, and the celebration of

Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr. Muslim traditions and practices are ingrained in Indian society's social structure, adding to the country's cultural variety.

3. Sikhism, which originated in the Indian state of Punjab, is distinguished by its values of dedication, service, and equality. The Guru Granth Sahib (the sacred text), the practice of langar (the communal kitchen), and the wearing of the turban are all highly valued aspects of Sikh culture. Sikh celebrations like Guru Nanak Jayanti and Baisakhi highlight their unique traditions and customs.
4. Buddhism, which has its roots in ancient India had a significant influence on Indian culture. Buddhism's importance is reflected in the magnificent architecture of Buddhist monasteries, stupas, and sculptures, especially in cities like Bodh Gaya and Sarnath. The nation's spiritual climate is still influenced by the practice of meditation, the quest for enlightenment, and the spread of peace and compassion.
5. With its focus on nonviolence, the truth, and self-discipline, Jainism has influenced Indian culture's ethical standards. Jain cultural traditions are fundamentally characterized by the elaborate construction of their temples, the beauty of their manuscript drawings, and their adherence of fasting customs. The Jain philosophy encourages respect for all living things and environmental preservation.
6. The colonial-era introduction of Christianity has permanently altered Indian culture. Churches, educational institutions, and Christian traditions have assimilated into the cultural mix. Christian communities attend Christmas festivals, prayers, and songs, promoting cultural fusion while preserving their own religious identity.

Aesthetic standards in art, poetry, love, and cuisine developed at the palaces of Oudh and Hyderabad, drawing on the courtly customs of Rajasthan and Persia. Hindus stole purdah from Muslims, while Muslims stole caste from Hindus. However, religion also contributes to diversity and hostility. India and Pakistan were created when the nation was divided mostly along religious and racial lines. The communal issue persisted even after the division at times. Fundamentalism leads to communalism, which generates animosity and violence against other faiths. It is a result of both ignorance and intentional mischief

by those with vested interests who want to divide the faithful along communal lines in order to obtain political influence and financial advantage [2], [3].

Cultural Aspects

The development, synthesis, and richness of Indian culture may all be seen throughout its history. Like religion, culture is a source of both variety and unification. Strong kingdoms and empires like the Mauryas and the Guptas refrained from overtly interfering in social and cultural affairs, preserving a great deal of variety. Although Islam was for many centuries the dominant religion politically in major portions of the nation, it did not supplant Hinduism or disrupt the Hindu social order. Additionally, Hinduism, which was dominating in terms of demographics and other factors, did not try to eradicate the practices and beliefs that made other faiths unique. Hindus, Muslims, and Christians all have different beliefs and adhere to different customs. Indian culture has evolved through time to be split up into many tribes, castes, subcastes, clans, sects, and groups, each of which aims to maintain its own way of life and moral code.

Numerous sociologists have meticulously documented the enormous variation in the traditions, behaviors, and habits of the people in various geographical areas. India serves as a tangible illustration of regional variation because to the dispersion of material characteristics like clothing, housing, arts and crafts, and a limitless variety of cuisine and how it is prepared. It is obvious how important Indian philosophy, art, and literature have been in promoting togetherness. Indian society is characterized by social structures like the caste system and the joint family, which may be found all throughout the nation. In a mostly uniform way, festivals are celebrated across India. Similarities in art and culture shown on the walls of temples and palaces across India have also contributed to a sense of unity. Despite their differences, it is appreciated that different civilizations coexist.

Political Variables

India's continued existence as a civilization is widely seen to have been more social and cultural than political. The state did not maintain order and stability; rather, culture and society did. It has been challenging to build an all-Indian empire because to the size of the nation, extraordinary physical diversity, and unending variety of races, castes, creeds, languages, and dialects. This also explains why political unification was not a common feature of medieval and ancient

Indian history. However, India's great monarchs and statesmen have long entertained the notion of unifying the whole nation under a single governing body. The monarchs of ancient India introduced the concept of "Chakravarti" for this reason. This concept has been put into reality by kings like Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka, Samudragupta, and Harshvardhana. Some Muslim kings, like Akbar and Jehangir, made very worthwhile socio-political achievements. In this light, Jehangir's focus on justice and Akbar's Din-e-Elahi are particularly noteworthy.

In a way, India has never been a politically cohesive entity governed by a single state. Even British India which was divided into around 600 major and tiny yet distinct and independent as autonomous entities states, was just a portion of India and did not fully understand it. The British attempted to create political unity under a supreme authority for all of India in terms of defense, external relations, foreign policy, and certain economic issues. However, such efforts were widespread in past times. India was unified officially and administratively after becoming independent, but it was previously split into India and Pakistan. Following independence, India's unity is reflected in its institutions. It is both a result of the liberation struggle and a British constitutional heritage. Even though there is now political and administrative unity, there are several political parties and political ideas. Politics therefore contributes to both unity and diversity [4], [5].

Linguistic Elements

India has several different languages. Another factor that contributes to both cultural unity and variety is language. Collective identities and even conflicts are influenced by it. The Indian Constitution officially recognizes eighteen languages. Regional and dialectal differences exist in all major languages. For instance, Hindi has Awadhi, Brij, Bhojpuri, Magadhi, Bundeli, Pahari, Malwi, and numerous more dialects, while Odia has Sambalpuri and several other dialects. The fact that India recognizes 179 languages and 544 dialects adds to the difficulty of the matter. These dialects and languages are grouped under the Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, and Mundari linguistic families. Sanskrit and other North Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali, Odia, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Urdu, etc. are all members of the Indo-Aryan language family. Malayalam, Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada are all members of the Dravidian language family. The Indian tribal groups speak a set of languages and dialects known as the Mundari. Persian, Arabic, and Urdu all gained popularity throughout the Middle

Agas. Around the same time as Hindustani language emerged in India Urdu also did. Despite having distinct scripts, they have a lot in common. Sanskrit and Pali were replaced as the official and court languages by Arabic and Persian.

English took the role of Urdu as the official and judicial language throughout the post-independence era. After the country gained its independence, Hindi was declared the official language, although the courts and the federal administration continued to use English. After 1835, India has likewise continued to use English as its primary language for research and higher education. Independent India's emphasis on English has had an effect on Indian literature and languages, as well as on social structure and divides within Indian society. Between a wealthy, English-speaking elite and the majority of Indians who speak vernacular languages or dialects, there is a clear social and economic divide. Administrative and political issues have arisen as a result of linguistic variety. But language also plays a fundamental part in the variety and unity of Indian culture. The thoughts and topics represented in India's many languages and dialects have a basic unity despite their astonishing variety. The level of grammatical structures also exhibits unity. Sanskrit's lexicon has had a significant impact on the majority of Indian languages. Sanskrit terms are still used in a variety of Dravidian languages today. The languages and dialects of India now include vocabulary from Persian, Arabic, and English as well. The spirit of accommodation that brought many ethnic groups together into a single social order is also shown in Indian literature.

Another element of diversity and separatist is language. Separatism along linguistic lines has a powerful emotional pull. Conflicts and political mobilizations have developed between various language groupings. Following independence, India's linguistic issues were primarily focused on three issues: the official language issue, the demands for the linguistic reorganization of the Indian provinces whose borders did not follow linguistic division during British rule, and the status of minority languages within reorganized states. After much debate, Hindi was chosen as India's official language, however English was kept around at least until the changeover. This transitional phase was originally planned to span fifteen years. The union and interprovincial communication designated English as a "associate additional official language" in 1965. The Eighth Schedule of the Constitution includes the main regional languages, which are spoken in their

respective regions and recognized as additional "national" languages. The country's official language is Hindi, but English has maintained its position as a "associate additional official language" and has maintained its glamor.

DISCUSSION

There has developed an all-India style, a network of connections, and a great deal of similarity among the many areas of India as a result of cultural, economic, and geographic contact. In spite of India's great variety, the aspects that serve as unifying characteristics are described in more detail in the next few lines. In addition to what may be described as the larger classical legacy, India is distinguished by a variety of local or folk traditions. The latter would be more prevalent across the nation but also restricted to a few dominating societal groups. The heart of rural communities in each linguistic area are distinct agricultural castes, which are complemented by artisan and service castes. These had a relationship with a jajmani, or service provider. The majority of castes in urban regions were banias (traders), artisans, and castes like brahmans and kayasthas. Centers for pilgrimage have also aided in creating a sense of national cohesion in India. During various cultural events, barriers of caste, class, and other social taboos were nearly nonexistent at pilgrimage sites. At the pilgrimage sites, people from various areas were able to communicate with one another, fostering the development of cultural ties. Kashi, Haridwar, Rameshwaram, Dwarka, Badrinath, and Gaya are only a few examples of trans-sectarian pilgrimage destinations. During the Middle Ages, Amritsar and Ajmer Sharif also developed into major centers of pilgrimage [6], [7].

A shared metaphysical foundation, such as the notions of transcendence and ethical compensation (Karmphal), preserves cultural identity. All areas have their own versions of the many Indian epics and myths, which emphasize certain ideals and objectives. Examples include vrata the procedure to acquire merit and prayaschita (penance or expiation). Other examples are purusharth (achieving aspirations), rinas (obligations), dana (sharing), and Samskara (sacraments) at birth, death, and marriage. Different areas were subject to the Hindus' traditional social mores and personal regulations. Bengal was a stronghold of the dayabhaga system of inheritance, whereas the rest of the nation with the exception of Kerala and Bengal was dominated by the mitakshara. The majority of Indians adore the notion of moksha,

salvation, or nirvana being freed from the cycle of life and death and believe in the concepts of heaven and hell. This idea of moksha or nirvana is connected to the idea of the one, all-pervasive Brahma.

India stood out as a nation where numerous faiths coexisted in relative social peace throughout the Middle Ages, when the globe experienced the most fiercely fought religious battles in Europe and the Middle East. In this situation, a monarch like Akbar played a crucial role. Hindu philosophy seems to have enhanced the mystical spiritual strain in Muslim religious thinking, whereas Islam appears to have reinforced the de-ritualizing and egalitarian impulses in Medieval Hinduism. For instance, the Nayanar Saints of South India's Bhakti movement gained power in the setting of Islam and Muslim hegemony in North India. The mystic and devotional aspects of Islam were also fostered by Hinduism's intellectual environment. Ramanand, Kabir, Nanak, and Dara Shikoh all made substantial contributions to the growth of Muslim and Hindu populations' capacity for understanding one another.

During the Middle Ages, a united language, music, and artistic style emerged. This united Hindustani culture of medieval India gave rise to Hindi and Urdu. Despite sharing similar terminology and origins, Devanagari and Persian are the two languages' separate writing systems. Hindus and Muslims had merged in music and the arts. The king's courts and Hindu temples were the breeding grounds for North Indian (Hindustani) music. Muslims have sang bhajans in Hindu temples, while Hindus have performed in Muslim courts. The standard topic for many of the works performed by Hindu and Muslim masters alike include Krishna, Radha, and the gopis. During the medieval era, the art of fusing Hindu and Muslim components into building reached its pinnacle. It was intended to combine Turko-Persian ideas with Indian style during Akbar's reign. The Hindu influence seems to have grown throughout Jehangir's reign. Despite its Muslim arches and domes, the mausoleum of Akbar at Sikandra displays the basic design of Buddhist viharas or of the rathas of Mahablipuram. Fathehpur Sikri's mosque and Mount Abu's mosque both have Jain influences. Neither the Persian nor the traditional Indian forms had ever had any of the new traits that the Mughal building possessed. During this time, painting also evolved a new aesthetic via the fusion of Turko-Iranian and traditional Indian painting. At his court, Akbar established a painting school where Persian and Indian artists collaborated. Mughal painting reached its

pinnacle under the reign of Jehangir, who was both a patron of the arts and an accomplished painter in his own right.

The structure of Indian society underwent substantial alterations under colonial control due to a variety of circumstances. Indian civilization's traditional structure for unity experienced severe strain. Westernization of culture began with the introduction of modern education by the colonial authorities. The Indian liberation struggle (1857–1947) gave rise to fresh points of social cohesion. Nationalism now serves as Indian society's unifying force, taking the place of religion and culture. The experience of the liberation struggle remains the cornerstone of Indian unification in contemporary India notwithstanding the partition in 1947. The country and its many organs have evolved as India's pillars of unity since its independence. By placing a strong emphasis on the principles of equality, fraternity, secularism, and justice, the constitution, which was founded upon the pre-existing unity of India has further reinforced it. These are some of the main sources of unity in modern-day India: The Indian Constitution is the main source of unity in India right now. Indians support the Constitution's fundamental principles.

The Indian Parliament is the country's national legislative body. Every adult citizen of India (one who is older than 18 years old) has the right to vote, and representatives are chosen by the people. This embodies the broad will of the people. On behalf of a council of ministers led by the Prime Minister, the President of India officially leads the country's government. Indian citizens are under the legal protection of the judiciary. At the municipal, regional, and federal levels, the judiciary is an independent institution. It serves as the Indian Constitution's keeper. The administration, the police, and other educated professionals including engineers, scientists, physicians, professors, and journalists have all contributed significantly to the country's governance, the upkeep of peace and order, and the implementation of the government's many development initiatives and programs. In light of the recent wars, insurgencies, and border tensions, as well as during natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, and cyclones, the military services deserve particular notice.

Post offices, telegraphs, telephones, print media, radio, and television are just a few of the modern communication tools that have played significant roles in preserving and strengthening the national ethos and fostering a sense of "we" among Indians. The growth of the capitalist and middle classes was facilitated by

industrialization, urbanization, and other economic forces, which also increased the movement of labor and services throughout the nation. In light of the aforementioned explanation of unity in variety, it is clear that India has a traditional culture with a global perspective. Despite having a great number of distinctions, the nation has always been and always will be unified in spirit, politics, and in the minds of its citizens [8], [9].

Indian Cultural Elements

Art and Architecture: Religious themes are prominent in Indian art, which is also influenced by them. There isn't anything austere or self-denying about it, however. In Indian art, the human element, nature, and life's everlasting variety are all depicted. During the Indus Valley era, the arts of building and sculpture were highly developed. The biggest collections of folk and tribal relics are from India.

Sangit, a word used often in India to refer to music, includes both vocal and instrumental music as well as dancing. The oldest instances of words put to music are rhymes from the Rigveda and the Samveda. The *Natyashastra*, credited to the philosopher Bharata who lived at the beginning of the Christian era, is the first comprehensive explanation of Indian musical theory. The two most popular classical music genres in India are north Indian Hindustani classical music and south Indian Karnatak music. Specific *gharanas* are connected to more specialized schools of classical music. One component of Indian culture that has gained international prominence is this. In India song and dance have long been a feature of social events. Without them, festivities like fairs, weddings, festivals, and other events would be incomplete. Modern music has been increasingly popularized among the general public thanks in large part to movies, movie tunes, and music.

Dance:

The spiritual and aesthetic outlook of the Indian psyche is beautifully and profoundly symbolized through classical Indian dance. The words "nritta" (music) and "nata" (theatre) are often used in traditional Indian texts. In India dance and music are a part of every aspect of family life. Three categories *Natya*, *Nritya*, and *Nritta* are used to categorize Indian dance. *Natya* is the drama counterpart. *Nritya* is an interpretive dance style that is done to song lyrics. *Nritta*, on the other hand, denotes pure dancing, in which the body does not transmit any message or exhibit any emotion (*bhava*). India has a wide range of both classical and folk dances. Some of the most well-

known dance styles in India are Kuchipudi (Andhra Pradesh), Odissi (Odisha), Kathakali (Kerala), Mohiniattam (Kerala), Bharatnatyam (Tamil Nadu), Manipuri (Manipur), Kathak (Uttar Pradesh), and Chhau (Orissa, West Bengal, and Jharkhand). Additionally, India has a long history of folklore, tales, and myths that merge with songs and dances to create composite art forms.

Theatre:

The 'divine beginnings' of Indian classical dance are tied to it, but the people of India are the source of the country's theater. The *Natyashastra* of Bharat is still the most comprehensive manual on classical Indian theater. In recent years, three former colonial cities Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai have given rise to "Modern Indian theater." European theatrical customs and trends have a big impact on it. There are several streams that make up "Traditional Indian theater." This theater was restricted to courts and temples and showed a sophisticated, well-honed taste. The spoken languages and dialects of many locales and regions were employed in the second popular stream. In India theater productions often take place after harvest when both performers and audience members are free. It is performed in outdoor theaters. Dance, music, mimetic gesture, and sophisticated choreography are used to recreate the story, which is often a tale that the audience is already familiar with.

Geography's Importance to Indian Culture

The world's greatest mountain range, the Himalayas, which separates India from the rest of Asia and the rest of the globe with its expansions to the east and west, forms the northern border of the ancient civilization in India. The barrier, however, was never insurmountable, and at all times both settlers and merchants managed to cross the high, barren passes into India while Indians also used this path to spread their commerce and culture beyond of her borders. The extent of India's isolation has never been fully realized, and the role played by the mountain wall in shaping her distinct culture is often exaggerated. The significance of the mountains to India lies less in the solitude they provide than in the fact that her two major rivers originate there. In the rainy seasons, clouds that are traveling north and west release the last of their moisture onto high peaks, from which countless streams are nourished by snow that is constantly melting and flow south to join the Indus and Ganga river systems. To get to the vast plain, they go via tiny, productive plateaus like the valleys of Kashmir and Nepal.

The Indus River System, which is today mostly in Pakistan, had the first civilisation out of the two river systems. It gave India its name since Indians named this river Sindhu and Persians termed it Hindu because they had trouble pronouncing Sindhu as initials. The term traveled from Persia to Greece, where the western river's name spread to include all of India. The name Jambuidvipa or Bharatavarsa is how the ancient Indians referred to their continent. When the Muslims invaded, the Persian name for the region Hindustan returned, and people who adhered to the previous faith were known as Hindus. Additionally, more than two thousand years before Christ, the fertile plain of Punjab, the land of five rivers, watered by the five major Indus tributaries, including the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Satlaj, had a high culture that extended as far as the sea and along the western seaboard, at least as far as Gujrat. The lower Indus flows through a desolate desert in the Sind area of Pakistan, despite the fact that this was previously a rich and well-watered territory.

The Thar, or Rajasthan desert, and a few small hills separate the Indus basin from the Ganga basin. Since at least 1000 B.C., the watershed, located to the northwest of Delhi, has seen several bloody wars. The heart of India has traditionally been in the western side of the Ganga plain, between the area surrounding Delhi and Patna, and includes the Doab, or the territory between the Ganga and its major tributary river Yamuna. Classical civilization developed here, in the area once known as Aryavarta, the country of the Aryans. This was originally among the most fruitful land in the world, and it has maintained a very large population ever since it was placed under the plough, even if years of unscientific farming, deforestation, and other causes have greatly diminished its productivity. The Ganga meets the Brahmaputra at its mouth in Bengal, where it creates a sizable delta that even historically has risen noticeably above the sea. Assam is the easternmost frontier of Hinduism, while the Brahmaputra originates in Tibet.

A highland region rises to the Vindhyan mountain range south of the big plain. These mountains have a tendency to act as a barrier between the North and the South, while not being quite as magnificent as the Himalayas. The Western and Eastern Ghats, which run along each side of the arid and mountainous plateau known as the Deccan, in the south. The majority of the rivers in the Deccan, including the Mahanadi, the Godavari, the Krishna, and the Kaveri, flow eastward because of the taller western of these two ranges of hills. Only two major rivers, the Narmada and the

Tapti, flow westward; the Deccan rivers pass through plains close to their mouths that are smaller than the Ganges but almost as populated. The Tamil nation, whose culture was formerly autonomous and has not yet fully merged with that of the North, makes up a broader plain in the southeast corner of the Peninsula. The Dravidian ethnic groups in Southern India still speak languages that are completely distinct from those in the North. Nevertheless, there has been a lot of mixing between northern and southern varieties. Geographically, Ceylon is a continuation of India with the island's central mountains being the Western Ghats and its northern plain matching that of South India. The subcontinent is nearly 2,000 miles long, from Kashmir in the north to Cape Comorin in the south, and as a result, its climate varies greatly throughout. Winters in the Himalayan area are chilly, with occasional frost and snowfall. In contrast to the hot seasons, which are almost unbearable, the winters in the northern plains are chilly with large variations in day and nighttime temperatures. Though winter evenings are chilly on the upper portions of the plateau, the temperature in the Deccan fluctuates less with the season. The Tamil Plains are always warm, yet the summertime temperatures there never reach those of the northern plains.

The monsoon, or rains, are the most significant aspects of the Indian climate. Except for the west coast and certain areas of Ceylon, little rain occurs between October and May, making it necessary to properly manage the water in rivers and streams while cultivating a winter crop using irrigation. By April 2nd, growth had all but stopped. The plains see increases in temperature of up to 45 0 C. or more, and a strong wind blows. Trees lose their leaves, the grass is almost dry, and wild animals often perish in great numbers due to a lack of water. The globe seems to be sleeping, and work has been drastically decreased. The clouds begin to form high in the sky, multiplying and becoming darker over the next several days as they roll up in banks from the sea. Finally, in June, there are heavy downpours of rain accompanied by a lot of thunder and lightning. The temperature rapidly reduces, and within a few days the world returns to being green and happy with new growth of grass. Despite these challenges, the arrival of the monsoon corresponds to the arrival of spring in Europe in the minds of Indians. The torrential rains, which fall intermittently for a few months and then gradually die away, make travel and any outdoor activity difficult. They also frequently leave behind epidemics. Due to this, thunder and lightning, which are often considered

unlucky in Europe, are not feared in India but are instead welcomed as indicators of the kindness of the skies.

It is sometimes said that India's entire reliance on the monsoon and the magnitude of its natural events have shaped its peoples' personalities. Major catastrophes like floods, hunger, and pestilence are still difficult to manage now, just as they were in the past. Hard winters forced many other ancient civilizations, including the Greek, Roman, and Chinese, to be resilient and resourceful. While India on the other hand, was endowed with a kind temperament that required little of man in exchange for nourishment, her deadly wrath could not be placated by any human endeavor. The Indian temperament has therefore been said to have a tendency toward fatalism and quietism, accepting success and disaster equally without complaint.

It is quite questionable to what extent this verdict is fair. Even while the old Indian way of life included a certain amount of quietism, just as it does now in India moralists never endorsed it. The impressive accomplishments of ancient India including their extensive irrigation systems, magnificent temples, and the protracted wars of their armies, do not indicate a debilitated people. If the climate had any impact on the Indian character, it was, in our opinion, the development of a love of ease and comfort, an addiction to the simple pleasures and luxuries so freely provided by nature. In response to this tendency, the urge for self-denial and asceticism on the one hand, and occasionally strenuous effort on the other, were natural reactions.

As a result, even though India was largely cut off by geographical features and a different climate zone, its vast size, diversity of racial elements, wide variations in climate, great variety of soils, and unique physical characteristics kept it from becoming a stagnant pool and gave it a continental feel. She was able to create the forces of action and response that resulted in the development of a sophisticated civilization and culture.

CONCLUSION

The word "culture" is derived from the Latin word "cult," which means "to till or refine." Sanskrit root 'Kri', which means to do, is the source of the word'sanskriti. Culture may be summed up as the way a person, and particularly a group, live, think, feel, arrange themselves, celebrate, and interact with one another. Different cultural traits exist. It may be obtained, misplaced, or shared. It accumulates. It

provides us with a variety of acceptable behavior-patterns and is dynamic and diversified. It is flexible. Material and immaterial components together make up culture. In a more profound sense, culture creates the kinds of writing, music, dance, sculpture, architecture, and other creative forms as well as the many institutions and structures that ensure the smooth and well-organized operation of society. We can live respectable lives thanks to the ideas, ideals, and values provided by culture. The finest qualities of a culture are self-control in behavior, care for other people's emotions, and respect for other people's rights. A cultural heritage is made up of all the facets or cultural values that have been passed down from one generation of people to the next. Heritage includes things like artistic constructions, monuments, tangible items, philosophical ideas, the enjoyment of learning, and scientific breakthroughs and discoveries. The well-known idea of unity in variety, as well as continuity and flexibility with the times, define Indian culture. India was placed in an isolated situation as a result of its location and physiographic division. Indian culture benefits greatly from the country's diverse physical characteristics and advantageous position. As a key foundation that shapes ideas, values, customs, and rituals, religion has a profound effect on Indian culture. The complex religious landscape of India is influenced by Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity, promoting cultural plurality and integration. Understanding and valuing the religious aspects of Indian culture may help one better understand the country's rich history and the interactions between religion and society.

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Family and Marriage in India Position of Women in Ancient India Contemporary Period; Caste System and Communalism.

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ABSTRACT: *This study explores three interconnected themes in the context of Indian society: family and marriage, the position of women in ancient and contemporary India and the influence of the caste system and communalism. These topics shed light on the historical and social dynamics that have shaped and continue to influence Indian culture and society. Family and marriage hold significant importance in Indian society, representing the cornerstone of social structure and cohesion. The concept of joint families, with multiple generations living together, has been a traditional norm, fostering strong familial bonds and collective decision-making. Arranged marriages, where families play a central role in finding suitable partners, have been prevalent, although there has been a gradual shift towards greater individual choice and autonomy in recent times. The position of women in ancient India varied across different periods and regions. While some ancient texts acknowledged the intellectual and spiritual capabilities of women, societal norms often placed them in subordinate roles. However, there were also instances of women occupying positions of power and influence, such as the reign of Queen Chandragupta and the contributions of female scholars in various fields. In contemporary India the position of women has seen significant transformations. Women have made strides in education, politics, and various professional fields, challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for gender equality. However, gender-based discrimination, violence, and social expectations still pose challenges to women's empowerment, highlighting the ongoing struggle for gender parity.*

KEYWORDS: *Ancient India Communalism, Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Indian Culture, Religion.*

INTRODUCTION

In order to examine Indian society, we must attempt to comprehend the fundamental principles that serve as the guide for behavior. In terms of civilizations, cultures, and social behavior, Indian society is very varied. However, the caste system is seen by sociologists as the driving force behind Indian society. It is seen as providing the fundamental framework for organizing connections between groups. Hinduism, the dominant religion of the Indian subcontinent, provides justification for caste distinctions. Through the decades, Indian civilization has changed, and innovations have happened across many industries. Additionally, you have read about social improvements in Indian society in prior courses. However, there are socio-cultural challenges that must be addressed in every culture. The safety of individuals, especially those in vulnerable groups like women, children, and the elderly, is a key issue in modern Indian culture. In order to maintain our social and cultural values, we must read about the significant socio-cultural concerns that need our urgent attention in this class. Casteism, communalism, and other

significant sociocultural challenges must be addressed in the modern world. The topics covered here are not all-inclusive. All of us should consider the many other problems that the country, and individual areas and communities, confront. However, sociologists also point out that early understandings of social science were acquired from important Hindu writings, which serve as the norms for social behavior. There are many different contextual realities. In the first portion, we explore the varna system, belief system, and its significance in comprehending the system. Later in this research, we also cover the rise of communalism in India as well as other current issues in Indian culture [1], [2].

System Varna

Varna is simply a reference category and not a functional social structure in the Indian social system; it only roughly alludes to the prestige that various jatis are accorded. It serves as a classification tool as well. It groups and ranks many jatis according to their assigned ceremonial status in a hierarchical manner. The three top levels—the Brahman, the Kshatriya, and the Vaishya are thought of as having two births because, in addition to their first biological birth, they

also experience a second birth after initiation procedures. The Sudra, the fourth level, is made up of many craftspeople and jatis with specialized skills who pursue clean, or non-polluting, activities. Although the Varna hierarchy terminates here, there is a fifth level that includes those who work in purportedly dirty or polluting professions. They are not part of the Varna system; they are Antyaja. They make up the group known as the Dalit.

The Varna's First Days

The earliest Vedic literature has a number of sections that discuss how the varnas came to be. The four social orders are said to have developed from the selflessness of Purusha, the creator and primordial entity. According to legend, Purusha destroyed himself so that a proper social order might develop. The oldest is the hymn in the purusha-sakta of the Rig-Veda, which states that the Brahmana Varna represented the mouth of the purusha, with the Rajanya (i.e., Kshatriya) representing his arms, the Vaisya representing his thighs, and the Sudra representing his feet. The word "the Universal Man" may be translated as "the Universal Man," perhaps referring to all of mankind. The partition of society into Varnas is stated in other chapters outside the Purusha-Sukta, but not in the rigorous manner of later periods, as has been shown. Thus, in Rig-Veda, the three varnas, the Brahma, Kshatam, and Visah are mentioned; while in Rig-Veda, the four varnas are referred to thus: "One to high sway (i.e. Brahmana), one to exalted glory (i.e. the Kshatriya), one to pursue his gain (i.e. the Valsya) and one to his labour (i.e. the Sudra), all to regard their different vocations, all moving creatures hath the Dawn awakened. The early Vedic texts do not mention the caste system. But without carefully assessing the data, this judgment was drawn too quickly. The obligations allocated to the various castes are not as well defined as they are in legal texts and Puranas, hence it is true that the caste system is not present in such a sophisticated state. However, the system is already assumed to have existed in the older Vedic literature. Only the obstacles weren't as overwhelming as they were in subsequent eras [3], [4].

The Triguna theory by S.C. Dube describes three intrinsic characteristics sattva, rajas, and tamas that are present in all living things, including inanimate objects, animate organisms, and human acts. These qualities are present in all three categories. The components of sattva were honorable ideas and acts, kindness and virtue, truth, and knowledge. Rajas, on the other hand, were known for their extravagant lifestyle, extravagance, pride, and courage. The lowest

was tamas, which had the qualities of coarseness and dullness, gluttony without taste, and the ability to do difficult tasks without much creativity. Sattvic individuals were categorized as Brahman, rajasic individuals as Kshatriya and Vaishya, and tamasic individuals as Sudra. A third approach considers functional specialization, cultural interaction, and racial mixing. These three elements cannot alone explain how the Varna came to be. Race and complexion played a significant role in Hindu society's early development, the Vedic period, but at their fully developed state, they were only cultural constructs and not biological realities.

Culture interaction led to aryanization, but it wasn't a one-way process involving donor-recipient relationships. The pre-Aryan Vratya traditions made their presence known, changing the Aryan system of social structure, rituals, beliefs, and worldview in the process. Massively, groups were integrated into the new social order, adopting some new traits while holding onto others, and leaving their mark on society as a whole. Returning to the Purusha-Sakta, the whole sakta has an allegorical significance in relation to the Purusha and the formation of the varnas from his limbs. In addition, we are informed that the moon sprang from his thinking (manas), the Sun from his eyes, Indra and Agni were made out of his lips, and air or wind from his breath. The Purusha is defined as being himself "this whole universe, whatever has been and whatever shall be." Once again, the planets were formed in this way: from his navel came the atmosphere (antariksham), from his head the sky, from his feet the earth (bhumi), and from his ear the four quadrants (disah). The issue of the origin and development of varnas has been the subject of extensive theorizing in both Epic and Dharma-Sastra literature. According to the Mahabharata, there were no distinct castes or classes of men in the Krita Yuga. However, the sage Bhrigu claims that only a small number of Brahmanas were initially created by the great Brahman. However, throughout time, the four human divisions of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra emerged. The rishi Bhrigu explains to Bharadwaja his hypothesis of the genesis of the varnas: "The complexion (varnah) of the Brahmanas was white (sita), that of the Kshatriyas red (lohitah), that of the Viasyas yellow (pitakah), and that of the Sudras black (asitah) [5], [6].

In certain ways, Manu's idea of the genesis of mixed castes differs from the Mahabharata's notion. Sons of twice-born males (dvijas, i.e., Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas) who have married members of the lower

social strata undoubtedly belong to the varna of their respective dads, but they are shunned because of the flaw in their mothers (matri-dosha). This is the customary rule (sanatana) that governs offspring of a woman whose varna is only one degree under her husband's. Therefore, babies born of a mother two or three degrees below give origin to the actual varnas combination (varnas-samkara). Thus, an Ambashtha would be the son of a Brahmana father and a Vaisya mother; a Nishada would be the son of a Brahmana father and a sudra mother; and so on. There are several ways in which the varnas are mixed. Children born of a Vaisya father and Kshatriya mother or a Brahmana mother belong to the Magadha and Videha castes, respectively; children of a Kshatriya father and Brahmana mother spring issues belonging to the Suta caste; and so on. Inter-marriages between these new castes give rise to newer and newer castes, so the process keeps multiplying. Manu has used the term "Jati" in this sloka to distinguish it from "varna." This sloka introduces the subject of offspring born to a man of lower varna and a lady of higher varna. As a result, the names Suta, Magadha, and Vaideha are based on their "jati" (jatitah). Additionally, Manu refers to this as a "mixture of varnas" (Varna-samkara) in the next sloka. Despite just mentioning four Varnas, Manu specifies roughly fifty-seven jatis due to Varna-samkara.

DISCUSSION

Obligations of the Varna

Here, the four Varnas are divided according to their respective tasks. Their origins are a symbolic reflection of the four Varnas' positions and roles. The traditional functions are arranged in declining order together with the head, arms, thighs, and feet in the cultural conception of the human body. From a different perspective, the Purusha-Sukta has been seen to have a metaphorical meaning. As a result, the Purusha's mouth, from which the Brahmanas are sprung, is the source of speech, and as a result, the Brahmanas were intended to serve as humankind's teachers and mentors. A Brahman should constantly and diligently study the Vedas alone and impart the Vedas, according to Manu. A Brahman also has the right to serve as a priest and is allowed to accept gifts from honorable members of the three higher varnas as a source of support. It is referred to as pratigraha. The Kshatriya's role in this world is to carry weapons and defend people; the arms are a sign of bravery and power. The Kshatriya were given the responsibilities of governance, administration, and military defense. It

is challenging to understand the hymn's section on how the Vaisyas were made from the Purusha's thighs. However, the thigh could have been meant to stand in for the lower body, which consumes food; as a result, it's possible to say that the Vaisya was made to feed the populace. The Vaishya engaged in agriculture, trade, and commerce. The Sudra's genesis from the foot represents the Sudra's role as the "footman" and servant to other varnas. The Sudra were the least valuable since they provided labor and crafts to others [7]. The whole social structure is conceptualized here metaphorically as a single human person, or the "Body Social," with its limbs standing in for the various social classes based on the principle of division of labor. Our salutation to That (Purusha), who is composed of Brahmanas in the lips, Kashtras in the arms, Vaishyas in the whole regions, stomach, and thighs, and Sudras in the feet.

The Varnas' Mobility

Between the many Varnas, there seems to be continual upward and downward social mobility. In Yajnavalkya, this mobility is described in two ways. Jatyutkarsa, or caste elevation, was the term used to describe the transformation of a lower Varna into a higher Varna. On the other side, jatyapakarsa, or the degeneration of the caste, was the term used to describe when a member of a higher varna eventually fell into a lower varna. Different Dharmasastras gave forth provisions for both of these stratification processes of social mobility, with just small variations in the requirements. It was specifically founded on two requirements: first, must one pursue another Varna's career for five to six generations; and second, that one marry into various Varnas for the same amount of time. It is obvious that the Dharmasastras did prescribe changing Varnas via interaction between the Varnas both upwards and downwards. It is easy to anticipate that in reality such mobility occurred only in exceptions since the process had to be covered across multiple generations. This is possible via education and marriage.

While varna dharma has to be upheld in regular circumstances, the Dharmasastras specify what is known as Apad Dharma, or that which is deserving of adherence under unusual circumstances, in certain situations. Manu lists 10 ways to survive amid adversity, including education, creative endeavors, paid employment, service following another person's orders raising cattle, selling goods, agriculture, contentment, alms, and money-lending. When there is no suffering, several of these cannot be followed by a Brahmin or a Kshatriya. According to the

Dharmasastras, Brahmins who engage in certain behaviors should be regarded as Sudras. Without learning the Veda but putting up great effort to master anything else, he and his family are swiftly demoted to the position of a Sudra. Therefore, Apad Dharma does not imply that one has the right to act whichever one pleases when crisis arises. There are several instances of well-known people refusing to alter their assigned tasks under exceedingly unfavorable circumstances. Once again, even when such a shift was allowed, it was always despised and never welcomed [8], [9].

Order of Responsibilities and Status

There was a rising sequence of obligations in the fourfold categorization of tasks listed above according to the Dharmashastras. Brahmin was given the most important position, but he was also given the most duties. The Brahmin was primarily in charge of maintaining Dharma overall. The Kshatriya was granted the next social standing in the Varna hierarchy because he was in charge of maintaining law and order in society and protecting the country in times of war. He used the Brahmin scholar to accomplish social justice. The Vaishyas and Sudras were given lower rank since they had less obligations. Over time, the Sudra became so despised that he was forbidden from touching a Brahmin. The only ashram of the four that the Sudra was eligible for was that of the householder since he could not be initiated into the study of Vedic philosophy. The descriptions that have been given above are mostly based on what is known as the "book view" of society, which is drawn from the great tradition or the scriptures. The actual reality, or "field view," is typically highly variable and does not match these ideal concepts. In actual life, the operational categories are not the varna but the jati or sub castes, who do have their own interpretations of caste hierarchy. The book perspective is also claimed to reflect the brahmanical vision of society, which is not commonly accepted by the so-called "lower castes."

CONCLUSION

Indian civilization has been significantly impacted by the caste system, a hierarchical social structure, for ages. It separates individuals into several castes in order to establish social rank, employment, and advantages. The caste system has come under fire for sustaining discrimination and inequity, preventing social mobility, and marginalizing Dalits and members of lower castes. Contemporary rhetoric and policy-making in India are still influenced by efforts to combat caste-based prejudice and advance social

justice. In India's social structure, communalism the partition of society along religious lines has been a recurrent problem. The need of interfaith conversation and community cohesion has been brought to light by instances of religious tension and violence. Despite these difficulties, India's secular democracy and long tradition of religious tolerance have served as a solid basis for promoting harmony and religious plurality. In conclusion, family and marriage, women's status, the caste system, and communalism are all fundamental facets of Indian culture with significant historical and modern foundations. The complexity of Indian culture, social institutions, and continuous attempts to promote social justice and inclusion must be understood in order to fully appreciate these dynamics. India can continue to develop, embrace its rich past, and work toward a more equal and inclusive future by tackling gender inequities, encouraging social peace, and making these goals a priority.

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An overview on Origin of Caste in India

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ABSTRACT: *The origin of the caste system in India is a complex and debated topic that has shaped the social structure of the country for centuries. This abstract provides an overview of the historical origins of the caste system and its evolution over time. The caste system in India is believed to have ancient roots, dating back to the Vedic period (1500-500 BCE). Initially, it was based on varna, a classification of society into four broad occupational categories: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and farmers), and Shudras (laborers and servants). This hierarchical division was associated with specific duties, privileges, and social status. Over time, the varna system became more rigid and stratified, leading to the emergence of jatis, or subcastes, based on occupation, kinship, and regional affiliations. The jati system further divided society into numerous groups, each with its own specific customs, rules, and restrictions. The origins of caste can be traced to various factors, including economic specialization, migration, intermarriage practices, and the influence of religious beliefs. Some scholars argue that the caste system evolved as a means to maintain social order and preserve occupational divisions. Others suggest that it may have originated from tribal affiliations or racial divisions. The caste system, though deeply rooted in Indian society, has been subject to significant changes and adaptations throughout history. Various social and political movements, such as the Bhakti and Sufi movements, challenged the rigid boundaries of caste and promoted spiritual equality. Colonial rule in India further complicated the caste system, as British administrators sought to classify and categorize people based on caste for administrative purposes.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Caste, Geography, Heritage, Indian Culture, Religion.*

INTRODUCTION

A caste is a hereditary endogamous group that determines a person's place in the social hierarchy and his line of work. A group of people whose share of responsibilities and privileges is determined by birth, approved by magic and/or religion, and maintained by these institutions is referred to be a caste. According to Ketkar's definition from 1909, a caste is a social group with two characteristics: members are bound by an unbreakable social norm to only marry within the group, and membership is confirmed to those who are born of members and encompasses all such individuals. Since there is no room for inter-marriage or inter-dining between various castes, caste is a phenomenon of social stratification and limitation in Indian culture. As stated by G.S. The Ghurye caste in India is an Indo-Aryan culture's Brahminic offspring that was nurtured in the Ganges region. The political thesis pertaining to the beginning of caste in India was initially put up by Abbe Dubbois. The caste system's seeming failure to preserve the power of Brahmin priests over Hindu society is a result of the intricate social structure it has created. According to the conventional wisdom, Brahma, who also gave birth to the four varnas, is credited with creating the caste system. Hutton claims that the non-Aryan group's religious practices, notably the philosophy of Manu,

was where the caste system first emerged. Manu is where endogamy, untouchability, and other customs had its start. Majumdar claims that the caste system was created to prevent the blending of the Aryan race and culture with other races [1], [2].

Caste Characteristics

The caste of a person is determined by a number of factors. Here are some of them:

Birth Determination

Birth determines a person's caste affiliation. Even if a person's rank, employment, education, money, or other characteristics change, they nonetheless remain a member of the caste to which they were born. Rules and restrictions pertaining to food: Each caste has its own rules that control how its members eat. Fruit, milk, butter, dried fruit, etc. are generally not prohibited, but kachcha food (bread, etc.) must come from a person of the same caste or above.

Clear Occupation

All of the varnas' jobs are mentioned in the Hindu texts. Manu asserts that the roles played by Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras are clear-cut. The Brahmins' duties include studying the Vedas, imparting knowledge, supervising religious rites, and disbursing and receiving charity. Sudras are required to do menial tasks for all other varnas. The caste

system's defined vocations emerged from the varna system.

Endogamous Society

Most people only get married inside their own caste. Vaishyas, Sudras, Kshatriyas, and Brahmins all wed people from their own castes. This has been cited by Westermarck as one of the main characteristics of the caste system. Even now, the Hindu community does not revere inter-caste unions. The many castes in the Hindu social structure are separated into a hierarchy of ascent and descent one above the other. This hierarchy governs rank and touchability. In this system, Brahmins are at the top and untouchables are at the bottom. This very inflated attitude of superiority is seen in the south. A person of a high caste may be profaned simply by the touch, and sometimes even by the shadow, of a member of a lower caste. The strict adherence to the untouchability system has led to the labeling of some low castes in Hindu society as "untouchables," who were subsequently prohibited from using places of worship, cremation grounds, educational institutions, public roads, hotels, etc., and were also prohibited from residing in urban areas [3], [4].

DISCUSSION

Caste Relationships and Kinship

The Indian Hindu family system and caste structure are closely intertwined. The endogamous structure of the caste system is the only explanation for this link. Since members of a caste are chosen based on their rank, it is essentially a closed system of stratification. In other words, a person automatically joins the caste into which they are born. As a result, it has a given status. Even while the caste system has seen some social mobility as a result of Sankritization, urbanization, etc., this simply represents a positional shift rather than a structural one. Regardless of their standing as an individual, people nonetheless belong to their caste. The caste group's social mobility in the local hierarchy of the society, which is just a changing of its place from one level to another, is where any movement in the structure happens. An individual's relationship to other members of their society as a member of that community is based on their sense of kinship. There are two different kinds of kinship ties. One is affinal, whereas the other is consanguinal. Blood relationships such as mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, etc. are known as consanguinal linkages. Affinal links are connections made by

marriage, such as those between husband and wife, a brother and a sister, etc.

In India kinship is often analyzed in terms of subcaste internal organization. The greatest caste subgroup, or subcaste, is responsible for practically all of the caste's duties, including endogamy, social control, etc. For instance, there are several subcastes within the Brahmin caste, including endogamy and social control. As an instance, there are several subcastes within the Brahmin caste, such the Gaur Brahmins, the Kanyakubjis, the Saraswat Brahmins, etc. These Brahmin subgroups make up the core group that functions well enough to facilitate social contact, marriage, and other activities. The Sarjupari Brahmins of North India are people who originally resided beyond the river Saryu or Ghaghara, for example. These parts, however, are also split and have a regional meaning as well.

The caste population of a single village makes up the effective caste group, but the effective subcaste group within which marriage and kinship occur is made up of residents of the area around the village, which has several settlements. Due to endogamy, which is practiced in India and restrictions on social interaction, a person would often marry within their sub-caste group or their caste group, which typically extends beyond their village and into a broader area. The kinship systems used in different regions of India are distinct from one another in many ways. The kinship systems in the Northern, Central, and Southern regions may be distinguished, though, generally speaking. North India is a relatively big territory in and of itself, with many varieties of kinship systems. The area between the Vindhya in the south and the Himalayas in the north is included in this region. Since everyone of one's caste in a village is regarded as a brother or sister, or an uncle or aunt, a person marries outside the community in this area. Marriage is not permitted inside the community. In actuality, a man's village might be encircled by an exogamous circle with a radius of four miles [5].

In this area, hypergamy is prevalent, when a guy marries a woman from a clan that is less important than his own. In other words, a girl marries into a higher status group within a subcaste after moving from a lower status group. The result of village exogamy and hypergamy is a geographically wider variety of relationships. Affinal and matrilineal linkages connect many settlements to one another. The clans, lineages, and kutumbs are all a component of the familial organization while also being a part of the caste's internal structure. These groupings are

continuously growing and diversifying throughout time. In the northern area, patrilocal, patrilineal, and patriarchal family structures predominate. The patrilineal method is used in this area, and the lineage is traced via the male. It is patriarchal since the male head of the household holds the position of power, and it is patrilocal because the bride is taken to live with the bride-groom's father following their marriage. Generally speaking, the "four-clan" norm of marriage is adhered to among the majority of castes.

Therefore, marriage between cousins who are even two or three degrees apart is considered incestuous in the northern area. Village exogamy is a common practice among most castes in the area, particularly among the Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya castes, as was already noted. In Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi, this reign is referred to as the Sassan rule. Caste endogamy is a widespread tradition in Central India which encompasses Rajputana, the Vindhya, Gujrat, Maharashtra, and Odisha. The Rajputs of this area are mostly hyperglycemic, and exogamy in villages is also present. Cross-cousin marriages are still common among various caste families in this area, particularly in Gujarat and Maharashtra. A guy has a propensity to wed the daughter of his mother's brother in this culture. However, it is frowned upon to wed the daughter of the father's sister. The desire for a certain kind of cross-cousin union seems to shift away from the northern region's taboo against marrying cousins of any class. Therefore, this choice in many respects shows a deeper connection to the customs of the southern area [6], [7].

The Dravidian languages are spoken in the southern states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. In that there are essentially favorable norms for marriage here, this area differs from the northern and central regions of India. In contrast to most of the northern regions, where men know who they cannot marry, men in this region know who they must marry. With a few exceptions, such as the Malabar, much of the Southern area adheres to the patrilineal family structure. Gotras, which are exogamous social groupings, are also present here. The exogamous clans in the north vary in that a caste in a village is considered to be of one patriclan, and as a result, marriage is not permitted inside a village. Sometimes even a collection of villages are thought to have been founded by a single patrilineage, making marriage between them illegal.

A gotra is not connected to a specific hamlet or region in the South. There may be many intermarrying clans that coexist in a same village region and have done so

for many years. As a result, unlike the social groupings seen in north Indian villages, those created as a result of this kind of marriage pattern in the South exhibit a centripetal (moving towards a center) as opposed to a centrifugal (moving away from the center) tendency. A caste is split into many gotras in the South. Obligations about daughter giving and receiving are brought about by the first marriage.

Small endogamous circles are therefore discovered inside exogamous clans to fulfill interfamily commitments, and many reciprocal relationships are discovered in South Indian towns. In addition to castes, which follow a patrilineal system of kinship in the southern area, we also find several castes that follow a matrilineal system of kinship, such the Nayars of the Malabar district. A mother, her sisters, brothers, daughters, sons, and the daughters and sons of her daughter make up their home. Property among them is transferred from the mother to the daughter. However, even under this arrangement, the brother retains control since he looks after the sister's children and administers the land; in this system, husbands only get to see their spouses. Tharavad is the name of the matrilineal Nayar home. The caste group known as "Nayar" is large and does not all adhere to the same familial structure. Because of how closely related the caste system and the kinship system are, we are unable to fully comprehend either one without also comprehending the specifics of the other. In this part, we have discussed the geographical differences in the kinship pattern that are connected to the caste system.

Sub-Caste

A sub-caste is seen as a more compact social group inside a caste. Typically, we find that there is just one sub-caste present in a village context. A village's late arrivals are indicated by a greater number of sub-castes. Thus, a sub-caste effectively serves as a proxy for the village's caste system. On the other hand, there are a lot of sub-castes in a region's larger context. Kumbhar, a group of potters, is one instance from Maharastra. The subcaste, which is the smallest endogamous group, uses systems like panchayats to control members' behavior in a traditional environment. The distinction between caste and subcaste is not apparent in a hamlet, but it is apparent in a region. The ideal life path outlined for Hindus in the scriptures will be discussed in the part that follows.

DISCUSSION

Modifications to the Caste System

Historical research by academics like Romila Thapar, A.R. Desai, and M.N. Indian society was never stagnant, as Srinivas has shown. Sanskritization, migration, and conversion to another religion were the three primary traditional routes for social mobility. Tribes or lower castes might advance in the caste system by gaining material riches and political influence. By adopting the lifestyle and traditions of a higher caste, they could so claim higher caste rank and sanskritize their way of life. In rural regions, caste relationship with occupation has hardly altered. Although they may still serve as priests, Brahmins are now engaged in agriculture. Supervisory farmers are often employed by landowning dominating castes that are found on both the high and middle rungs of the caste structure. Small and marginal peasants and members of other lower castes who do not own land are wage laborers in agriculture. Castes of artisans like carpenters and ironworkers continue to work in their respective fields. However, urban migration has made it possible for people from all castes, including untouchables, to pursue non-traditional careers in manufacturing, trade, and services [8], [9].

In rural places, intercaste marriage is almost nonexistent. Due to the existence of tea shops in villages that are frequented by almost all castes, restrictions on food, drink, and smoking are still in place but to a lesser extent. Untouchability is no longer as strong, and clothing differentiation now more closely reflects caste standing than untouchability. People go to cities and return with money, which has altered the established social order. Since the advent of representative parliamentary politics, caste has taken on a new significance in the functioning of interest groups and associations in politics. We discover that caste has undergone adaptive adaptations as a result. Rural communities still practice its traditional aspects, such as connubial (matrimonial), commensal (dining together), and ceremonial. The fundamental traits of the castes, which have impacted social interactions, are still in effect. However, as a result of their gaining political and economic power, the status quo of the low and intermediate castes has shifted. In various parts of India the high castes' predominance has given way to differentiation of these statuses, thus high castes no longer necessarily hold a greater position of power or class.

Casteism's Causes

Casteism is a partial or biased allegiance to a certain caste. It is an unwavering devotion to one's own caste or subcaste that has no regard for the interests of other castes and only the social, political, economic, or other interests of its own group in mind. The following are some causes of casteism:

Sense of Caste Status: The desire of members of a certain caste to increase the status of their own caste is the most significant factor contributing to casteism. Every caste gives its members every advantage possible to advance their social rank in order to accomplish this goal.

Endogamy or Marriage Restrictions: Under the caste system, the prohibitions on marriage transform each caste into a monogamous society in which every member sees himself as connected to all the others in some way. As a result, caste solidarity grows, which in turn promotes caste.

Urbanization: As cities and towns grew, people from all castes were able to congregate there in huge numbers.

Modernization: Better communication and transportation tools have contributed to the dissemination of misinformation. Due to this development, caste members who were previously separated by distance have begun to form close ties. Through the media of newspapers, journals, and the internet, the perception of casteism is also readily conveyed.

The Life Cycle's Four Stages

Hindus are required to go through four distinct ashrams (stages) throughout their lives as part of their dharma. The first Ashram, known as the brahmacharya ashram (the educational stage), is where women of the first three varna, Sudra, and the fourth Varna are prohibited. Marriage marks the end of it. The grihasthashram is the name given to the second stage of existence. A guy raises a family, makes a job, and goes about his everyday personal and societal responsibilities throughout this time. Following this, a man progressively reaches the vanaprasthashram, the third stage of existence. The householder gives up his responsibilities in the home and focuses his attention on his religion during this period. His ties to his family are compromised. In this ashram, a man leaves his worries and responsibilities as a householder behind and retreats into the forest, either with or without his wife. The sanyasashram stage is where the last portion of a Hindu's life starts. By moving to the forest and spending the remainder of one's life in search of moksha, one tries to completely distance themselves from the outside world and its concerns at this stage.

The Varnashram is a model that is not required but is advised, similar to the Varna system.

CONCLUSION

The caste system still has a significant influence on political dynamics, economic possibilities, and social interactions in modern India. Through affirmative action laws and legal safeguards for underprivileged populations, efforts have been undertaken to combat caste-based discrimination and advance social justice. Understanding the caste system's historical growth and obstacles in advancing equality and social peace can help one better understand the complexity of Indian society. For India to become a more inclusive and fair society, it is essential to recognize the varied experiences and ambitions of various caste groups.

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An Overview on Purpose of Samskaras

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ABSTRACT: *Samskaras, a Sanskrit term meaning "impressions" or "sacraments," are a vital aspect of Hinduism that encompass a range of rituals and ceremonies conducted throughout an individual's life. This abstract provides an overview of the purpose and significance of samskaras in Hindu culture. Samskaras serve as transformative rites of passage, marking significant milestones in an individual's life journey. These rituals are intended to purify, bless, and spiritually empower the individual, facilitating their physical, emotional, and spiritual growth. From birth to death, samskaras encompass a series of ceremonies and sacraments. They include prenatal rituals (Garbhadhana), the naming ceremony (Namakarana), initiation into formal education (Upanayana), marriage (Vivaha), and funeral rites (Antyeshthi), among others. Each samskara holds unique religious and cultural significance, with specific rituals, prayers, and blessings associated with it.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Indian Culture, Religion, Samskaras.*

INTRODUCTION

Samskaras serve a variety of purposes. Invoking blessings and direction from the gods, they first create a link between the human and the divine. Samskaras also strengthen ties between family members, priests, and the larger community since they often engage them in the rites. They provide opportunities for celebration, community, and support. Samskaras also assist people in upholding their moral and social obligations. For instance, marriage samskaras highlight the value of family, reproduction, and lineage continuance in addition to sanctifying the union of two people. Similar to this, burial ceremonies provide closure and ease the soul's transition to the next world. Samskaras also offer cultural and spiritual education, transferring moral and spiritual principles to succeeding generations [1]. They inculcate a feeling of self, moral behavior, respect for the divine, and an understanding of the interconnection of all things via rituals, prayers, and texts.

Samskaras serve a greater purpose than only the person, enhancing Hindu society as a whole. They reinforce the continuity of cultural traditions, build ties within the society, and provide a framework for moral behavior and spiritual growth. Samskaras serve to record important life events, invoke blessings, promote spiritual development, and protect cultural norms. While exact rituals and interpretations of samskaras may differ among cultures and Hindu sects, their essential goal is always the same. Samskaras serve a role that sheds light on Hinduism's social, religious, and cultural dynamics [2]. These ceremonies demonstrate the deep role that rites of passage have in

creating personal and social identities, fostering spiritual wellbeing, and preserving Hindu culture's rich legacy.

Samskaras

Man has always tried to become a better version of himself. He has begun to reflect more deeply on his bodily, mental, and spiritual well-being as a result of this realization, which is unique to humanity. The Vedic seers recommended a series of rituals known as Samskaras in order to achieve this. The closest equivalent in English is sacrament, which is tied to the concept of a "rite of passage." In texts of classical Sanskrit literature such as those by Raghuvamsha, Kumarsambhava, Abhijnan-Shakuntal, Hitopadesha, and Manu Smruti, the word "samskara" is used to denote education, cultivation, training, refinement, perfection, grammatical purity, polishing, embellishment, decoration, a purificatory rite, a sacred rite, consecration, and many other things [3], [4].

The Reason for Samskaras

Cultural

The multiplicity of samskara-related ceremonies and rituals aid in the creation and development of personality. According to the Parashar Smruti, "Just as a picture is painted with various colors, so the character of a person is formed by undergoing various samskaras." As a result, the Hindu sages realized the importance of actively directing and shaping people's character development rather than letting it develop randomly.

Spiritual

The seers believe that samskaras give life a greater degree of purity. Samskaras are rituals that purify the material body of its impurities. The whole body is dedicated and prepared as a suitable home for the atma. According to the Atri Smruti, a man is born a Shudra, becomes a Dvija twice born by completing the Upanayana Samskara, a Vipra an inspired poet by learning Vedic literature, and a Brahmin by realizing Brahman (God). The samskaras are a kind of spiritual practice, or sadhana an external regimen for enhancing one's own spirituality. As a result, a Hindu's whole life is a huge sacrament. We may add that after transcending the cycle of births and deaths, the atma attains Paramatma - the Lord Purushottam - as stated in the Isha Upanishad, which states that the ultimate objective of the samskaras is "to transcend the bondage of samsara and cross the ocean of death." Despite the fact that different scriptures prescribe varying numbers of samskaras, we will focus on the sixteen on which experts agree:

DISCUSSION**Samskaras Antenatal****Garbhadan (Conception)**

The word "Garbha" implies womb. "Dan" stands for giving. A woman is the recipient of the man's seed in this. For this, the Gruhyasutras and Smritis recommend particular circumstances and observances in order to guarantee a progeny that is healthy and clever. It was believed that having children was essential for paying off one's obligations to one's ancestors. The Taittiriya Upanishad provides yet another justification for having children. The student asks his instructor for permission to depart after completing his Vedic studies. After that, the instructor bestows onto him some life-long wisdom. Prajaatantu ma vyavyachchhetseehi, which translates to "Do not terminate one's lineage; let it continue (by having children)," is one of the precepts.

Pumsavana (Male Gender Issue)

The third samskara, Pumsavana, and Simantonayana, are only carried out during the woman's first issue. When the moon is in a masculine constellation, notably the Tishyanakshatra, during the third or fourth month of pregnancy, pumsavana is done. This represents a boy kid. As a result, "male procreation" is the literal meaning of the name "pumsavana." Sushrut, an ancient Ayurvedic rishi, outlined the process in his Sushruta Samhita: "Having pounded milk with any of

these herbs Sulakshmana, Batasurga, Sahadevi, and Vishwadeva one should instil three or four drops of juice in the right nostril of the pregnant woman. She should not spit out the juice."

Simantonayana (Hair Parting)

This is called as Khodo bhavavo in Gujarati. Here, the husband divides his wife's hair. This samskara's religious meaning is to bestow wealth on the mother and long life on the unborn child. It also wards off negative energy. Interesting and sophisticated is the physiological relevance. According to Sushrut, the fifth month of pregnancy is when the fetus's brain begins to develop. Therefore, the woman must use the greatest caution to give birth to a healthy kid. Sushrut gave specific instructions, advising the expectant woman to abstain from all forms of effort, including resting during the day and staying up at night, as well as abstaining from purgatives, phlebotomy (bloodletting by slashing veins), fear, and delaying natural excretions [5], [6].

In addition to samskaras that have an impact on the fetus's physical health, old texts include instances of samskaras that have been learned and imprinted on them. According to the Mahabharata, Abhimanyu, Arjun's son, picked up war tactics while still within his mother Subhadra's womb. While still within Kayadhu's womb, the infant devotee Prahlad of the Shrimad Bhagvatam became aware of the magnificence of Lord Narayan. The contrary is also true, just as a fetus might pick up beneficial spiritual samskaras from the outside world. It may undoubtedly be impacted by some of the mother's bad behaviours. Today, we are aware of the harmful effects that drugs, alcohol, some medicines, and smoking have on the fetus. The Varaha Smruti forbids the consumption of meat when pregnant. The Smritis thus commanded the husband to use every precaution to protect his pregnant wife's bodily, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. He is forbidden by the Kalavidhan from traveling abroad, participating in combat, constructing a new home, and taking a sea bath.

Youngsters' Samskaras**Jatakarma (Birth Rites)**

These rites are carried out at the child's birth. The freshly born are said to be particularly affected by the moon. The planets' constellations, or nakshatras, which also affect the degree of auspiciousness. The jatakarmas are conducted to prevent the infant from suffering harm if delivery happens during an unfavorable arrangement. Additionally, the father

would ask for the Brahmanishtha Satpurush's benediction.

Namkaran (Giving Names)

The kid is named on a day determined by caste custom based on the constellation pattern at birth. As a continual reminder of the sacred principles the name stands for, children are typically called after avatars, deities, holy places or rivers, saints, etc. in Hinduism. When choosing names for their children in the Swaminarayan Sampraday, the devotees go to Pramukh Swami Maharaj or one of the other senior sadhus.

Nishkrama (First Appearance)

The youngster is permitted to see the moon and the fire during the third month. The father or maternal uncle brings the infant to the mandir for the Lord's darshan for the first time in the fourth month. Annaprashan (First feeding) is the next significant samskara. For a boy, this procedure is carried out in the sixth, eighth, tenth, or twelfth month. This is done in the fifth, seventh, or ninth month for a girl. Cooked rice with ghee is the dish that is provided. Some sutras recommend combining this with honey. The wise elders achieved two significant goals by endorsing this samskara. First, the kid is properly weaned away from the mother. It also advises the mother to quit nursing the infant. Because of this, many ignorant mothers continue to breastfeed their children out of love, not realizing that they are not benefiting either herself or the kid.

Karnavedh (Earlobe Piercing)

On the 12th or 16th day, the 6th, 7th, or 8th month, or the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, or 9th year, the child's earlobes are pierced. Sushrut stated, "The ears of a child should be pierced for both decoration and protection from conditions such as hydrocoele and hernia. One sutra recommends a goldsmith pierce the ears, while Sushrut advocates a surgeon. For a boy, the right earlobe is pierced first, and for a girl, the left. Today, this samskara is only common in some states of India and in girls, this [7].

Academic Samskaras

Vidyarambh (Learn the Alphabet)

This samskara, also known by the names Akshararambha, Aksharlekhan, Aksharavikaran, and Aksharavishkaran, is performed at the age of five and is required before beginning Vedic study, or Vedarambh. After bathing, the child sits facing west while the acharya (teacher) sits facing east. Saffron

and rice are scattered on a silver plank. The child is made to write letters on

Yagnopavit (Sacred thread initiation) Upanayan

The son enters studentship and a life of perfect discipline, which involves brahmacharya (celibacy), leaving the guardianship of his parents to be cared for by the acharya at the age of eight, and is initiated by the acharya with the sacred thread known as janoi or yagnopavit. This samskara is performed by Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas. Among all the cultural systems of the world, none have advocated such a lofty and stringent ideal for studentship as the Hindu samskara. Upa means "near," and Nayan means "to take (him) to," i.e. to take the son to the teacher. Like the parents, the acharya will mold the student with love and patience into a man of character and inculcate in him the invaluable knowledge of the Vedas. The three strings of the janoi represent the three gunas: sattva (reality), rajas (passion), and tamas (darkness), as well as the reminder that the wearer has three debts to the seers, ancestors, and gods that must be paid. The three strings are tied by a knot known as the brahmagranthi, which represents Brahma (creator), Vishnu (sustainer), and Shiva (leveller

Vedarambh (Vedic Learning at its Beginning)

It appears that although upanayan marked the beginning of education, it did not coincide with Vedic study, so a separate samskara was felt necessary to initiate Vedic study. In this samskara, each student, according to his lineage, masters his own branch of the Vedas. This samskara was not mentioned in the earliest lists of the Dharma Sutras, which instead listed the four Vedic vows - Ved Vrats.

Godaan's beard was shaved by Keshant

This samskara, also known as Godaan because it entails giving a cow to the acharya and gifts to the barber, is one of the four Ved Vrats. As the other three faded, keshant itself became a separate samskara.

Samavartan (Final Examination)

The ritual bath known as Awabhruth Snan, which is sacrificial because it marks the end of the lengthy observance of brahmacharya and symbolizes the student's crossing of the ocean of learning, is performed as part of this samskara at the conclusion of the brahmacharya phase, which is the end of studentship. "Sama vartan" means "returning home from the house of the Acharya [8]." Vidy

Of course, the student is not in a position to pay fees; one sutra states that the teacher's debt is

insurmountable: "Even the earth containing the seven continents is not sufficient for the guru-dakshina." However, the student must obtain the acharya's permission before taking the bath because doing so certifies the student as a person fit in learning, habit, and character for marriage. Those students who wished to remain as lifelong students adhering to brahmacharya would remain with the acharya. Today, this requires accepting a spiritual guru - an Ekantik Satpurush and becoming a sadhu. The student thus skips the next two ashrams, to enter sannyas. He would elaborate with the impressive statements, known as Dikshant Pravachan, noted in the Taittiriya Upanishad.

Marriage

This is the most important of all the Hindu Samskaras. The Smrutis laud the gruhastha (householder) ashram as the highest, for it is the central support of the other three ashrams. Manu enjoins, "Having spent the first quarter of one's life in the guru's house, the second quarter in one's own house with the wife, and the third quarter in the forest, one should take sannyas in the fourth, casting away every worldly tie." (Manu Smriti). By marriage an individual is able to achieve the four purusharths (endeavors) of life: dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kama (desire) and moksha (salvation). He is also able to pay off ancestral debt by having children. Procreation for children is also a primary purpose of marriage. In addition to being a religious sacrament, Hindu marriage is also regarded as an important social institution. For developing a stable and ideal society, marriage has been regarded as an essential element in all cultures of the world. A society without loyal marital ties tends to degrade. It is said that promiscuity was one reason for the downfall of the Romans. By marriage, both an individual and society, while remaining within the moral norms, can progress together. Simultaneously it does not cause harm to others nor infringe upon one's independence.

Antyeshti (Rituals of death)

The rishis and Dharma Sutras agreed on the ultimate goal of life, which they enjoined in the four ashrams - stages of life. The last samskara in a Hindu's life is antyeshti. While the Rig Veda considers antyeshti, the Yajur Veda believes vivaha to be the sixteenth samskara. Even if it is done by a person's family members after death, it is significant since the worth of the afterlife is greater than that of the present. The Brahmin priests' assistance is used to carefully carry out the concluding procedures [9], [10].

CONCLUSION

Samskaras like ours have analogs in various religious traditions across the globe, including baptism, confirmation, holy marriage, barmitzvaahs, and circumcision in Judaism, navjot in the Parsi faith, and circumcision in Islam. In their own unique ways, each of these is significant in the lives of the followers of various faiths. The sixteen Hindu samskaras used to be an essential component of Hindu life. Only a select number of these have persisted in current times due to the invasion of modern life, particularly in metropolitan India: chaul, upanayan, vivaha, and antyeshti. However, because of their spiritual significance, these samskaras 'samskarize' (edify) all facets of a person's existence. Each samskara ceremony elevates the individual's psychological state by making them the center of attention. This boosts the person's sense of self-worth and improves interactions with people around them. The samskaras bring together family members, close friends, and other near relatives, which strengthens the bonds between family members. The unit therefore strengthens and harmonizes the social structure. A healthy society with a strong cultural identity that can readily develop, promote, and uphold its traditional ideas, practices, morals, and values is the result of this. This has been one of the main factors in the Hindu Dharma's ability to endure the pressures and assaults of historical invasions and upheavals from outside. Through their personal encounters with the Divine, the ancient rishis and sages prescribed the sixteen samskaras for the benefit of humanity's future generations. They were woven into the Hindu people's way of life. From conception till after death, they are "outward acts" for interior or spiritual favor. Today, vivaha is the crucial samskara that, if practiced with its pure and high feelings, would decide the cohesiveness and continuation of Hindu traditions wherever in the globe.

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Joint Family: Characteristics of a Joint Family

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ABSTRACT: A joint family, also known as an extended family, is a social structure commonly found in many cultures, particularly in India. This abstract explores the characteristics of a joint family and its significance in shaping familial relationships and social dynamics. A joint family typically consists of multiple generations living together under one roof, including grandparents, parents, children, and sometimes extended relatives. The family members share common living spaces, resources, and responsibilities, fostering a sense of unity, mutual support, and collective decision-making. One of the key characteristics of a joint family is its emphasis on interdependence and cooperation. Family members contribute to the household chores, financial obligations, and the overall well-being of the family unit. This collective effort promotes a strong sense of belonging and shared responsibilities. Respect for elders is another prominent characteristic of a joint family. The elder members, often the grandparents, hold a position of authority and wisdom. They play a crucial role in guiding and mentoring the younger generation, imparting cultural traditions, values, and moral teachings.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Indian Culture, Joint Family, Religion, Samskaras.

INTRODUCTION

The purushartha are four objectives for human existence that are stated in Hindu literature. The word purushartha not only refers to what the goals of life should be, but also to what those goals are as a consequence of a person's psychological inclinations. In that same sequence, dharma, artha, kama, and moksha make up the purushartha. First and foremost, everyone must firmly adhere to dharma in order to observe the laws of nature. Dharma is the preservation of social order, the stability of society, and the wellbeing of all people. And everything that advances the achievement of this goal is referred to as "dharma." The pursuit of riches, or artha, is seen as the main goal of life since it is essential to human survival. Before one may live well, one must first live. The completion of Artha, the main goal of life, is the only way that all other purushrthas may be attained. Artha is the cornerstone upon which the whole edifice of life has been erected. money is obtained by dharmic deeds, and money must be used to the upkeep of dharma. Kama, or passions of various intensities, meaning desires. Artha and kama come about as a consequence of dharma. Man acknowledges that artha and kama fulfill man's psychological needs and are, in essence, the two basic desires of every person. It is indicated that one's aspirations must fall within their means and adhere to dharmic principles.

The term "moksha" now refers to either the release of the soul from slavery or the ultimate liberation from rebirth and death. Advaitic thought holds that the eradication of incorrect knowledge (ignorance) leads

to moksha. The goal and resolution of man's suffering and servitude is self-knowledge. The Upanishads provide various further reasons in favor of the awareness of Self. The world has a natural inclination to aid human souls in their spiritual awakening. The balance between physical things, living plants, sentient animals, and intellectual humans is maintained by the natural forces of the cosmos. It takes time and effort to go from human awareness to divine (transcendental) consciousness. Normally, it is not possible to go from a human to a divine throughout one lifetime. Life is a continuous journey that continues through subsequent incarnations till Self awareness is attained [1], [2].

Therefore, according to Hinduism, a person's relationships with other people, his family, the community or society in which he lives or comes into contact, his village and his country, as well as with all of animate and inanimate creation, are determined by his relationships with the ultimate principle of the Universal or Primal Cause. For Hindus, self-discipline and education are a part of every aspect of a person's life. He must now go through four phases, or four classes of training, in order to complete this education and practice self-discipline. These levels are known as the Ashrams. Every element, level, and aspect of the Ashrams must also be explained in terms of the previously established relationships between man and God. As a result, in this instance, we construct the superstructure of man's worldly career on a supernatural foundation. Thus, dharma must be used as the primary definition of earthly life, and dharma must be understood specifically in terms of karma.

Therefore, the ashram plan describes our dharma as a life of worldliness, of samsara, before it and beyond its bounds; in practice, it aims to establish the implications of dharma in terms of karma. Only males from higher castes are required to follow this plan of progression; wives are expected to assist and support their husbands in carrying it out properly.

Manu believed that a harmonious administration or coordination of the three (trivarga), namely dharma, artha, and kama, was necessary for the welfare of mankind. According to him, some believe that dharma and artha make up human well-being, while others believe that kama and artha are where it can be found. Some believe that dharma alone may provide human well-being, while the last group claims that artha alone constitutes human well-being on earth. However, the proper view is that the harmonious coordination of the three is what serves humankind's best interests. As a result, the purusharthas are often concerned with both the individual and the collective. They define the appropriate relationships between an individual's actions and those of the group; they enunciate the types of relationships between the individual and the group; and they implicitly and explicitly state the improper relationships in order to help the individual avoid them. As a result, the purushartha has power over each person and each group, as well as how they interact.

It is important to keep in mind that when we speak to artha and kama as purusharthas, we only mean them in the finest possible sense that is, in their right proportions. Artha refers to the issue and actions associated with the discovery, creation, collection, preservation, and organization of the material requirements of existence and all that goes along with it. Kama also refers to the knowledge, proper functioning, organization, and control of the sex and reproductive aspects with respect to both the individual and the collective. As we said before, the term "Kama" may refer to all of a person's inborn drives and wants [3], [4].

The attributes that regulate the appropriate functioning and administration of the relationships between the individual and the community as well as between the inner man and the outward man seem to be governed by dharma, who appears to be the arbitrator, conscience keeper, director, and interpreter of these relationships. Therefore, Dharma is the owner of the balance on which artha and kama must be judged, applied, and distributed. On the other hand, Moksha seems to be primarily focused on the person. Perhaps it alludes to the attractiveness of the inner man to the

independent person. The definition of the struggle, hope, and rationale for moksha inside the individual is probably too personal. The inner personality of the individual, at its best, is identified by him not only with the group, nor only with the society, nor even with the entire human race, but with the entire creation, animate and inanimate, seen and unseen, which includes all of these and is still much more than all of these. This is important to keep in mind from the Hindu perspective. Given these factors, the Hindu objective of moksha does not have a limited individual perspective and should not be sought alone and directly by a person until all of his societal debts (rinah) or duties have been properly paid.

Relatives in India

The term "joint family" refers to the big familial unit that makes up the traditional Indian family. A joint family is one where at least two generations live under a single roof or many roofs that share a common hearth. The line's immovable property is owned jointly by all of the members. This family is often patriarchal and patrilineal, meaning that the head of the home and property administrator is the father or the eldest male member, and the headship passes down via the male line. There are a lot of nuclear families, which are made up of a woman, a husband, and children, in contemporary communities. Additionally patrilineal and patriarchal, these families. But in many places, such as Kerala and the northeastern states of Nagaland and Meghalaya, families are matrilineal, with the headship descended in the female line. The family is the fundamental building block of society, regardless of its makeup. Shradhdha, the custom of remembering the ancestors, ties the family members together. Family was defined by "Shradhdha," and only "sapindas," or members of the family unit, were permitted to attend the ritual. Family members felt secure in their relationships with one another because of this. In times of need, a man may turn to his extended family for support. The family relationship was strengthened when the duties were shared during festivals and weddings.

Indian families have historically been regulated by two schools of sacred law and traditions. 'Mitakshara' and 'Dayabhaga' are the inspiration for these. While the rest of India typically abides by "Mitakshara," the majority of households in Bengal and Assam observe the "Dayabhaga" regulations. The divine rule provided for the dissolution of the enormous and impractical joint families. These splits happened after the patriarch's death. Since individual family members' properties were not included in the joint family

property, at least since the Middle Ages, such properties could not be separated. The Constitution stipulated that each religious group would be subject to its own religion personal laws in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, succession, adoption, guardianship, child custody, and maintenance throughout the post-independence era. As a result, the 1955–1956 Hindu Acts, which were codified, control the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and Jain communities. Families of Muslims, Christians, and Parsis each have a unique set of personal regulations based on their own religions [5].

A joint family is a group of kins that spans multiple generations and is headed by a head. Members of a joint family share a home, a hearth, and property and are responsible for one another. Common living quarters, a shared kitchen, shared assets, a common place of worship, adherence to the pater familial rule, and awareness of the interdependence of family members are the main characteristics of a joint family. One of the surviving social structures in Indian civilization, which has been changing through time, has been the joint family. I, according. According to Karve, "A joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, eat food cooked at one hearth, hold property in common, participate in common worship, and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred." In addition to parents, children, brothers, and step-brothers, a joint family may occasionally include ascendants, descendants, and collaterals up to many generations. Members of a joint family may be connected to one another directly, indirectly, or both. Essentially, a family is only considered "joint" if it consists of two or more related married couples, whether they are connected directly (such as in a father-son or sometimes father-daughter connection) or indirectly (such as in a brother-sister relationship). Both of these forms correspond to the patrilineal joint family's compositional feature. A lady, her mother, and her married and unmarried daughters make up the family in matrilineal systems, which are prevalent in south west and north-eastern India. Another significant family member is the mother's brother, who oversees the matrilineal joint family matters. The female members' spouses reside with them. In Kerala, a husband who lived with his mother used to pay regular visits to the wife's home.

DISCUSSION

The following are the characteristics of a joint family:

1. Commensality the members of a joint family prepare and consume meals from the same kitchen, which gives them a sense of community.
2. Members of a combined family live together in the same home and share the same hearth as well.
3. Joint Ownership of Property a joint family's members share joint ownership of property, which may be considered the most important legal component for the definition of a joint family.

Coordination and Attitude

The ownership, creation, and consumption of wealth occur jointly in a joint family. It is a cooperative structure, comparable to a joint stock corporation, in which there is a shared property. The head of the joint family acts as a trustee, managing the family's assets with the goal of generating financial and spiritual benefits for all family members. I.P. 1964's Desai and K.M. According to Kapadia (1958), jointness has to be analyzed from a functional standpoint. Fulfilling commitments to family members is important in a functionally united family. They identify as members of a certain "family," participate in rites and ceremonies, provide financial and other forms of assistance, and uphold the rules of communal life. They also preserve a similar family spirit.

Ritual Ties

A key aspect of jointness is seen to be the ceremonial ties that bind a joint family. Therefore, a joint family is connected through remembrance of the deceased ancestors on a regular basis. The oldest male joint family member honors the spirit of his deceased mother or father by presenting the 'pinda' (ball of cooked rice) on behalf of everyone else at the 'shraddha' ritual [6].

Worship of A Common God

Common god worship among members of a mixed family might provide another ritual tie. Each joint family has a custom in several regions of South India to worship a specific clan or local god. In both happy and difficult times, vows are made to this divinity. Marriages, the first tonsure, and other ceremonies take place in or close to the deity's temple.

Benefits of a Joint Family

The following are some benefits of the combined family:

Economic Benefit

The joint family structure provides a number of financial benefits. It hinders the division of property. The preservation of land against excessive subdivision and fragmentation. The joint family also contributes to economic output, with the male members doing tasks like irrigation, planting, and furrowing, while the female members help with the harvest and the kids graze the cattle and gather dung and firewood. The members' collaboration allows for the saving of funds that would otherwise be paid to a laborer.

Protection of Participants

The combined family may support the elderly, the crazy, the widowed, and the defenseless in addition to the children. The combined family is able to help through times of pregnancy, illness, etc. The other members of the joint family will take care of the deceased person's wife and children if he or she passes away, protecting their honor, money, and prosperity as a whole.

Personality Evolution

Members of a blended family are able to grow into their ideal selves. The older people look out for the kids and make sure they don't act in an undesired or antisocial way.

Partnership and Economy

Few, if any, other institutions cultivate cooperation and economy to the same degree as the joint family. The members have a feeling of affiliation and cultural cohesion. Spending may also be reduced significantly.

Socialism in Affluence

According to Sir Henry Maine, the head of the family serves as the trustee of the joint family, which is analogous to a business. The socialistic order of "each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" is achieved by each member of the family working to the best of his abilities while obtaining what he needs.

Modifications to the Joint Family

The united family has endured a number of adjustments recently. The following reasons may be used to explain this:

Economic Variables

The joint family structure in India has been impacted by monetarization (the introduction of currency transactions), vocational diversification for work in several fields, and technical developments (in communication and transport). People quit their customary occupations and relocated to cities or towns where jobs are available as a result of the availability

of employment in government services and the monetization. As a result, they leave their ancestral home, bringing their wives and kids with. Since gaining independence, there have been more chances for and a greater variety of jobs. Due to the constitutional need to advance gender equality, women are entering different fields of work and changing traditional roles, which has an impact on blended families [7].

Educational Variables

With the arrival of the British, a chance for higher education opened up, with all castes and communities being able to use the resources made available by them. The Hindu traditions and practices around child marriage, denying women the access to an education, protecting property rights, and mistreating widows came under scrutiny from some educated individuals. The educated wanted to get married considerably later in life, which has an impact on how joint families are structured.

Legal Aspects

Laws governing work, education, marriage, and property have a variety of effects on the family structure. The joint family was significantly impacted by labor regulations, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, and the Hindu Succession Act.

Urbanization

The Indian family structure has been impacted by the trend of urbanization. Agriculture is being replaced by non-agricultural jobs. The movement of people from rural to urban regions has impacted the joint family because of the demand on land caused by population growth, education, and the potential for better employment, healthcare, and living conditions.

Deviating from Gendered Norms

Gender equations have seen significant change in the previous century. Traditional joint households left little room for the independence of women. The burden of keeping up social relationships and home duties fell mostly on women. Women, particularly those from higher caste households, have joined the public arena with little time for housework and investment in interpersonal relationships due to the widening frontiers of women's education and employment. Smaller families are another factor in this phenomena. Although there have been many revisions to the joint family system, K.M. According to Kapadia (1972), those who moved to the metropolis still have links to their combined family in the country

and town. Their united family ethic and kinship orientation may remain even if the families move into separate homes. This is seen through the fulfillment of specific role responsibilities, such as providing material and practical support to kin. Because of the economic foundation that industrialization has given the joint family, the necessity for additional aid in a revived family business, or the ability for relatives to support one another in their aspirations for upward mobility, the joint family has been strengthened. The joint family may thus seem to be dissolving, yet it nonetheless maintains a connection between its members within certain kin groupings [8].

CONCLUSION

Close ties and emotional support are fostered through the combined family system. Children may grow up in a caring atmosphere where they get the love and attention of many different caregivers. A feeling of kinship and connection that goes beyond close family is created through lifetime ties between siblings, cousins, and extended relatives. A combined family has several benefits, including resource sharing and financial stability. The weight of individual financial obligations is shared when there are many earners and contributions, resulting in a more stable economic base. Better financial planning, joint investments, and assistance during trying times are all made possible by this community approach to money. The united family structure does, however, come with certain difficulties. Conflicts or compromises may sometimes result from juggling individual preferences and objectives with group decision-making. Family members' privacy and personal space may be restricted, and the group identity may overpower their individualism.

In conclusion, interdependence, collaboration, respect for elders, emotional attachment, and shared responsibility are characteristics of the joint family. It has many advantages, such as the maintenance of cultural values, financial stability, and mutual support, but it also has drawbacks with regard to privacy and individual liberty. The complexities of familial connections, the cultural makeup of communities, and

the value of communal living arrangements in creating social cohesion and support networks may all be better understood by understanding what makes a joint family.

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An Overview on the Marriage in India

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ABSTRACT: *Marriage is a significant institution in Indian society, encompassing diverse cultural practices, traditions, and beliefs. This study provides an overview of the institution of marriage in India highlighting its various dimensions, rituals, and societal implications. Marriage in India is considered a sacred union, not just between two individuals but also between two families. It is viewed as a lifelong commitment and a fundamental step towards building a family and continuing the lineage. The Indian wedding ceremony is a grand affair, often spanning several days and involving elaborate rituals, celebrations, and feasts. Arranged marriages, where families play a central role in finding suitable partners, have been a prevalent tradition in India. They are based on considerations such as caste, social status, education, and compatibility. However, there has been a gradual shift towards more love marriages, where individuals choose their partners based on personal preferences and compatibility. Marriage customs and rituals vary across different regions and religions in India. Hindu weddings, for example, involve rituals like the exchange of garlands (varmala), circling the sacred fire (pheras), and applying vermilion (sindoor) on the bride's forehead. Similarly, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, and other religious communities have their unique wedding traditions and ceremonies. Marriage in India is not just a union between two individuals but also a merging of families, which brings social, economic, and cultural considerations into play. It often involves dowry practices, where the bride's family provides gifts or financial contributions to the groom's family, although such practices have been legally discouraged.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the oldest and most important social institutions is marriage. It has always been responsible for upholding discipline and order in human society. Different societies have different forms, natures, and processes for it. Despite these variations, this institution has a number of globally shared components and roles. Marriage is a "relation of one or more men to one or more women, which is recognized by custom or law and involves certain rights and duties both in case of parties entering the union and in case of the children born from it," according to Edward Westermarck. It basically refers to a set of laws and guidelines that specify who will wed whom, how the marriage union will be established under what circumstances and when it will occur, what the rights and obligations of the parties to the union will be, and how the union will be dissolved. It satisfies the husband's and wife's physical, social, psychological, and spiritual goals and ambitions. Marriage is a legally recognized and normatively required union of at least two people at least one male and one female that establishes and specifies the sexual, financial, and other obligations that one has to the other. Marriage establishes a man and woman as husband and wife in social and legal contexts. In society, children born out of marriage are accepted as

legitimate offspring. Different socio-religious and cultural groups in India have their own traditional ideas, standards, and practices around marriage [1], [2]. Let's look at some of the more prominent forms:

Hindu Weddings in India

The book perspective and field view of marriage must be distinguished. Hindu societies are distinctive from other groups in that they have their own marital customs. Hindu marriage is more than just a relationship between a man and a woman that is accepted by society. It also includes a theological and heavenly component in addition to the social penalty. The fact that a Hindu marriage is a holy union and a religious ritual is more significant. Its goal is to improve people's spiritual growth in addition to providing them with bodily pleasure. According to K.M. Kapadia, a Hindu marriage is a legally recognized union between a man and a woman with the goals of dharma, reproduction, sexual pleasure, and the fulfillment of specific responsibilities. The continuation of the family life is the main goal of marriage, according to P.H. Prabhu. Marriage creates an unbreakable tie between the woman and the husband that endures beyond death. Sociologists have observed that marital relationships in India are generally stable.

Goals of a Hindu Wedding

Following are some goals of Hindu marriage in India that have been addressed by sociologists and indologists.

- (1) Hindu marriage is intended to fulfill specific religious requirements as a sacrament. The woman and the husband swear to live together while the marriage is in progress. The four Ashramas, or life phases, that a typical Hindu goes through are Brahmacharya (student life), Grihastha (family life), Vanaprastha (retired life), and Sannyasa (renunciation). A Hindu receives a sacrament and makes a pledge at the start of each of these Ashramas. This leads to one's physical and mental purification. The path to Grihastha Ashrama begins with marriage.
- (2) Hindus must get married in order to fulfill their religious obligations, including rati (sexual pleasure), praja (religious practice), and reproduction. Hindu marriage is fundamentally about upholding dharma in line with 'varna', 'jati', and 'kula' traditions.
- (3) According to the Hindus, marriage, or vivah, is one of the Samskara, or sacraments, that sanctify the body. A woman needs it much more since marriage is the sole important samskara in her life.
- (4) A Hindu Grihastha is required to perform daily fire sacrifices, such as Deva Yajna, Bhut Yajna, and Pitriyajna, by reciting Vedic mantras every day, offering ghee or clarified butter in fire, providing some food to various animals, showing hospitality to visitors, and performing shradha, or offering of pinda or rice balls to ancestors, as appropriate. A guy cannot carry out these responsibilities without his wife's full cooperation.
- (5) The idea of three religious debts, or Rinas, is held by Hindus. Pitri Rina, Daiv Rina, and Guru Rina are these. To pay back Pitri Rina, one must be married, and the person pays it back by having a son. The role of a woman is crucial for carrying out Grihastha Dharma and carrying out religious ceremonies. Hindus refer to their wives as Ardhangini [3].

DISCUSSION

Hindu Marriage Forms

Eight types of marriage were described in Hindu texts. include the following:

Vivah Bramha

The Hindus consider this to be the ultimate and most desired marriage. In this kind of union, the father of the bride chooses the most deserving husband for his daughter, who is given in kanyadaan, based on his character and learning ability. These days, it is often referred to as samajik vivah or Kanyadaan vivah. In the Daiva Vivah, the priest receives the daughter of the bride's father as a sacrifice for the Dakshina and Yajna that he has performed. In the past, it was seen as the ideal marital arrangement, but it is no longer applicable [4].

Arsha Vivah: If sages or renunciators want to have a family, this was the approved method of marriage. They once gave a bull and a pair of cows to the father of the girl of their choosing. If the girl's father approved of the marriage proposal, he received the present, and a wedding was planned. The gift was formally given back to the sage in all other cases. The Prajapatya Vivah is a simplified variation of the Brahma Vivah. The sapinda exogamy regulations are the primary point of distinction.

Asura Vivah: The husband pays the bride price to the bride's father or her kinsmen and marries the bride in this kind of union. Within this marriage, marriage via trade is also allowed.

Vivah Gandharva: It was a modern love marriage in the conventional sense. In unusual cases and among certain groups, it was a legal kind of marriage, but the tradition did not see it as desirable.

Rakshasa Vivah: This is the kind of marriage that tribal people refer to as "marriage by capture." As war spoils or a machination to mend fences with the vanquished people, this kind of marriage was quite common in the ancient world among the monarchs. Although legal, it wasn't the best kind of marriage.

Paisacha: This kind of union is the least respectable, according to Vivah. By defrauding the girl, the guy coerces her into becoming his wife. The only option left to the lady after she lost her virginity is to wed him. It was an effort to uphold the rights of the defrauded lady to recognize this kind of relationship as marriage. Additionally, it granted legitimacy to the offspring of such unions [5], [6].

The Mate Selection Rules

Hindu law-givers have established intricate laws and guidelines governing the selection of a spouse in order to preserve the purity and unique character of social groupings. The endogamic rule and the exogamic rule serve as the foundation for these regulations.

(a) Endogamy

A person must pick a partner from within her or his own sub-caste and/or caste.

- (i) **Caste Endogamy:** This law forbids caste members from getting married outside of their own caste and mandates marriage within one's own caste. The 'caste council' or 'panchayat' would impose harsh social and economic sanctions for breaking this norm, which would include isolation and the denial of all forms of social assistance and cooperation.
- (ii) **Sub-caste Endogamy:** Each caste is subdivided into several little groupings, each of whose members believes they are better than the others. Each of these units is an endogamous society that forbids its members from dating anybody outside of that sub-caste. For instance, there are many sub-castes among Brahmanas, like Saraswat, Gaur, Kanyakubj, etc. These are all endogamous social groupings.

(b) Exogamy

Exogamy is the practice of getting married outside of one's own community. Even though endogamy and exogamy seem to be two opposing norms, both are practiced concurrently in Hindu culture, albeit at different degrees. In Hindu civilization, there are two kinds of exogamous rules:

- (i) **Sagotra Exogamy:** Exogamy is the practice of forbidding marriage between members of a clan or familial group known as a gotra (sagotra or same gotra). Sagotras, or those with the same gotra, are said to have shared an ancestor and are consequently blood relatives. But the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 rendered this regulation invalid legally.
- (ii) **Sapinda Exogamy:** According to legend, sapindas are related through blood. By five generations on the mother's side and seven on the father's, sapindas are individuals who are linked to one another in either an ascending or descending sequence. Life partners cannot be chosen from one's own Sapindas. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 forbids Sapinda marriage in general, but as a distinct South Indian

tradition, it permits cross-cousin weddings. Sapinda exogamy refers to the ban on sapindas being married to other sapindas. The bond between a living person and their deceased ancestors is symbolized by sapinda. The word "sapinda" (saman pind) refers to two groups of people: (1) Those who share parts of the same body, and (2) Those who are connected by a shared ancestor's acceptance of pinda or balls. The meanings of sagotra given by the Hindu law-makers vary. However, marriage within three generations on the mother's side and five generations on the father's side is prohibited under the Hindu Marriage Act [7].

Inter-Caste Union

It refers to a union between a man and woman from different castes. An inter-caste marriage, for instance, occurs when a lady of the Brahman caste weds a guy from, let's say, the weaver caste. Such unions are not favored in accordance with the tradition, albeit this tradition is rarely rigorously observed in metropolitan areas.

Other Marital Regulations

- (i) **Hypergamy or Anuloma:** Hypergamy is a kind of marriage when a man's ceremonial rank is greater than his intended wife's.
- (ii) **Hypogamy or Pratiloma:** Hypogamy is a kind of marriage where a woman's ceremonial status is greater than her intended husband's. However, laws like the Special Marriage Act of 1954, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, the Hindu Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act of 1976, and others have made inter-caste marriages permissible in Indian culture [8].

Marriage in India is a significant and sacred institution that reflects the cultural, social, and religious diversity of the country. This detailed description provides an overview of marriage in India including its traditions, customs, and key facts:

Diversity of Marriage Traditions:

India is a land of diverse cultures, and as a result, there are various marriage traditions followed across different regions and communities. From elaborate Hindu wedding ceremonies to simple Christian church weddings, traditional Muslim Nikah, and colorful Sikh

Anand Karaj, each community has its unique customs and rituals.

Arranged Marriages:

Arranged marriages are still prevalent in India where families play a crucial role in selecting suitable partners for their children. In such marriages, compatibility, family background, and societal considerations are given significant importance. However, the trend of love marriages, where individuals choose their partners, is also on the rise, particularly in urban areas.

Rituals and Ceremonies:

Indian weddings are known for their elaborate rituals and ceremonies that span several days. These may include pre-wedding ceremonies like Haldi, Mehendi, and Sangeet, followed by the main wedding ceremony and post-wedding rituals. Each ritual has its significance and holds cultural and religious importance.

Importance of Family and Community:

Marriage in India is not just a union of two individuals but also a coming together of families. The concept of marriage extends beyond the couple, with families forming a strong support system. The involvement of extended family members and community participation is a common feature of Indian marriages.

Religious and Regional Influences:

Religion plays a vital role in shaping marriage traditions in India. Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, and other religious communities have their customs and rituals. Additionally, regional influences contribute to the diversity of marriage practices, such as the traditional Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, or Tamil wedding ceremonies.

Bridal Attire and Jewelry:

Indian bridal attire is known for its vibrancy and opulence. Each region has its traditional bridal clothing, such as the red saree for Hindu brides or the white lehenga for Christian brides. Intricate jewelry, including necklaces, earrings, bangles, and headpieces, is an essential part of the bridal ensemble.

Social Significance:

Marriage in India is not just a personal event but also carries social significance. It strengthens social bonds, fosters community harmony, and is seen as a way to preserve cultural heritage. It is also an occasion for celebration and joy, where relatives, friends, and

communities come together to rejoice and bless the couple.

Facts about Marriage in India:

1. India has one of the highest marriage rates globally, with the majority of people marrying at a relatively young age.
2. The concept of dowry, although illegal, still persists in some parts of the country, leading to social and financial issues.
3. The "Big Fat Indian Wedding" is often characterized by extravagant celebrations, multiple ceremonies, and elaborate decorations.
4. India is known for its diverse wedding cuisine, with each region offering its traditional delicacies.
5. Marriage is considered a sacrament and a lifelong commitment in many Indian cultures, with divorce rates relatively lower compared to Western countries.

CONCLUSION

In India the institution of marriage has societal importance that extends beyond the particular couple. It strengthens social ties, enhances familial ties, and promotes communal cohesiveness. Marriages are seen as platforms for showcasing social rank, riches, and cultural pride. Intricate feasts, music, dance, and festive festivities that showcase the variety and vitality of Indian culture are also held on these days. However, issues still exist within the Indian marriage structure. Concerning topics include gender inequality, dowry-related problems, and cultural expectations on gender roles. Legal changes, educational initiatives, and campaigns supporting gender equality and women's empowerment are all attempts to solve these challenges. In conclusion, marriage in India is a complex institution with a strong foundation in culture, custom, and connections to the family. It represents a significant time of life for people and families, embodying social, religious, and economic components. Knowing the basics of marriage in India offers insightful knowledge into the vibrant cultural legacy, social dynamics, and current initiatives to promote gender equality and individual empowerment within this crucial institution.

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Position of Women in Indian Society

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ABSTRACT: *The position of women in Indian society has undergone significant transformations over the centuries, reflecting the complexities of culture, history, and socio-economic factors. This abstract provides an overview of the evolving position of women in Indian society, highlighting key aspects of their roles, rights, and challenges. Traditionally, Indian society has been characterized by patriarchal norms and practices that prescribed subordinate roles for women. Women were expected to fulfill domestic duties, prioritize the well-being of their families, and conform to societal expectations of modesty and obedience. However, it is important to note that throughout history, there have been instances of powerful and influential women who defied societal norms and made substantial contributions to various fields. In recent decades, significant progress has been made towards empowering women and challenging gender inequality. Legal reforms have granted women equal rights in areas such as education, employment, property ownership, and inheritance. Initiatives promoting women's education and economic independence have helped bridge the gender gap and expand opportunities for women in various sectors. Despite these advancements, challenges persist. Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and dowry-related crimes, continues to be a grave concern. Discrimination and unequal treatment, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, hinder women's full participation in social, economic, and political spheres.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Society.*

INTRODUCTION

A study of civilisation would be lacking without consideration of the status and role of women within it. The foundational element of Indian culture was women. Indian culture is built on the idea that males are the ones who make women rise or fall; they may be bound together or free to be themselves. Studying the history of women's roles and status within civilization is one of the finest ways to comprehend its spirit, recognize its virtues, and recognize its limits. The Ancient Indian Women relished denying them the right to learn in terms of education. Women's independence and involvement in public life demonstrate how a sense of justice and its application grew within a society. Marriage laws and traditions act as a guidance when assessing a spouse. His cooperation was essential to the family's prosperity and happiness. the degree to which women had the flexibility to choose the mates they wanted in life. Her administration of their home and acknowledgement of their property rights demonstrate man's ability to restrain the innate need for oneself, self, power, and ownership that is so ingrained in every human being. Throughout the time of our investigation, the position and status of women changed. Gods are delighted with places where women are kept in honor, but in reality, she was treated like a Sudra. She was influenced by her spouse as an adult, her parents as a child, and her boys as a widow where she was born. Women's

freedom is likewise restricted. She cannot accomplish anything on her own, even in her own home, whether she is a girl and a young woman or even by an older one. Her standing and position gradually deteriorated. In establishing the equality of man and woman, ancient Indian culture fell short. In the medieval and contemporary periods, female prestige and position suffered further degradation. Nations that don't value women have never achieved greatness. Our lack of respect for these live embodiments of Shakti is the primary factor contributing to the degradation of our race. Don't imagine there is another method to raise if we don't raise the women who are the Divine mother's living example [1], [2].

The position of women in tribal societies is a topic of discussion. Some have come to the conclusion that women were inferior to males because they hold the view that the ancient humans were savage. Early uncivilized cultures had few constraints on the tyranny of males over women since the groups had not yet escaped from savagery. Muscle was a crucial component of success in prehistoric life, and males were stronger than women at using it. Thus, the inherent dominance of man over women was automatically established by his physical prowess, physiological vigor, and muscular strength. Therefore, the position women had in Hindu society at the beginning of civilization during the Vedic period was far better than what we would normally anticipate.

The condition of food collection and hunting had definitely been left behind by the Vedic age. Women had a position of honor since it was determined that their involvement was required in the manufacturing process. The husband and wife are referred to as dampati throughout this. It is a reflection of the culture in which the sexes' relationships were based on autonomy and reciprocity in their own fields of endeavor. They participated equally in the rituals associated with sacrifice, squeezed the soma, cleaned it, combined it with milk, and worshiped the gods. The situation today is so bad that although women were granted 33% of the Panchayat level government's reservations when they were elected by the public, they did not use their power. Instead, their husbands cherished their power and participated in folk assembly, associated themselves with the assembly, and participated in its deliberations.

If we look at the later samhita era, we see a lady in a good position. In terms of obligations and tasks at home, women were seen as equal partners with men. She underwent an upanayana (Initiation Ceremony) and was then initiated into Vedic studies. Sandhya prayers, or ritual prayers said in the morning, noon, and evening, were described as being given by Sita. She wasn't a hindrance to religion, and religious rituals and ceremonies definitely required her attendance and cooperation. Beginning in the year 500 B.C. Upanayana was discouraged for girls, and it was stated that marriage would have much worse effects on women's overall position and dignity.

In the Vedic era, women's independence and improved position were largely a result of their active engagement in economic activities including cultivation, the production of fabric, bows and arrows, and other military supplies. When the society had access to the cheap or forced labor of the enslaved people or of the Sudras, their situation started to degrade. The reduction of women's marriageable ages from 16 or 17 to 18 or 19 and the practice of Sati were undoubtedly the results of their status' decline. From 300, women's status and position started to decline [3], [4].

B.C. onwards. They start to be seen as being readily swayed by someone who is attractive and has a good voice and dancing. According to the Anusasana Parva of the Mahabharata, Yudhishthira pleaded to Bhishma for guidance on the nature of women. He made the comment before he prayed. It is believed that women are the source of all evil and have little minds. Bhishma consented and tempts. She lacks the willpower necessary to withstand temptation. She is

always in need of male protection. Bhishma extols them elsewhere in the Mahabharata. Women should always be cherished and given loving treatment. Because it is stated that the very gods are worshipped in places where women are treated with respect. All actions become useless in places where women aren't loved. If a family's women often cry and grieve because of how they are treated, that family will eventually disintegrate.

DISCUSSION

Homes cursed by women suffer ruin; they lose their magnificence, stop growing, and become unproductive. This Mahabharata conflict reveals society's mistrust of women's inherent goodness. Even yet, it was unabashed in promoting idealized womanhood and acknowledging women as a representation of chastity, morality, and spirituality. The five ideal and highly regarded ladies are Tara, Sita, Draupadi, Ahalya, and Mandodari. Though he gave women the right to the monastic life and founded an order of Nuns, Buddha, a born democrat, had no different mindset. The Jalaka fables make a moral argument about equality. The lack of compassion shown by Buddhism towards women was founded on the idea that a woman is closer to the outside world than a man, as stated in the Jatakas: "of all the snares of the senses which ignorance sets before the unwary, the most insidious, the most dangerous, and the most attractive is women." The Buddha did not even show that he was enlightened enough to create gender equality by forming the order of nuns.

Education

Women participated in society's intellectual life throughout the Rig Vedic period. This occurred after the Upanayana ritual on a regular basis, just as it did for boys. Up to their marriage, they spent their time to studying Vedic philosophy and religion. Following marriage, both the husband and the woman participated equally in the sacrifice rituals. There are twenty such female writers who have been given credit for writing certain Vedic hymns. These famous people achieved considerable renown as philosophers. There are allusions to women with outstanding intellectual achievements from the Upanishadic era. One illustration is Gargi Vacaknavi. These instances highlight the pinnacle of intellectual and spiritual accomplishments that women are capable of. Women who became teachers were referred to as Upadhyayas. Since there were many female instructors, a new name had to be created to describe them. The Puranas also

mention female professors, and Bhagavata describes two of Dakshayana's daughters as being skilled in both philosophy and religion. This positive attitude toward women's education would not last for very long, following 300 B.C. The circumstances evolved, and women eventually lost their right to pursue higher education. It's conceivable that girls from wealthy homes weren't refused access to school. Girls received instruction in the fine arts from an early age, including music, dance, and painting, as higher education was not permitted for them. In actuality, they were acknowledged as achievements by women [5].

In South India's social life, ganikas, also known as courtesans and nautch girls, had a well-established position. They were skilled in performing arts including dance and song. Even local assemblies recognized them for their civic service. As time went on, people began to look down upon the dancing ladies associated with the temples (devadasis), and these exquisite talents came to be seen as appropriate solely for such females. Some women enrolled in administrative and military training programs. Kautilya mentions a female bodyguard and orders that when the king gets out of bed, a group of female soldiers with bows should be waiting for him. Women were not allowed access to Vedic knowledge until the early Christian period.

Marriage

Hindu authors place a lot of value on a woman's marriage. Not only Dharma, Artha, and Kama, but also Moksha and other purusharthas are all derived from women. It was a need and a social and religious obligation. Given that an unmarried lady would face more pitfalls, it was required for girls. Modern thinking is the same. Although society is changing, so are people's habits of working and living. Girls were often married after reaching puberty in the Vedic era. The Mahabharata encourages the marriage of mature, well-developed ladies. Although it was customary for females to be completely grown before being married in earlier times, Draupadi, Kunti, Sita, Uttara, and Devayani were all adults when they were married. The sutra texts have a propensity to reduce the age of marriage for females. Circa 200 A.D. Child marriage was steadily gaining popularity. The Khap-Panchayata proposes revisions to the Hindu Marriage Act of 1957, which would enable same-gotra marriages and marriages within the same village. Traditionally, marriages took place between couples of the same class and caste, but sagotra, sapravara, and sapinda marriages were illegal. According to Smirtis, anuloma—a guy of a higher caste marrying a girl of a

lower caste—is permitted under the sutras. The caste of the father was passed down to the offspring of anuloma unions. Despite allusions to love weddings, most marriages were planned by the couple's parents. The expectation for married life was perfect harmony and contentment.

Owning Property

It is crucial and educational to examine how women's proprietary rights have changed throughout time. It is significant because it shows us how society evolved and reveals the economic freedom and affluence that women experienced. It is instructive because of the progressive deterioration of her social standing. Both the home and the property belonged to the spouses as joint tenants. The husband promises during the marriage that he would respect his wife's rights and interests in financial concerns. Her many rights and benefits were protected by the joint ownership. She now has a complete maintenance claim against the spouse. Generally speaking, Hindu jurists never made an attempt to guarantee women complete equality with their husbands in the ownership of the family's property. This severe unfairness to women has been rectified in Free India however. Lawmakers have acknowledged the wife's claims to Sridhana (Women's Special Property), which included the wedding price and gifts paid by the husband even after the marriages. Landed property was eventually added to the Sridhana. Depending on the locality, different laws applied to Sridhana's inheritance. The Sridhana passed to a woman's parents or brother if she died childless and if her marriage did not follow the prescribed procedures; otherwise, her offspring received it. In Eastern India females without brothers were eligible to inheritance. After 300 B.C., things started to shift. The patrimony was denied to sisters who had brothers. Hindu Succession Act states that India is a free country. Daughters inherit the same amount of the property as their dads. However, owing to societal pressure and other factors, girls' mindsets are shaped in such a way that they do not take their own portion of the property. This is the issue facing Indian females in the middle class today [6], [7].

Divorce

The holy law declares that when the seven stages were completed jointly, the marital relationship was irrevocable. Divorce was not permitted. Most of a rebellious wife's rights were taken away from her, although the husband was still required to support her if necessary. She was unable to remarry however. According to a careful reading of the dharma sutra

literature, it was acceptable to leave your wife or spouse long before the Christian period under certain, predetermined conditions. If a woman leaves a husband who is infertile, demented, or afflicted with an incurable or communicable illness, Manu does not hold her responsible. Manu authorizes such a woman to remarry. In terms of marriage, contracts, and divorce, Kautilya is more tolerant to females. A woman may be remarried if her first husband spent a lot of time away from home, if he had a terminal illness or was infertile, if he had fallen out of favor, if he had a terrible character, if he had committed high treason, if he was a threat to her infertility, or if she hadn't been able to have boys. It was also possible to divorce on the grounds of animosity with the approval of both parties, rather than just one party. Manu seems indifferent to the wife's situation and allows her to marry a second man under the predetermined conditions. When divorce became almost difficult for those in upper social levels, Gupta entirely forgot about the aforementioned regulations. Divorce is a simple process in modern society. Although the Indian Penal Code granted these rights to women, the middle class culture in India still views divorced women as inferior and blames them for their own mistakes.

Prostitution

One class of women in ancient India intermarried freely with males. They weren't subject to restrictions that matrons had to keep an eye on. They are referred to as Vesyas and Ganikas, respectively. The prostitute is portrayed in literature as a beautiful, successful, and affluent woman holding a position of renown and honor. She was to get in-depth instruction in 64 Kalas (arts). The ganikas or courtesans had tremendous social status and had little in common with such women in contemporary industrial towns. These included music, dancing, singing, and acting, among other things. They were especially skilled in performing arts like dance and singing. They received honors from the populace for both their mastery of those talents and their civic service. Ambrapali, the renowned courtesan of Vaishali, was typical of such revered and honored courtesans: She was extraordinarily rich, very intellectual, and well-known across the civilized areas of India. She was one of the most prized treasures in her city and interacted with royalty on an equal basis. She was a diamond of a lady, or Sri-ratna. The function that the ganikas performed in modern civilization is documented in South Indian inscriptions. They made suggestions on how the ganikas oppressed and agitated the courts and towns using their charms and cunning. The chalukya, chola,

and other dynasties' documents attest to the ganikas' involvement in charitable causes. The institution of prostitution had been established by the time of the Mauryas.

According to the Arthashastra of Kautilya, a prostitute appointed superintendent with a salary of 1,000 pans a year was praised for her beauty, youth, and accomplishments. She made arrangements for the prostitutes' education in the necessary fields of the arts in addition to caring for their wellbeing. The government used prostitutes as spies. They had to pay the state a licensing fee and work two days to earn it in order to practice their profession. They worked in the royal household for a hefty pay and often frequented the court. In the present day, prostitution is legal, same as in Indonesia. Prostitution was seen favorably by the secular world. The religious perspective condemned it as being bad [8].

Widows

Widows were treated with contempt in a civilized society, who also thought their appearance to be unlucky. The sati system is unfit for human habitation. Although they were allowed to possess land in their own right, this did not help their situation. The Rig Veda's documentation on the widow's status is just too scant to draw any conclusions about it. The position of widow was far better, if the status held by women in general is any indication. Up to 400 B.C., the practice of sati was not popular in India. The Buddhist canon and the Arthashastra of Kautilya make no mention of the practice. The Mahabharata makes a few passing allusions to sati. While Satyabhama, another wife of Krishna, withdrew to the wilderness, the other five women of Krishna and four of Vasudeva's wives both committed sati. In a same vein, Madri, Pandu's second wife, committed sati but not Kunti.

Around 400 A.D., sati became more and more common among the aristocratic classes. even if they do not see it as an ideal for the widow, some smritikaras mention it. Even then, it wasn't all that common. While Yasomati, Harsha's mother, did commit sati, Vakataka dynasty queen Prabhavati Gupta did not. At the beginning of the seventh century A.D. The fact that modern social critics and authors detested the practice is shown by the following quote: "To die after one's beloved is most pointless. The stupid follow this tradition. It is an error made when infatuated. Only due to hurry is this risky course of action being taken. A huge error of this kind has been made. The practice of sati gained popularity in north India as a result of the praise bestowed upon it by intellectuals like Angirasa and Harita.

The practice was initially exclusive to the ruling classes; however, a few brahmana households started to adopt it about the year 1000 A.D. The practice of Niyoga during the Vedic era has been mentioned. The Dharma Sutras and the Vedic literature typically permit widows to remarry; those who objected to this did not prohibit the remarriage of child widows. With the recitation of the holy, a woman may get married again, according to Smirtis. In every era, women have aided humanity's advancement. They are the change-makers. They have made a substantial contribution to the formation of the country. A key indicator of social fairness in society is how women are treated. There are several constitutional protections and legislative safeguards for women in contemporary Indian culture, yet their involvement in the workforce and rate of literacy are also low.

Several women's groups have raised awareness of gender equality at the moment, yet rape, dowry killings, humiliations, honor killings, domestic violence, and other crimes against women are now widespread in our culture. Half of the population is made up of women, who have a significant economic impact on the nation. However, they only make up around 8% of the parliament, which is quite little. The Indian government is now putting in place a number of programs and projects for the welfare and empowerment of women in the areas of education, skill development, poverty alleviation, and skill upskilling. Services in the areas of health, education, legal literacy, and assistance. A major focus of the five-year plan has been on the development and empowerment of women. However, despite several implementations and regulations, the status of women is still unsatisfactory. There is no prophylactic mechanism in place in the society, as shown by the recent gang rapes in Delhi and Mumbai, which were reported in the news daily. The stains on humanity are the Aarushie Murder Case, the Naina Sahni Murder Case, and the Rohtak Honour Killing. If we believe that legal protections are adequate to prevent crimes against women and to provide them safety, security, and status, then we might claim that contemporary society is regressive rather than progressive in its treatment of women. India ranks 103rd in the world out of 137 nations for gender-related development. Compared to 60.7 for men, the life expectancy at birth is 60.7 for women.

Out of 174 nations, India is in 93rd place for female empowerment. In the previous parliament, there were 8.01% women, but only 2.3% of administrators and managers, compared to 20.5% of professionals and

technicians. The idea that men and women should not have a superior-subordinate relationship since they are complimentary to one another and have distinct attributes in the grand scheme of things is not given much weight in Indian culture. Women are better able to care for and nurture children than males are, despite men having more physical strength. Women are more resilient to stress, have longer lifespans, and are more patient, persistent, and tenacious. They are more capable of serving others and have less egos, which are qualities that make up the essence of being [9].

Women participate equally in the advancement of humanity. She represents half the human race. Yet she is lacking in society. In contrast to old Indian civilization, women are not treated with respect. In contemporary society, there is a lot of violence towards women. The provisions of the Constitution alone are insufficient to achieve a respectable standing in society. It is necessary for both men and women to make certain specific mental adjustments. Everyone attempts to comprehend that there is a division of labor in society and that each pole of society has some crucial duty, which is why we don't think of women as being as important as males. Technology advanced, globalization and commercialism emerged in modern times, yet the status and position of women really declined.

CONCLUSION

Campaigns to raise awareness, initiatives empowering women, and the establishment of protective legislation are all attempts to address these issues. The women's rights movement and grassroots efforts, among other organizations and groups that support gender equality, are essential in creating awareness and enacting change. The status of women in Indian culture is closely correlated with cultural expectations and views. Gender inequalities are a result of cultural traditions including early marriage, dowries, and son preference that have an effect on women's life. A more inclusive and equal society is being promoted, however, as a result of cultural developments and changing attitudes that are increasingly challenging traditional traditions. In conclusion, gender equality and women's empowerment are now recognized and supported in Indian society as opposed to the conventional patriarchal structure that it formerly had. Although there has been progress, ongoing issues need for sustained work to eliminate gender-based discrimination, protect the safety and wellbeing of women, and provide equitable opportunity in all aspects of life. In order to promote social change,

promote gender equality, and create a more inclusive and progressive country, it is important to understand the status of women in Indian culture.

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An Overview on Communalism

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ABSTRACT: *Communalism, a term widely used in the Indian context, refers to the social, political, and religious divisions based on religious identities. This abstract provides an overview of communalism, exploring its origins, manifestations, and impact on Indian society. Communalism in India has historical roots, stemming from the complexities of the country's diverse religious landscape and the legacy of colonial rule. The partition of India in 1947, which resulted in the creation of India and Pakistan, intensified communal tensions and gave rise to communal violence and conflicts. Communalism manifests through the politicization of religious identities, the formation of religiously segregated communities, and the promotion of religious exclusivity. It often finds expression in divisive rhetoric, hate speech, and acts of violence, targeting individuals or communities based on their religious affiliations. The impact of communalism is far-reaching, affecting social cohesion, interfaith relations, and the fabric of Indian society. It undermines the principles of secularism, religious harmony, and pluralism that form the foundation of the Indian constitution. Communal tensions can lead to violence, discrimination, and marginalization of minority communities, posing a threat to peace, stability, and national integration.*

KEYWORDS: *Communalism, Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Society.*

INTRODUCTION

In terms of religion, Indian society is diverse. The adherents of all the major religions are gathered here. The majority of the people, who are Hindus, live across the nation. The biggest religious minority is Muslims. However, attempts to reconcile Muslims and Hindus have failed on multiple occasions, leading to bloody riots. During the communal riots that occurred during the era of independence, millions of people lost their homes and millions more their possessions. The nation was split into India and Pakistan as a result of communalism. It was anticipated that the partition would solve the puzzle, but it didn't. The neighborhood living style between Hindus and Muslims has not yet developed.

Communalism Means

As it is understood in our nation, communalism is a blind devotion to one's own religious sect. It is defined as a tool for organizing people for or against something by making a social plea. Communalism is linked to dogmatism and religious extremism. In other words, it may be classified as a social dynamic between two groups that often results in conflict, hostility, and even riots. Alternatively, communalism is a political philosophy that uses cultural and religious divisions for political gain. Thus, the term "communalism" describes a political ideology that aims to unite one group over a shared religious identity while enmitying another community. It aims to establish this community's identity as being essential

and unchanging. It makes an effort to solidify this identity and show it as natural, as if individuals were born with it and identities did not change throughout the course of history. Communalism emphasizes the importance of the community's intrinsic unity in relation to other communities while suppressing differences within the group. It may be argued that communalism breeds a politics of hate for a recognized "other"—"Hindus" in the case of Muslim communalism and "Muslims" in the case of Hindu communalism. This animosity supports a violent political agenda. The politicization of religious identity that characterizes communalism, an ideology that tries to incite conflict amongst religious groups, is therefore a specific kind of this. The term "religious nationalism" might take on a similar connotation in the context of a multireligious nation. Any effort to treat a religious group as a nation in such a place would include planting the seeds of hostility against one or more other religions [1], [2].

In modern India defining communalism is a challenging challenge for historians. On the one hand, there is the barrier created by communal tradition itself, which has worked to essentially reduce the "nation" to the "community" with great success. The division of India and the lengthy history of Hindu Rashtravad (Hindu Nationalism) are powerful expressions of this tradition's outstanding accomplishments. On the other hand, the development of the modern nation-state and the subjective responses to the Industrial Revolution are rooted in a historical conflation of the terms "nation" and

"community." For instance, Bipan Chandra's definition of communalism "Simply put, communalism is the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion, they have, as a result, common social, political, and economic interests" could be rephrased to define the phenomenon of nationalism as well, leaving us in the dark. Thirdly, the subject of our research warps and tests our sense of chronology.

The foundation of collective ideology is historical memory, which takes the form of myths, symbols, and primitive feeling. Mass mobilization for the authoritarian rebuilding of the failing state is the purpose of communalism. This state is a byproduct of a colonial and medieval past, but it also coordinates capital accumulation within the framework of a global economy. By combining ancient and contemporary ideas (mythologized memory and Rousseauesque ideals of popular sovereignty), communalism succeeds as an ideology. The state also embodies the merger of contemporary capitalist tyranny with ancient power specialization. In order to establish an authoritarian popular base, a state experiencing legitimacy issues may fairly readily and naturally resort to community institutions and movements. The boundary between community and country seems to evaporate when communalism reaches governmental authority, making the work of critical understanding even more difficult.

A Synopsis of India's Communalism

The steady revival of the Brahmin priesthood coincided with the decline of Buddhism and the imperial traditions it was linked to. Despite its innovative work in assimilating pastoral or food-gathering tribes into established agriculture, this layer also contributed to the spread of ritual, superstitious control, caste exclusivity, localization, and autarky of material culture. D.D. Kosambi describes the procedure described in various Puranas the hiranyagarbha (golden womb) ceremony by which low-caste chieftains and monarchs would attain high-caste rank, agree to uphold the chaturvarnya the four fundamental castes, and transform the remainder of their tribe into a new peasantry. The body of distinct heterodoxy known as shramanism (asceticism) stood in opposition to this priestly culture. Patanjali, a former grammarian who lived in the second century BC, compared its inherent animosity to the rivalry between the snake and the mongoose. Even if its adherents were caste-victims, the shramanic morality tended to be universalist. According to Romila Thapar, the shramanic heritage was carried on by the Bhakti

movements, which flourished among the 'poor' castes for a lengthy period beginning from 500 AD. Many of them were vehemently opposed to caste division and the idea of renunciatory redemption, and they preached in the local language, despite the fact that they varied greatly based on period, region, social origins, and styles of worship. Islam, meantime, brought with it the idea of the righteous and holy Sultan. The Sultan was obligated to preserve the divine law (shariah), hence in essence, he could not be an absolutist. In reality, religious law was unable to guarantee continuation on the basis of de-jure principles since the Sultanat was neither private property nor common property. It was thus forced to postulate de-facto sovereignty [3].

In addition, even though Islam had never approved of a church or a clergy, the Holy Scriptures encouraged social equality while at the same time upholding the idea of the learned ones' superior authority. The monarch could only profess to uphold the shariah since he lacked direct power in issues of scripture, and he could only do so by working through the ulema. The latter had no other way to force the monarch to acknowledge their religious qualifications. A state-oriented clergy that was also connected to the king via charity donations established a mutually beneficial interest. The heritage of a rivalrous and ambitious ulema, determined to instill in Muslims of lower social levels only a feeling of conformity and inherent superiority, melded very nicely with a society already corrupted by status and ceremony. Orthodoxy "made religion a poor dependent of politics and converted a source of moral nourishment into a parasite" since it was unable to establish the shariah as a normative standard.

Establishmentism, meanwhile, was not unopposed. There was also an independent ulema who would not cooperate with the institutions of authority. Even farther from the legalistic tradition were the mystics (Sufis). They presented a more relatable and attractive interpretation of Islam by basing it on monistic ideas like wahdat-ul-wujud the oneness of being and the unity of the person with God. The Sufis could provide common people spiritual nourishment, in contrast to the orthodox ulema, who stood for the authority of the state and of doctrine. They had to leave space for the miraculous to be believed in the process.

While the state-oriented clergy might use religious precepts to support submission to the monarch, its detractors could do the same by expressing their rebellious tendencies via the principles of conditional obedience, social equality among the faithful, and

antipathy to ostentation. The Mahdawi movement, which Saiyyad Mohammad of Jaunpur started, is an illustration of this. The envious ulema focused on his messianic assertions since he was unable to defeat him in discursive conflict. Constant expulsion orders combined with the Mahdawi emphasis on migration as a means of preaching resulted in the establishment of a number of egalitarian "dairas" (circles) in various regions of western and northern India. The cult persisted until the late sixteenth century despite orthodox and governmental persecution, which was only logical given that if its doctrines were to be adopted, the current social and political structure would have to be rejected as being anti-Islamic.

Now let's look at events throughout the period of British imperialism. When colonial conquest started, the mercantilist relationship with India had already been going on for more than a century. It took an additional century for the latter process to be completed, during which time the political ruins of the defunct Mughal empire and other predatory polities were united under a single new political and economic order. It is not surprising that there were many different responses to this entire process given the highly complex social hierarchies that existed in various areas, the lengthy period of social pacification, the staggered pace of institutional change, and the fact that Britain herself underwent drastic historical transformation during this time [4], [5].

The British took control of India when the Mughals' illustrious era came to an end. Bahadur Shah II was acclaimed the Emperor of India by the rebels during the Great Revolt of 1857. The British government saw Muslims as their longtime foe after the Revolt was put down. The government made an effort to treat Muslims with hate and disdain. Thus, communalism developed among them in order to ensure their survival and self-defense. The Aligarh Movement was launched by Sir Slayed Ahmad Khan in an effort to rouse the Muslims. He founded Aligarh's Anglo-Mohammedan Oriental College, which eventually became the Aligarh Muslim University, to provide education for Muslims. He believed that the Muslims should support British authority in order to be protected. He intended to bring the Muslims together since doing so would strengthen communalism.

British administrator William Hunter pleaded with his fellow citizens to modify their perception of Indian Muslims in his book, *The Indian Muslim*. However, Mr. Beck, the head of Aligarh's Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, counseled Muslims to support the British Government in order to ensure their safety.

Additionally, he instilled hatred among Hindus in the Muslim community and urged them to resist the Indian National Congress. As a result, there was a tighter relationship between the British and Indian Muslims, which helped communalism spread.

The development of communalism in India was primarily caused by the British strategy of "Divide and Rule." Bengal was divided into two provinces in 1905 by Lord Curzon in an effort to win the support of the Muslim population. The British Government vigorously carried out Lord Curzon's agenda in the next years in a number of ways, such as strengthening Muslim communalism. Hindu communalism also provided a backdrop for the development of Muslim communalism. Hindu landowners, moneylenders, and middle-class professionals fostered anti-Muslim attitudes in the 1870s. They requested that there be seats set aside for Hindus in the legislature and other government positions. This strengthened communalism and drew Muslims closer to the British government.

A Muslim delegation led by Sir Agha Khan visited Viceroy Lord Minot in 1906. He persuaded the Viceroy that a separate electorate should be established for the Muslim population. The Muslims received that in the next elections. This communalism found expression in the Montague Chelmsford and Morley-Minto reforms. In 1906, Nawaz Salimullah Khan founded the Indian Muslim League. Its goals were to provide possibilities for educated Muslims to participate in politics and to restrain the Indian National Congress's expanding power. The Muslim League periodically requested a separate electorate and other privileges, and the British Government complied as time went on. The League played a significant role in the Muslim community's communalism movement.

An intelligent Muslim leader named Muhammad Ali Jinnah advocated that Congress was a Hindu-dominated institution that would fail to defend Muslims' interests. Therefore, he advocated for the country's division and issued a call to arms to the Muslim community on August 16, 1946, declaring, "We will take Pakistan by force." This day became known as "Direct Action Day." Thus, the desire for Pakistan marked the peak of communalism. After India gained its freedom, a large-scale bloodbath occurred. Millions of members of the Muslim and Hindu populations were murdered. In a free India there have been several riots. The deconstruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, the Godhra tragedies, and the ensuing unrest are a disgrace to mankind.

DISCUSSION

The nature of communalism in India

Communalism is the racial nationalism and fascist populism of India. First, it contrasts the present with its own ideal time, which is a synthesis of the past and the future both of which merge to one another in the illusion of collective power. Muslim communalists referred to the era of 'Muslim sovereignty' as though every Muslim owned a piece of the ancient Sultanat. Communalist Sikhs referred to Maharaja Ranajit Singh's authority, portraying it as being under the control of "the Khalsa." And equipped with the Hindu Rashtra philosophy, Brahmanical fascists dreamed of a brand-new, fantastical monolith they called the "majority community," which they could use as their political property to subdue all of their foes.

Second, communalism designates an internal foe who is the subject of widespread hostility because they are seen to be weakening the power of the selected. It might be argued that Partition refuted the Two Nation Theory in South Asia since India and Pakistan continue to be ideologically mindful of each other. As a result, Bengalis and Ahmadiyas are a poor second for Pakistan, which needs the evil of Bharat and the Hindus to exist. The 'minorities,' particularly the Muslims, who are seen as physiologically anti-national, Pakistani agents, and an impure element in the body politic, are the internal adversary for Brahmanical fascists in India. The internal adversary is represented externally by Pakistan, while Pakistan's internal shadow is represented by Indian Muslims.

Third, communalism undermines all forms of humanistic reason and replaces them with romantic, death-worshipping cults of irrationality, whose political goals include the formation of murderous gangs, the militarization of civil society, and the propagation of a splintered morality based on the dehumanization of the targets of hate.

Fourth, communalism, like fascism, has the ability to rally large numbers of supporters via the use of phony radical rhetoric and to use democratic institutions to take control and destroy democracy from a position of strength. This anti-democratic aspect of communalism is most evident in the countless instances when different types of communalists served the colonial rulers; the Muslim League's early and late histories are only two examples.

Finally, communalism institutionalizes all these occurrences into solid organizations, politicizes the underworld, connects politicians and goons, legitimizes criminal violence, and creates the synergy between the state and the bestial personality that is the

hallmark of fascist. The human race as a whole is its main sufferer.

The Reasons for Communalism

There are many factors that contribute to communalism's prevalence. Below is a discussion of a few of communalism's two main reasons.

Minority Tendency: Muslims are not assimilated into the country's mainstream. The elite among the Muslims have failed to create the proper national ethos since the majority of them refuse to engage in secular nationalistic politics and insist on preserving their distinct identities.

Orthodoxy and Obscurantism: Members of orthodox minorities believe they are a separate group with their own culture, set of rules, and way of thinking. Islam has significant aspects of conservatism and fanaticism. They have been unable to embrace the ideas of secularism and religious tolerance as a result of these feelings [6].

Design of the Leaders: Hindu and Muslim communal leaders both have a vested interest in seeing communalism grow in India for the benefit of their respective communities. The practical applications of this school of thinking included the call for a separate electorate and the formation of the Muslim League. The cornerstone of communalism in India was established by British control, which led to the "divide and rule" strategy and separate electorates based on religion. Ultimately, the country's split into India and Pakistan exacerbated this sentiment of hostility.

Poor Economic Situation: In India most Muslims have not adopted the scientific and technology education. They have not been adequately represented in the public service, industry, commerce, etc. due to their educational backwardness. This engenders a sense of relative deprivation, which contains the germ of communalism.

Geographical Factors: The geographical settlement of various religious groups, particularly Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, results in considerable variations in their way of life, social mores, and worldview. Given that most of these patterns are incompatible, there may be friction within the community.

Historical Causes: Muslims all throughout the subcontinent converted to Islam from Hinduism, which was made easier by caste prejudice and Muslim rulers' coercion. Since the foreign elite that came never shared power with them, the issues of social segregation, illiteracy, and poverty that had separated the low caste people remain unaddressed for them. When the Indians were converted, their labor was

over, and the converted people started acting and thinking like the masters. They were alienated by it. The Muslim community gradually began to include features of communalism. Since the beginning of the national renaissance, the separatist forces in the Muslim community have prevented other members of their community from identifying with it. A Muslim league was established as a consequence, calling for the division of the nation.

Social Causes: Cultural similarities may help any two social groups develop friendly relationships with one another. Hindus and Muslims consider themselves to be two separate groups because of the vast differences in their social structures, traditions, and practices.

Psychological Roots: The emergence of communalism was significantly influenced by psychological elements. Muslims are seen as zealots and fanatics by Hindus. Muslims, in their view, are not patriotic. In contrast, Muslims believe that their religious practices and beliefs are inferior and that they are regarded as second-class citizens in India. These emotions give rise to social unrest.

Provocation by Enemy Nations: Through the use of their agents, certain hostile nations aim to destabilize our nation by inciting conflict amongst our communities. Pakistan has contributed to the development of a sense of community among the Muslims in our nation. By inciting the militant Indian Muslim community, Pakistan has fostered and encouraged sectarian unrest. Pakistan trains young people from Kashmir to undermine India's internal security by fomenting animosity. Mass media's negative effects include the messages about racial tension or riots that are broadcast across the nation. As a consequence, there are disturbances between the two competing religious factions.

A Danger to Indian Society is Communalism

A secular state is India. In the perspective of Indian politics, secular is the same as non-religious. It refers to the peaceful coexistence of all faiths without any kind of prejudice. Although there are protections for minorities in our constitution, it may be difficult to put such protections into practice. Since Indians are typically recognized for being peaceful, tolerant, and brotherly, many different religions have thrived in Indian culture. Following the tragic division and the carnage that occurred during the partition, political parties now have a number of hot-button subjects to stir up public sentiment for their own political ends. Instead of attempting to calm the communal enmity, not only politicians but even the religious leaders of minority and majority communities fanned it with

their words and deeds. The demolishing of the Babri Masjid, the execution of the Hindu Kar Sewaks at Godhra (Gujarat), and the other acts of violence in Gujarat have irreparably damaged the secular fabric of Indian democracy. After every incident, there are more incidents, more incidents of hate, and more communalism in the nation.

Throughout the last century, sectarian movements in India have attempted to seize the political spotlight via a number of ways. They have attempted to undermine the nation's integrity and cohesiveness. Attempts were made to undermine the fundamental secular roots of Indian history and culture. However, they have lost over time. However, the results of such thinking have often been traumatic. To understand the pain, one just has to bring up the Holocaust of 1947, Mahatma Gandhi's murder, the destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, and the riots that followed. The question has become one of identity and existence for the hardline Muslims. Inciting the naïve people to rise up against the Muslims by leading them to think that Hindus in Hindustan are being treated like second-class citizens is another tactic used by Hindu fundamentalists [7], [8].

All organizations, whether Hindu or Muslim, that support strict communal identities exacerbate the issue. Real people's identities are flexible and multifaceted; nonetheless, the ethnic nationalism agenda calls for the creation of limited identities, which are then used to organize people. In this sense, the ostensibly benign promotion of religious identity may contribute to a chain of events that ends in bloodshed. Riots seldom occur on their own. The idea of spontaneous "tit for tat" violence is perhaps the most inaccurate depiction of the recent carnage. Highlighting the structured character of violence does not mean that the complex issues surrounding the causes of mass violence, including mass sexual assault, and their connections to authoritarianism and sexual repression, should be dismissed.

The religious right in India makes extensive use of all of its manifestations, from the more respectable to the more radical. The crucial thing to understand is that organizational disagreements are more practical than ideological. Past glories do not exist. Hindu Nationalists remind us of an ostensibly lovely pre-Islamic age, while secularists seek to counter this with instances of peace, development, and togetherness accomplished during the time of Mughal rule. History, particularly the pre-British history of India has become a battleground. The truth is that historical simplifications like these are never safe. All pre-

Islamic and post-Islamic empires were established via harsh conquest and expansion, which resulted in significant societal inequalities. Many people have also had periods of social advancement, relative calm, and stability. Instead of getting caught down in minute argument today, it is arguably more instructive to analyze how history is portrayed generally.

Speaking of a Hindu state, or Hindustan for Hindus, would be a frightening indication in a nation like India with so much variety and pluralism because it would completely undermine the secular foundation of the Indian Constitution. Organizations of the un-secular forces must be aware of communalizing. India will bring terror to the nation, and the moment when we shall once again be under foreign domination is quickly approaching. The very unity of India is in jeopardy unless an all-out effort is made to restrain the sectarian forces. All forms of community groups must be outlawed completely. To educate the populace on the realities of intercommunal violence and its impacts on both them and the nation as a whole, a social and cultural campaign has to be started. The procedure must begin from the top. All political parties and religious groups must avoid making provocative statements and stirring up the populace in the name of religion. A terrible deed committed by one community cannot be compensated for by a similar wrong deed committed by another group. Secularism must endure for the sake of the nation, and for secularism to endure, religious harmony, cohesion, and tolerance are essential. Communalism is incapable of fostering friendship, fraternity, or a sense of community; it can only serve to undermine the unity and integrity of the country [9].

India is a nation with many different identities, each of which is based on a region, a language, or a religion, and each of which has social systems that are more or less unique and have been changing through time. One of the oldest recognized social groups dates to the Vedic era and is known as a tribe. The first kind of distinction was based on skin tone, which subsequently gave way to a sophisticated "varna system" that classified tribes into "Brahmana," "Kshatriya," "Vaishya," and "Shudra" categories. With the spread of Buddhism and Jainism, as well as subsequently with the advent of new people in India like the Shakas, Kushanas, Parthians, and Indo Greeks, the "Varna/Jati system" experienced further alterations in post-Vedic cultures. The caste system had regional differences as a result of the development of regions and regional awareness after the ninth century AD. As a result of a variety of circumstances, the caste system

became more complicated, multiplying into a number of castes and sub-castes. Slavery existed in India although it differed from the classical Greek and Roman slavery; "Purushartha," "ashramas," and "samskaras" are interconnected concepts. Untouchability, the most objectionable practice, took root during the final phase of the Vedic period and crystallized into a separate identity in the age of the Buddha.

CONCLUSION

The "Jajmani system" was a crucial institution that fostered complementary relationships between dominant peasant castes and service and artisan castes. It persisted into modern times in Indian rural society, but is now disintegrating due to the effects of monetisation, urbanization, and industrialization. Marriage is a crucial sanskara ceremony that results in families. In Indian society, there are many different types of marriages, including monogamous, polygamous, and polyandrous unions depending on the number of spouses and "anuloma" and "pratiloma" unions based on alliances between different varna/castes. The traditional Indian family is a joint family that is controlled by the "Mitakshara" and "Dayabhaga" schools of sacred law and traditions. Up until recent times, when attempts were made to better the circumstances of women via social and religious changes brought about by the spread of western education, the status of women in India's history had been one of steady degradation.

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Pre-Vedic and Vedic Religion, Buddhism Jainism, Indian Philosophy-Vedanta and Mimansa School of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT: *The religious and philosophical landscape of ancient India witnessed the emergence and evolution of several distinct belief systems. This study provides an overview of pre-Vedic and Vedic religion, the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, and the development of Indian philosophy through Vedanta and the Mimansa school of philosophy. Pre-Vedic religion in India was characterized by a polytheistic worship of nature, deities, and spirits. Rituals, sacrifices, and hymns formed the core of religious practices during this period. With the advent of the Vedic period, the religious focus shifted to the worship of gods and goddesses described in the Rigveda, the oldest sacred text of the Vedic tradition. During the sixth century BCE, two major religious movements, Buddhism and Jainism, emerged as alternatives to the prevailing Vedic traditions. Buddhism, founded by Siddhartha Gautama, emphasized the pursuit of enlightenment and the alleviation of suffering through the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Jainism, founded by Mahavira, emphasized non-violence (ahimsa), truth (satya), and asceticism as paths to liberation. Indian philosophy flourished during this period, encompassing various schools of thought. Vedanta, derived from the Upanishads, explored the nature of reality, the self, and the relationship between the individual soul (Atman) and the universal soul (Brahman). It sought to achieve liberation (moksha) through knowledge (jnana) and devotion (bhakti).*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

The science of the soul is religion. Religion serves as the basis for morality and ethics. The Indians' relationship with religion has existed from ancient times. In regard to various groups of individuals linked with them, it took on a variety of shapes. These communities had different religious beliefs, practices, and ideals, and throughout time, the diverse religious forms underwent changes and advancements. In India religion never had a static personality; instead, it was propelled by a natural dynamic power. Indian spirituality has its roots in the country's long-standing religious and philosophical traditions. India was the birthplace of philosophy, which began as an investigation into the meaning of life. Yoga is the collective name for the extraordinary methods that Indian sages known as Rishis or "seers" created to transcend the senses and the ordinary mind. They penetrated the depths of consciousness with the aid of these procedures, learning crucial facts about the fundamental nature of humanity and the cosmos. The sages discovered that the spirit, which is immutable, eternal, and composed of pure awareness, is the real

essence of a person, as opposed to the body or the intellect, which are ever-changing and transient. It was known as the Atman.

The real wellspring of human knowledge, joy, and power is the Atman. The rishis discovered that every person's unique self is a component of the boundless awareness they named Brahman. The universe's ultimate cause and ultimate actuality is Brahman. Human misery and servitude are mostly caused by ignorance of human nature. It is possible to escape pain and servitude and achieve Moksha, which is a state of immortality, unending tranquility, and contentment, by understanding Atman and Brahman correctly. In ancient India religion was a way of life that helped people discover their inner selves and achieve Moksha. Philosophy thus offered a true understanding of reality, whilst religion demonstrated a true way to live; philosophy offered the vision, whereas religion brought about its fulfillment; philosophy was the theory, whereas religion was the practice. As a result, philosophy and religion were complementary in ancient India [1], [2].

Harappan Pre-Vedic Religion

The Harappan religion is where one should start when trying to comprehend Indian religious traditions historically. We have been able to reconstruct the history of the Harappan civilisation, which peaked about 2600 B.C., thanks to the archaeological discoveries from the sites of Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Banwali, Lothal, and Kalibangan. The objects retrieved from numerous excavations at the aforementioned locations are the sole source of knowledge about Harappan civilisation as the script has not yet been definitively deciphered. As is well known, the town layout and settlement patterns seen at Harappan sites are indicative of an advanced urban civilisation. We know a little something about Mother Goddess, a deity akin to Pasupati-Siva, and the devotion of nature and animals in terms of Harappan religion. The first person to bring our attention to the Harappan people's religious rituals was Sir John Marshall. Other archaeologists and scholars have since attempted to understand Harappan religion using seals and other artifacts as evidence. Whether the Harappan religion belongs to non-Vedic or Vedic tradition is the subject of intense discussion. This unit will provide you an overview of the religious activities and beliefs of the Harappans within their historical background before examining several interpretations of their religion offered by various academics.

Historical Background

The Harappan civilisation, the oldest known civilization in India is the result of a process, and its roots may be found in the earlier Neolithic Nal, Kulli, Zhob, and Quetta rural cultures. This culture first emerged about 3000 B.C. There may have been three separate eras of the Harappan civilization: the early Harappan, the mature Harappan, and the "late Harappan." The Harappan society reached its peak about 2600 B.C. and it started to diminish from 1700 B.C. At Harappa and Mohenjodaro, the ruins of this civilisation were first uncovered in the 1920s. It was formerly believed to have been limited to the Indus River Valley. However, later archeological investigations revealed that this civilization's boundaries extended well beyond the Indus Valley, into northwestern and western India. The largest sites in India are Ropar in Punjab, Lothal in Gujarat, and Kalibangan in Rajasthan. Harappa and Mohenjodaro are now in Pakistan. It is clear from excavations at Alamgirpur in Uttarpradesh and Mitathal near Delhi that civilisation extended to the Ganges-Yamuna Doab. A number of Harappan sites may have flourished along the banks of the Ghaggar river, which

ran through Rajasthan and Haryana before entering Pakistan.

All of the excavations indicate that this civilisation was dispersed over a wide region. Amazing similarities between the grid town, the size of the bricks, and the yet-to-be-deciphered lettering point to a certain cultural homogeneity that has persisted in Harappan civilisation across time. According to archaeological studies, this civilisation was a sophisticated urban one with traits of a complex society. The Harappan culture's foundation was likely built by village groups, which were likely separated into social classes based on jobs. Even though farming was the major employment of the Harappans, there are several artifacts that show an extensive commerce network and an abundance of agricultural surplus. The Harappan people traded with other modern civilizations in Egypt, the Persian Gulf, and Mesopotamia. All of these point to the presence of a sophisticated civilisation that covered a considerable region and persisted for thousands of years. It is of interest to us to see how religious beliefs and practices shaped culture in a society marked by standardized urban design, culture, sophisticated agriculture, and commerce. We can reconstruct the religious practices of the Harappans because to the many human figurines, clay Mother Goddess sculptures, and deity images on seals. You will learn about the Harappans' religious practices and beliefs in the section that follows [3], [4].

Religious Convictions and Actions

According to the archaeological evidence, the worship of Mother Goddess or Nature Goddess was the most significant aspect of the Indus Valley religion. There are several terracotta or other material figurines that show a standing female figure with little to no clothes but lavish ornamentation, including a headpiece, collar, etc., and a girdle or band around her loins. An upside-down female figure with extended legs and a plant sprouting from her womb is shown on seals from Harappa. The Mother Goddess may be identified with the Nature Goddess in a further image of a feroali figure standing in a bifurcated tree, most likely an asvattha (pippal) tree. In addition, there are a few female representations with several offspring, which may link the Mother Goddess to a religion of fertility. The fact that several of the figurines have smoke stains is noteworthy. Therefore, it may be assumed that the figurines were worship items, and that oil or incense was burned before them. Siva is a prominent god in Harappan religion and is readily recognized among male deities. The most striking depiction of this god is

a three-faced man with three horns on his head, sat cross-legged on a throne in a stance remarkably similar to padmasana, with his eyes directed toward the tip of his nose, as described in yoga books. A very important feature of this representation is the penis erectus (urdhvamedhra). The god is surrounded by a variety of creatures, including an elephant, buffalo, tiger, and rhinoceros, with a deer sneaking beneath the throne, which is another outstanding aspect of this image. Three features of Siva are highlighted by this picture, namely. i) Trimukha, ii) Pasupati, the Lord of Animals, and iii) Yogisvara or Mahayogin, the Supreme Yoga Practitioner.

In various other sites' excavations, two other seals with the same god have been found. The god wears a horned headdress and is almost naked. The first has three faces, whereas the second has only one. Additionally, it seems that both lingas and icons were used to worship Siva. Most likely, the inhabitants of the Indus Valley were worshipping a variety of animals. Some of the animal figurines may have been used as toys, while others may have had religious purposes. The seals and sealings feature three different animal groups. They include: i) legendary creatures, such as the weird unicorn; b) Complex animals, which have the heads of many different species; and c) creatures that are neither entirely real nor entirely legendary. There are several unicorns, which may imply that they served as some of the towns' tutelary deities; iii) there are real creatures, including bison, tigers, elephants, rhinoceroses, bulls, and zebras. There have been attempts to link these animals to the vehicles (vahanas) of several Vedic and Puranic deities, but these attempts lack credibility and are speculative.

Most likely, the inhabitants of the Indus Valley also venerated other elements of nature, such as fire, water, and trees. On several seals, many types of trees, plants, and vegetation have been shown. The worship of fire must have existed. However, it is still unclear whether fire was revered as a separate deity or as a god's messenger, as it was in Vedic culture. As of yet, no site has yielded any evidence of the presence of temples or other houses of worship. S.R. However, Rao has recognized a few small buildings at the Lothal and Kalibangan excavation sites as fire altars, and it is thought that animals were sacrificed at those altars. "Some aspects of Harappan religious practice would have been highly ceremonial and public, as at the Great Bath," wrote S. Ratnagar. "But there would also have been domestic worship, as well as local cults, village rituals enacted under trees, and so on."

Observations

There are several interpretations of Harappan religion since our understanding of it is solely based on archeological discoveries. Regarding its connection to the Vedic tradition, scholars disagree. Let's examine the various writers' discussions on arapraelnig ion. The Great Mother or Nature Goddess, whose religion is said to have started in Anatolia (possibly in Phrygia), and from there expanded over much of western Asia, is considered to be represented by the Mother Goddess figurines, according to Sir John Marshall. Atre believes that there is continuity in the religious beliefs of the Harappans with the religious elements of the hunter-gatherer's cultures, citing the discovery at Kalibangan, where there were several fire altars along with kits containing ashes, and this place may be interpreted as a ritual center where animal sacrifice and ritual ablution used to take place. It is suggested that the mother Goddess figurines, the linga and yoni symbols, various seals, and ritual objects are indicative of primitive tantrik practices. According to N.N. Bhattacharya, the yogic posture of "Proto-Siva" found on the Harappan seals refer to the pre-vedic practices. K.N. Sastri disagrees with the assumption of female predominance in the Harappan religion.

From Kalibangan and Lothal remains, S.R. Rao infers that Agni was given a special place and various types of oblations, including animals, were offered to him. Rao further postulates that the Indus Valley people had a clear conception of Supreme God, whom they mentioned as "Ka." Rao concludes that the religious beliefs and practices of the Harappan people were similar to those of the Vedic Aryans. S. Ratnagar considers the existence of 'shamanism' in Harappan religion. She explains, 'Shamanism is a form of religious practice that exists among preliterate prehistoric groups, including tribesmen and hunter-gatherers, as well as in the Shang-dominated society of Bronze Age China Central to shamanism is animism, belief in the souls of animals, birds, plants or snakes, and a belief that these souls or spirits can communicate with living people. They do so through the shaman, a person with the rare gift of understanding them as he is able to journey into the world of the spirits-n the waves of frenzied drumming or clapping, on the spirals of smoke, or on the souls of sacrificed animals, by taking part in vigorous dance or by eating hallucinogenic substances. Shamans thus go into ecstasy or trance. While in the other world, they seek out cures for disease or drought.' Ratnagar feels that the copper tablets of Mohenjo-daro, depicting masked figure with horns, animals, material items having association with shamanistic practice, the so-

called Pasupati seal and some hybrid personages depicted on Harappan seals suggest the existence of shamanism in Harappan religion. However, in the absence of proper decipherment of Harappan scripkinferences based on archaeological findings are very much subjective in nature [5].

DISCUSSION

The Vedic tradition at its early stage was primarily a tradition, by priests and priest-craft, with a sizable pantheon of nature deities. There was Vayu, the wind god, Agni, the fire god, Indra, the god of thunder and many others. Sacrifice involving the specialized priests and slaughter of animals was the chief form of religious practice. Sacrifice was originally a rite of hospitality for the gods and this was performed to obtain material rewards on earth and in heaven. In the Vedic texts we find that the sacrifice is symbolic of the selfless, visionary, coordinated, dynamic and creative activity which could be at any level, in any sphere or dimension. Different rituals have deeper meaning of eternal value and universal applications. In the context of the Vedic religion sacrifice needs to be understood with reference to the inner self of man. Ancient seers have suggested two approaches with reference to the Vedic religion – Pravrtti Lakshana (characterized by action) and nivrtti-lakshana (characterized by renunciation). The aim of religion is also two fold: Abhyudaya (prosperity in the life in this world and enjoyment in heaven in the life after) and Nihisreyasa (permanent freedom from all bondage and sufferings, state of eternal bliss). In this Unit you will be introduced to sources of the Vedic religion, meaning and classification of various rituals and what do they symbolize. The Mantra and Brahmana parts of the Veda which are primarily associated with rites and rituals serve the purpose of Abhyudaya, whereas the Aranyakas and the Upanishads teach the ways and means for Nihisreyasa.

Sources of Religion in Vedas

The Veda is the source of the Vedic religion; the word "Veda" is derived from the root "vid," "to know," and thus means knowledge; the knowledge contained in and imparted by the Veda is regarded as the knowledge of the highest caliber; and the Veda is believed to be Apauruseya, non-human creation, having been revealed to ancient Risis, seers of the truth. The Rig-Veda is the oldest and most significant of all the Vedas, and it is composed of a collection of 1,028 hymns that are recited or chanted during a sacrifice. The Sama-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the

Atharva-Veda, and the Atharva-Veda are the other four major works that make up the corpus of the Vedic literature, and each of these has four subdivisions that central eight. The Yajur-Veda is a collection of ritual formulae and explanations used by the priests in performing the sacrifice. The Atharva-Veda is a later addition to the other three Vedas, and a significant portion of this text is a collection of magic spells. The Sama-Veda is composed primarily of hymns taken from the Rig-Veda (with about seventy-five additional stanzas). Between 1500 B.C. and 1200 B.C. is when the Vedas are thought to have been composed, and its contents are based on ancient folk religious beliefs. Several different priestly schools started to record and preserve their expositions of the meaning of the sacrifice, the hymns, and the prayers, and this led to the development of the texts known as the Brahmanas, which are the ritual textbooks intended to guide the priests through the intricate web of sacrificial rites.

The Vedas mention quite a few deities, with the main ones being classified as belonging to different religions, namely i) terrestrial, ii) aerial, and iii) celestial, with Prithivi, Agni, Soma, Brhaspati and the rivers belonging to the first order; Indra, Apam-apat, Rudra, Vayu-Vota, Parjanya, Apah and Matarisvan to the second; and Sacrifice was considered as an inherent part of the cosmic order. Sacrifice involved the yajamana, the patron of the offering, the god to whom the offering is given, the Brahmana who performs the sacrifice and acts as a link between the yajamana and the god and the bali or the offering which is gifted to the gods. The Vedic sacrifices are performed by offering oblations or Ahutis to fire, since Agni (fire) is believed to be the mouth of all deities. He receives the offerings not only for himself but also for transmissions to the gods. Oblations are offered under different circumstances to three fire altars, containing three sacred fires duly established through rituals, such as Garhaptya, used for warming of dishes and preparation of offerings, Ahavaniya, installed in the east, receives the offerings for the gods and daksina, established in the south, for receiving offering for the ancestors and demons. Vedic rituals are broadly classified into two categories, Public rites (Srauta) and Domestic rites (Grhya or Smarta). In this section we will explain public rites [6].

The primary distinction between the Srauta sacrifices is the kind of offering made, namely the havir-yajna, in which ghee (also known as butter-havis) is presented as the primary oblation, and the soma-yajna. It is important to note that in a Soma-yajna, animal sacrifice also takes the form of different parts of the

sacrificial animal's body, particularly the omentum (vapa), which is offered to the fire. Other items, which are offered in sacrifices as oblation are sacrificial cakes (purodasa), generally made of barley, millets, and lentils. There are several different types of officiating priests (rtvij-s) involved in the Sruta rituals; the four main ones are Hotr (Rgvedic), Udgatr (Samavedic), Adhvaryu (Yajurvedic), and Brahman (Atharvavedic), although there are also a few subordinate ones like Aspotr; Nestr; Agnidh; Prasastc, etc. Adhva

Periodic Sacrifices The first of all periodic sacrifices is the setting up of sacred fire (agnyadhana). This is performed either in a particular season or either on new moon or full moon day. It is a two-day performance. The garhapatya fire is first established on a circular altar (vedi). The second the dakshina is established on a semicircular altar and the third one, i.e. ahavaniya is established on a square altar. Each of the three fires is established under a separate shed. First the garhapatya fire is lit and a blaze from it is taken to each of the other two fires. The agnihotra is performed daily, morning and evening. The oblation is milk, heated and mixed with water, which is offered to the garhapatya and ahavaniya fires. A part of the evening performance is agnyupasthana, an homage to fire and the cow whose milk is used. The Darsapurnamasa, as its name indicates, is performed on new moon (darsa) and full moon day (purnamasa). Sacrificial cakes (Caturmasya) are performed - at the beginning of spring, monsoon, and autumn seasons. The Maruts are the - most important deities who receive oblations in all these sacrifices along with other. In addition, five oblations to Agni, Soma, Savitr, Sarasvati and Pusan are offered in the beginning of each of the three sacrifices. For the firewood the tree which blossoms in the particular season is selected. In the first four-12 month sacrifice the five common libations are followed by a cake (purodasa) to Maruts, a milk mixture to the Visvedevas and a cake to heaven and earth (dyavaprthivi). Another seasonal sacrifice is agrayana-isti, which is the sacrifice of the first fruit of the biennial harvest. Apurodasa of barley in spring and ofrice ig autumn is offered to Indra, Agni, Visvedevas, Dyau and Prthivi. The first born of the calves during the year is offered as the fee (daksina). **Animal sacrifice (pasuyaga)**, sometimes as an independent sacrifice and sometimes as part of the soma sacrifice, is the first among this type of occasional sacrifices. However, this has largely fallen out of practice. One of the independentpasuvagas is Nirudhapasubandha. **Special Sacrifices:** Many

sacrifices under this class are known to be variations of the isti type, on the model of darsapurnamasa. These are performed for the fulfillment of various desires of the y The offering is the same as the Darsa sacrifice, with the exception that an animal replaces milk offered to Indra. A yupa, sacrificial post is erected and the victim (pasu), before it is tied up, is bathed and anointed with butter. Other procedures, following the offering of ajya (clarified butter), are similar to those of the new moon and full moon sacrifices (darsa andpurnamasa). The ritualistic-texts describe in detail the immolation of the victim and offering the omentum (vapa) and some of the limbs of the victim to the fire. The main ceremony of this animal sacrifice is calledparyagnikarana. At the end of this ceremony, some minor rituals called anuyajas including offering to barhis and the doors are also performed. Somayajnas, i.e. sacrifices in which soma juice forms the main oblation is most important among occasional sacrifices. Since this type of sacrifice is quite expensive, only kings and very wealthy people could perform it. But the Somayajnas are attended by a multitude of people belonging to different strata of the society as a public event. The seven major Soma sacrifices are Agnistoma, Ukthya, Sodasin, A tiratra, A tyagnostoma, Vajapeya, and Aptoryama; however, this list is not exhaustive.

Sixteen priests, senior and junior ones, officiate in an Agnistoma. There are various steps or stages of the Agnistoma ceremony. First of them is the selection and commissioning of the priests, which is followed by the consecration (diksa) of the sacrificer (yajamana) and his wife. Then they are supposed to observe silence, abstinence, etc. The next is the purchase of Soma which is done through a mock fight between the seller and the purchaser. This event is followed by three of actual performances, on each of which pravargya or hot-milk offering is made twice a day. On the second day an altar is constructed to place the cartloads of the Soma plant. An animal sacrifice to Agni and Soma is performed on the third day. The juice is kxtracted from the Soma plant, with stone or mortar and pestle. After proper purifying through a strainer the Soma juice is mixed with milk. The Soma offerings are accompanied by the chanting of various categories of mantras, known as astras and stotras. Another animal sacrifice, the victim animal, being a goat, is dedicated to Indra and Agni. Oblations, such as sacrificial cakes (purodasas) are also ofired [7], [8]. The final study of Agnistoma includes chanting specific hymns to Agni and Maruts (Agni-Marutasastras), immersion of used Soma shoots, sacrificial

implements, etc. in a nearby river or tank, and finally a bath taken by the sacrificer (yajamana) and his wife. Of the seven Soma sacrifices, Vajapeya deserves special mention because it is assumed that this sacrifice. Another important Vedic sacrifice was Rajasuya which is related to royal consecration ceremony and, therefore, assumed the character of a public event. The grandeur of the ceremony, very naturally, drew public attention and attendance in a big way. The mantras chanted on this occasion are prayers for the welfare of the state and the people. It is, however, to be borne in mind that the sacrifice was actually performed by the king as the yajamana, and not by the members of the public. In the performance aspect, Rajasuya was like any other Soma sacrifice, starting from the diksa and to several upasad days. Unlike other sacrifices, the yajamana, i.e. the king has to play a few very important roles and there were a few special features. The Adhvaryu priest would hand over to the king a bow with three arrows; the king should walk a few steps to all the directions. He will sit on a throne made of udumbara wood covered with a tiger-skin, and will be anointed with butter, honey, sacred waters from many rivers and seas.

The real royal grandeur is reflected in the Asvamedha, i.e. horse sacrifice. This sacrifice was performed by powerful kings with imperial ambitions. Prajapati is the chief deity of the Asvamedha rite, though oblations are offered to many other deities. The ceremony starts on the 8th or 9th day of Phalguna and is spread over a year. The procedure of the sacrifice is quite elaborate and complicated. At the outset, a horse of the highest quality is tied and bathed. It is then consecrated near the sacrificial fires and various types of purodhas are offered, during the next three days. Then the horse is set free to roam at its free will beyond the boundaries of the king, but it is escorted by the contingent of army. If the horse crosses the territory of a king unopposed, it will mean that the ruler of the territory concedes to the authority of the former king. If any king obstructs the movement of the horse, it will be rescued by the accompanying army contingent by fighting. During the year of the horse's wandering many types of merry-making continue in capital. On the return of the horse, a Soma sacrifice is performed, in which the Soma is pressed on three days (sutya days). On the second sutya day the horse is sacrificed, along with a great number of victims, - animals both domestic and wild, - big and small. There are some activities in the ritual which can only be interpreted as a fertility cult. The sacrifice is concluded with the ceremonial both on the third sutya day. If a king

succeeds in performing the asvamedha on the return of the horse unopposed, he is acclaimed as an emperor. Though many authors of the Puranas and compilers of later Law digests forbid the performance of the Asvamedha in the Kali Age, the sacrifice continued to be performed till a much later age. The Vedic Soma sacrifices are categorized by another criterion. If a sacrifice is performed with more than one but up to twelve pressbg (sutya) days, it is called an ahina sacrifice. If the number of the sutya days is more than twelve, it is called a sattra. A sattra may be extended to several years. Sautramani is another Vedic sacrifice known for its unique peculiarity that sura, i.

Besides the Sruta sacrifices both regular and occasional, compulsory and optional - a householder belonging to any of the three upper castes is required to perform quite a good number of personal or family rites - as enjoined by the ritualistic texts known as grhya karmans, i.e. domestic rites. The most important distinction between the public rites (sruta) and the domestic rites (grhya) is that while the Sruta rites are performed in three sacred fires, viz. Ahavaniya, Dakshina and Garhapatya, - the grhya rites are performed only in the Garhapatya fire. There are, however, some rites which are both sruta and grhya. The occasions of establishing the Garhapatya fire are marriage, death of the head of the family or division of paternal property, resulting in the setting up of a separate household. The Garhapatya fire is to be maintained uninterruptedly. The auspicious time for the setting up of the Garhapatya fire is any bright fortnight during the northern course of the sun (uttarayana) which rule is of course not very hard and fast. The householder is supposed to perform all the Grhya rites himself, except the Sulagava and Dhanvantari rites which may be performed by a Brahmin priest commissioned for the purpose. During the absence of the householder, however, his wife or a resident pupil may act as his representative. The materials used for the oblations in the Grhya rites are generally the same as those for the sruta rituals, with the exception that Soma is never offered and animals very rarely [9], [10].

CONCLUSION

The Mimamsa School of philosophy, also known as Purva Mimamsa, focused on the interpretation of Vedic rituals and texts. It aimed to understand the nature and purpose of rituals and their significance in attaining worldly and spiritual goals. Mimamsa scholars developed extensive commentaries on the Vedas, providing insights into the intricate details of religious

practices. These philosophical and religious systems played a vital role in shaping the intellectual and cultural fabric of ancient India. They influenced not only spiritual and philosophical discourses but also social and ethical frameworks. They promoted values such as non-violence, truth, compassion, and self-realization, which continue to have a lasting impact on Indian society and beyond. In conclusion, the study of pre-Vedic and Vedic religion, Buddhism, Jainism, and Indian philosophy provides a comprehensive understanding of the diverse spiritual and intellectual traditions that shaped ancient India. These belief systems continue to be relevant today, offering insights into the nature of existence, the pursuit of truth, and the ethical principles that guide human life.

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Heterodox Religious Order in Ancient India

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ABSTRACT: Ancient India was a land of diverse religious and philosophical traditions, including heterodox or non-conventional religious orders. This study provides an overview of heterodox religious orders in ancient India focusing on three prominent movements: Ajivikas, Lokayatas (Carvaka), and the Charvakas. Heterodox religious orders challenged the prevailing orthodox Vedic and Brahmanical traditions of ancient India. The Ajivikas, founded by Makkhali Gosala, emphasized determinism and the concept of niyati (fate). They believed that all events, including human actions, were predetermined and beyond individual control. The Ajivikas advocated ascetic practices and the renunciation of material desires as means to liberation. The Lokayatas, also known as Carvaka, were proponents of materialism and atheism. They rejected the authority of the Vedas and denied the existence of gods or an afterlife. The Lokayatas embraced a materialistic worldview, emphasizing sensual pleasure and sensory experiences as the highest goals in life. Their philosophical standpoint was rooted in empiricism and the rejection of supernatural explanations. The Charvakas, a sub-sect of the Lokayatas, promoted a hedonistic philosophy centered on material enjoyment and sensory gratification. They believed that this life was the only reality and that individuals should pursue pleasure and happiness without concern for religious rituals or moral codes. The Charvakas challenged the prevailing religious and philosophical systems of their time through their rationalist arguments.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Ideologies that were pro- and anti-Vedic emerged and grew throughout the sixth century BC. One should be aware, nevertheless, that India lacked many instances of violent religious disputes among the country's many different belief systems. In actuality, these systems used arguments and disputes to spread their own ideologies or belief systems, which is a distinctive aspect of Indian religion. In contrast to the rigorous Vedic religion, which was centered on sacrifices and polytheism, the sixth century saw the emergence in India of heterodox and monotheistic religions including Jainism, Buddhism, and Ajivakas, among others. These ideologies were opposed to the intricate and expensive Vedic sacrifices and rites. Additionally, they resisted the rise of Brahmans as a dominant socio-religious and economic force in society. They gave the civilization in the sixth century BC an ideological foundation and alternative. The non-Vedic faiths were not alien, it should be recognized. Instead, they had a strong connection to Indian culture. When it comes to the spread of their various faiths, they first seem to be sharply at odds with one another, yet over time, they adopt similar strategies. The following are some factors that contributed to the rise of non-Vedic cults: Increase in Sacrifices. The offering of sacrifices was made necessary for obtaining God's favor or having any request granted during the Later Vedic era. The scriptures recommended a variety of bloody,

expensive, and time-consuming sacrifices. In addition, comparable to the sacrifices, many other kinds of specialized priests and Gods began to appear in society. Overall, the system evolved into something that was beyond the capabilities of the average individual and only beneficial to the priest class. Institutions of discrimination based on a rigorous caste system were part of later Vedic society. The caste system, the abundance of castes and subcastes, the treatment of women and Shudras, etc. are all examples of how the Vedic culture is depicted. In this arrangement, neither the common person nor the non-Kshatriya rulers or economically superior trading class found any respectable position or respect [1], [2].

unclear scriptures The literature of the Vedas was diverse and specialized. But it was written in the obscure Sanskrit dialect that was only understood by Brahmans. Therefore, it was important for the average person to comprehend their faith via literature and language that was simple to grasp. Need for Fresh Ideas The extreme ritualism of the Later Vedic era infuriated many intellectuals, even among Vedic people. Thus, they produced the Upanishads, a unique kind of Vedic literature. The lavish sacrifices of the Vedic texts were rejected in favor of meditation and introspection by the Upanishads. Even more abstract than the rites themselves, the meditation of the Upanishads, however, revolved on concepts like atman, Brahma, dvait-advait, etc. People thus needed fresh, clear-cut, straightforward belief systems. There

was a need for a religious system that would provide basic, clear ideas and would recommend inexpensive, manageable rites in accessible language in light of the complexity of Later Vedic ritual. Additionally, politically and economically superior non-Kshatriya rulers and people needed social and religious penalties against them or social legitimacy. An example of this is the Vaishya Varna. As a result, non-Vedic religions that met the criteria outlined above began to arise in the sixth century BC, giving Vaishya and non-Kshatriya strong individuals and kingdoms credibility.

Jainism

Jainism is seen as an anadi religion, or the religion that has always been, and via tirthankaras, it is periodically recounted. Rishabhdeva was the first of the 24 tirthankaras, Neminath came in at number 22, and Parshvanatha came in at number 23. Ashvasena, the king of Banaras, and his wife Vama had a son named Parshvanath. At the age of 30, he abdicated the crown and began doing penance. He was a 100-year-old man who dedicated his life to the spread of Jainism. He placed special emphasis on the four precepts of Satya, Brahmacharya, Aseya, and Aparigraha. Eight gana, eight ganadhara, and one thousand Shramanas made up Parshvanatha's disciples, who were all dressed in white fabric. The 24th tirthankara and most revered speaker of the Jain faith was Vardhaman Mahavir.

Vardhaman Mahavir

Vardhaman was born in Kundagrama, Muzaffarpur district (current Bihar). He was the child of Lichhavi King Trishaladevi and Siddhartha, King of the Dnyatrik Republic. Vardhaman was usually meditating and disengaged from earthly pleasures since he was a little kid. He has a daughter from his marriage to a woman named Yashoda. At the age of 30, he requested permission from his older brother and decided to live an austere life after his parents passed away. He first donned clothing, but after a year he stopped wearing them and hasn't returned. He spent 12 years doing tedious penance, or tapas. On the banks of the Rijjpalika in the hamlet of Jrimbhika, he attained enlightenment of the highest knowledge in his thirteenth year, becoming kevalin or arhat. He was able to master all of his indriyas, or senses. He is hence referred to as the Jina, or Jitendriya (who conquered his senses). He was known as Nigranth because he was released from all bonds. After then, he continued to share his ideas for another 72 years in public. Then he attained Nirvana in Pavapuri [3].

The Jainist ideology and code of behavior that prevailed at the time were reinterpreted by Mahavira.

He added the fifth principle, ahimsa, to the four already mentioned by Parshvanatha. He developed a new system of ethics and principles centered on nonviolence. He then gathered his followers. In addition, he revived Jain monasticism and established the hierarchy of Jain preachers, or Shramanas. In addition, he offered guidelines that were appropriate for laypeople. He embraced the use of ardhmagadhi, a language of the people, as a medium for preaching as well as techniques of discussion and conversation. Mahavira was able to effectively spread Jainism because of his straightforward moral code and use of everyday language. Within a short period of time, Jainism gained appeal among regular people as well as among monarchs and businessmen. Mahavira is thus regarded as the true founder of Jainism.

DISCUSSION

Fundamentals of Jainism

The following are inferred to be the fundamentals of Jainism:

- (i) Negations of the Vedas, Vedic sacrifices, rites, and their notion of God
- (ii) To obtain moksha, one should master his senses rather than relying on God's favors.
- (iii) The everlasting jiva (soul), which created the universe,
- (iv) Jiva must be liberated from deeds in order to get moksha.
- (v) Adherence to equality

The Fasts: Anu-Vrata and Maha-Vrata

Ahimsa: This is Jainism's central idea. It is to refrain from causing any kind of physical, verbal, or mental harm to any living creature. Satya to tell the truth and to set up circumstances that would encourage others to do the same. Asteya not to own anything that is not our property Aparigraha to only own the items that are absolutely necessary Brahmacharya Avoid having sexual relations. For Jain monks and nuns, adherence to these five tenets was required. These are hence referred to as "maha-vrata." But it is impossible for laypeople to adhere to such rigid moral standards. Jainism thereby provided them with the same concepts, but in a mild or constrained manner. They are referred to as "anu-vrata," such as satyaanuvrata, ahimsa-anuvrata, etc. Three guna-vrata, such as Dig-vrata, were made available to laypeople (shravaka and shravika) in order to teach them patience and sacrifice. One should keep their instructions to a minimum when traveling. Kal-vrata One should set a time limit when

traveling and stick to it. Anarth-dandavat One should respect the boundaries and ideals of their vocation while doing it.

Shiksha-Vrata

Some principles, such as Samayika, are taught to promote the inclination of detachment from worldly pleasures and for the social-health. to practice the habit of sitting stillly in one spot while doing meditation Proshadhopavasa Every two weeks, on the fifth (panchami), eighth (ashtami), and fourteenth (chaturdashi) days, one is to observe fast; on the eighth and fourteenth days of chaturmasa (Ashadh to Ashvin, or June to September/rainy season), one is to observe fast. One should sit at Jain temples on the day of fasting, recite texts, and practice meditation. Parinama Bhogopabhoga Set daily restrictions on how much you can eat and how much fun you can have. Asmibhag atithi to provide the sincere and deserving visitor a portion of our prepared cuisine [4], [5].

Different Disciples

There are five different categories of disciples in Jainism: Tirthankara (free), Arhata (a soul on the path to nirvana), Acharya (a Great Disciple), Upadhyaya (a Teacher), and Sadhu (a General Disciple). Jain scripture. The original preaching of Mahvira is said to have been collected in 14 books known as Parva. Sthulabhadra divided Jainism into 12 Anga during the Pataliputra grand assembly, which was the first of its kind. Famous angas like the Acharanga sutra and the Bhagavati sutra were among these angas. The Upangas added to these in the second great assembly, which was held in Vallabhi. Sutragrantha (41), Prakirnakas (31), Niyukti/Bhashya (12), and Mahabhshasha (1) made up the first 85 Jaina canons. In the ardhmagadhi script, they are known as Agama.

Growth of Jainism

According to legend, Mahavira did not create Jainism. However, because to the flimsy efforts of Mahavira and his new contributions consolidation, reinterpretation of ethics and morality, a distinct set of rules for laypeople, hierarchical systemized monarchism he was given the title of Jaina religion's true founder. Arya Sudharma, one of his 11 students or ganadharas, rose to prominence as the first mainpreacher or thera. Sambhutavijaya promoted Jainism under the Nanda dynasty. The sixth Thera, Bhadrabahu, reigned at the same time as Chandragupta Maurya. The main factor in the expansion of Jainism was the assistance and favors of the ruling classes of the time. Jainism was adopted as

the official religion of illustrious kings including Bimbisara, Ajatshatru, Chandragupta Maurya, Kharvela (in the north), and the Ganga, Kadamba, Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, and Shilahara (in the south). They offered Jain their assistance in spreading them farther and steadily. The Jain were mostly centered in the Mathura area, but they began to expand across Gujarat and southern India thanks to the support of the Chalukya dynasty and other major kingdoms.

The commerce and craftsman classes, in addition to the ruling elite, adopted Jainism. On the financial foundation that these programs supplied, it expanded. Literature and art produced by Jainas thrived as a result of monarchs' favor. There are vast libraries of Jaina literature written in both Sanskrit and common languages like ardhmagadhi. In addition, temples, viharas, and caverns were built to house vast crowds of devotees. The most well-known research institutes for Jainism were Mathura and Shravanbelagola, which functioned as educational centers for notable works and study on the religion by many experts. Jainism's emphasis on following strong moral guidelines hindered its growth, but they also allowed it to maintain its original shape up to the present day. The everlasting contributions of Jainism to Indian civilization were the ideas of "ahimsa" and "anekantavada," in particular [6].

Sweeping Assemblies

Bhadrabahu left Magadha for Shravanbelagola in South India during the 12 years of famine there, although some Jain mostly Shvetambaras remained there under Sthulbahubhadra's direction. He held the first large assembly in Pataliputra somewhere about 300 BC. The assembly determined how Mahavira's sermons were divided into 12 Angas. Upon their return to Magadha, largely Digambara Jain from south India rejected these Angas and said that all of the original text had been lost. After a long period of time, a second major assembly was organized in 512 AD at Vallabhi, Gujarat, under the direction of Deavardhimani Kshamashramana. The 12th Anga was lost in the meanwhile. As a result, the assembly made an effort to gather and collect the scripture. They added to the extant Angas and produced new writings like Upanga [7].

Dissensions

Jaina had been wearing nothing before. Most of the Jaina departed Magadha for south India during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, led by Bhadrabahu. They eventually made their way back to Magadha. The Jaina in Magadha, meantime, had resorted to and

developed the custom of covering their bodies with white fabric. The Jaina who came from the south were devoted to the prior severe standards and continued to be cloth-less, but they have relaxed other norms of behavior, such as allowing women to practice Jain monasticism. Undoubtedly, their presence caused rifts among the Jaina. It was split into the Shvetambara (in a white dress) and Digambara (without clothing) cults. The Shvetambara Jaina encouraged the involvement of women and accept the white (shveta) cloth to wear, however the Digambara Jaina believed in staying cloth-less and are against allowing women into the fold of religion. Both of these significant cults eventually developed their own interpretations of the Jain texts throughout time. In general, the Digambaras were mostly concentrated in southern India whereas the Shvetambaras lived in the north [8].

CONCLUSION

These heterodox religious orders played a significant role in ancient Indian intellectual and religious discourse. They offered alternative perspectives, critiqued traditional beliefs, and contributed to the diversity of philosophical thought in ancient India. Their influence, however, diminished over time as orthodox traditions regained prominence. Studying heterodox religious orders in ancient India provides insights into the multifaceted nature of religious and philosophical thought in the region. It highlights the presence of dissenting voices, alternative worldviews, and the ongoing quest for truth and understanding. By examining these heterodox movements, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of the rich tapestry of ancient Indian religious and intellectual history. In conclusion, heterodox religious orders in ancient India such as the Ajivikas, Lokayatas (Carvaka), and the Charvakas, challenged established religious and philosophical traditions. They presented

alternative ideologies rooted in determinism, materialism, atheism, and hedonism. Exploring these heterodox movements enriches our understanding of the diversity of thought and the dynamics of religious and philosophical discourse in ancient India.

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Buddhism: Gautama Buddha (566 to 486 BC): His life

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ABSTRACT: *Buddhism, one of the major religions of the world, traces its roots back to the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha. This abstract provides an overview of the life of Gautama Buddha, the historical figure who founded Buddhism and became known as the "Enlightened One." Gautama Buddha, born around 566 BCE in what is now Nepal, was originally named Siddhartha Gautama. He was born into a privileged family, but at a young age, he became disillusioned with the world of material wealth and sought answers to the fundamental questions of human existence: the nature of suffering and the path to liberation. At the age of 29, Siddhartha Gautama renounced his life of luxury and embarked on a spiritual quest for enlightenment. For six years, he engaged in rigorous ascetic practices and studied under various renowned teachers, but none provided him with the answers he sought. Determined to find the truth, he entered into deep meditation under a Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, India. After an intense period of meditation, Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment, achieving a profound understanding of the nature of suffering and the path to liberation from it. This event, known as the "Buddha's awakening," marked the birth of Buddhism as a distinct spiritual tradition. Following his enlightenment, Gautama Buddha spent the remaining years of his life teaching and sharing his insights with disciples and the wider community. He traveled extensively throughout northern India delivering discourses and expounding the Four Noble Truths the core principles of Buddhism that highlight the reality of suffering, its causes, its cessation, and the path leading to its end.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

Siddhartha was born in modern-day Lumbini, Nepal. He was the child of Mayadevi, a princess of Koliya gana, and Shuddodana, the King of Shakya gana of Kapilvastu. Since Gautami raised him in his early years, he also went by the name Gautama. After being enlightened, he adopted the name Buddha. Siddhartha received several conveniences and pleasures from Shuddodana. Siddhartha, on the other hand, had been aloof from earthly pleasures and preoccupied with meditation since he was a little boy. He was profoundly impacted by the suffering and anguish of human existence when he was young. Traditions tell us of Siddhartha's reactions to seeing an elderly man, a sick man, a dead corpse, and a meditating sage. His search for the source of such suffering and the true nature of reality grew restless. Thus, at the age of 29, he traveled to the jungles to learn the true meaning of truth and the source of his sadness before leaving his wife Yashodhara and son Rahul. He gave up earthly pleasures to advance mankind, leaving a mark on history known as maha-bhi-ni-shkramana. He experimented with different forms of penance for six years while being overseen by several academics. He abandoned them, nonetheless, feeling that they were ineffective. In the end, he attained enlightenment

under the pipal (bodhi) tree in Gaya, on the banks of the Uruvela. He evolved into Tathagath, who realized the truth, and the Buddha, the enlightened one. He presented his unique interpretation of reality while challenging accepted scientific theories and authorities. He made the decision to impart his knowledge to the populace using clear moral standards and in their own languages, i.e. Pali. At Sarnath, he preached for the first time and described the dhamma. This discourse challenged past interpretations of reality and marked a new turning point in Indian culture's intellectual history; as a result, it was memorably known as dhamma-chakra-parivartana. People were pleased by his well-informed, unassuming, and selfless nature as well as by his straightforward instruction [1].

There were initially five disciples: Anand, Ashvajit, Upali, Mogalalana, and Shreyaputra. But in a short time, throngs upon throngs of people flocked to him and acknowledged his wisdom. Along with simple people, he was followed by affluent businessmen, craftsmen, and rulers from that era including Ajatshatru (Magadha), Prasenjit (Kosala), and Udayana (Kaushambi). Then, based on clear guidelines and regulations of behavior, Buddha organized his followers into a particular monasticism. The Sangha is the name for this. Buddhists show their

adoration for the Buddha, his Sangha, and his dhamma by surrendering to them. At the age of 80, after years of laborious propagation and extensive travel, the Buddha retired in tranquility to Kusinagar (Kasaya, district of Devriya, modern Uttar Pradesh). His departure was honored with the name Maha-Parinirvana.

Buddhist Monasticism or Sangha: Buddha established a rigid system of missionaries known as Bhikshus and Bhikshunis in order to spread Buddhism. He put his followers and missionaries into a particular group that he named the Sangha.

Membership in the Sangha (Monastery) is open to anybody (male or female) above the age of 18 who has given up his property and joined on an equal basis. Women were first not allowed in the Sangha, but owing to Ananda (a disciple) and Gautami (a foster mother), who persisted in their efforts and persuasion, the doors were eventually opened. Additionally, slaves, warriors, and creditors might join the Sangha with the owner's consent. Criminals, lepers, and infectious sick cannot enter the Sangha, nevertheless. One must first swear an oath of fidelity to the Buddha-Dhamma-Sangha, shave his head (mundana), and put on a yellow garment. He might then do a diksha known as upasampada after a month. Additionally, he is accepted into the Sangha following upasampada. The member must, however, abide by the standards of behavior (dasha-shila), which include refraining from things like drinking alcohol, eating when it's not mealtime, dancing, using fragrances, sleeping on mattresses, wearing gold and silver jewelry, and engaging in adultery.

Sangha's organizational structure was democratic. In order to spread Buddhism, the monks are supposed to travel for eight months. Then, during the four months of the rainy season, they congregated at a single location for a gathering known as varshavasa. During varshavasa, they spoke, shared their stories, made confessions, and took prayashcita (expiation). They were thus required to regularly congregate, act in unison, and show respect for the Sangha's seniors. On certain days, such as the eighth, fourteenth, full moon, and no-moon days of the month, the monks gather in upasabhas. They sent in their reports, confessed, and followed prayaschita when there was a rule violation. The discipline and chastity of monks earned them a lot of respect from the general public. It aided in the spread of Buddhism among a sizable populace. Additionally, the Sangha served as a socio-religious legitimation for the merchants, in exchange for which the latter paid liberally to fund the building of

Buddhist temples and homes. The kings also gave the Sangha favors, contributions, and protections in order to sustain the superior economic class of that time and the people's faith [2], [3].

DISCUSSION

Buddhism's Sacred Texts

Three volumes, together known as pitakas, contain the sermons of the Buddha. These three volumes make up the Sutta-pitaka, a compilation of the Buddha's discourses that were primarily written for regular people. The accounts of Buddha's rebirth (the jatakas) are contained in the fifth of the work's five nikayas. Vinaya pitaka is a compendium of guidelines and standards of behavior for Buddhist nuns and monks. The Abhi-dhamma-pitaka is a compilation of the Buddha's philosophical ideas presented as questions and answers. It was primarily intended for Buddhist intellectuals.

Dharmaparishadas:

The Grand Assemblies Following the mahaparinirvana of the Buddha, Buddhism observed the multitude of distinct preachings of the Buddha. Therefore, it was considered that it was necessary to restructure, collect, and codify Buddha's original teachings in order to eliminate this disagreement and attain a unifying platform. Grand gatherings of Buddhist adherents were sometimes convened for this reason. As soon as Buddha passed away, in the year 483 BC, during the rule of Ajatshatru of the Haryaka dynasty, the first large gathering was held near to Rajgriha at the Saptarni caves. Mahakashyapa served as the chairman. The meeting produced a compilation of the Buddha's pitakas. Vinaya Pitaka was put together under the direction of Upali, whilst Ananda oversaw the creation of Sutta Pitaka.

The second great assembly was then established at Vaishali in 387 BC, during the rule of Kalashoka of the Shishunaga dynasty. However, monks from Avanti and Kaushambi disagreed with some of the restrictions that Pataliputra and Vaishali monks adopted. As a result of the lack of a resolution to the argument, Buddhism had its first significant divide under the labels of Mahasanghika and Sthavirvadis. The Sthavirvadi chose to adhere to the Vinaya pitaka's laws, whereas the Mahasanghik favored new regulations. The third great assembly, presided over by Moggaliputta Tisya, was assembled in Pataliputra in 251 BC during the reign of Ashoka of the Maurya dynasty. The assembly produced a book called the Abhidhammapitaka that included a compilation of

Buddha's philosophical writings. Additionally, the assembly expelled 60000 monks who were not abiding by Buddha's instructions.

Kanishka of the Kushana dynasty held the fourth great assembly at Kundalvana (Kashmir) against a backdrop of new ideas. The assembly developed a set of agreements on three pitakas. The older split was later abolished and unified under the label of Hinayana, whilst the new intellectuals were known as Mahayana, as a result of disagreements between conventional academics and new thinkers [4], [5].

Dissensions

Buddhism saw its greatest divisions at the second grand assembly at Vaishali as a result of the heated debates between the monks of Kaushambi and Avanti and those of Pataliputra and Vaishali. After the Mauryas, the monarchs began emphasizing Vedic religion over Buddhism. They are known as Sthavirvadis (those who prioritized rigorous obedience of Vinaya-rules) and Mahasanghikas (those who desired to bring new norms and reforms), respectively. In addition, the Vedic religion began reflecting on itself and improvising its intellectual and practical tenets in response to Buddhism's growing popularity. Foreign kings and artistic ideas were entering Indian land during this time. Additionally, every religion system followed the practice of deification and idol-worship in order to broaden its base of followers. In order to compete with Vedic religion, various systems began to explore using Sanskrit for their texts.

In light of this, Kundalvana hosted the fourth great assembly. Many Buddhist philosophers advocated for further radical reforms in Buddhism in order to broaden its support base. While the new ideas were known as Mahayana, the previous groups of Sthavirvadis and Mahasanghikas gathered under Hinayana to fight them.

Buddhism's Decline

As was previously established, many varieties of Buddhism clashed philosophically and placed a strong emphasis on rules. It rapidly deteriorated over time and eventually vanished from Indian soil by the end of the 7th century. What led to such a decrease, and why? Let's investigate. Change in kings' favor since we are aware that one of the factors contributing to the growth of Buddhism was the backing and favor of monarchs. However, rulers who supported Vedic religion proliferated in India following the Mauryas. In reality, by making enormous sacrifices and delivering generous gifts, the emperors and their officers really

began revitalizing Vedic religion. It made it difficult to sustain Buddhism.

Analysis of the Vedic Religion

The rapid expansion of non-Vedic faiths compelled Vedic religion to examine its own tenets. As a result, they changed a few things about the old, rigorous, ceremonial Vedic religion. It started to focus on individuals. It brought ideas like public temples for worship, idolatry, devotional prayer styles, basic codes of behavior, the founding of monasteries, pilgrimages, etc. As a result, the Vedic religion acquired large numbers of followers. Dissensions in Buddhism Emerging soon after the death of Buddha, dissensions were present. Contemporary monarchs sometimes held large conferences to quell such tensions and achieve unity. They were, however, ineffective. Buddhism also embraced ideas like idolatry, the Sanskrit language, the idea of heaven and hell, the cycle of birth, etc. since it is people-oriented. Such ideas tainted Buddhism's individualistic character, which was once radical and unconventional in nature. With the exception of Menander and Kanishka, practically all invaders were adherents of the Vedic faith. In particular, the warlike Huna tribe adhered to the Shaiva sect. Buddhist monasteries and educational facilities were destroyed. At the moment, it was the scattered Buddhists' last strike [6], [7].

The Ajivakas

The worship of Ajivakas originated in north India with the development of non-traditional faiths like Jainism and Buddhism. Since we lack access to the texts of this religion, we must rely on allusions from Buddhist and Jain literature to piece together what we know about Ajivakas. It is said that Makkhaliputra Goshal is the originator of this sect. Some claim that this cult existed before to Goshala for 117 years under the direction of Nandabachcha, Kisasankichcha, etc. Makkhali (Sanskrit: Maskari), who carries cane-stick, was Goshal's father. He subsisted entirely on handouts. Goshala got his name since he was born in a cow enclosure (goshala). Mahavira lived at the same time as Makkhaliputra Goshala. He really spent six years with Mahavira and was his first student. However, Goshala abandoned Jainism and started his own cult, the Ajivaka, in Shravasti as a result of disagreements over rules of behavior. In a short amount of time, we notified you that Ajivakas was drawing enormous numbers of people. Particularly among the potter world, he had a large following.

It spread from Anga (Bihar) to Avanti (western Madhya Pradesh). We also aware that on the highlands

of Baravara and Nagarjuni, Ashoka and his grandson provided rock-cut caves for Ajivakas. In terms of Indian rock-cut cave construction, they were the oldest known caves. According to the story, the Goshala engaged in illegal behavior with a single potter's wife. He developed an addiction to many different intoxicants. He eventually withdrew from these activities however, and his cult was once again reborn. He left in the year 500 BC.

Principles of Ajivakas

Ajivaka refers to a person who disregards rules, believes in fate, lives according to his natural instincts, and therefore leads a free life.

1. They believe that every living thing contains a soul that, after each existence, reincarnates.
2. But they place no value on taking any action and trust on fate.
3. In their opinion,
4. Everything arrives at its predetermined location without the need for supportive action,
5. Natural and spiritual development occurs through the ongoing cycle of birth and rebirth,
6. Nothing/being/quality is brought about by human action; rather, it exists because of its own destiny,
7. Whatever joy and sadness exist, they are unrelated to anything and cannot be avoided. These ideas gave rise to the akarmanyavada school of thought, or belief in inaction.

Goshala declares that there should be "no action, no deeds, and no power." He is thus referred to as maskari, which is Sanskrit for "one who does not act." Goshala's determinism gave birth to his idea of amorality. He disproves the actions-believing kriyavada. This prompts him to argue against the idea that moral behavior advances both the person and society. In other words, if one accepts that events occurred without any human intervention, then moral or immoral consciousness standards are obviously rendered irrelevant. As a result, Goshal's faith in fate and belief in inaction naturally led him to defend unethical behavior.

Other cults of the Brahman

The most significant aspect of early religious beliefs was the worship of Yakshas, Nagas, and other folk deities, in which Bhakti played a crucial role. In both early literature and archaeology, there is a wealth of evidence demonstrating the popularity of this kind of devotion among the populace.

Worship of Vasudeva/Krishna

In Panini's Ashtadhyayi, a sutra alludes to Vasudeva (Krishna) devotees. Krishna, the son of Devaki, a student of the sage Ghora Angirasa who was a sun-worshipping priest, is also mentioned in the Chhandogya Upanishad. People who solely adored Vasudeva Krishna as their personal deity were once referred to as Bhagavatas. The Vasudeva-Bhagavata religion expanded rapidly, including other Vedic and Brahminic deities like Narayana (a cosmic God) and Vishnu (mainly an aspect of the sun) into its fold. This Bhakti religion has been known by the term Vaishnava from the late Gupta era, which denotes the focus on the idea of incarnations (avatars) and the primacy of the Vedic Vishnu element in it.

Southern Vaishnava Movement

South India is the major focus of the Vaishnava movement's history, which spans from the Gupta era's conclusion until the first decade of the thirteenth century AD. Alvars, a Tamil term for those who have drowned in Vishnu-bhakti, were Vaishnava poet-saints who taught ekatmika bhakti (unwavering devotion) to Vishnu. Their songs were collected referred to as prabandhas.

Shaivism

Shaivism, as opposed to Vaishnavism, has its roots in antiquity. A group of Shiva worshipers known as the Shiva-bhagavatas, according to Panini, were distinguished by the iron lances and clubs they carried as well as their skin-covered garb. Shaiva Movement in the South: The 63 saints known in Tamil as Nayanars (Siva-bhaktas) were instrumental in the early success of the Shaiva movement in the South. Tevaram Stotras, also known as Dravida Veda, were their endearing passionate Tamil melodies that were ceremonially performed in the neighborhood Shiva temples. The Nayanars were members of every caste. A significant number of Shaiva intellectuals whose names were connected to various Shaiva groups, including Agamanta, Shudha, and Vira-shaivism, complemented this on the doctrinal side [7], [8].

Small-Scale Religious Movements

The worship of Surya and the feminine principle (Shakti) did not become as significant as the other two great brahminical cults. It's possible that in pre-Vedic eras, the feminine side of the divine was revered. Respect was also shown to the feminine principle known in the Vedic era as the Divine Mother, the Goddess of plenty, and the personification of energy (Shakti). However, it is not until a somewhat late date

that there is a distinct mention of the Devi's exclusive devotees. As was previously said, Surya has long been revered in India. Sun and his varied facets played a significant role in both Vedic and epic mythology. Early in the Christian period, regions of northern India were exposed to the East Iranian (Shakadvipi) variant of the sun cult. But god didn't become the focal point of religious movements until a very recent time [9], [10].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we may conclude that Buddhism provided a challenge to the then ceremonial, intricate, and secluded Vedic religion by offering a religion founded on straightforward philosophy and norms of behaviour. Buddhism allowed India to experience the average person's actual faith. Additionally, it is credited with introducing Indian culture to far-off other nations. The middle road, which strikes a healthy balance between self-indulgence and self-mortification, is stressed in Gautama Buddha's teachings as the route to freedom from suffering. His teachings, referred to as the Dharma, included a broad variety of subjects, including as morality, effective meditation techniques, and the impermanence of life. Due to the enormous number of people who were drawn to Gautama Buddha's teachings of compassion and focus on self-transformation both during his lifetime and in the centuries that followed, Buddhism steadily expanded across India and other countries. In conclusion, Buddhism is built on the life of Gautama Buddha, from his privileged upbringing to his final renunciation and enlightenment. Millions of people all across the globe are still motivated by his teachings to seek out knowledge, compassion, and freedom from

pain. Knowing about the life of Gautama Buddha offers important insights into the philosophical and historical roots of Buddhism, a significant and enduring religious tradition.

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An overview on Philosophy in Ancient India

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ABSTRACT: *Philosophy in ancient India encompasses a rich and diverse intellectual tradition that explores fundamental questions about the nature of reality, human existence, and the pursuit of truth. This abstract provides an overview of the philosophy in ancient India highlighting key schools of thought and their contributions to the development of Indian philosophical traditions. Ancient Indian philosophy flourished over several centuries, from around 1500 BCE to 600 CE, and can be classified into two major schools: the astika (orthodox) and the nastika (heterodox). The astika schools include six main philosophical systems: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta. Nyaya and Vaisheshika focus on logical reasoning and the analysis of the nature of reality. Samkhya offers a dualistic perspective on the existence of matter and consciousness. Yoga emphasizes the practice of meditation and the attainment of spiritual liberation. Mimamsa focuses on the interpretation of Vedic rituals and texts. Vedanta explores the nature of reality and the relationship between the individual soul (Atman) and the universal soul (Brahman). The nastika schools challenge the authority of the Vedas and include the Charvakas, Jainism, and Buddhism. The Charvakas espouse a materialistic and atheistic philosophy centered on sensory pleasure. Jainism, founded by Mahavira, emphasizes non-violence (ahimsa), truth, and spiritual liberation through self-discipline. Buddhism, founded by Gautama Buddha, explores the nature of suffering and the path to enlightenment through the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

In classical India philosophy was understood as contributing to human well-being by freeing people from misconceptions about themselves and the world. Ultimate well-being was conceived as some sort of fulfilment outside the conditions of space and time. Philosophies, as well as religious traditions, understood themselves as paths to that final goal. Where the religious contexts of those who engaged in critical, reflective and argumentative philosophy are concerned we have to reckon with a tremendous variety of beliefs and practices. Neither 'Hinduism' nor 'Buddhism' are really homogenous. It is difficult to know where to begin: you can always go back further. In the course of the second millennium B.C. the Aryan migrations into north west of the sub-continent introduced the Vedic religious culture and the four-fold hierarchy of varn. as (Brahmins, Warriors, Farmers and Servants) that was superimposed on the indigenous system of jātis. It appears that originally the ritual cult was concerned with the propitiation by offerings of the many deities in the Vedic pantheon. Their favour thus secured would yield mundane and supra- mundane rewards. Rituals performed by members of the Brahmin caste were understood as yielding benefits for both the individual and the community. But there developed an outlook that the continuation of the cosmos, the

regularity of the seasons and the rising of the sun, were not merely marked or celebrated by ritual acts but actually depended upon ritual. What the rituals effected was too important to be left to the choices of ultimately uncontrollable capricious divinities. So rituals came to be thought of as automatic mechanisms, in the course of which the mention of the deities' names was but a formulaic aspect of the process. The relegated gods existed only in name. The Brahmins unilaterally declare themselves the gods in human form. From the point of view of the individual, the benefit of the ritual was understood in terms of the accumulation of merit or good karma that would be enjoyed at some point in the future, in this or a subsequent life perhaps in a superior sphere of experience for those with sufficient merit.

Vedic philosophy

Religion of the Rig Vedic people was very simple in the sense that it consisted mainly of worship of numerous deities representing the various phenomena of nature through prayers. It was during the later Vedic period that definite ideas and philosophies about the true nature of soul or Atman and the cosmic principle or Brahman who represented the ultimate reality were developed. These Vedic philosophical concepts later on gave rise to six different schools of philosophies called shada darshana. They fall in the category of the orthodox system as the final authority of the Vedas is

recognised by all of them. Let us now find out more about these six schools of Indian philosophy.

Samkhya System

The Samkhya philosophy holds that reality is constituted of two principles one female and the other male i.e. Prakriti, Purusha respectively. Prakriti and Purusha are completely independent and absolute. According to this system, Purusha is mere consciousness; hence it cannot be modified or changed. Prakriti on the other hand is constituted of three attributes, thought, movement and the change or transformation of these attributes brings about the change in all objects. The Samkhya philosophy tries to establish some relationship between Purusha and Prakriti for explaining the creation of the universe. The propounder of this philosophy was Kapila, who wrote the Samkhya sutra. Infact Samkhya school explained the phenomena of the doctrine of evolution and answered all the questions aroused by the thinkers of those days [1], [2].

Yoga

Yoga literally means the union of the two principal entities. The origin of yoga is found in the Yogasutra of Patanjali believed to have been written in the second century BC. By purifying and controlling changes in the mental mechanism, yoga systematically brings about the release of purusha from prakriti. Yogic techniques control the body, mind and sense organs. Thus this philosophy is also considered a means of achieving freedom or mukti. This freedom could be attained by practising self-control (yama), observation of rules (niyama), fixed postures (asana), breath control (pranayama), choosing an object (pratyahara) and fixing the mind (dhyana), concentrating on the chosen object (dhyana) and complete dissolution of self, merging the mind and the object (Samadhi). Yoga admits the existence of God as a teacher and guide.

Nyaya

Nyaya is considered as a technique of logical thinking. According to Nyaya, valid knowledge is defined as the real knowledge, that is, one knows about the object as it exists. For example, it is when one knows a snake as a snake or a cup as a cup. Nyaya system of philosophy considers God who creates, sustains and destroys the universe. Gautama is said to be the author of the Nyaya Sutras.

Vaisheshika

Vaisheshika system is considered as the realistic and objective philosophy of universe. The reality

according to this philosophy has many bases or categories which are substance, attribute, action, genus, distinct quality and inherence. Vaisheshika thinkers believe that all objects of the universe are composed of five elements—earth, water, air, fire and ether. They believe that God is the guiding principle. The living beings were rewarded or punished according to the law of karma, based on actions of merit and demerit. Creation and destruction of universe was a cyclic process and took place in agreement with the wishes of God. Kanada wrote the basic text of Vaisheshika philosophy. A number of treatises were written on this text but the best among them is the one written by Prashastapada in the sixth century AD. Vaisheshika School of philosophy explained the phenomena of the universe by the atomic theory, the combination of atoms and molecules into matter and explained the mechanical process of formation of Universe.

Mimamsa

Mimamsa philosophy is basically the analysis of interpretation, application and the use of the text of the Samhita and Brahmana portions of the Veda. According to Mimamsa philosophy Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge, and religion means the fulfilment of duties prescribed by the Vedas. This philosophy encompasses the Nyaya-Vaisheshika systems and emphasizes the concept of valid knowledge. Its main text is known as the Sutras of Gaimini which have been written during the third century BC. The names associated with this philosophy are Sabar Swami and Kumarila Bhatta. The essence of the system according to Jaimini is Dharma which is the dispenser of fruits of one's actions, the law of righteousness itself. This system lays stress on the ritualistic part of Vedas.

Vedanta

Vedanta implies the philosophy of the Upanishad, the concluding portion of the Vedas. Shankaracharya wrote the commentaries on the Upanishads, Brahmasutras and the Bhagavad Gita. Shankaracharya's discourse or his philosophical views came to be known as Advaita Vedanta. Advaita literally means non-dualism or belief in one reality. Shankaracharya expounded that ultimate reality is one, it being the Brahman. According to Vedanta philosophy, 'Brahman is true, the world is false and self and Brahman are not different, Shankaracharya believes that the Brahman is existent, unchanging, the highest truth and the ultimate knowledge. He also believes that there is no distinction between Brahman

and the self. The knowledge of Brahman is the essence of all things and the ultimate existence. Ramanuja was another well known Advaita scholar. Among different schools of philosophy was found one philosophy which reached the climax of philosophic thought that the human mind can possibly reach, and that is known as the Vedantic philosophy.

Vedanta philosophy has ventured to deny the existence of the apparent ego, as known to us, and in this respect Vedanta has its unique position in the history of philosophies of the world. Vedanta is a philosophy and a religion. As a philosophy it inculcates the highest truths that have been discovered by the greatest philosophers and the most advanced thinkers of all ages and all countries. Vedanta philosophy teaches that all these different religions are like so many roads, which lead to same goal. Vedanta the end of the Vedas or knowledge refers to the Upanishads which appeared at the end of each Veda with a direct perception of reality. The core message of Vedanta is that every action must be governed by the intellect the discriminating faculty. The mind makes mistakes but the intellect tells us if the action is in our interest or not. Vedanta enables the practitioner to access the realm of spirit through the intellect. Whether one moves into spirituality through Yoga, meditation or devotion, it must ultimately crystallize into inner understanding for attitudinal changes and enlightenment.

Charvaka School

Brihaspati is supposed to be the founder of the Charvaka School of philosophy. It finds mention in the Vedas and Brihadaranyka Upanishad. Thus it is supposed to be the earliest in the growth of the philosophical knowledge. It holds that knowledge is the product of the combination of four elements which leaves no trace after death. Charvaka philosophy deals with the materialistic philosophy. It is also known as the Lokayata Philosophy – the philosophy of the masses. According to Charvaka there is no other world. Hence, death is the end of humans and pleasure the ultimate object in life. Charvaka recognises no existence other than this material world. Since God, soul, and heaven, cannot be perceived, they are not recognised by Charvakas. Out of the five elements earth, water, fire, air and ether, the Charvakas do not recognise ether as it is not known through perception. The whole universe according to them is thus consisted of four elements.

Jain Philosophy

Like the Charvakas, the Jains too do not believe in the Vedas, but they admit the existence of a soul. They also agree with the orthodox tradition that suffering (pain) can be stopped by controlling the mind and by seeking right knowledge and perception and by observing the right conduct. The Jaina philosophy was first propounded by the tirthankar Rishabha Deva. The names of Ajit Nath and Aristanemi are also mentioned with Rishabha Deva. There were twenty-four tirthankaras who actually established the Jaina darshan. The first tirthankar realised that the source of Jaina philosophy was Adinath. The twenty fourth and the last tirthankar was named Vardhaman Mahavira who gave great impetus to Jainism. Mahavira was born in 599 BC. He left worldly life at the age of thirty and led a very hard life to gain true knowledge. After he attained Truth, he was called Mahavira. He strongly believed in the importance of celibacy or brahmacharya.

Jain Theory of Reality

Seven Kinds of Fundamental Elements: The Jainas believe that the natural and supernatural things of the universe can be traced back to seven fundamental elements. They are jiva, ajivaa, astikaya, bandha, samvara, nirjana, and moksa. Substances like body which exist and envelope (like a cover) are astikaya. Anastikayas like 'time' have no body at all. The substance is the basis of attributes (qualities). The attributes that we find in a substance are known as dharmas. The Jainas believe that things or substance have attributes. These attributes also change with the change of kala (time). From their point of view, the attributes of a substance are essential, and eternal or unchangeable. Without essential attributes, a thing cannot exist. So they are always present in everything. For example, consciousness (chetana) is the essence of the soul; desire, happiness and sorrow are its changeable attributes.

Philosophy of the Buddha

Gautama Buddha, who founded the Buddhist philosophy, was born in 563 BC at Lumbini, a village near Kapilavastu in the foothills of Nepal. His childhood name was Siddhartha. His mother, Mayadevi, died when he was hardly a few days old. He was married to Yashodhara, a beautiful princess, at the age of sixteen. After a year of the marriage, he had a son, whom they named Rahul. But at the age of twenty-nine, Gautama Buddha renounced family life to find a solution to the world's continuous sorrow of death, sickness, poverty, etc. He went to the forests

and meditated there for six years. Thereafter, he went to Bodh Gaya (in Bihar) and meditated under a pipal tree. It was at this place that he attained enlightenment and came to be known as the Buddha. He then travelled a lot to spread his message and helped people find the path of liberation or freedom. He died at the age of eighty. Gautama's three main disciples known as Upali, Ananda and Mahakashyap remembered his teachings and passed them on to his followers. It is believed that soon after the Buddha's death a council was called at Rajagriha where Upali recited the Vinaya Pitaka (rules of the order) and Ananda recited the Sutta Pitaka (Buddha's sermons or doctrines and ethics). Sometime later the Abhidhamma Pitaka consisting of the Buddhist philosophy came into existence [3].

DISCUSSION

Main Characteristics

Buddha presented simple principles of life and practical ethics that people could follow easily. He considered the world as full of misery. Man's duty is to seek liberation from this painful world. He strongly criticised blind faith in the traditional scriptures like the Vedas. Buddha's teachings are very practical and suggest how to attain peace of mind and ultimate liberation from this material world. The knowledge realized by Buddha is reflected in the following four noble truths:

There is suffering in Human Life:

When Buddha saw human beings suffering from sickness, pain and death, he concluded that there was definitely suffering in human life. There is pain with birth. Separation from the pleasant is also painful. All the passions that remain unfulfilled are painful. Pain also comes when objects of sensuous pleasure are lost. Thus, life is all pain. There is cause of suffering, the second Noble Truth is related to the cause of suffering. It is desire that motivates the cycle of birth and death. Therefore, desire is the fundamental cause of suffering.

There is cessation of suffering: The third Noble Truth tells that when passion, desire and love of life are totally destroyed, pain stops. This Truth leads to the end of sorrow, which causes pain in human life. It involves destruction of ego (aham or ahankara), attachment, jealousy, doubt and sorrow. That state of mind is the state of freedom from desire, pain and any kind of attachment. It is the state of complete peace, leading to nirvana.

Path of Liberation: The fourth Noble Truth leads to a way that takes to liberation. Thus, initially starting

with pessimism, the Buddhist philosophy leads to optimism. Although there is a constant suffering in human life, it can be ended finally. Buddha suggests that the way or the path leading to liberation is eight-fold, through which one can attain nirvana [4], [5].

Eight-fold Path to Liberation (Nirvana)

- (i) **Right Vision:** One can attain right vision by removing ignorance. Ignorance creates a wrong idea of the relationship between the world and the self. It is on account of wrong understanding of man that he takes the non-permanent world as permanent. Thus, the right view of the world and its objects is the right vision.
- (ii) **Right Resolve:** It is the strong will-power to destroy thoughts and desires that harm others. It includes sacrifice, sympathy and kindness towards others.
- (iii) **Right Speech:** Man should control his speech by right resolve. It means to avoid false or unpleasant words by criticizing others.
- (iv) **Right Conduct:** It is to avoid activities which harm life. It means to be away from theft, excessive eating, the use of artificial means of beauty, jewellery, comfortable beds, gold etc.
- (v) **Right Means of Livelihood:** Right livelihood means to earn one's bread and butter by right means. It is never right to earn money by unfair means like fraud, bribery, theft, etc.
- (vi) **Right Effort:** It is also necessary to avoid bad feelings and bad impressions. It includes self-control, stopping or negation of sensuality and bad thoughts, and awakening of good thoughts.
- (vii) **Right Mindfulness:** It means to keep one's body, heart and mind in their real form. Bad thoughts occupy the mind when their form is forgotten. When actions take place according to the bad thoughts, one has to experience pain.
- (viii) **Right Concentration:** If a person pursues the above seven Rights, he will be able to concentrate properly and rightly. One can attain nirvana by right concentration (meditation).

Except for Charvaka School, realisation of soul has been the common goal of all philosophical schools of India. I am sure you would like to know more about Buddhism. We will go to Bodhgaya in Bihar. Tread

reverently along this ancient path. Begin with the Mahabodhi tree where something strange happened - realization of truth or spiritual illumination. Tradition states that Buddha stayed in Bodhgaya for seven weeks after his enlightenment. There you must also see the Animeshlocha Stupa which houses a standing figure of the Buddha with his eyes fixed towards this tree. Bodhgaya is also revered by the Hindus who go to the Vishnupada temple to perform 'Pind-daan' that ensures peace and solace to the departed soul. It was from Rajgir that Buddha set out on his last journey. The first Buddhist Council was held in the Saptarni cave in which the unwritten teachings of Buddha were penned down after his death. Even the concept of monastic institutions was laid at Rajgir which later developed into an academic and religious centre.

Religion and philosophy in Medieval India

Nearly every month a programme is going on in any auditorium in the city where songs of the Sufi saints and Bhakti saints are sung. The popularity of these programs can be seen from the attendance that is there. They are patronized by the government, by big business houses and even by individuals. The songs and the teachings of the Sufi and the Bhakti saints are relevant even today. Do you know the medieval period in India saw the rise and growth of the Sufi movement and the Bhakti movement? The two movements brought a new form of religious expression amongst Muslims and Hindus. The Sufis were mystics who called for liberalism in Islam. They emphasised on an egalitarian society based on universal love. The Bhakti saints transformed Hinduism by introducing devotion or bhakti as the means to attain God. For them caste had no meaning and all human beings were equal. The Sufi and Bhakti saints played an important role in bringing the Muslims and Hindus together. By using the local language of the people, they made religion accessible and meaningful to the common people.

The Sufi Movement

You will recall that Islam was founded by Prophet Muhammad. Islam saw the rise of many religious and spiritual movements within it. These movements were centered mainly around the interpretation of the Quran. There were two major sects that arose within Islam – the Sunnis and Shias. Our country has both the sects, but in many other countries like Iran, Iraq, Pakistan etc. you will find followers of only one of them. Among the Sunnis, there are four principal schools of Islamic Law, These are based upon the Quran and Hadis (traditions of the Prophet's saying and doings). Of these the Hanafi school of the eighth

century was adopted by the eastern Turks, who later came to India. The greatest challenge to orthodox Sunnism came from the rationalist philosophy or Mutazilas, who professed strict monotheism. According to them, God is just and has nothing to do with man's evil actions. Men are endowed with free will and are responsible for their own actions. The Mutazilas were opposed by the Ashari School. Founded by Abul Hasan Ashari (873-935 AD), the Ashari school evolved its own rationalist argument in defence of the orthodox doctrine (kalam). This school believes that God knows, sees and speaks. The Quran is eternal and uncreated. The greatest exponent of this school was Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111 AD), who is credited with having reconciled orthodoxy with mysticism. He was a great theologian who in 1095 began to lead a life of a Sufi. He is deeply respected by both orthodox elements and Sufis. Al-Ghazali attacked all non-orthodox Sunni schools. He said that positive knowledge cannot be gained by reason but by revelation. Sufis owed their allegiance to the Quran as much as the Ulemas did. The influence of the ideas of Ghazali was greater because of the new educational system set up by the state. It provided for setting up of seminaries of higher learning (called madrasas) where scholars were familiarised with Ashari ideas. They were taught how to run the government in accordance with orthodox Sunni ideas. These scholars were known as ulema. Ulema played an important role in the politics of medieval India.

The Sufis: Contrary to the ulema were the Sufis. The Sufis were mystics. They were pious men who were shocked at the degeneration in political and religious life. They opposed the vulgar display of wealth in public life and the readiness of the ulema to serve "ungodly" rulers. Many began to lead a retired ascetic life, having nothing to do with the state. The Sufi philosophy also differed from the ulema. The Sufis laid emphasis upon free thought and liberal ideas. They were against formal worship, rigidity and fanaticism in religion. The Sufis turned to meditation in order to achieve religious satisfaction. Like the Bhakti saints, the Sufis too interpreted religion as 'love of god' and service of humanity. In course of time, the Sufis were divided into different silsilahs (orders) with each silsilah having its own pir (guide) called Khwaja or Sheikh. The pir and his disciples lived in a khanqah (hospice). A pir nominated a successor or wali from his disciples to carry on his work. The Sufis organised samas (a recital of holy songs) to arouse mystical ecstasy. Basra in Iraq became the centre of Sufi activities. It must be noted that the Sufi saints were not

setting up a new religion, but were preparing a more liberal movement within the framework of Islam. They owed their allegiance to the Quran as much as the ulema did.

Sufism in India: The advent of Sufism in India is said to be in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. One of the early Sufis of eminence, who settled in India was Al-Hujwari who died in 1089, popularly known as Data Ganj Baksh (Distributor of Unlimited Treasure). In the beginning, the main centres of the Sufis were Multan and Punjab. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Sufis had spread to Kashmir, Bihar, Bengal and the Deccan. It may be mentioned that Sufism had already taken on a definite form before coming to India. Its fundamental and moral principles, teachings and orders, system of fasting, prayers and practice of living in khanqahs had already been fixed. The Sufis came to India via Afghanistan on their own free will. Their emphasis upon a pure life, devotional love and service to humanity made them popular and earned them a place of honour in Indian society [6], [7].

Abul Fazl while writing in the Ain-i-Akbari speaks of fourteen silsilahs of the Sufis. However, in this lesson we shall outline only some of the important ones. These silsilahs were divided into two types: Ba-shara and Be-shara. Ba-shara were those orders that followed the Islamic Law (Sharia) and its directives such as namaz and roza. Chief amongst these were the Chishti, Suhrawardi, Firdawsi, Qadiri and Naqshbandi silsilahs. The beshara silsilahs were not bound by the Sharia. The Qalandars belonged to this group.

The Chishti Silsilah

The Chishti order was founded in a village called Khwaja Chishti (near Herat). In India the Chishti silsilah was founded by Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti (born c. 1142) who came to India around 1192. He made Ajmer the main centre for his teaching. He believed that serving mankind was the best form of devotion and therefore he worked amongst the downtrodden. He died in Ajmer in 1236. During Mughal times, Ajmer became a leading pilgrim centre because the emperors regularly visited the Sheikh's tomb. The extent of his popularity can be seen by the fact that even today, millions of Muslims and Hindus visit his dargah for fulfilment of their wishes. Among his disciples were Sheikh Hamiduddin of Nagaur and Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. The former lived the life of a poor peasant, cultivated land and refused Iltutmish's offer of a grant of villages. The khanqah of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki was also visited by people from all walks of life. Sultan Iltutmish dedicated the Qutub Minar to this Saint. Sheikh Fariduddin of

Ajodhan (Pattan in Pakistan) popularised the Chishti silsilah in modern Haryana and Punjab. He opened his door of love and generosity to all. Baba Farid, as he was called, was respected by both Hindus and Muslims. His verses, written in Punjabi, are quoted in the Adi Granth.

Baba Farid's most famous disciple Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (1238-1325) was responsible for making Delhi an important centre of the Chishti silsilah. He came to Delhi in 1259 and during his sixty years in Delhi, he saw the reign of seven sultans. He preferred to shun the company of rulers and nobles and kept aloof from the state. For him renunciation meant distribution of food and clothes to the poor. Amongst his followers was the noted writer Amir Khusrau. Another famous Chishti saint was Sheikh Nasiruddin Mahmud, popularly known as Nasiruddin Chirag-i-Dilli (The Lamp of Delhi). Following his death in 1356 and the lack of a spiritual successor, the disciples of the Chishti silsilah moved out towards eastern and southern India.

The Suhrawardi Silsilah: This silsilah was founded by Sheikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi. It was established in India by Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya (1182-1262). He set up a leading khanqah in Multan, which was visited by rulers, high government officials and rich merchants. Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya openly took Iltutmish's side in his struggle against Qabacha and received from him the title Shaikhul Islam (Leader of Islam). It must be noted that unlike the Chishti saints, the Suhrawardis maintained close contacts with the state. They accepted gifts, jagirs and even government posts in the ecclesiastical department. The Suhrawardi silsilah was firmly established in Punjab and Sind. Besides these two silsilahs there were others such as the Firdawsi Silsilah, Shattari Silsilah, Qadiri Silsilah, Naqshbandi Silsilah.

The importance of the Sufi movement: The Sufi movement made a valuable contribution to Indian society. Like the Bhakti saints who were engaged in breaking down the barriers within Hinduism, the Sufis too infused a new liberal outlook within Islam. The interaction between early Bhakti and Sufi ideas laid the foundation for more liberal movements of the fifteenth century. You will read that Sant Kabir and Guru Nanak had preached a non-sectarian religion based on universal love. The Sufis believed in the concept of Wahdat-ul-Wajud (Unity of Being) which was promoted by Ibn-i-Arabi (1165-1240). He opined that all beings are essentially one. Different religions were identical. This doctrine gained popularity in India. There was also much exchange of ideas between

the Sufis and Indian yogis. In fact the hatha-yoga treatise Amrita Kunda was translated into Arabic and Persian. A notable contribution of the Sufis was their service to the poorer and downtrodden sections of society. While the Sultan and ulema often remained aloof from the day-to-day problems of the people, the Sufi saints maintained close contact with the common people.

Nizamuddin Auliya was famous for distributing gifts amongst the needy irrespective of religion or caste. It is said that he did not rest till he had heard every visitor at the khanqah. According to the Sufis, the highest form of devotion to God was the service of mankind. They treated Hindus and Muslims alike. Amir Khusrau said "Though the Hindu is not like me in religion, he believes in the same things that I do". The Sufi movement encouraged equality and brotherhood. In fact, The Islamic emphasis upon equality was respected far more by the Sufis than by the ulema. The doctrines of the Sufis were attacked by the orthodoxy. The Sufis also denounced the ulema. They believed that the ulema had succumbed to world by temptations and were moving away from the original democratic and egalitarian principles of the Quran. This battle between the orthodox and liberal elements continued throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Sufi saints tried to bring about social reforms too [8], [9].

Like the Bhakti saints, the Sufi saints contributed greatly to the growth of a rich regional literature. Most of the Sufi saints were poets who chose to write in local languages. Baba Farid recommended the use of Punjabi for religious writings. Shaikh Hamiduddin, before him, wrote in Hindawi. His verses are the best examples of early Hindawi translation of Persian mystical poetry. Syed Gesu Daraz was the first writer of Deccani Hindi. He found Hindi more expressive than Persian to explain mysticism. A number of Sufi works were also written in Bengali. The most notable writer of this period was Amir Khusrau (1252-1325) the follower of Nizamuddin Auliya. Khusrau took pride in being an Indian and looked at the history and culture of Hindustan as a part of his own tradition. He wrote verses in Hindi (Hindawi) and employed the Persian metre in Hindi. He created a new style called sabaq-i-hindi. By the fifteenth century Hindi had begun to assume a definite shape and Bhakti saints such as Kabir used it extensively.

The Bhakti Movement

The development of Bhakti movement took place in Tamil Nadu between the seventh and twelfth centuries. It was reflected in the emotional poems of

the Nayanars (devotees of Shiva) and Alvars (devotees of Vishnu). These saints looked upon religion not as a cold formal worship but as a loving bond based upon love between the worshipped and worshipper. They wrote in local languages, Tamil and Telugu and were therefore able to reach out to many people. In course of time, the ideas of the South moved up to the North but it was a very slow process. Sanskrit, which was still the vehicle of thought, was given a new form. Thus we find that the Bhagavata Purana of ninth century was not written in the old Puranic form. Centered around Krishna's childhood and youth, this work uses Krishna's exploits to explain deep philosophy in simple terms. This work became a turning point in the history of the Vaishnavite movement which was an important component of the Bhakti movement.

A more effective method for spreading of the Bhakti ideology was the use of local languages. The Bhakti saints composed their verses in local languages. They also translated Sanskrit works to make them understandable to a wider audience. Thus we find Jnanadeva writing in Marathi, Kabir, Surdas and Tulsidas in Hindi, Shankaradeva popularising Assamese, Chaitanya and Chandidas spreading their message in Bengali, Mirabai in Hindi and Rajasthani. In addition, devotional poetry was composed in Kashmiri, Telugu, Kannad, Odia, Malayalam, Maithili and Gujarati. The Bhakti saints believed that salvation can be achieved by all. They made no distinction of caste, creed or religion before God. They themselves came from diverse backgrounds. Ramananda, whose disciples included Hindus and Muslims, came from a conservative brahman family. His disciple, Kabir, was a weaver. Guru Nanak was a village accountant's son. Namdev was a tailor. The saints stressed equality, disregarded the caste system and attacked institutionalised religion. The saints did not confine themselves to purely religious ideas. They advocated social reforms too. They opposed sati and female infanticide. Women were encouraged to join kirtans. Mirabai and Lalla (of Kashmir) composed verses that are popular even today.

Kabir emphasised simplicity in religion and said that bhakti was the easiest way to attain God. He refused to accept any prevalent religious belief without prior reasoning. For him, a man could not achieve success without hard work. He advocated performance of action rather than renunciation of duty. Kabir's belief in the unity of God led both Hindus and Muslims to become his disciples. Kabir's ideas were not restricted to religion. He attempted to change the narrow

thinking of society. His poetry was forceful and direct. It was easily understood and much of it has passed into our everyday language.

Another great exponent of the Nankana school was Guru Nanak (1469-1539). He was born at Talwandi (Nakana Sahib). From an early age, he showed leanings towards a spiritual life. He was helpful to the poor and needy. His disciples called themselves Sikhs (derived from Sanskrit sisya, disciple or Pali sikkha, instruction). Guru Nanak's personality combined in itself simplicity and peacefulness. Guru Nanak's objective was to remove the existing corruption and degrading practices in society. He showed a new path for the establishment of an egalitarian social order. Like Kabir, Guru Nanak was as much a social reformer as he was a religious teacher. He called for an improvement in the status of women. He said that women who give birth to kings should not be spoken ill of. His vani (words) alongwith those of other Sikh Gurus have been brought together in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs [6], [10].

The Importance of Bhakti And Sufi Movements

You will recall that the Bhakti movement was a socio-religious movement that opposed religious bigotry and social rigidities. It emphasised good character and pure thinking. At a time when society had become stagnant, the Bhakti saints infused new life and strength. They awakened a new sense of confidence and attempted to redefine social and religious values. Saints like Kabir and Nanak stressed upon the reordering of society along egalitarian lines. Their call to social equality attracted many a downtrodden. Although Kabir and Nanak had no intention of founding new religions but following their deaths, their supporters grouped together as Kabir panthis and Sikhs respectively.

The importance of the Bhakti and Sufi saints lies in the new atmosphere created by them, which continued to affect the social, religious and political life of India even in later centuries. Akbar's liberal ideas were a product of this atmosphere in which he was born and brought up. The preaching of Guru Nanak was passed down from generation to generation. This resulted in the growth of a separate religious group, with its separate language and script Gurmukhi and religious book, Guru Granth Sahib. Under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs grew into a formidable political force in the politics of North India.

The interaction between the Bhakti and Sufi saints had an impact upon Indian society. The Sufi theory of Wahdat-al-Wujud (Unity of Being) was remarkably similar to that in the Hindu Upanishads. Many Sufi

poet-saints preferred to use Hindi terms rather than Persian verses to explain concepts. Thus we find Sufi poets such as Malik Muhammad Jaisi composing works in Hindi. The use of terms such as Krishna, Radha, Gopi, Jamuna, Ganga etc. became so common in such literature that an eminent Sufi, Mir Abdul Wahid wrote a treatise Haqiq-i-Hindi to explain their Islamic equivalents. In later years this interaction continued as Akbar and Jahangir followed a liberal religious policy. The popular verses and songs of the Bhakti saints also served as forerunners of a musical renaissance. New musical compositions were written for the purpose of group singing at kirtans. Even today Mira's bhajans and Tulsidas's chaupais are recited at prayer meetings.

Philosophy in Medieval India

The major religious movements were brought about by the mystics. They contributed to the religious ideas and beliefs. Bhakti saints like Vallabhacharya, Ramanuja, Nimbaraka brought about new philosophical thinking which had its origin in Shankaracharya's advaita (non-dualism) philosophy.

1. **Vishistadvaita of Ramanujacharya:** Vishistadvaita means modified monism. The ultimate reality according to this philosophy is Brahman (God) and matter and soul are his qualities.
2. **Sivadvaita of Srikanthacharya:** According to this philosophy the ultimate Brahman is Shiva, endowed with Shakti. Shiva exists in this world as well as beyond it.
3. **Dvaita of Madhavacharya:** The literal meaning of dvaita is dualism which stands in opposition to non-dualism and monism of Shankaracharya. He believed that the world is not an illusion (maya) but a reality full of differences.
4. **Dvaitadvaita of Nimbaraka:** Dvaitadvaita means dualistic monism. According to this philosophy God transformed himself into world and soul. This world and soul are different from God (Brahman). They could survive with the support of God only. They are separate but dependent.
5. **Suddhadvaita of Vallabhacharya:** Vallabhacharya wrote commentaries on Vedanta Sutra and Bhagavad Gita. For him, Brahman (God) was Sri Krishna who manifested himself as souls and matter. God and soul are not distinct, but one. The stress was on pure non-dualism. His philosophy came to be known as Pushtimarga (the path

of grace) and the school was called Rudrasampradaya [10], [11].

CONCLUSION

It is difficult, at the present state of our knowledge, to form a clear idea about the true contents of the Harappan religion or religions. It can, be presumed that some features of religions common to other ancient civilizations existed in the Indus valley also. These features consisted in worshipping Mother Goddess, deification of trees and their spirits, certain animal figures, a prototype of Siva and svastika. We find in the Vedic texts elaborate description of public and domestic rites. Sacrifice was the chief act of worship which had significant religious and social connotation. In course of time, the liturgical details of the Vedic rituals became more and more complicated and technical and lots of sutra works were written to formulate the procedures of the rites. In the Vedic Age, the performance of the rituals became the professional monopoly of the priests. This of public apathy resulted in considerable decline in the cult of sacrifice. The elaborate sacrifices were replaced to a great extent by another mode of religious performance, namely puja, taught by the Puranas and the Tantras. On the other hand thinkers laid more emphasis on philosophic speculation, penance and meditation as means towards the attainment of emancipation (moksa), i.e. freedom from all bondage and sufferings.

This new trend gave rise to the Upanisadic philosophy on one hand and schools like Buddhism and Jainism on the other. Changes that were coming in material life of people because of pastoral society being replaced by agriculture and growth of trade and commerce as well as the reactions created by ritualism and priestly dominance paved the ground for looking of alternative paths to realize the ultimate truth. Following this trend we find that sixth century B.C. witnessed the development of two important religious traditions in India Jainism and Buddhism. The Jains believe that there were twenty four Tirthankaras and Mahavira was the last Tirthankara. It is believed that Mahavira and his predecessor Parsva mainly shaped Jainism. According to Jainism the universe is eternal and god has nothing to do with creation of the universe.

For centuries, Buddhism enjoyed patronage of the royal houses and merchants in India. However, Buddhism in India died out gradually after the seventh century, though it did not disappear completely. It is suggested that shifts in royal patronage from Buddhist to Hindu religious institutions, deviation from original teachings of the Buddha and adoption of popular

religious forms from Hindu religious traditions, origin and development of new Hindu religious orders, etc. contributed to the gradual decline of Buddhism in India. We have explained the circumstances in which Buddhism developed in India. Systems of Indian philosophy that originated from the Vedas are called Orthodox systems. Samkhya philosophy holds that reality is constituted of the self and non-self that is purusha and prakriti, Yoga is a very practical philosophy to realise the 'Self', Nyaya presents a technique of logical thinking, Vaisheshika gives us the principles of reality which constitute the universe. The Bhakti and Sufi movements were liberal movements within Hinduism and Islam emphasising a new and more personalised relationship between the human being and God. The message of the Sufi movement was universal love and brotherhood of man. The Bhakti movement grew amongst Nayanars and Alvars of the south and stressed a new method of worship of God based upon devotional love.

In conclusion, the philosophy of ancient India encompasses a vast array of schools of thought, each offering unique insights into the nature of reality and human existence. From the astika traditions of Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta to the heterodox nastika schools of Charvakas, Jainism, and Buddhism, ancient Indian philosophy continues to inspire and shape philosophical inquiries to this day. Understanding the rich philosophical heritage of ancient India allows for a deeper appreciation of its intellectual contributions and the enduring relevance of its ideas.

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Evolution of Script and Languages in India: Harappan Script and Brahmi Script

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ABSTRACT: *The evolution of script and languages in India is a fascinating journey that encompasses several millennia of history and cultural development. This study provides an overview of two significant scripts the Harappan script and the Brahmi script, shedding light on their origins, characteristics, and historical significance. The Harappan civilization, which thrived in the Indus Valley around 2600-1900 BCE, possessed one of the earliest known writing systems in the Indian subcontinent. The Harappan script, comprising a series of symbols inscribed on seals, pottery, and other artifacts, remains undeciphered to this day. Despite its mystery, the Harappan script represents a crucial milestone in the development of writing systems in ancient India. A few centuries later, the Brahmi script emerged as a precursor to many modern Indian scripts. Originating around the 5th century BCE, the Brahmi script was used across the Mauryan Empire and later spread to various regions of the subcontinent. Its earliest known inscriptions can be found on pillars and rock edicts, including those of Emperor Ashoka. The Brahmi script consisted of around 400 characters, each representing a syllable or a phonetic sound.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a medium through which we express our thoughts while literature is a mirror that reflects ideas and philosophies which govern our society. Hence, to know any particular culture and its tradition it is very important that we understand the evolution of its language and the various forms of literature like poetry, drama and religious and non-religious writings. This lesson talks about the role played by different languages in creating the composite cultural heritage that characterizes our country, India.

Indian languages: Their classification

The Indian people, composed of diverse racial elements, now speak languages belonging to four distinct speech families—the Aryan, the Dravidian, the Sino-Tibetan (or Mongoloid), and the Austric. It has been suggested by some that over and above these four groups, there might have been one or two more there seems to be some evidence from linguistics for this idea. But nothing definitely has yet been found, and we are quite content to look upon these four groups as the basic ones in the Indian scene. People speaking languages belonging to the above four families of speech at first presented distinct culture groups; and the Aryans in ancient India were quite conscious of that. Following to some extent the Sanskrit or Indo-Aryan nomenclature in this matter, the four main 'language-culture' groups of India namely, the Aryan,

the Dravidian, the Sino-Tibetan, and the Austric, can also be labelled respectively as Arya, Dravida or Dravida, Kirata, and Nisada. Indian civilization, as already said, has elements from all these groups, and basically it is pre-Aryan, with important Aryan modifications within as well as Aryan super-structure at the top.

In the four types of speech represented (by these, there were, to start with, fundamental differences in formation and vocabulary, in sounds and in syntax. But languages belonging to these four families have lived and developed side by side for 3,000 years and more, and have influenced each other profoundly—particularly the Aryan, the Dravidian, and the Austric speeches; and this has led to either a general evolution, or mutual imposition, in spite of original differences, of some common characteristics, which may be called specifically Indian and which are found in most languages belonging to all these families. Overlaying their genetic diversity, there is thus in the general run of Indian languages at the present day, an Indian character, which forms one of the bases of that 'certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin', of that 'general Indian personality', which has been admitted by an Anglo-Indian scholar like Sir Herbert Risley, otherwise so sceptical about India's claim to be considered as one people. Indo-Aryan speech family are: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Urdu. Kashmiri, one of the major modern Indian languages,

belongs to the Dardic branch of the Indo-Iranian group within the Aryan family. Although Dardic by origin, Kashmiri came very early under the profound influence of Sanskrit and the later Prakrits which greatly modified its Dardic bases. Most scholars now think that Dardic is just a branch of Indo-Aryan [1], [2].

Dravidian

Dravidian is the second important language family of India and has some special characteristics- of its own. After the Aryan speech, it has very largely functioned as the exponent of Indian culture, particularly the earlier secular as well as religious literature of Tamil. It forms a solid bloc in South India embracing the four great literary languages, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, and Telugu and a number of less important speeches all of which are, however, overshadowed by the main four. It is believed that the wonderful city civilization of Sind and South Punjab as well as Baluchistan (fourth-third millennium B.C.) was the work of Dravidian speakers. But we cannot be absolutely certain in this matter, so long as the inscribed seals from the city ruins in those areas like Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, etc. remain undeciphered. The art of writing would appear to have been borrowed from the pre-Aryan Sind and South Punjab people by the Aryan speakers, probably in the tenth century B.C., to which period the beginnings of the Brahmi alphabet, the characteristic Indian system of writing connected with Sanskrit and Prakrit in pre-Christian centuries, may be traced.

The Dravidian speech in its antiquity in India is older than Aryan, and yet (leaving apart the problematical writings on the seals found in Sind and South Punjab city ruins) the specimens of connected Dravidian writing or literature that we can read and understand are over a millennium later than the oldest Aryan documents. Of the four great Dravidian languages, Tamil has preserved its Dravidian character best, retaining, though not the old sound system of primitive Dravidian, a good deal of its original nature in its roots, forms, and words. The other three cultivated Dravidian speeches have, in the matter of their words of higher culture, completely surrendered themselves to Sanskrit, the classical and sacred language of Hindu India. Tamil has a unique and a very old literature, and the beginnings of it go back to about 2,000 years from now. Malayalam as a language is an offshoot of Old Tamil. From the ninth century A.D. some Malayalam characteristics begin to appear, but it is from the fifteenth century that Malayalam literature took its independent line of development. Kannada as a

cultured language is almost as old as Tamil; and although we have some Telugu inscriptions dating from the sixth/seventh century A.D., the literary career of Telugu started from the eleventh century. Tamil and Malayalam are very close to each other, and are mutually intelligible to a certain extent. Kannada also bears a great resemblance to Tamil and Malayalam. Only Telugu has deviated a good deal from its southern neighbours and sisters. But Telugu and Kannada use practically the same alphabet, which is thus a bond of union between these two languages [3].

DISCUSSION

Sino-Tibetan and Austric

Peoples of Mongoloid origin, speaking languages of the Sino-Tibetan family, were present in India at least as early as the tenth century B.C, when the four Vedas appear to have been compiled. The Sino-Tibetan languages do not have much numerical importance or cultural significance in India with the exception of Manipuri or Meithei of Manipur. Everywhere they are gradually receding before the Aryan languages like Bengali and-Assamese. The Austric languages represent the oldest speech family of India but they are spoken by a very small number of people, comparatively. The Austric languages of India have a great interest for the student of linguistics and human culture. They are valuable relics of India's past, and they link up India with Burma, with Indo-China, with Malaya, and with Indonesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia. Their solidarity is, however, broken as in most places there has been penetration into Austric blocs by the more powerful Aryan speeches with their overwhelming numbers and their prestige.

Speakers of Austric in all the walks of life (they are mostly either farmers, or farm and plantation, or colliery labourers) know some Aryan language. In some cases they have become very largely bilingual. Their gradual Aryanization is a process which started some 3,000 years ago when the first Austrics (and Mongoloids as well as Dravidians) in North India started to abandon their native speech for Aryan. But in the process of abandoning their own language and accepting a new one, namely the Aryan, the Austrics (as well as the Dravidians and the Sino-Tibetans) naturally introduced some of their own speech habits and their own words into Aryan. In this way, the Austrics and other non-Aryan peoples helped to modify the character of the Aryan speech in India from century to century, and even to build up Classical Sanskrit as the great culture speech of India.

As the speakers of the Sino-Tibetan and Austric languages had been in a backward state living mostly a rather primitive life in out-of-the-way places, their languages do not show any high literary development excepting, as already said, in the case of Meithei or Manipuri belonging to Sino-Tibetan, which has quite a noteworthy and fairly old literature. They had, however, some kind of village or folk-culture, connected with which there developed in all these languages an oral literature consisting of folk-songs, religious and otherwise, of folk-tales, and of their legends and traditions. And a literature, mainly of Christian inspiration, has been created in some of these speeches by translating the Bible in its entirety or in part.

Songs, legends, and tales of the Austric languages have been collected and published, particularly in Santali and Mundari, and in Khasi. Munda and Santali lyrics give pretty, idyllic glimpses of tribal life, some of the Munda love poems having a rare freshness about them; and a number of Santali folk-tales are very beautiful. A few of the folk-tales prevalent in the Sino-Tibetan speeches are also beautiful, but they do not appear to compare favorably with the Santali and Mundari languages in the matter of both lyric poems and stories. A systematic study of these languages started only during the nineteenth century when European missionaries and scholars got interested in them. I have discussed in detail the speeches of the Sino-Tibetan and Austric families prevalent in the country in my contribution to this volume, entitled 'Adivasi Languages and Literatures of India'.

There is, as already said, a fundamental unity in the literary types, genres, and expressions among all the modern languages of India in their early, medieval, and modern developments. The reason of this unique phenomenon is that there has been a gradual convergence of Indian languages belonging to the different linguistic families, Aryan, Dravidian, Sino-Tibetan, and Austric, towards a common Indian type after their intimate contact with each other for at least 3,000 years. This volume of *The Cultural Heritage of India* is indeed an encyclopedia in its scope and range, and it will certainly provide an authentic and valuable contribution towards the study of Indian languages and literatures in their glory and grandeur; it will also afford a spectacular display of the genius of India reflected in various branches of knowledge. It is needless to add that the literary heritage of India constitutes a priceless possession covetable to any nation, however great it may be by any standard [4], [5].

Evolution of Writing in Ancient India

The sub-continent of India is a vast region, now embracing the three independent States of India proper or Bharat, Pakistan and Nepal. It shows, in its natural of geographical setup as well as in its population, a unique diversity against the background of a remarkable unity which is basic or fundamental. Almost all the various types of climate, excepting the arctic, are found here; and in her population India is a veritable museum of races and languages, cultures and religions. Yet, there is an underlying unity behind all this variety. Different people came to India at different times, each with its special racial type, language, region and culture, but after they settled down side by side, a great intermingling of races and cultures started from prehistoric times, resulting in the emergence of a mixed Indian people with a composite culture of its own, in the evolution of which all the component elements were represented. In the evolution of development of languages in India we see this process of miscegenation at work. The Aryan speech, after it came to India assimilated with the pre-Aryan languages-the Dravidian, the Austric and the Indo-Mangoloid- and a common speech, gradually evolved. It had some common characteristics, although in their own region, in their roots and formative elements, as well as in their words-their sprachgut or "Speech-commodity"- they were different.

Until the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization in 1920, ancient India seemingly had two main scripts in which languages were written, Brahmi and Kharosti. The Brahmi script developed under Semitic influence around 7th c. BC, and was originally written from right to left. The Kharosti script came into being during the 5th c. BC in northwest India which was under Persian rule. Although the origin of the Brahmi script is uncertain, the Kharosti script is commonly accepted as a direct descendant from the Aramaic alphabet. The direction of writing in the Kharosti script is as in Aramaic, from right to left, and there is also a likeness of many signs having similar phonetic value. In the later centuries of its existence, Brahmi gave rise to eight varieties of scripts. Three of them the early and late Mauryas and the Sunga - became the prototypes of the scripts in northern India in the 1st c. BC and AD. Out of these developed the Gupta writing which was employed from the 4th to the 6th c. AD. The Siddhamatrka script developed during the 6th c. AD from the western branch of the eastern Gupta character. The Siddhamatrka became the ancestor of the Nagari script which is used for Sanskrit today. The Nagari developed in the 7th to 9th c. AD, and has

remained, since the 7th to 9th centuries, essentially unaltered.

However, certain other factors need to be considered to get the complete picture of script development in India. In 1920 archaeologists announced the discovery of extensive urban ruins in the Indus Valley which predated the earliest literary sources and which caused scholars working on ancient texts to re-examine their views on the different phases of Indian culture. The Rig Veda which speaks in such derogatory terms of the enemies subdued by the Aryan tribes, gives the impression that they were all savage barbarians. The Brahmins for centuries have degraded the original inhabitants of India with the intention of self elevation, preservation and oppression. These ancient dwellers in India were Dravidian, and in fact, their culture had developed a highly sophisticated way of life which compares favorably with that of contemporary urban civilizations in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The extensive excavations carried out at the two principal city sites, Harappa and Mohenjo- Daro, both situated in the Indus basin, indicates that this Dravidian culture was well established by about 2500 B.C., and subsequent discoveries have revealed that it covered most of the Lower Indus Valley. What we know of this ancient civilization is derived almost exclusively from archaeological data since every attempt to decipher the script used by these people has failed so far. Recent analyses of the order of the signs on the inscriptions have led several scholars to the view that the language is not of the Indo-European family, nor is it close to the Sumerians, Hurrians, or Elamite, nor can it be related to the structure of the Munda languages of modern India. If it is related to any modern language family it appears to be Dravidian akin to Old Tamil, presently spoken throughout the southern part of the Indian Peninsula [6], [7].

What this points to is the existence of a system of writing far more ancient than what was originally considered. For instance when the Indian scripts are grouped, the southern scripts form a class of their own. The Grantha alphabet, which belongs to the writing system of southern India developed in the 5th c. AD and was mainly used to write Sanskrit. Inscriptions in Early Grantha, dating from the 5th to 6th c. AD are on copper plates and stone monuments from the kingdom of the Pallavas near Chennai (Madras). The influx of foreign invaders through the northwest over the centuries, forced the Dravidians, the original inhabitants of India south. Scholars have indicated that the south has been the gateway for religious and cultural developments in India. Originally Grantha

was used for writing Sanskrit only, and Sanskrit was later transliterated with Nagiri after the 7th c. AD. Scholars over the years have indicated that many Hindu writings have been tampered with, and certainly this could have happened during the transliteration process. The later varieties of the Grantha script were used to write a number of Dravidian Languages, and the modern Tamil script certainly seems to be derived from Grantha.

The bibliographical evidences indicate that the Vedas are written in the Grantha and Nagari scripts, and according to tradition Veda Vyasa, a Dravidian, compiled and wrote the Vedas. The Grantha script belongs to the southern group of scripts and Veda Vyasa being a Dravidian would certainly have used it. Since the earliest evidence for Grantha is only in the 5th c. AD, the Vedas were written rather late.

Another important fact is brought out in the account of the religion, philosophy, literature, geography, chronology, astronomy, customs, laws and astrology of India about AD 1030 by Alberuni. He states that, "The Indian scribes are careless, and do not take pains to produce correct and well-collated copies. In consequence, the highest results of the author's mental development are lost by their negligence, and his book becomes already in the first or second copy so full of faults, that the text appears as something entirely new, which neither a scholar nor one familiar with the subject, whether Hindu or Muslim, could any longer understand. It will sufficiently illustrate the matter if we tell the reader that we have sometimes written down a word from the mouth of Hindus, taking the greatest pains to fix its pronunciation, and that afterwards when we repeated it to them, they had great difficulty in recognising it."

This is a clear opposite to Yuan Chwang's time in the 7th c AD, when this young Chinese Buddhist scholar came to India in search of authentic sacred books which he accomplished. However, scholars indicate that the same is not true with early Tamil classics like the Sangam literature (3rd c. BC - 3rd c. AD) which are remarkably helpful in the reconstruction of history. Thus, in the matter of writing, we find a long history from prehistoric times before the coming of the Aryans down to recent years. Until the discovery by excavations of the pre-historic and pre-Aryan city sites of Mohen-jo-Daro in northern Sind and Harappa in South Punjab, the oldest writings known in India was the Maurya script, used in inscriptions of Ashoka and in a few old coins and inscriptions which date back to the 3rd Century B.C. Here we are in broad daylight, although it was only over century ago, in 1837, that the

Brahmi script could be read and understood for the first time. Throughout the whole of India we have inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka in different forms of Prakrit in Brahmi script and decade-by-decade and century by century, this script has gone on evolving on the soil of India. In North India through various stages like Kusana Brahmi; Gupta Brahmi and Siddhamatraka of 7th century A.D., we arrive through the Nagara style of writing at the Siddhamatraka and through the Sharada and the Kutila styles at modern North India scripts. All these are related to each other as distant cousins and going back to their common source, the Brahmi of Ashoka-scripts like the Nagari (or Devanagari) Bengali, Assamese, Odia, Maithili, Sharada, Gurumukhi etc.

In South India there was a similar development of Brahmi, and by the middle of the 6th century we come to the Pallava script, whence originated the modern Telugu and Kannada scripts, the Malayalam and the Grantha script (Sanskrit is written and printed in the Grantha script in the Tamil country) and the Tamil script. We have no inscriptions or other writing prior to the Ashokan Brahmi of the 3rd Century B.C. Long ago, there were discovered in grave sites in South India painted on potsherds, certain letters like symbols or signs, mostly occurring singly. They do not seem to be letters of any alphabet or syllabary or system of writing, but rather appear to be individual signs or marks, such as are, for example, used in branding cattle to indicate ownership. Similar symbols are found on the oldest coins of India- the square or oblong pieces in silver or copper known as puranas which go back to the centuries just before the Christian era. Then quite a mass of short inscriptions came to light after the Mohen-jo-Daro site was discovered in North Sind, and in Harappa in South Punjab. These were found on seals of soft stones, and they look like simple letters and combinations of letters. An inventory has been made of these letters, and their number comes up to over a hundred. In the Mohen-jo-Daro script, which goes back to 3500 B.C. and beyond, several strata are noticed. The one which is supposed to be the youngest or most advanced in development (following the first stratum in which the signs appear to be pictograms or crude pictures of objects, and the second stratum which might represent syllables rather than pictures or simple alphabetical letters) has simple shapes for the signs, depicted like linear writing. There is a superficial agreement between this youngest or linear phase of Mohen-jo- Daro writing of the period before 1500 or 2000 B.C. and the Brahmi script of the 3rd century B.C. Some of the Mohen-jo-Daro signs

resembles or are almost identical with Brahmi letters. Some others are a bit complicated. What is most important, in some of Mohen-jo-Daro signs, it would appear that the Brahmi characteristic of tagging on vowel signs to the consonant letters is also found, besides combinations of two or more consonants.

This brings us to the question of the origin of the Brahmi script. Most scholars until recently thought that the Brahmi scripts was derived from the ancient Phoenician script of, say, 1200 B.C., itself a derivative of the still more ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, through the later Demotic style. A direct Mesopotamia was thought possible. About the middle of the first millennium B.C., or little earlier, it was believed that Indian merchants who used to go by sea to Baveru or Babylon saw that writing was in vogue there, and got both the idea and the very simple Phoenician letters in Babylon and modified it to suit the Indian Prakrit they spoke, and so evolved the Brahmi writing. Others thought that the South Arabian form of Phoenician was the immediate source of Brahmi.

But there are some basic divergences between Phoenician writing on the one hand and Brahmi on the other, which make this affiliation a little difficult to accept. On the other hand, the agreements between the linear and later Mohen-jo-Daro script and Brahmi would suggest that Brahmi was derived from the former, and was gradually perfected by 300 B.C. it would appear very reasonable to think that sometime in the 10th Century B.C. the compilers of the Vedic literature of songs and hymns and short prose directives in connection with the ritual of their predecessors evolved a kind of Proto-Brahmi script from the latest linear Mohen-jo-Daro writing, and this is how Brahmi come into existence.

Of course, to start with, it could not be a perfect or full system of writing, expressing in all its niceties the entire sound-system or Phonological habits of the Aryan speech of the time, which was a late form of Vedic. There was also a suggestion that the Brahmi letters originated independently in India from pictures of objects, the initial sound of the Sanskrit names of which was associated with the picture, which finally became the letter for the sound. Thus the Brahmi letter for dh, which was shaped like the Roman capital D, was a picture of the bow, Dhanu, and then this picture became a letter and the value of dh. So Brahmi n is shaped like the Roman capital inverted T, L, and this denoted the nose-nasa; and so on with most of the letters. But this is extremely fanciful, and there is no evidence to establish this kind of derivation.

The Brahmi letters have the great beauty of simplicity- they stand bold and clear, statuesque and columnar, like Greek and Latin letters (capitals) or ancient Phoenician letters. There is no matra of top-line or flourish and compared with Brahmi, Nagari or Telugu, Sharada or Grantha, are very complicated and cumbersome scripts indeed. Brahmi letters are so simple in their structure that an Indian familiar with any of the modern descendants of Brahmi can pick it up in a few hours. It lends itself to decorative treatment in its grandeur of simplicity, and the acquisition of Brahmi by an Indian intellectual of to-day can be a very easily acquired accomplishment with its attendant historical and cultural value. So far as we know, the Aryans had no system of writing of their own when they came to India and all their literature was, as in the case of many primitive people, entirely oral. But there is evidence that, as in some of the most ancient countries outside India like Egypt and Babylon, Asia Minor and China, pre-Aryan India too, had her own system of writing. The oldest Sanskrit script goes back to the early centuries of the Christian era and Sanskrit inscriptions are written in the characters of that period which are but modifications of the earlier ancient Indian Brahmi of the 3rd Century B.C. and between the coming of the Aryans which might have happened round about 1500 B.C. and the use of Brahmi as in the Ashoka inscriptions of the 3rd Century B.C. what was the script in which the Aryan speakers wrote their language? Until now, European scholars thought that Indian merchants going to Mesopotamia and to some of the western countries like Egypt from the beginning of the first millennium B.C. learnt the art of writing from there and that they modified some form of Phoenician writing into the ancient Indian script-Brahmi, which may have taken its rise sometime before 500 B.C.

But we have now found out that there was this Mohenjo-Daro system of writing in its various stages of development and in the last stage, there appears to be some agreement with the Brahmi writing of the 3rd century B.C. It would be most reasonable to assume that the Brahmi script in its very ancient form as a sort of Proto-Brahmin was developed out of the youngest form of the Mohenjo-jo-Daro script. Thus, the origin of the Brahmi script and its subsequent developments in the succeeding centuries was native Indian. Step by step, thus original Brahmi went on changing. It was ordinary Ashokan Brahmi in the 3rd Century B.C. about time of Christ, it became modified into what is known as Kusana Brahmi, then about 400 A.D. it became Gupta Brahmi and then in the 7th Century

A.D. it came to be known as the Siddhamatraka form of writing. Ultimately, by about 1000 A.D. it became a kind of Proto-Nagari and a Proto-Kutila script, which is the ultimate mother of Bengali-Assamese, Maithili, Newari and Odia and also of the ancient Sharada script of Kashmir, and of both the Kashmir scripts still known as Sharada and Gurumukhi. In South India the history was somewhat analogous. In the middle of the 7th century A.D., it became the developed Pallava script which is the ultimate mother of the four great systems of writing in the South - the Telugu, the Kannada, the Tamil including Grantha and the Malayalam [8], [9].

Language is a medium through which we express our thoughts while literature is a mirror that reflects ideas and philosophies which govern our society. The Indian people, composed of diverse racial elements, now speak languages belonging to four distinct speech families- the Aryan, the Dravidian, the Sino-Tibetan (or Mongoloid), and the Austric. Indian civilization has found its expression primarily through the Aryan speech as it developed over the centuries- through Vedic Sanskrit (Old Indo-Aryan), then Classical Sanskrit, then Early Middle Indo-Aryan dialects like Pali and Old Ardha-Magadhi, then Buddhist and Jaina Sanskrit and after that at the various Prakrits and Apabhramsas, and finally in the last phase, the different Modern Indo-Aryan languages of the country.

Dravidian is the second important language family of India and has some special characteristics- of its own. After the Aryan speech, it has very largely functioned as the exponent of Indian culture, particularly the earlier secular as well as religious literature of Tamil. It forms a solid bloc in South India embracing the four great literary languages, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, and Telugu. The Dravidian speech in its antiquity in India is older than Aryan, and yet the specimens of connected Dravidian writing or literature that we can read and understand are over a millennium later than the oldest Aryan documents. The Sino-Tibetan languages do not have much numerical importance or cultural significance in India with the exception of Manipuri or Meithei of Manipur. Everywhere they are gradually receding before the Aryan languages like Bengali and-Assamese. The Austric languages represent the oldest speech family of India but they are spoken by a very small number of people, comparatively. The Austric languages of India have a great interest for the student of linguistics and human culture. They are valuable relics of India's past, and they link up India with Burma, with Indo-China, with

Malaya, and with Indonesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia. Until the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization in 1920, ancient India seemingly had two main scripts in which languages were written, Brahmi and Kharosti.

The significance of the Brahmi script lies not only in its widespread usage but also in its role in the dissemination of knowledge, particularly through religious and philosophical texts. The script enabled the recording of the teachings of Buddha and Mahavira, giving rise to Buddhism and Jainism as major religious traditions. Over time, regional variations and adaptations of the Brahmi script led to the development of numerous scripts used in different parts of India. The evolution of script and languages in India is intertwined with the cultural, political, and linguistic diversity of the subcontinent. The scripts served as a means of communication, facilitating trade, administration, and the preservation of knowledge. They bear witness to the linguistic richness and cultural heritage of ancient India. Studying the Harappan script and the Brahmi script provides valuable insights into the early forms of writing systems and the historical contexts in which they emerged. They represent significant milestones in the evolution of scripts and languages in India paving the way for the rich textual traditions and diverse languages that characterize the country today [10], [11].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Harappan script and the Brahmi script mark important stages in the evolution of scripts and languages in India. The Harappan script, though undeciphered, represents an early attempt at writing in the region. The Brahmi script, on the other hand, played a crucial role in the dissemination of knowledge, religious texts, and the development of subsequent scripts. Understanding the evolution of script and languages in India provides a deeper appreciation of the cultural, historical, and linguistic complexities of the subcontinent.

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An overview on Origin of Brahmi script

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ABSTRACT: *The Brahmi script holds a significant place in the history of writing systems in ancient India and is considered the precursor to many modern Indian scripts. This provides an overview of the origin of the Brahmi script, exploring its historical context, key characteristics, and its role in shaping the script traditions of the Indian subcontinent. The origin of the Brahmi script can be traced back to around the 5th century BCE, during the time of the Mauryan Empire in India. Its emergence marked a notable transition from the earlier undeciphered Harappan script to a more systematic and phonetic writing system. The exact origins of the Brahmi script are still debated among scholars, with theories suggesting influences from various sources such as the Aramaic script and the script used by the Achaemenid Empire. The Brahmi script consisted of approximately 400 characters, each representing a syllable or a phonetic sound. Its distinguishing feature was its simplicity, with each character representing a single sound rather than an entire word. This innovation made the script more versatile and adaptable to various languages and dialects. The Brahmi script played a crucial role in the spread of knowledge, administration, and communication during the Mauryan Empire. It was used for inscriptions on rock edicts, pillars, coins, and other artifacts. The famous inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka, written in the Brahmi script, provide valuable historical insights into the Mauryan period and Ashoka's teachings on moral principles and governance.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

Brahmi is the modern name given to the one of the oldest scripts used on the Indian Subcontinent and in Central Asia, during the final centuries BCE and the early centuries CE. Like its contemporary, Kharosthi, which was used in what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The best-known Brahmi inscriptions are the rock-cut edicts of Asoka in north-central India dated to 250-232 BCE. The script was deciphered in 1837 by James Prinsep, an archaeologist, philologist, and official of the British East India Company. The origin of the script is still much debated, with current Western academic opinion generally agreeing (with some exceptions) that Brahmi was derived from or at least influenced by one or more contemporary Semitic scripts, but a strong current of opinion in India favors the idea that it is connected to the much older and as-yet undeciphered Indus Script. The Gupta Script of the 5th century is sometimes called "Late Brahmi". The Brahmi script diversified into numerous local variants, classified together as the Brahmanic family script. Dozens of modern scripts used across South Asia have descended from Brahmi, making it one of the world's most influential writing traditions.

While the contemporary and perhaps somewhat older Kharosthi script is widely accepted to be a derivation of the Aramic Script, the genesis of the Brahmi script is less straightforward. An origin in the Imperial

Aramaic script has nevertheless been proposed by some scholars since the publications by Albrecht Weber (1856) and George Buhler's *On the origin of the Indian Brahma alphabet* (1895). Bühler's ideas have been particularly influential, though even by the 1895 date of his great opus on the subject; he could identify no less than five competing theories of the origin, one positing an indigenous origin and four deriving it from various Semitic models. Like Kharosthi, Brahmī was used to write the early dialects of Prakrit. Surviving records of the script are mostly restricted to inscriptions on buildings and graves as well as liturgical texts. Sanskrit was not written until many centuries later, and as a result, Brahmi is not a perfect match for Sanskrit; several Sanskrit sounds cannot be written in Brahmi [1].

Origin of Brahmi Script

The most disputed point about the origin of the Brahmī script is whether it was a purely indigenous development or was inspired or derived from scripts that originated outside India. Saloman noted that the indigenous view is strongly preferred by Indian scholars, whereas the idea of Semitic borrowing is preferred most often by Western scholars. He agreed with S.R. Goyal that biases have influenced both sides of the debate. Buhler curiously cited a passage by Sir Alexander Cunningham, one of the earliest indigenous origin proponents, that indicated that, at the time, the indigenous origin was a preference of English scholars

in opposition to the "unknown Western" origin preferred by continental scholars.

Among scholars who have taken the origin to have been purely indigenous is Raymond Allchin, who speculated in a personal communication that Brahmi perhaps had the Harappan script (i.e. Indus script) as its predecessor. However, Allchin and Erdosy later in 1995 expressed the opinion that there was as yet insufficient evidence to resolve the question, though they were confident that the development of Brahmi was earlier than and "quite independent" of the Aramaic derivation of Kharosthi. G.R. Hunter in his book *The Script of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and Its Connection with Other Scripts* (1934) proposed a derivation of the Brahmi alphabets from the Indus Script, the match being considerably higher than that of Aramaic in his estimation.

The most prominent alternative view in the indigenous origin category is that Brahmi was invented entirely independently of either foreign scripts or the Indus script. This view usually accepts that the Mauryans were previously aware of the art of writing in general but proposes that Brahmi was created anew for the purposes of writing Prakrit, based on well established theories of Vedic grammar and phonetics, and probably on the order of the reform-minded King Asoka. From this point of view, Brahmi might be seen as a successful attempt to remedy some of the apparent limitations of Kharosthi as a vehicle for writing Prakrit.

There is little intervening evidence for writing during the millennium and a half between the collapse of the Indus Valley Civilisation c. 1900 BCE and the first appearance of Brahmi in the 3rd century BCE and there is no accepted decipherment of the Indus script, but similarities to the Indus script have been nonetheless claimed by scholars such as Kak, who did not even acknowledge the existence of the Semitic-origin theory. A promising possible link between the Indus script and later writing traditions may be in the graffiti of the South Indian megalithic culture, which may have some overlap with the Indus symbol inventory and persisted in use up at least through the appearance of the Brahmi and Tamil Brahmi scripts up into the 3rd century CE. These graffiti usually appear singly, though on occasion may be found in groups of two or three, and are thought to have been family, clan, or religious symbols [2], [3].

There appears to be general agreement at least that Brahmi and Kharosthi are historically related, though much disagreement persists about the nature of this relationship. Trigger considered them, as a pair, to be

one of four instances of the invention of an alpha-syllabary, the other three being Old Persian Cuneiform, the Merotic script, and the Geez Script. All four of these have striking similarities, such as using short /a/ as an inherent vowel, but Trigger (who accepted the Aramaic inspiration of Brahmi with extensive local development, along with a pre-Ashokan date) was unable to find a direct common source among them. Gnanadesikan also posited a stimulus diffusion view of the development of Brahmi and Kharosthi, in which the idea of alphabetic sound representation was learned from the Aramaic-speaking Persians, but much of the writing system was a novel development tailored to the phonology of Prakrit.

Aramaic Hypothesis

The Semitic theory (Phoenician or Aramaic) is the more strongly supported by the available data. According to the Aramaic hypothesis, the oldest Brahmi inscriptions shows striking parallels with contemporary Aramaic for the sounds that are congruent between the two languages, especially if the letters are flipped to reflect the change in writing direction. For example, both Brahmi and Aramaic g resemble Λ ; both Brahmi and Aramaic t resemble λ , etc.

Brahmi does feature a number of extensions to the Aramaic alphabet, as it was required to write more sounds. For example, Aramaic did not distinguish dental stops such as d from retroflex stops such as ḍ, and in Brahmi the dental and retroflex series are graphically very similar, as if both had been derived from a single Aramaic prototype. Aramaic did not have Brahmi's aspirated consonants (kh, th, etc.), whereas Brahmi did not have Aramaic's emphatic consonant (q, ṭ, ṣ), and it appears that these unneeded emphatic letters filled in for Brahmi's aspirates: Aramaic q for Brahmi kh, Aramaic ṭ (⊙) for Brahmi th (⊙), etc. And just where Aramaic did not have a corresponding emphatic stop, p, Brahmi seems to have doubled up for the corresponding aspirate: Brahmi p and ph are graphically very similar, as if taken from the same source in Aramaic p. The first letters of the two alphabets also match: Brahmi a, which resembled a reversed κ , looks a lot like Aramaic alef, which resembled Hebrew \aleph . The following table compares Brahmi with Phoenician and Aramaic.

The earliest likely contact of the Hindu Kush region with the Aramaic script occurred in the 6th century BCE with the expansion of the Achaemenid Empire under Darius the Great to the Indus valley. It appears that no use of any script to write an Indo-Aryan language occurred before the reign of Emperor

Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE, despite the evident example of Aramaic. Meghasthenes, an ambassador to the Mauryan court in Northeastern India only a quarter century before Ashoka, noted explicitly that the Indians "have no knowledge of written letters". This might be explained by the cultural importance at the time (and indeed to some extent today) of Oral literature for history and Hindu scripture. Another Greek, Nearchus, a few decades earlier observed that in northwestern India letters were written on cotton cloth. Authors have variously speculated that this might have been Kharosthi or Aramaic, but Salomon thus regarded the evidence from Greek sources to be inconclusive.

There have been claims that fragments of Brahmi epigraphy found in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka date as far back as the 5th or 6th century BCE. Recent claims for earlier dates include fragments of pottery from the trading town of Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, which have been dated to the early 4th century BCE; from Bhattiprolu and on pieces of pottery in Adichanallur, Tamil Nadu, which were associated with radiocarbon dates to the 6th century BCE. The claimed pre-Ashokan Bhattiprolu and Adichanallur inscriptions have been widely reported in the press, but do not appear to have been academically published so far. Saloman recognized the potential significance of the Anuradhapura inscriptions with respect to dating the origin of Brahmi but was cautious in accepting the early dates. Coningham et al., in their thorough analysis of the Anuradhapura inscriptions, found that the language was Prakrit rather than Dravidian, and they were unwilling to draw any conclusions about the affinities of the script beyond its being Brahmi; no claim was made that it is Tamil Brahmi. The historical sequence of the specimens was interpreted to indicate an evolution in the level of stylistic refinement over several centuries, and they concluded that the Brahmi script may have arisen out of "mercantile involvement" and that the growth of trade networks in Sri Lanka was correlated with its first appearance in the area.

Overall, evidence for pre-Mauryan Brahmi inscriptions remains inconclusive, restricted to pottery fragments with possible individual glyphs. The earliest complete inscriptions remain the 3rd-century-BCE Ashokan texts. Many early post-Ashokan remains show regional variation thought to have developed after a period of unity across India during the Ashokan period. Brahmi is clearly attested from the 3rd century BCE during the reign of Ashoka, who used the script for imperial edict. It has commonly been supposed that

the script was developed at around this time, both from the paucity of earlier dated examples, the alleged unreliability of those earlier dates, and from the geometric regularity of the script, which some have taken to be evidence that it had been recently invented [4], [5].

Early Regional Variant

The earliest Ashokan inscriptions are found across India-apart from the Kharosthi-writing northwest-and are highly uniform. By the late third century BCE regional variants had developed, due to differences in writing materials and to the structures of the languages being written. For example, Tamil Brahmi had a divergent system of vowel notation. The earliest definite evidence of Brahmi script in south India comes from Bhattiprolu in Andhra Pradesh. The Bhattiprolu was written on an urn containing Buddhist relics, apparently in Prakrit and old Telugu. Twenty-three letters have been identified. Unlike the edicts of Ashoka, however, the majority of the inscriptions from this early period in Sri Lanka are found above caves, are only a few words in length and "rarely say anything more than the name of the donor (who paid for the renovation of the cave, presumably); sometimes the donor's profession and village-of-origin are added, and sometimes the reader may be unable to guess if they are looking at the name of a person, profession or village, but can see that it is a name in any case and not a philosophical statement." Earliest writing in Brahmi was found in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka in Prakrit language, ancestor of Sinhalese language.

Characteristics

Brahmi is usually written from left to right, as in the case of its descendants. However, a coin of the 4th century BCE has been found inscribed with Brahmi running from right to left, as in Aramaic. Brahmi is an abugida, meaning that each letter represents a consonant, while vowels are written with obligatory diacritics called mātrās in Sanskrit, except when the vowels commence a word. When no vowel is written, the vowel /a/ is understood. This "default short a" is a characteristic shared with Kharosthī, though the treatment of vowels differs in other respects. Special conjunct consonant are used to write consonant clusters such as /pr/ or /rv/. In modern Devanagari conjunct consonant are written left to right to join them as one composite character whereas in Brahmi characters are joined vertically downwards.

Vowels following a consonant are inherent or written by diacritics, but initial vowels have dedicated letters. It has been noted that the basic system of vowel

marking common to Brahmi and Kharosthī, in which every consonant is understood to be followed by a vowel, was well suited to Prakrit, but as Brahmi was adapted to other languages, a special notation called the virama was introduced to indicate the omission of the final vowel. Punctuation can be perceived as more of an exception than as a general rule in Asokan Brahmi. For instance, distinct spaces in between the words appear frequently in the pillar edicts but not so much in others. ("Pillar edicts" refers to the texts that are inscribed on the stone pillars oftentimes with the intention of making them public.) The idea of writing each word separately was not consistently used [6], [7].

In the early Brahmi period, the existence of punctuation marks is not very well shown. Each letter has been written independently with some space between words and edicts occasionally. In the middle period, the system seems to be in progress. The use of a dash and a curved horizontal line is found. A flower mark seems to mark the end, and a circular mark appears to indicate the full stop. There seem to be varieties of full stop. In the late period, the system of interpunctuation marks gets more complicated. For instance, there are four different forms of vertically slanted double dashes that resemble "/" to mark the completion of the composition. Despite all the decorative signs that were available during the late period, the signs remained fairly simple in the inscriptions. One of the possible reasons may be that engraving is restricted while writing is not.

The Harappan Script

The Indus script (also Harappan script) is a corpus of symbols produced by the Indus valley civilisation during the Kot Diji and Mature Harappan periods between the 26th and 20th centuries BC. Most inscriptions are extremely short. It is not clear if these symbols constitute a script used to record a language, and the subject of whether the Indus symbols were a writing system is controversial. In spite of many attempts at decipherment, it is undeciphered, and no underlying language has been identified. There is no known bilingual inscription. The script does not show any significant changes over time. The first publication of a seal with Harappan symbols dates to 1873, in a drawing by Alexnader Cunningham. Since then, over 4,000 inscribed objects have been discovered, some as far afield as Mesopotamia. In the early 1970s, Iravatham Mahadevan published a corpus and concordance of Indus inscriptions listing 3,700 seals and 417 distinct signs in specific patterns. The average inscription contains five signs, and the longest

inscription is only 17 signs long. He also established the direction of writing as right to left [8], [9].

Some early scholars, starting with Cunningham in 1877, thought that the system was the archetype of the Brahmi script. Cunningham's ideas were supported by scholars, such as G.R. Hunter, S.R Rao, F. Raymond Allchin, John Newberry and Iravatham Mahadevan, some of whom continue to argue for an Indus predecessor of the Brahmic script. Early examples of the symbol system are found in an Early Harappan context, dated to possibly as early as the 33rd century BC. In the Mature Harappan period, from about 2600 BC, strings of Indus signs are most commonly found on flat, rectangular stamp seals, but they are also found on at least a dozen other materials including tools, miniature tablets, copper plates, and pottery.

Late Harappan

After 1900 BC, the systematic use of the symbols ended, after the final stage of the Mature Harappan civilization. A few Harappan signs have been claimed to appear until as late as around 1100 BC. Onshore explorations near Bet Dwarka in Gujrat revealed the presence of late Indus seals depicting a 3-headed animal, earthen vessel inscribed in what is claimed to be a late Harappan script, and a large quantity of pottery similar to Lustrous Red Ware bowl and Red Ware dishes, dish-on-stand, perforated jar and incurved bowls which are datable to the 16th century BC in Dwaraka, Rangpur and Prabhas. The Thermoluminescence date for the pottery in Bet Dwaraka is 1528 BC. This evidence has been used to claim that a late Harappan script was used until around 1500 BC. In May 2007, the Tamil Nadu Archaeological Department found pots with arrow-head symbols during an excavation in Melaperumpallam near Poompuhar. These symbols are claimed to have a striking resemblance to seals unearthed in Mohenjo-Daro in the 1920s.

In one purported decipherment of the script, the Indian archeologist S.R Rao argued that the late phase of the script represented the beginning of the alphabet. He notes a number of striking similarities in shape and form between the late Harappan characters and the Phoenician letters, arguing that the Phoenician script evolved from the Harappan script, challenging the classical theory that the first alphabet was Proto-Sinatic. The characters are largely pictorial but include many abstract signs. The inscriptions are thought to have been mostly written from right to left, but sometimes follow a boustrophedonic style. The number of principal signs is about 400, comparable to the typical sign inventory of a logo-syllabic script.

Over the years, numerous decipherments have been proposed, but none have been accepted by the scientific community at large. The following factors are usually regarded as the biggest obstacles for a successful decipherment:

1. The underlying language has not been identified though some 300 loanwords in the Rigveda are a good starting point for comparison.
2. The average length of the inscriptions is less than five signs, the longest being only 17 signs (and a sealing of combined inscriptions of just 27 signs).
3. No bilingual texts (like a Rosetta stone) have been found.
4. The topic is popular among amateur researchers, and there have been various (mutually exclusive) decipherment claims. None of these suggestions has found academic recognition.

Dravidian Hypothesis

The Russian scholar Yuri Knorozov surmised that the symbols represent a logosyllabic script and suggested based on computer analysis, an underlying agglutinative Dravidian language as the most likely candidate for the underlying language. Knorozov's suggestion was preceded by the work of Henry Heras, who suggested several readings of signs based on a proto-Dravidian assumption. The Finnish scholar Asko Parpola led a Finnish team in the 1960s-80s that vied with Knorozov's Soviet team in investigating the inscriptions using computer analysis. Based on a proto-Dravidian assumption, they proposed readings of many signs, some agreeing with the suggested readings of Heras and Knorozov (such as equating the "fish" sign with the Dravidian word for fish "min") but disagreeing on several other readings. A comprehensive description of Parpola's work until 1994 is given in his book *Deciphering the Indus Script*. The discovery in Tamil Nadu of a late Neolithic (early 2nd millennium BC, i.e. post-dating Harappan decline) stone celt allegedly marked with Indus signs has been considered by some to be significant for the Dravidian identification. Iravatham Mahadevan, who supports the Dravidian hypothesis, says, we may hopefully find that the proto-Dravidian roots of the Harappan language and South Indian Dravidian languages are similar [5], [10].

The Brahmi script developed under Semitic influence around 7th c. BC, and was originally written from right to left. The Kharosthi script came into being during the 5th c. BC in northwest India which was under Persian

rule. Although the origin of the Brahmi script is uncertain, the Kharosthi script is commonly accepted as a direct descendant from the Aramaic alphabet. The direction of writing in the Kharosthi script is as in Aramaic, from right to left, and there is also a likeness of many signs having similar phonetic value. In the later centuries of its existence, Brahmi gave rise to eight varieties of scripts. Three of them - the early and late Mauryas and the Sunga - became the prototypes of the scripts in northern India in the 1st c. BC and AD. Out of these developed the Gupta writing which was employed from the 4th to the 6th c. AD. The Siddhamatrka script developed during the 6th c. AD from the western branch of the eastern Gupta character. The Siddhamatrka became the ancestor of the Nagari script which is used for Sanskrit today. In the matter of writing, we find a long history from prehistoric times before the coming of the Aryans down to recent years. Until the discovery by excavations of the pre-historic and pre-Aryan city sites of Mohen-jo-Daro in northern Sind and Harappa in South Punjab, the oldest writings known in India was the Maurya script, used in inscriptions of Ashoka and in a few old coins and inscriptions which date back to the 3rd Century B.C. In 1837, that the Brahmi script could be read and understood for the first time. Throughout the whole of India we have inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka in different forms of Prakrit in Brahmi script and decade-by-decade and century by century, this script has gone on evolving on the soil of India. An inventory has been made of these letters, and their number comes up to over a hundred. In the Mohen-jo-Daro script, which goes back to 3500 B.C. and beyond, several strata are noticed. The one which is supposed to be the youngest or most advanced in development has simple shapes for the signs, depicted like linear writing.

CONCLUSION

The Brahmi script's influence extended beyond the Mauryan Empire, as it served as a foundation for the development of numerous regional scripts in different parts of India. These scripts, known as the Brahmic scripts, include Devanagari, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, and many others. They continue to be used today in various Indian languages. Studying the origin of the Brahmi script provides insights into the cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts of ancient India. The script's development represents an important milestone in the evolution of writing systems, facilitating the spread of knowledge, religious texts, and administrative practices. In conclusion, the origin

of the Brahmi script during the Mauryan Empire marked a significant advancement in writing systems in ancient India. Its simplicity, phonetic nature, and widespread usage laid the foundation for the development of numerous scripts across the subcontinent. The Brahmi script remains an essential part of the rich cultural and linguistic heritage of India and continues to be a source of inspiration and study in the field of epigraphy and Indology.

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Vedas Epics: Ramayana, Mahabharata & Puranas

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ABSTRACT: *The ancient Indian scriptures encompass a vast body of texts that are central to the religious, philosophical, and cultural traditions of India. This provides an overview of three significant categories of texts: the Vedas, the Brahmanas and Upanishads, and the Sutras, as well as the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, and the Puranas. The Vedas are the oldest sacred texts in Hinduism, dating back to around 1500 BCE. Composed in Sanskrit, the Vedas consist of hymns, prayers, rituals, and philosophical insights. They are divided into four main collections: the Rigveda, the Samaveda, the Yajurveda, and the Atharvaveda. The Vedas provide insights into ancient Indian cosmology, rituals, and spiritual practices. The Brahmanas and Upanishads are texts that elaborate on the ritualistic aspects of the Vedas and explore profound philosophical concepts. The Brahmanas contain explanations and interpretations of Vedic rituals, while the Upanishads delve into the nature of reality, the self, and the ultimate truth (Brahman). The Upanishads are considered the philosophical culmination of Vedic thought and are revered as the source of spiritual wisdom. The Sutras are concise aphoristic texts that systematize and organize knowledge in various fields. They provide concise rules, guidelines, and principles for rituals, grammar, law, and philosophy. The most famous Sutras are the Vedanta Sutras of Badarayana, which expound on the philosophy of Vedanta. In this study we intended providing you an insight into the long history of Sanskrit language and literature that flourished in India since the Vedic Age. The lesson will briefly discuss the vast corpus of Vedic and Vedic allied literature and other Brahminical scripture composed in early age in chaste Sanskrit.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy*

INTRODUCTION

Ever since human beings have invented scripts, writing has reflected the culture, lifestyle, society and the polity of contemporary society. In the process, each culture evolved its own language and created a huge literary base. This literary base of a civilization tells us about the evolution of each of its languages and culture through the span of centuries. Sanskrit is the mother of many Indian languages. The Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and Dharmasutras are all written in Sanskrit. There is also a variety of secular and regional literature. By reading about the languages and literature created in the past, we shall be able to understand our civilization better and appreciate the diversity and richness of our culture. All this was possible because of the language that developed during that time.

Sanskrit is the most ancient language of our country. It is one of the twenty-two languages listed in the Indian Constitution. The literature in Sanskrit is vast, beginning with the most ancient thought embodied in the Rig Veda, the oldest literary heritage of mankind, and the Zend Avesta. It was Sanskrit that gave impetus

to the study of linguistics scientifically during the eighteenth century. The great grammarian Panini, analysed Sanskrit and its word formation in his unrivalled descriptive grammar Ashtadhyayi. The Buddhist Sanskrit literature includes the rich literature of the Mahayana school and the Hinayana school also. The most important work of the Hinayana school is the Mahavastu which is a storehouse of stories. While the Lalitavistara is the most sacred Mahayana text which supplied literary material for the Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa. Sanskrit is perhaps the only language that transcended the barriers of regions and boundaries. From the north to the south and the east to the west there is no part of India that has not contributed to or been affected by this language. Kalhan's Rajatarangini gives a detailed account of the kings of Kashmir whereas with Jonaraja we share the glory of Prithviraj. The writings of Kalidasa have added beauty to the storehouse of Sanskrit writings [1].

The Vedic Literature

The Vedas are the earliest known literature in India. The Vedas were written in Sanskrit and were handed down orally from one generation to the other. The preservation of the Vedas till today is one of our most

remarkable achievements. To be able to keep such a literary wealth as the Vedas intact when the art of writing was not there and there was a paucity of writing material is unprecedented in world history. The word 'Veda' literally means knowledge. In Hindu culture, Vedas are considered as eternal and divine revelations. They treat the whole world as one human family Vasudev Kutumbakam. There are four Vedas, namely, the- Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. Each Veda consists of the Brahmanas, the Upanishads and the Aranyakas.

The Rig-veda Samhita

The Rig-Veda Samhita which has come down to us belongs to the branch known as the Sakala Sakha. It consists of 1,028 suktas (hymns) including eleven additional hymns. These hymns, which are made up of a varying number of mantras in the form of metrical stanzas, are distributed in ten books called mandalas. The formation of the mandalas was governed mainly by the principle of homogeneity of authorship. Among the classes of the Vedic Aryans certain families had already acquired some measure of socio-religious importance. The mantras, or hymns, which the progenitor and the members of any of these families claimed to have 'seen' were collected in the book of that family. The nucleus of the Rig- Veda mandalas two to seven is formed of six such family books, which are respectively ascribed to the families of Grtsamada, Visvamitra, Vamadeva, Atri, Bharadvaja, and Vasistha. The eighth mandala laRigely belongs to the Kanvas. The ninth mandala is governed by the principle of the homogeneity not of authorship but of subject-matter, for all the suktas in this mandala relate to soma (an intoxicating juice). The first and the tenth mai.ulalas, each of which has 191 hymns, are miscellaneous collections of long and short suktas.

Within a mandala, the suktas are arranged according to the subject-matter. That is to say, the suktas are grouped according to the divinities to whom they relate, and then these devata groups are arranged in some set order. Within a devata group, again, the suktas are normally arranged in the descending order of the number of their stanzas The Rig-Veda has also been arranged by another method. In this the whole collection is divided into eight astakas (books). Each astaka is subdivided into eight adhyayas, and each adhyaya is further subdivided into about thirty-three vaRigas (sections) consisting of about five mantras each. This arrangement, however, is obviously mechanical and intended mainly to serve the practical purpose of Vedic study. Tradition requires that before starting the study of any sukta one should know four

essential items about it: rsi, authorship; devata, subject-matter; chandas, metre; and viniyoga ritualistic application. The poets of the Rig-Veda show themselves to have been conscious artists and they sometimes employed various stylistic and rhetorical devices. The majority of the suktas in the Rig- Veda are of the nature of prayers addressed to different divinities usually with background descriptions of their various exploits and achievements. Apart from these prayers and their mythology, however, we do get in some suktas the Rig-Veda intimations of the further development of Vedic thought in the directions of ritualism and philosophical speculation. In connection with the latter, special mention may be made of the Hiranyagaibha-sukta and the Purusa-sukta [2], [3].

The Atharva-veda Samhita

In contrast to the Rig- Veda, the Alharva- Veda is essentially a heterogeneous collection of mantras. It concerns itself mostly with the everyday life of the common man, from the pre-natal stage to the post-mortem. It portrays that life with all its light and shade, and highlights the generally obscure human emotions and relations. Truly, there is an aura of mystery and unexpectedness about it. The interest of the Atharva-Veda is varied and its impact is irresistible. A distinctive feature of the Atharva-Veda is the laRige number of names by which it has been traditionally known. All these names are significant, and together give a full idea of the nature, extent, and content of this Veda. The name Atharvangirasah (an abbreviated form of this, Atharva- Veda, has, in the course of time, come to be the one most commonly used) is, for example, indicative of the twofold character of the Atharvanic magic: the wholesome, auspicious, 'white' magic of the Atharvans and the terrible, sorcerous, 'black' magic of the Angirasas. The substitution of BhRigu for Atharvan in the name BhRigvangirasah is presumably the result of the dominant role played by the family of the BhRigus in a certain period of India's cultural history. The purohita (priest) of a Vedic king was expected to be an adept in both white and black magic, and in order to dischaRige adequately the duties of his responsible office he naturally depended on the mantras and practices of the Atharva-Veda. Thus, it was that this Veda also came to be called the Purohita-Veda. It was also called the Ksatia-Veda, because it included within its scope many practices specifically relating to the Ksatriya rulers.

The Atharva-Veda consisted of Brahmanas (magically potent mantras) and was therefore, according to one view, called the Brahma-Veda. But there is another reason why it is called the Brahma-Veda, which is far

more significant. On account of the peculiar character of the contents of the Atharva-Veda, it was, for a long time, not regarded as being on a par with the other three Vedas, called trayi. As a reaction against this exclusive attitude of the Vedic hierarchy, the Atharva-Vedins went to the other extreme and claimed that their Veda not only enjoyed, by right, the full status of a Veda, but actually comprehended the other three Vedas. The view had already been independently gaining ground that the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, and the Sama-Veda were essentially limited in scope and that Brahman alone was truly limitless. The sponsors of the Atharva-Veda claimed that this Brahman was adequately embodied in their Veda, and that the Atharva-Veda was therefore the Brahma-Veda. However, it is not unlikely that the name Brahma-Veda became stabilized because the priest of the Atharva-Veda in the Vedic ritual was called Brahman. The Atharva-Veda is usually considered to be a Veda of magic, and magic becomes effective only through the joint operation of mantras and the corresponding practices. The Atharva-Veda Samhita itself contains only the mantras, while its various practices are described in its many ancillary texts, particularly in its five kalpas. The Atharva-Veda is accordingly sometimes referred to as the Veda of the five kalpas. But mystic and esoteric verses are there in the Atharva-Veda, and this justifies in a way its claim to be regarded as the Brahma-Veda, dealing specifically with Brahman, the supreme Spirit, the other three being more or less connected with the ritual of worship. Nine (or sometimes fifteen) sakhas of the Atharva-Veda are traditionally known, but the Samhitas of only two Sakhas, the Saunaka and the Paippalada, have been preserved. It was once believed that the Paippalada Sakha was restricted to Kashmir and it was therefore called, though erroneously, the Kashmirian Atharva-Veda. It has now been established, however, that that Sakha of the Atharva-Veda had also spread in eastern India (Orissa and south-west Bengal) and in Gujarat. The entire Paippalada recension was discovered some years ago in Orissa by the late Dr DuRiga Mohan Bhattacharyya and a small portion of it has been published. The Saunaka Samhita of the Atharva-Veda has been more commonly current. It consists of 730 suktas divided into twenty kandas (books). About five-sixths of the suktas, which are called artha-suktas, contain metrical stanzas, whereas the remaining suktas, which are called paryadya-suktas, contain avasanas (prose-units). Unlike the Rig-Veda Samhita, the arrangement of the Atharva-Veda Samhita is not governed by any

consideration either of authorship or of subject-matter. In deed, it is understandable that the historical tradition regarding authorship was not preserved in respect of this 'Veda of the masses'. Again, the Atharva-Veda shows considerable looseness in matters of metre, accent, and grammar, presumably because it was not subjected, as the Rig-Veda was, to deliberate revision and redaction. The contents of the Atharva-Veda are remarkably diverse in character. There are in this Veda charms to counteract diseases and possession by evil spirits, bhaisajyani. The Atharva-Veda presents perhaps the most complete account of primitive medicine. There are also prayers for health and long life, ayusyanv, for happiness and prosperity, paustikani. There are also spells pertaining to the various kinds of relationship with women, strikarmani. Another significant section of this Veda contains hymns which concern themselves with affairs involving the king, rajakarmani, and others which are intended for securing harmony in domestic, social, and political spheres, sammanasydni [4].

As for black magic, the Atharva-Veda abounds in formulas for sorcery and imprecation, for exorcism and counter-exorcism. Polarity may be said to be one of the most striking features of the Atharva-Veda, for side by side with the incantations for sorcery and black magic, it contains highly theosophical or philosophical speculations. These speculations, indeed, represent a significant landmark in the history of Indian thought. As has been mentioned, the Rig-Veda and the Atharva-Veda are the only two primary Samhitas, the other two Samhitas being mostly derivative in character. Again, it is to be noted in the same context that the Sama-Veda and the Yajur-Veda may be styled as Samhitas since they are, in a sense, collections of mantras, but in them are reflected tendencies which are not of the Samhita period but are of the Brahmana period.

The Sama-Veda Samhita

The Sama-Veda Samhita is a collection of mantras prescribed for chanting at various soma sacrifices by the udgatr (singer-priest) and his assistants, thus this Veda serves an avowedly ritualistic purpose. Though called Sama-Veda, it is not strictly speaking a collection of samans (chants). The Sama-Veda, as we have said, is essentially a derivative production in the sense that most of its mantras are derived from the Rig-Veda. Three distinct stages may be inferred in the evolution of this Veda. There is a specific mantra taken from the Rig-Veda in its original form. This mantra is taken into the Sama-Veda with a view to its being made the basis of a proper saman. The only change

that is affected in this process concerns the marking of the accents, numbers, 1, 2, and 3 now being used to indicate accents instead of the vertical and horizontal lines used in the Rig- Veda. In this second stage the mantra is called samayoni-mantra. The Sama-Veda is actually a collection of such samayoni-mantras. It is, however, not in the form in which they occur in the Sama-Veda Samhita that these mantras are employed by the udgatr in the soma ritual. The samayommmtrns are transformed into chants or ritual melodies called ganas. This is done by means of such devices as the modification, prolongation, and repetition of the syllables occurring in the mantra itself, and the occasional insertion of additional syllables known as stobhas.

These ganas, which represent the third and final stage in the evolution of the Sama- Veda, are collected in four books: the Gramageya-gana, the Aranya-gana, the Uha-gana, and the Uhya-gdna. Of course, these gdna collections are quite distinct from the Sama-Veda Samhita. Normally, each gdna in these collections is given some technical name, for example, Brhat, Ratkantara, or Gotamasya Parka. Since one sdmayoni-mantra can be chanted in a variety of ways, it may give rise to several ganas. For instance, three ganas, Gotamasya Paika, Kajyapasya Barhisa, and another Gotamasya Parka, have evolved out of the first mantra in the Sama-Veda Samhita. Consequendy, the number of Sama-ganas is much laRiger than the number of sdmayoni-mantras. Thirteen sakhas of the Sama-Veda are traditionally mentioned, though only three sakhas, the Kauthuma, the Ranayaniya, and the Jaimini, are well known today. Patanjali, in his Mahabhasya, speaks of the Sama-Veda having a thousand 'paths', sahasravartma samavedah. This characterization presumably suggests the laRige number of possible modes of sama chanting, rather than a thousand Sakhas of the Sama-Veda, as is construed by some. In the Bhagavad-Gita the Sama-Veda is glorified as the most excellent of the Vedas. This may be due to the great efficacy of the magical potence engendered in the Vedic ritual by the chanting of the samans.

The Brahmanas

Many Vedic texts are traditionally called Brahmanas, but the more important among them are the Aitareya and the Kausitak belonging to the Rig-Veda, the Taittiriya belonging to the Krsna Yajur-Veda, the Satapatha belonging to the Sukla Yajur-Veda; the Jaiminiya and Tandya belonging to the Sama-Veda, and the Gopatha belonging to the Atharva-Veda. The Aitareya Brahmana, which naturally concerns itself mainly with the duties of the priest of the Rig-Veda,

namely, the hotr, is divided into eight pancikas of five adhydyas each. Clear evidence is available of Panini's having known all the forty adhydyas of this Brahmana. The first twenty-four adhydyas of the Aitareya Brahmana deal with the hautra the function or office of the hotr of the various soma sacrifices; the next six with the agnihotra and the duties of the hotrs assistants; and the last ten, which show signs of being a later addition, with the rajasuya. The Kausitaki Brahmana, also known as the Sankhayana Brahmana, has thirty adhyayas. It is a better-oRiganized text and covers more or less the entire sacrificial procedure. As has been indicated already, the Taittiriya Brahmana is merely a continuation of the Taittiriya Samhita.

The Satapatha Brahmana, on the other hand, must be regarded as an independent work and it is quite remarkable in many respects. Indeed, after the Rig-Veda and the Atharva-Veda, it is perhaps the most important Vedic text in both extent and content. The Madhyandina version of the Satapatha Brahmana consists of 14 kandas (each with a separate name derived from its contents), 68 prapathakas or 100 adhyayas (from which the Satapatha Brahmana presumably gets its name as 'the Brahmana with a hundred paths or sections'), 438 brahmanas, and 7,624 kandikas. In the Kanva version, the first, the fifth, and the fourteenth kandas are each divided into two kandas', thus the total number of kandas in that version is seventeen. Otherwise, the names of the kandas and their contents are generally the same [4], [5].

The first nine kandas of the Madhyandina-Satapatha Brahmana, which seem to represent the older portion, fully correspond with the first eighteen adhyayas of the Vajasaneyi Samhita, and thus cover the basic sacrificial ritual. The tenth kanda, called Agrdrahasya speaks of the mystical significance of the various aspects of the sacred fires; while the eleventh, called Astadhyayi, recapitulates the entire sacrificial ritual. This would seem to be confirmed by Patanjali's reference to this Brahmana as Sastipatha (sixty paths), a name presumably derived from the fact that the first nine kandas together consist of sixty adhyayas. The twelfth kanda concerns itself with expiation rites and the sautramani sacrifice. The thirteenth kanda deals mainly with the abamedha sacrifice and also, rather briefly, with the purusamedha and the sarvamedha sacrifices. The first three adhydyas of the last kanda of the Satapatha Brahmana are devoted to the consideration of the praoaRigya ceremony (introductory to the soma sacrifice); while the last six adhydyas constitute the famous Brhaddranyaka Upanisad.

One of the important features of the Satapatha Brahmana is the large number of legends it contains. Among them may be mentioned: Manu and the fish; the migration of Videgha Mathava from the region of the Sarasvati to the region of the Sadanira; the rejuvenation of Cyavana; the romantic affair between Pururavas and Urvashi; and the contest between Kadru and Vinata. Another important feature is that, while some portions of this Brahmana are intimately connected with the Kuru-Pancalas, others have their provenance in Kosala-Videha. This fact clearly indicates that the Satapatha Brahmana is a composite work and that its composition must have extended over a wide range of time and area. The Sama-Veda can boast of having the largest number of Brahmana texts, but only two or three of them can properly be called Brahmanas; all the others are more or less of the nature of parimstas (appendices). The Jaiminiya Brahmana, which consists of 1,252 sections and which is thus one of the bulkiest of the Vedic texts, constitutes the best source of information regarding the technique of the samagas the priests who chant or recite the Sama- Veda. It is also a difficult text, however, since the ritual and legendary data in it are more or less isolated.

Another Brahmana which belongs to the Sama-Veda is the Tandya Brahmana. Its chief concern is of course the soma sacrifice in all its varieties, but of particular interest are its detailed description of the satras (sacrificial sessions) organized on the banks of the Drsadvati and the Sarasvati, and its treatment of the vratya-stomas (hymns of praise). Like the Pancavirhsa Brahmana, the Sama-Veda has a Sadvimfa Brahmana, the last book of which deals with omens and portents; it is called the Adbhuta Brahmana. The Gopatha Brahmaria, which is the only Brahmana of the Atharva-Veda known to us, is perhaps the youngest of the Brahmana texts. It is also limited in extent, consisting as it does of only two books with eleven prapathakas. One of the paristas of the Atharva-Veda, says, however, that the Gopatha Brahmana originally consisted of one hundred study out of which only two have survived. This is quite plausible, since many statements referred to in other texts as being derived from this Brahmana are not traceable in its extant text [6].

A significant point about the Gopatha Brahmana is that, for the most part, it contains myths, legends, and parables which illustrate and explain various ceremonies in the Vedic ritual. The Atharvanic character of this Brahmana becomes evident in several ways. For instance, it glorifies Angiras as the 'sage of

sages' and emphasizes that a Vedic sacrifice performed without the help of a priest of the Atharva-Veda is bound to fail. In the literary history of ancient India the Brahmanas are important for the following reasons: (i) they represent the earliest attempts to interpret the Vedic mantras; (ii) they mark the beginnings of Sanskrit prose; (iii) they have preserved many ancient legends; and (iv) they have in them the seeds of the future development of several literary forms and works, and of various branches of knowledge. Moreover, the Brahmanas contain an exclusive and comprehensive treatment of Vedic sacrificial ritual, and thus constitute a highly authoritative source for one of the most significant periods in the religious history of India. It is, again, the Brahmanas which have prepared the background for the philosophical speculations of the Upanisads. And, finally, culture-historians can ill afford to lose sight of the various facts of socio-political history interspersed in the ritualistic lucubrations of the Brahmanas [7].

The Aranyakas

The Aranyakas are a kind of continuation of the Brahmanas, textually as well as conceptually. They mark the transition from the ritualism of the Brahmanas to the spiritualism of the Upanisads. While, on the one hand, most of the texts of the Aranyakas form the concluding portions of some of the Brahmanas, on the other hand, some of the Upanisadic texts are either embedded in or appended to them. The Aranyakas, which are obviously esoteric, seek to present the true mystique of the ritual by glorifying the inner, mental sacrifice as against the external, material aspect of it. The study of the Aranyakas was traditionally restricted therefore to the solitude of the forest, aranya.

As for the Taittiriya Aranyaka, it is, as already mentioned, a direct continuation of the Samhita and the Brahmaria of the Taittiriya School. In its first six books it supplements the treatment of Vedic ritual in the Samhita and the Brahmana by dealing with such sacrifices as the sarvamedka, the pitrmedha, and the pravargya. Its next three books constitute the Taittiriya Upanisad, while its tenth and last book is known as the Maha-ndrayana Upanisad. The first three adhyayas of the fourteenth kanda of the Satapatha Brahmana are called Aranyaka and their subject-matter is the pravargya sacrifice. As already mentioned, the last six adhyayas of this kanda make up the Brhadhranyaka Upanisad.

The Upanisads

The word upanisad is interpreted variously. It is made to correspond with the word upasana which is understood to mean either worship or profound knowledge. The word is also connected with the Pali word upanisa and thus made to mean something like cause or connection. In his bhasya (commentary) on the Taittiriya Upanisad Sankara interprets upanisad as that which destroys (sad, to destroy) ignorance. But the sense most commonly signified by the word upanisad is the esoteric teaching imparted by the teacher to the pupil who sits (sad), near him (upa), in a closed select (ni), group.

The Upanisads are also called the Vedanta, because they represent the concluding portion of the apauruseya Veda or Sruti, or the final stage in Vedic instruction, or the ultimate end and aim of the teachings of the Veda. The importance of the Upanisads, however, as the first recorded attempt at systematic, though not systematized, philosophizing can hardly be gainsaid. They are one of the most significant sources of the spiritual wisdom of India and are traditionally regarded as one of the three prasthanas (source books) of Indian philosophy. Also, one cannot fail to be impressed by certain notable features of the Upanisads, such as: their unity of purpose in spite of the variety in their doctrines; the note of certainty or definiteness which informs them; and the various levels at which they consider and represent reality.

The Isa Upanisad belongs to the Sukla Yajur-Veda and is included in the Vajasaneyi Samhitd as its last adhyaya, that is, the fortieth. This Upanisad, which derives its name from its first word, emphasizes the unity of being and becoming, but in this connection it speaks of Isa, the Lord, rather than of Brahman. It elaborates the doctrine of vidyd (knowledge) and avidya (ignorance), and sets forth the view that a fusion of both (samuccaya), is a necessary precondition for the attainment of amrtatva (immortality). The Kena Upanisad, which also derives its name from its initial word, forms part of the fourth book of the Talavakara Brahmana of the Sama-Veda. It consists of four sections, of which the first two, which are in verse, deal with Brahman, paid-vidya (higher knowledge), and sadyomukti (immediate liberation); while the last two sections, which are in prose, deal with Isvara, apara-vidyd (lower knowledge), and krama-mukti (gradual liberation).

Apart from these principal Upanisads there are many others, but they are essentially sectarian in character and pseudo-philosophical in content. They are usually

divided into various classes, such as Smanya-Vedanta, Yoga, Sannyasa, Saiva, Vaisnava, and Sakta, in accordance with their main tendencies. As for the age of the principal Upanisads, they may be said to extend roughly over a period from the eighth to the third century B.C., the older ones among them being decidedly pre-Buddhistic. As far as the relative chronology of the Upanisads is concerned, it is customary to speak of four classes, namely: ancient prose, early metrical, later prose, and later metrical. The Upanisads can, no doubt, be said to represent the high watermark of Vedic thought; but it also needs to be realized that certain features of their teachings, such as Brakma-vidya (knowledge of Brahman), were too subtle to be adequately comprehended by ordinary people. They demanded a high intellectual level and strict spiritual discipline on the part of the seeker. The Upanisads gave the people a philosophy but not a religion [8].

As we have seen, the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanisads are believed to be apauruseya. Not so the Vedangas, for in the reorganization of Vedic knowledge they present an attempt to systematize various aspects of that knowledge which are necessary for understanding the Vedic texts. The six Vedangas are: Siksa (phonetics); kalpa (socio-religious practice and ritual); vyakarana (grammar); nirukta (etymology, exegesis, and mythology); chandas (metrics); and jyotisa (astronomy). Each of these six Vedangas is connected, in one way or another, with the Vedic religion, although only the Kalpa may be said to be directly religious in purpose. By the Kalpa-Sutra is usually meant a whole literary corpus comprising the Sruta-Sutra, the Grhya-Sutra, and the Dharma-Sutra; these, broadly speaking, refer respectively to the religious, the domestic, and the social aspects of the life of the people. These Sutras primarily seek to regulate and codify the practices which were already in vogue, but at the same time they also initiate new practices or modify the old ones in accordance with the times and the traditions of the school in which they originated.

CONCLUSION

The epics Ramayana and Mahabharata are monumental works of literature and mythology. The Ramayana narrates the adventures of Prince Rama and his quest to rescue his wife Sita from the demon king Ravana. It explores themes of righteousness, devotion, and the triumph of good over evil. The Mahabharata is an epic saga that chronicles the rivalry between the Pandava and Kaurava clans and the great Kurukshetra

war. It contains profound philosophical teachings, including the Bhagavad Gita, a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and Lord Krishna. The Puranas are a genre of texts that recount mythological narratives, legends, and genealogies of deities, sages, and kings. They serve as repositories of cultural and religious knowledge and provide insights into the Hindu cosmology, legends, and moral teachings. Collectively, these scriptures form the foundation of Hinduism, shaping religious practices, philosophical doctrines, and cultural narratives. They provide profound insights into the ancient Indian worldview, spirituality, and the pursuit of knowledge.

In conclusion, the Vedas, the Brahmanas and Upanishads, the Sutras, the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, and the Puranas constitute a diverse and extensive corpus of ancient Indian scriptures. These texts are revered for their religious, philosophical, and literary significance, providing invaluable insights into the ancient Indian cultural and intellectual heritage. They continue to inspire and guide millions of people worldwide, fostering a deep understanding of Indian spirituality and wisdom.

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A Study on Sruta-Sutras, Grhya-Sutras, and Dharma-Sutras

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ABSTRACT: *The Sruta-Sutras contain injunctions regarding religious practices, the word 'practices' being understood in the restricted sense of ritualistic practices. Naturally, therefore, they are directly connected with the Brahmanas, particularly with the vidhi portions. The Sruta- Sutras, however, present the procedure of the various sacrifices in a far more complete and systematic manner. Presumably, these Sutras were composed as practical aids to the professional officiating priests. Closely related to the Sruta-Sutras are the Sulva-Sutras which deal with such matters as the construction of the sacrificial altars, the measurements of the different kinds of fire- altars, etc. The Sruta-Sutras generally treat of sacrifices in which the three sacred fires, the ahaxianiya, the garhapatya, and the daksina (or sometimes more) are employed. These sacrifices usually require the services of several officiating priests from among the adhvaryu, the hotr, the brahman, and the udgar, and their assistants.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

The majority of the Sruta-Sutras known today belong to the Yajur-Veda (particularly to the Krsna Yajur-Veda). This is quite understandable, for the adhvaryu plays the most active role in the sruta ritual, and the Tajui-Yeda is essentially the Veda for the adhvaryu. The Baudhayana Sruta- Sutra belongs to the Taittiriya Sakha of the Krasna Yajur-Veda; it is perhaps the oldest among the Sruta-Sutras. The Baudhayana Sruta-Sutra is called a pravacana (sacred treatise) and is written more in the style of the Brahmanas than of the Sutras. The other Sruta-Sutras which belong to the Taittiriya Sakha, are the Bharadvaja, the Apastamba, the Satyasadha-Hiranyakesm, the Vaikhanasa, and the Vadhula. Of the two Sruta- Sutras belonging to the MaitrayanI Sakha, the Manava and the Varaha, the former is closely connected with the Apastamba Sruta- Sutra. The Kathaka Sruta-Sutra has become known only through references to it in other Sruta-Sutras and commentaries. The Katyayana Sruta-Sutra is the only Sruta- Sutra of the Sukla Yajur-Veda. The two Sruta-Sutras of the Rig-Veda, the Asvalayana and the Sankhayana, deal mainly with the hautra. The Sama-Veda has four Sruta- Sutras, the Latyayana, the Drakyayana, the Jaiminiya, and the Gobhila. The Vaitana- Sutra of the Atharva-Veda is a short text concerning the duties of the brahman and his

assistants, and also of the sacrificer. The Kausika-Sutra, which also belongs to the Atharva-Veda, is essentially a Grhya-Sutra, but it contains several passages relating to the sruta ritual [1], [2].

The Grhya-Sutras deal with the grhya (household) rites which broadly comprise the seven paka-yajna-samsthas and also the rites connected with the various samskaras (sacraments). The Grhya-Sutras have very little to do with the Brahmanas, but they are directly connected with the Samhitas since they derive their mantras from them. It needs to be pointed out, however, that not all the mantras prescribed to be employed in grhya rites are traceable to the Samhitas. The grhya rites are generally performed with the help of only one fire, and in many of them the services of officiating priests are not required. Soma has no place in any of them. When they form part of a corpus, the Grhya-Sutras presuppose and occur after the Sruta-Sutra. It is, however, difficult to say whether the Sruta-Sutra and the Grhya-Sutra belonging to the same school can be ascribed to the same authorship. At the same time, one does come across many verbal repetitions in the two Sutras of the same school [3], [4].

Of the two Grhya-Sutras of the Sukla Yajur-Veda, one is the Paraskara Grhya-Sutra, which is also known as the Katiya Grhya-Sutra or the Vajasaneya Grhya-Sutra. The other one, the Baijavapa Grhya-Sutra, is known only through references to it in other works. The Paraskara Grhya-Sutra is connected with the

Madhyandina Sakha. The largest numbers of published Grhya- Sutras belong to the Ksna Yajur-Veda. The Baudhayana Grhya-Sutra (with four prahas), the Bharadvaja Grhya- Sutra (with three prahas), the Apastamba Grhya-Sutra (with three prahas, of which two give only the mantras for grhya rites while the third gives the injunctions regarding the performance of these rites), and the Satyasadha-Hiranyakesi Grhya- Sutra (with two prahas) are included in the Kalpa-Sutra corpuses of their respective Vedic schools. Compared with Sruta-Sutras and Grhya-Sutras which are available, the Dharma-Sutras are very few. It may be pointed out, however, that besides those published, many other texts of this category have become known through quotations from them found in other works. It is also possible to presume that some of the Dharma-Sutras are now completely lost.

There is another significant point about the Dharma-Sutras. This is that although the different Dharma-Sutras are traditionally believed to have been affiliated to different Vedic schools, the influence on them of those specific schools is almost negligible. It seems that while the sruta and grhya practices varied from school to school in some details at least-social practices, civil and criminal law, and polity, which constituted the principal subject-matter of the Dharma-Sutras, had in general become common to the entire Vedic-Aryan community. Understandably the connection between a Dharma-Sutra and any particular Vedic school was often tenuous. Within a Kalpa corpus the Dharma-Sutra usually follows the Grhya-Sutra. It may also be noted that many topics, such as the asrama-dharmas (special duties of each period of life), are common to the Grhya- Sutra and the Dharma-Sutra. The arrangement of the subject-matter in the Dharma-Sutras is not at all orderly. In the light of the classification of topics in some of the later metrical Smritis, however, it is possible to classify the topics of the Dharma-Sutras under three main heads: acara (conduct), vyavahara (dealings), including rajadharmas (a king's duty), and prayaicitta (expiation). As for the literary form of the Dharma-Sutras, they contain sutras interspersed with metrical passages; two exceptions to this are the Gautama Dharma-Sutra and the Vaikhanasa Dharma-Sutra.

Dharma-Sutras and Dharma-Sastras

Broadly speaking, the Dharma-sastras or metrical Smritis represent a later stage than the Dharma-Sutras in the evolution of the literature on Dharma- Sastra. But it cannot be assumed on this account that every Smrti had as its basis a Dharma-Sutra, or that every

Dharma-Sutra developed in course of time into a metrical Smrti. This point has special relevance in connection with the problem relating to the Manu Smrti and the Manava Dharma-Sutra. It was suggested that the extant Manu Smrti was a metrical redaction of the Manava Dharma-Sutra which belonged to the Maitrayani Sakha of the Kfsna Yajur-Veda.

But no Manava Dharma-Sutra has become available so far, nor is it even mentioned in any other work. Various arguments have been advanced to prove that the Manava Dhavma-Sutra had once existed but was lost; there have also been counter-arguments to disprove the existence of this Sutra. Neither of these claims is conclusive, and the question has to remain open. By and laRige, the entire Vedic literature, both apauruseya and pauruseya, may be said to be directly religious in character. As against this, in the post-Vedic Sanskrit literature, which is by no means homogeneous either in form or content, religion is but one of the many fields covered. One may, nonetheless, hasten to add that there is hardly any ancient or medieval Sanskrit text, even of an avowedly secular type, which is not religion-oriented in one sense or other [5], [6].

DISCUSSION

The logical and chronological sequence which characterizes the Vedic periods is absent in the post-Vedic Sanskrit literary periods. We have therefore to consider the post-Vedic Sanskrit religious texts not chronologically but in groups formed in accordance with their contents and tendencies. The end of the period of the major Upanisads saw the gradual dwindling of the influence of the Vedic tradition. Four cultural movements emerged during this interregnum. Firstly, heterodox religions like Buddhism and Jainism began to assert themselves. Secondly, as a natural reaction to this challenge to orthodox Brahmanism, attempts were made to consolidate the Vedic way of life and thought by reorganizing and systematizing all Vedic knowledge and Vedic practice. The Sutra-Vedanga literature was the outcome of these attempts. Thirdly, for the purpose of counteracting the cult of renunciation generally encouraged by the Upanisads, there grew what may be called secular and materialistic tendencies best manifested in a work like the Artha tastra of Kautilya. And, finally, there emerged a form of Hinduism which steered clear of the heterodoxy of Buddhism and Jainism on the one hand and the revivalism of the Sutra-Vedanga movement on the other. It was a federation of tribal religious cults, most of which were originally non-

Vedic in provenance and which tended to converge in the course of historical development-this federation being held together by the running thread of formal allegiance to the Vedas. The literature relating to the second movement, the Sutra-Vedanga literature has been already dealt with in the previous section on the Vedic literature. Now we are concerned with the literature of the fourth movement which proved to be of the greatest consequence in the history of India namely, Hinduism. The main characteristics of this new religious movement may broadly be set forth as follows:

- (i) The indigenous popular gods, such as Siva and Visnu and His various incarnations, superseded the Vedic gods, such as Indra and Varuna;
- (ii) The doctrine of bhakti or devotion to a personal God began to prevail, and the different religious practices associated with it, such as puja (worship), replaced the Vedic sacrificial ritual;
- (iii) The ideal of lokasaiigraha (social solidarity) acquired as much importance as the Upanisadic ideal of atma-jnana (Self-realization). Consequently, Karma-yoga came to be encouraged as against Sannyasa;
- (iv) The response of Hinduism to external and internal challenges was one of gradual assimilation and adaptation rather than of opposition and isolation, and the tendency to synthesize various religious practices and philosophical doctrines into a single harmonious way of life and thought became prominent.

A new polity and statecraft was sponsored. The influence of some of these trends in Hinduism becomes evident even in the ancillary texts of the different Vedic schools, such as the pariiistas, the prayogas, and the paddkatis, all of which, of course, belong to a fairly late date. The Vaikhanasa-Sutras, for instance, which claim to belong to a school of the Yajur-Veda, are actually related to a Vaisnava school in South India. Similarly, the Baudhayana Grhya-paritista-sutra deals with some aspects of Visnu-puja. Such texts, though ostensibly Vedic, have taken over many non- Vedic beliefs and practices.

The Bhagavad-Gita and the Epics

The characteristics of Hinduism, as just set forth, are best reflected in the Bhagavad-Gita which may, indeed, be regarded as the principal scripture of this new religious ideology. They are also reflected in the

character of Krsna, its enunciator, as portrayed in the great epic, the Mahabharata, which is in many ways a unique literary phenomenon. It is by far the biggest single literary work known to man. Its vastness is aptly matched by the encyclopaedic nature of its contents and the universality of its appeal. The claim is traditionally made, and fully justified, that in matters pertaining to dharma (religion and ethics), artha (material progress and prosperity), kama (enjoyment of the pleasures of personal and social life), and moksa (spiritual emancipation), whatever is found in this epic may be found elsewhere; but what is not found in it will be impossible to find anywhere else.

The Mahabharata, as we know it today, is the outcome of a long process of addition, assimilation, expansion, revision, and redaction. Presumably, it originated as a bardic-historical poem called Jaya, which had the eventful Bharata war as its central theme. In the course of time, a large amount of material belonging to the literary tradition of the sutas (bards), which had been developing side by side with the mantra tradition embodied in the Vedic literature, was added to the historical poem, thereby transforming it into the epic Bharata. This transformation of Jaya into Bharata received added momentum from another and, from our point of view, more significant factor, the rise of Krsnite Hinduism. The protagonists of this religion realized that the bardic poem, which enjoyed wide currency, would serve as the most efficient vehicle for the propagation of their ideology. So they redacted the poem in such a way that the Bhagavad-Gita became the corner-stone of the new epic superstructure, with Krsna as its central character. Thus we find that this new literary product, Bharata, had derived its bardic-historical elements from the ancient suta tradition and its religio-ethical elements from Krsnite Hinduism, and upon this was gradually superimposed elements derived from Brahmanic learning and culture and from other elements of Hinduism. The result was that Bharata became the Mahabharata. Indeed, it is on account of the contributions of Krsnaism, Brahmanism, and Hinduism that the Mahabharata became a veritable treasure-house of religious beliefs and practices [1], [7].

There is also the Harivamsa which is traditionally regarded as a khilaparvan of the great epic. If the Mahabharata (with the Harivamsa) glorifies the Krsna incarnation, the other epic, the Ramayana, gives an account of the Rama incarnation. This incarnation is traditionally believed to have been earlier than the Krsna incarnation; composition of the Ramayana, however, which is laRigely the work of a single poet

named Valmiki, seems to have begun after that of the Mahabharata, but ended before the Mahabharata assumed its final form. The Ayodhya episode in the Ramayana probably has some historical basis; but with the exile of Rama, the theme of the poem is enlarged to epic proportions, and the prince of Ayodhya becomes transformed into an incarnation of the highest God. Cleverly interwoven with these two strands is a third, that of an agricultural myth. Compared with the Mahabharata, the Ramayana presents a more unitary structure; it is not too overloaded with extraneous sautic (bardic) material and is distinguished by several features of classical Sanskrit poetry. It has seven kandas—the entire seventh kanda evidently is a later interpolation. It contains several sections of religious significance, such as the Surya-stava (which is also called Aditya-hridaya-stotra) by Agastya and the Rama-stuti by Brahma (both in the Yuddha-kanda). Its principal religious appeal, however, springs from the idealized domestic and social virtues which its characters embody. Indeed, this appeal has, through the centuries, proved to be direct and sustained.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata represent the ethos of ancient India. The Ramayana, according to tradition, owes its origin to an extraordinary circumstance. A fowler's arrow killed one of a pair of curlews. Moved to pity at this tragic incident, the sage Valmiki cursed the fowler, but he did so in a verse which came out spontaneously from his lips. This poetical expression of profound grief is said to have been the first verse composed (in the epic period); and the sage, who became the author of the Ramayana, is called the adikavi, the first poet of the classical period of Sanskrit literature. Anandavardhana (ninth century), the famous rhetorician, analysing Valmiki's state of mind as he reacted to the pathetic sight of the bird being killed, is of the opinion that the experience had not only culminated in the utterance of the first verse, but also gave rise to the idea of rasa in poetry. The origin of the Mahabharata, according to tradition, is that it was penned by the elephant-headed deity Ganesa and dictated by sage Vyasa. The epics had come into existence long before the art of writing was known. Dawn the centuries they were transmitted orally through, mainly, two classes of people: the sutas (bards in the royal courts); and the kusilavas (travelling singers). Before they were committed to writing, the epic stories gathered many accretions; and even after they were written down, additions and alterations continued. The diverse nature of the changes made explains the great popularity of the epics throughout the length and breadth of India.

Though the epic stories are very old and some of them hark back to Vedic times, their present forms are of a much later date. It is generally believed that the Mahabharata had attained its present form by about the fourth century A.D. The Ramayana probably assumed its present shape a century or two earlier.

The Ramayana

Tradition places the Ramayana earlier than the Mahabharata. The nucleus of the Mahabharata may have been older than that of the Ramayana, but in their present forms the Ramayana appears to be the earlier work. The Ramayana is more ornate than the Mahabharata, more refined and sophisticated; the ballad style of the Mahabharata is not present here. The Ramayana is more or less a unified work. Much shorter than the Mahabharata, it does not show the jumble of diverse matters that is found there.

The main story of the Ramayana is briefly this: Dasaratha, king of Ayodhya, is about to install his eldest son, Rama, on the throne. Kaikeyi, Rama's step-mother, wants her own son Bharata to be crowned king, and Rama to be sent into exile for fourteen years. The old and infirm king, though reluctant, has to agree. Rama goes to live in the forest, accompanied by his consort, Sita, and his brother, Laksmana. The demon-king of Lanka, Ravana, abducts Sita. Rama, determined to rescue Sita, wages a dour war against Ravana who is ultimately vanquished and killed. Rama comes back to Ayodhya and assumes his position as king, with Sita as queen. The story of the genuine portion of the epic ends here. In the last Book, which is suspected by many modern scholars to be spurious, it is narrated that the people of Ayodhya speak ill of Rama for taking back Sita from Ravana's custody and Rama banishes her in deference to public opinion. Some historian believed that the Homeric story of Helen and the Trojan War exercised a deep influence on the Ramayana is not substantiated by reliable evidence. Some scholars, think that the epic was based on an ancient Buddhist legend of Rama, the Dasaratha Jataka. But it is possible that the tranquillity and mildness of Rama's character may have been, to some extent, due to the influence of Buddhism, which was extremely popular. As Sita can be traced to the Taittiriya Brahmana, the Rig-Veda, the Atharva-Veda, and some of the Grhya-Sutras, some zealous mythologists regard these as bearing the first germs of the story of the Ramayana.

Literary Characteristics

In the Ramayana, as compared with the Mahabharata, the art of poetry appears to have made great progress.

To a great extent it appears to develop consciously, for content is no longer the sole concern of the poet; he is not a little concerned with form too. The poet is an adept in characterization, and this is displayed in a series of unparalleled portraits: Rama's supreme sacrifice for the sake of his father; Laksmana's obedience to his elder brother, at whose command he acts even against his conscience; the self-abnegation of Bharata in abjuring royal comforts during the absence of Rama; and the unflinching loyalty of Hanuman to his master at the cost of his personal comfort and even at the risk of life. Across the sea, in Lanka, we find Ravana, of tremendous physical and mental vigour, falling a victim to the frailties fleh is heir to. Among the women, Sita is the glowing example of chastity and highmindedness, the paragon of all domestic virtues. She spurns the pleasures of the royal palace in order to follow her husband and be with him in his perilous forest-life.

Amidst the various temptations held out to her by Ravana, who seeks her love, her fidelity to her husband is unshaken. King Rama banishes her for no fault on her part; and, instead of accusing her husband, she accepts him decree without a word of protest, taking it as a decree of her own destiny Kaikeyi, the typically designing and jealous queen, prevails upon Dasaratha, her husband, to banish Rama and install Bharata on the throne. She gains her objective, but loses the respect of her noble son. The author of the Ramayana has thus presented a magnificent life-gallery throbbing with profound human appeal, and in the centre of this gallery the character of Rami shines and shines almost like the Pole Star. He is a model son, husband, brother, king, warrior, and man. Though occasionally dazzled by flashes from his superhuman nature, we are not 'blinded or bewildered' by them.

The use of simile and imagery in the Ramayana is superb. King Dasaratha, overwhelmed with grief, is compared to the sun under eclipse, to fire covered by ashes, to a lake the water of which has dried up and so on. In the Asoka grove, Hanuman catches a glimpse of the emaciated Sita. She looks, he thinks, like the thin line of the crescent, the flame enveloped in smoke, a lotus destroyed by the frost. The white moon moving in the sky is like a swan swimming in the blue waters. Held in the clutches of the dreaded Ravana, Sita warns him that temporarily he may overpower her, but he cannot subdue her just as a fly can swallow clarified butter but cannot assimilate it. The employment of other figures of speech too has been done with a masterly skill and effortless ease. The poet's description of nature is also masterly.

The Ramayana, unlike the Mahabharata, brings out the close relationship between external nature and internal nature expressed in the minds and moods of people. There is, moreover, suggestiveness in the picture of nature drawn by the author of the Ramayana. In the Mahabharata, descriptions are merely objective, but here the poet brings personal experience or his own interpretation to bear upon his depiction of nature. Unlike the other epic, the Ramayana creates an idyll out of nature and produces a lyrical effect. The sad prospect of Rama's going into exile casts a shadow of gloom not only on the minds of the people, but also on nature all around. Various sentiments have been introduced, into the epic, but the main sentiment is the heroic. At the same time, pathetic scenes are described with - masterly skill. Dasaratha broken down by the separation from his dearest son, Rama; the city of Ayodhya bereft of Rama; Rama separated from his beloved; Sita pining in alien surroundings-these scenes are so poignantly described that the appreciative reader has to shed tears. The author's capacity to delineate the fierce and the cruel is shown in his description of a grim battle, or of Bharata's awful dream [8], [9].

Although ornate, the style of the epic is racy, and not pedantic. In form and content it is a very near approach to the mahakavya, as defined in poetics. It is thus a precursor of the vast and varied classical kavya literature in Sanskrit. The epic is a kavya of the romantic type, the element of romance being most marked in the Sundara-kanda. The language is simple, and yet dignified, and does not indicate that straining after literary exercise which characterizes some later poetical works, especially those of the decadent age. The author of the epic appears to have been the first poet to adapt anustubh, the Vedic metre, to later Sanskrit literature, although with certain modifications. Valmiki thus may aptly be described as the father of classical Sanskrit poetry. Some other scholars consider the Rama story to be allegorical. Rama, they hold, symbolizes Aryan culture, and his expedition against Ravana represents the cultural domination of the southern regions by the Aryans.

Artistic Merit

In the view of some Western critics, the Ramayana as a piece of literary art suffers from some defects, such as diffuseness, frequent use of hyperboles, and exaggerations. Besides, verbiage, hyperbole, exaggeration, diffuseness, etc. are natural in most poetical literature. The Ramayana, therefore, could not be an exception. In fact, most of the artistic drawbacks of the Ramayana are attributable to the later versifiers

who added to, and altered the original production by Valmiki. The Ramayana, indeed, is a marvellous piece of art which India can legitimately be proud of. In the whole range of Sanskrit literature, there are very few poems more charming than this one by the adikavi. 'The classical purity, clearness, and simplicity of its style, the exquisite touches of true poetic feeling with which it abounds, its graphic descriptions of heroic incidents and nature's grandest scenes, the deep acquaintance it displays with the conflicting workings and most refined emotions of the human heart, all entitle it to rank among the most beautiful compositions that have appeared at any period or in any country.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Sruta-Sutras, Grhya-Sutras, and Dharma-Sutras form an integral part of the ancient Indian textual tradition, known as the Sutra literature. These texts provide invaluable insights into various aspects of Vedic rituals, domestic ceremonies, and social and ethical principles. The Sruta-Sutras focus on the elaborate rituals and sacrifices prescribed in the Vedic tradition. They outline the intricate procedures, mantras, and symbolism associated with these rituals, which were performed by the priestly class known as the Brahmins. The Sruta-Sutras provide a comprehensive guide for conducting these rituals in accordance with precise rules and regulations. The Grhya-Sutras, on the other hand, deal with household rituals and ceremonies. They provide instructions for various domestic rituals, including birth ceremonies, marriage rituals, and funeral rites. The Grhya-Sutras elucidate the social and religious customs that governed family life in ancient India and offer insights into the values, responsibilities, and ethical conduct expected of individuals within the household. The Dharma-Sutras focus on moral and ethical principles, providing guidance for righteous conduct and social order. They outline the duties and responsibilities of individuals belonging to different social classes (varnas) and stages of life (ashramas). The Dharma-Sutras delve into topics such as justice, governance, marriage, inheritance, and the preservation of social harmony.

These sutras were composed by ancient scholars known as rishis or sages and served as concise guides for practitioners and students of Vedic traditions and social codes. They played a crucial role in preserving and transmitting the knowledge, rituals, and ethical values of ancient Indian society. The Sruta-Sutras, Grhya-Sutras, and Dharma-Sutras collectively

represent an invaluable resource for understanding the religious, cultural, and social fabric of ancient India. They provide a glimpse into the intricacies of Vedic rituals, domestic life, and the moral principles that guided individuals and society as a whole. These texts continue to be studied and revered for their profound insights into ancient Indian wisdom and the principles that shaped the civilization. In the Sruta-Sutras, Grhya-Sutras, and Dharma-Sutras stand as significant contributions to the vast body of ancient Indian literature. Their teachings and guidelines have left a lasting impact on Hindu traditions, social customs, and ethical values, ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage and the perpetuation of ancient wisdom through generations.

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An Overview on the Mahabharata

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ABSTRACT: *The Mahabharata, one of the longest epic poems in the world, holds immense significance in the cultural, religious, and literary traditions of India. This study provides an overview of the Mahabharata, highlighting its origins, key themes, and enduring impact. The Mahabharata is believed to have been composed around 400 BCE to 400 CE, although its oral tradition predates its written form. The epic is attributed to the sage Vyasa and comprises over 100,000 verses divided into 18 books or sections known as parvas. It narrates the epic saga of the Kurukshetra war between two factions of a royal family, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. At its core, the Mahabharata explores complex moral and philosophical dilemmas, human relationships, and the eternal struggle between righteousness (dharma) and unrighteousness (adharma). It weaves together intricate subplots, diverse characters, and profound dialogues that delve into themes of duty, honor, power, love, sacrifice, and the consequences of one's actions. The epic centers on the Pandava brothers Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva and their cousins, the Kauravas, led by the ambitious Duryodhana. The narrative unfolds through a multitude of interwoven stories, including the adventures of Krishna, the divine incarnation, and the philosophical teachings of the Bhagavad Gita.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

The kernel of the Mahabharata story is briefly this: The Pandavas, headed by Yudhishthira, and the Kauravas, headed by Duryodhana, descended from common ancestors. Duryodhana becomes jealous and, coveting the crown invites Yudhishthira to a game of dice. As the result of a rash wager, Yudhishthira loses his kingdom to Duryodhana and is then forced to go into exile, together with his brothers and Draupadi, the common consort of the Pandavas, for twelve years, followed by one year during which they must live incognito. But even when the stipulated period is over, Duryodhana refuses to give even a fraction of his territory to Yudhishthira, the rightful owner. A grim battle ensues. The Kauravas are routed and ruined, and the Pandavas regain their lost kingdom [1], [2].

Literary Characteristics

The Mahabharata has been characterized as a 'whole literature', a 'repertory of the whole of the old bard poetry of ancient India'. The nucleus of the epic, as we have seen, is simple, but around this nucleus has gathered a diverse mass of material dealing with innumerable topics-legendary, didactic, ethical, heroic, aesthetic, philosophical, political, and so on. Of the legends, some are edifying and testify to the great literary skill of the author. This may be seen, for example, in the legends of Nala and Damayanti, of Savitri and Satyawati, of Duryodhana and Sakuntala.

Even a casual reader is struck by the wealth of characters in the epic, and the way they have been so beautifully portrayed. The composer is obviously a keen observer of human nature, and he can depict a character with masterly skill. He knows the value of contrast, for he shows how a good character shines brighter against a bad one. Each of the five Pandava brothers has his own distinct traits of character. Yudhishthira, the eldest, never departs from the age-old path of virtue, however great his privation or humiliation, and however grave the provocation may be. Unflinching in his devotion to dharma, he has an unshaken faith that Dharma must ultimately triumph [3], [4]. Arjuna is the warrior par excellence. Bhima, of tremendous physical vigour, is rather blunt and impatient; nevertheless, he is obedient to his eldest brother when he counsels patience and restraint. Nakula and Sahadeva are extremely loyal to their brothers and skilled in sword-exercise. Duryodhana is a designing and ambitious person. But he is well-versed in politics and statecraft and also in the art of warfare. Materialistic in outlook, he is concerned mainly with artha (wealth) and kama (desire), and does not bother himself about dharma [5]. He thus serves as an excellent foil to Yudhishthira. Karna, the faithful friend of Duryodhana, is a self-made man. Though contemptuously referred to as the 'son of a charioteer', he is a master of his craft, and in the art of warfare he can be matched only with Arjuna. His fidelity to the Kauravas, even after he learned of his close kinship

with the Pandavas, is ideal. His charity even at tremendous personal sacrifice is proverbial. The suffering caused by their enemies rouses the righteousness of Draupadi, the wife of the five Pandavas. Her speech to spur the quid Yudhisthira to action is fiery and imbued with the high Ksatriya spirit. Gandhari, the mother of the Kauravas and wife of the blind Dhrtarastra, is similarly forthright. She condemns Dhrtarastra as the one who is fully responsible for the rout and ruin of the Kauravas, thus clearly showing that she is not blinded by attachment to her husband or by affection for her sons. Her judgment is impartial and sound. Damayanti and Savitri are models of chastity, ever solicitous of the welfare of their husbands for whose well-being no sacrifice is too great for them.

The dominant sentiment in the Mahabharata is the heroic, but here too the pathetic sentiment is equally noteworthy. The battlefield is littered with corpses, some of them mutilated, others changed beyond recognition; the air is rent by the frantic wails of the bereaved women, in particular, of the aged queen-mother Gandhari, and the heart-rending laments of Dhrtarastra. Fate has afflicted him with blindness, and now, a forlorn father, he is doubly helpless. Such scenes cannot but draw forth the tears of the reader. The lament of Gandhari, is in fact a masterpiece of elegiac poetry. The epic reveals the poet's mastery of the art of description. The battlescenes appear most vividly before our inward eye. The accounts of the forest life led by the Pandavas, the penances performed by Arjuna, the svayamvara, self-choice, of Draupadi and many other such scenes are all equally graphic. The description of Dvaitavana with its wealth of flowers and foliage, birds and beasts, and its hermitages, reveals the poet's eye for colour and his ear for music, and before the mind's eye of the reader it presents an unforgettable idyll. The poet of the epic is, however, as aware of the violent aspects of nature as of the pleasant. A most realistic picture is presented of the devastating storm that confronted the Pandavas on their way to Mount Gandhamadana: the reader vividly sees the ravages caused by the storm as the rivers swell with the heavy rain.

In general, the style is effortless. Unlike the writers of Sanskrit poems of the post-Kalidasa period, particularly of the decadent period, the composer of the epic is concerned more with matter than with manner. The long compounds, the difficult words, and the recondite allusions which disfigure the poetry of the age of decadence, are absent here. The epic shows spontaneous use of figures of speech. The flowing

ballad style of the epic conjures up the age of simplicity and reflects its popular character. Interest is also created by a mass of legends and the occasional inclusion of supernatural elements, such as the appearance of gods and their direct intervention in human affairs. The epic contains beautiful imagery too. The mighty tree entwined by clusters of flowering creepers under which Yudhisthira with his brothers gathered, immediately reminds the poet of a huge mountain surrounded by leviathan elephants. Even in the philosophical Bhagavad-Gita there are flashes of good imagery. Krsna's mouth is wide agape, and as the people enter into it, they are fancied as insects jumping into a burning flame to meet with certain doom. Again, the heroes of the world rushing into his flaming jaws are seen as so many currents of rivers flowing to merge into the ocean. The effulgence of Visvarupa (the Lord's universal form) assumed by Krsna standing before the perplexed Arjuna, is conceived as the brilliant radiance of a thousand suns rising simultaneously. The description of the ocean in the Adipatoan is a marvellously picturesque one. It is rich in detail, in colour, and in vividness. The imaginative touch also is very captivating.

Some scholars have tried to find an allegory in the Mahabharata. One has suggested that the Pandavas symbolize the seasons, and Draupadi (Krsna) the dark earth possessed by five successive seasons. At times the seasons lose their wealth of lustre, as in the disastrous game of dice with Duryodhana when Krsna is left with only a single garment, that is, the earth becomes denuded in winter. Another critic finds in Pandu (literally pale or white) the name of a royal family of a white race that migrated into India from the north and was afterwards known as Arjuna (literally white). According to yet another scholar, the epic story is an account of the relationship and the conflict among the different systems of Hindu philosophy and religion. The epic has been a veritable fount at which the people of India and indeed, of all climes and times, have drunk deep in seeking to quench their insatiable thirst for the truth. The key to the universal popularity of the epic seems to lie in the fact that it has invaluable treasure to offer on three planes: the mundane, the ethical, and the metaphysical.

On the mundane plane, it is a work of great art, transporting the reader to a new world vivified by intense imagination and masterly delineation. On the ethical plane, we find in it the eternal conflict between dharma and adharma, with, dharma having temporary reverses but with the ultimate and inevitable triumph of good over evil. The Bhagavad-Gita, the

quintessence of the ethical teaching of the epic, teaches the philosophy of disinterested action, a philosophy highly prized by the wise of all ages and all lands. It also teaches us to practise samatva (equipoise) which, indeed, is the essence of Toga. On the metaphysical plane, the epic demonstrates the ultimate Truth. And yet, in between all this, we find simple incidents which declare that the secret of the universal popularity of the epic is its tremendous human appeal-the actions of such noble characters as Yudhishthira and Karna, the exhortation of the hero-mother Vidula to her cowardly son Sanjaya to act like a true Ksatriya, or the sage counsel of Vidura to face the challenges of life with aplomb and dignity [6].

DISCUSSION

Artistic Merit

The Mahabharata is not a homogeneous and unified work of art. It is as a whole, a literary monster containing so many and so multifarious things. It has also been characterized as a 'jungle of poetry'. All this is true, yet it is a fact that the epic is 'more suited than any other book to afford us an insight into the deepest depths of the soul of the Indian people. The Brahmanas utilized this popular epic as a medium for the propagation of their ideas among the people, ideas that were religious, philosophical, moral and ethical, political and economic. In doing this, they incorporated a mass of material, including legends and myths, into the corpus of the epic. Thus from the earliest times the epic literature did not emerge as an entity distinct from philosophy and moral and religious teaching. This accounts for the fact that, like the Rig-Veda and the Upanisads, the Mahabharata contains beautiful poetry juxtaposed with philosophical or other topics which are, perhaps, to the ordinary reader, insipid and jejune. In the course of time, when the Buddhists assumed political power, they seized upon the popular Mahabharata as a convenient tool for the dissemination of their doctrines and moral principles. The Jains, too, did not lose the opportunity to spread their doctrines among the masses through the framework of this popular epic. The epic thus underwent changes which have made it a medley of miscellaneous matters. It is not, however, amorphous, nor is it meaningless. It has the single purpose of upholding the glory of dharma and proclaiming the eternal value of peace and tranquillity in society.

While parts of the Mahabharata contain profound wisdom and at the same time testify to the artistic skill of the composer, there are other portions which, as

pieces of literature, are pedestrian. This phenomenon prompted Winternitz- to say that if one has to believe that the epic is by one and the same hand, then it must be presumed that the author was at once a sage and an idiot, a finished writer and a wretched scribbler. But modern research has proved that the Mahabharata is not one single poetic production at all; it is a literary complex. So the presence of portions of varying merits in one and the same work is not surprising. It is not fair to say that the Mahabharata began as a simple epic but ended in 'monstrous chaos' [7].

Ever since human beings have invented scripts, writing has reflected the culture, lifestyle, society and the polity of contemporary society. Sanskrit is the most ancient language of our country. It is one of the twenty-two languages listed in the Indian Constitution. The literature in Sanskrit is vast, beginning with the most ancient thought embodied in the Rig Veda, the oldest literary heritage of mankind. Sanskrit is perhaps the only language that transcended the barriers of regions and boundaries. The Vedas are the earliest known literature in India. The Vedas were written in Sanskrit and were handed down orally from one generation to the other. The preservation of the Vedas till today is one of our most remarkable achievements. The word upanishad is interpreted variously. It is made to correspond with the word upasana which is understood to mean either worship or profound knowledge [8]. The Upanisads are also called the Vedanta, because they represent the concluding portion of the apauruseya Veda or Sruti, or the final stage in Vedic instruction, or the ultimate end and aim of the teachings of the Veda.

Vedangas, present an attempt to systematize various aspects of that knowledge which are necessary for understanding the Vedic texts. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata represent the ethos of ancient India. Tradition places the Ramayana earlier than the Mahabharata. The nucleus of the Mahabharata may have been older than that of the Ramayana, but in their present forms the Ramayana appears to be the earlier work. The Puranas are a very important branch, of the Hindu sacred literature. They enable us to know the true import of the ethos, philosophy, and religion of the Vedas. They clothe with flesh and blood the bony framework of the Dharma-Sutras and the Dharma-Sastras. The Puranas relate to the whole of India so far as the historical portion therein is concerned and to the whole world so far as their ethical, philosophical, and religious portions are concerned. We also have a large body of books dealing with various sciences, law, medicine and grammar. Kautilya's Arthashastra is an

important treatise of the Mauryan times. It reflects the state of society and economy at that time and provides rich material for the study of ancient Indian polity and economy. The works of Bhasa, Shudraka, Kalidasa and Banabhatta provided us with glimpses of the social and cultural life of northern and central India in times of the Guptas and Harsha. The Gupta period also saw the development of Sanskrit grammar based on the works of Panini and Patanjali [9].

CONCLUSION

The Mahabharata is not just a historical account but a repository of cultural and religious knowledge. It contains detailed descriptions of ancient Indian customs, rituals, and societal norms, providing insights into the fabric of ancient Indian civilization. The epic also includes profound discourses on spirituality, ethics, and the pursuit of truth. Over the centuries, the Mahabharata has influenced countless literary, artistic, and performing arts traditions in India and beyond. It has been adapted into various languages, theatre performances, dance forms, and visual art forms, perpetuating its timeless wisdom and captivating narratives. Furthermore, the Mahabharata has transcended religious boundaries, resonating with people of diverse faiths and philosophical backgrounds. Its teachings on morality, self-realization, and the complexities of human nature continue to hold relevance in contemporary society, fostering discussions on ethics, governance, and the pursuit of righteousness. In conclusion, the Mahabharata stands as a monumental epic that encapsulates the essence of Indian civilization, offering a profound exploration of human virtues, flaws, and the intricate workings of destiny. Its timeless wisdom and rich narrative tapestry continue to captivate readers, inspiring introspection, moral contemplation, and a deeper understanding of the human condition. The epic's enduring legacy as a cultural treasure and a profound source of spiritual and philosophical wisdom makes it an invaluable

contribution to the world's literary and cultural heritage.

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History of Buddhist and Jain Literature: Pali, Prakrit and Sanskrit, Sangama Literature & Odia Literature

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ABSTRACT: *The history of Buddhist and Jain literature encompasses a rich tradition of texts composed in various languages, including Pali, Prakrit, Sanskrit, Sangama literature, and Odia literature. This abstract provides an overview of the evolution and significance of these literary traditions within the broader context of Buddhist and Jain thought. Pali, as a language, became closely associated with early Buddhist literature. The Pali Canon, also known as the Tipitaka, is a vast collection of scriptures that includes discourses attributed to the Buddha, as well as commentaries and treatises. These texts provide insights into the teachings, principles, and practices of Buddhism. The Pali Canon played a crucial role in preserving and disseminating the early Buddhist doctrines. Prakrit, a group of vernacular languages derived from Sanskrit, served as the medium for a substantial amount of Jain literature. The Jain Agamas, comprising the canonical scriptures of Jainism, were composed in various Prakrit dialects. These texts expound on Jain philosophy, ethics, and the path to liberation (moksha). They contain narratives of the lives of Tirthankaras (spiritual leaders), philosophical dialogues, and moral precepts. Sanskrit, the classical language of ancient India played a pivotal role in the development of both Buddhist and Jain literature. Many significant Buddhist and Jain texts, including commentaries and philosophical treatises, were composed in Sanskrit. These works delve into intricate metaphysical concepts, epistemology, logic, and ethical teachings.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

The religious books of the Jains and the Buddhists refer to historical persons or incidents. The earliest Buddhist works were written in Pali, which was spoken in Magadha and South Bihar. The Buddhist works can be divided into the canonical and the non-canonical. The canonical literature is best represented by the "Tripitakas", that is, three baskets Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka. Vinaya Pitaka deals with rules and regulations of daily life. Sutta Pitaka contains dialogues and discourses on morality and deals with Dharma while Abhidhamma Pitaka deals with philosophy and metaphysics. It includes discourses on various subjects such as ethics, psychology, theories of knowledge and metaphysical problems.

The non-canonical literature is best represented by the Jatakas. Jatakas are the most interesting stories on the previous births of the Buddha. It was believed that before he was finally born as Gautama, the Buddha practising Dharma passed through more than 550 births, in many cases even in the form of animals. Each birth story is called a Jataka. The Jatakas throw

invaluable light on the social and economic conditions ranging from the sixth century BC to the second century BC. They also make incidental reference to political events in the age of the Buddha.

The Jain texts were written in Prakrit and were finally compiled in the sixth century AD in Valabhi in Gujarat. The important works are known as Angas, Upangas, Prakirnas, Chhedab Sutras and Malasutras. Among the important Jain scholars, reference may be made to Haribhadra Suri, (eighth century AD) and Hemchandra Suri, (twelfth century AD). Jainism helped in the growth of a rich literature comprising poetry, philosophy and grammar. These works contain many passages which help us to reconstruct the political history of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The Jain texts refer repeatedly to trade and traders [1], [2].

Literature of Jainism

Jaina literature begins with the last of the Tirthankaras, Mahavira, who reorganized the old Nirgrantha sect and revitalized its moral and religious zeal and activities. He preached his faith of ahimsa (non-violence or harmlessness) and self-purification to the people in their own language which was not

Sanskrit, but Prakrit. The form of Prakrit which he is said to have used was Ardha- Magadhi, by which was meant a language that was not pure Magadhi but partook of its nature.

Twelve Angas

Mahavira's teachings were arranged in twelve Angas (parts) by his disciples. These Angas formed the earliest literature on Jainism, Acaranga laid down rules of discipline for the monks, Sutakrtanga contained further injunctions for the monks regarding what was suitable or unsuitable for them and how they should safeguard their vows. It also gave an exposition of the tenets and dogmas of other faiths, Sthananga listed in numerical order, categories of knowledge pertaining to the realities of nature, Samavayanga classified objects in accordance with similarities of time, place, number, and so on, Vyakhya-prajnapiti or Bkagavat explained the realities of life and nature in the form of a catechism, Jnatrdhamakatha contained hints regarding religious preaching as well as stories and anecdotes calculated to carry moral conviction, Upasakadhyayana or Upasaka-dasaka was meant to serve as a religious code for householders, Antakrddasaka gave accounts of ten saints who attained salvation after immense suffering, Anuttaraupapatika contained accounts of ten saints who had gone to the highest heaven after enduring intense persecution, Prsnna-vyakarana contained accounts and episodes for the refutation of opposite views, establishment of one's own faith, promotion of holy deeds, and prevention of evil, Vipaka-Sutra explained how virtue was rewarded and evil punished and finally the Drstivada included the five sections namely Parikarmani contained tracts describing the moon, the sun, Jambudvipa, other islands and seas, as well as living beings and nonliving matter, Sutra gave an account of various tenets and philosophies numbering no less than 363, Prathamanyoga recounted ancient history and narrated the lives of great kings and saints. Purvagata dealt with the problems of birth, death, and continuity.

The Digambara Tradition

This comprehensive collection of practically the whole knowledge of the times, secular as well as religious, could not survive long in its original form. According to the Digambara Jains, the whole canon was preserved for only 62 years after Mahavira that is up to the eighth successor, Bhadrabahu. After that, portions gradually began to be lost. So, after 683 years from the nirvana of Mahavira, what was known to the Acaryas (teachers) was only fragmentary. It was only

the knowledge of a few portions of the Purvagata or Parvas that was imparted at Girinagara in Kathiawar by Dharasena to his pupils Puspadanta and Bhutabali who, on the basis of it, wrote the Satkhandagama in the sutra form during the first or second century A.D. The Satkhandagamas, therefore is the earliest available religious literature amongst the Digambaras. It is for them the supreme authority for the teachings of Mahavira [3].

The Svetambara Tradition

The literary tradition of the Svetambara Jains is, however, different. They agree with the Digambara view so far as the continuity of the whole canon up to Bhadrabahu is concerned. The Svetambaras say that after Bhadrabahu had migrated with a host of his adherents to the South on account of a famine, the monks who remained in Magadha met in a Council at Pataliputra, under the leadership of Sthulabhadra. There a compilation was made of the eleven Angas together with the remnants of the twelfth. This was the first attempt to systematize the Jaina Agama. But in the course of time, the canon became disorderly. Therefore, the monks met once again at Valabhi in Gujarat under the presidency of Devarddhi Ksamasramana in the middle of the fifth century A.D. All the sacred texts available today were collected, systematized, redacted and committed to writing by this Council. They are as follows: The eleven Angas named above, twelve Upangas, Ten Prakirnas, Six Cheda-Sutras, two Culika-Sutras, and four Mula-Sutras.

It is therefore evident that books written up to the time of the Valabhi Conference were included in the canon. Perhaps some later works were also included in the Agama as is shown by the enlargement of the list up to fifty. But there is no doubt about a good deal of the material in the Agama texts being genuinely old as is proved by the absence of any reference to Greek astronomy and the presence of statements which are not altogether favourable to the Svetambara creed, such as Mahavira's emphasis on nakedness.

The Jaina Canon: An Estimate

The language of these texts is called arsa by which is meant Ardha-Magadhi. But it is not uniform in all the texts. The language of the Angas and a few other texts, such as the Uttaradhyayana, is evidently older and amongst them the Acaranga shows still more archaic forms. The language of the verses generally shows tendencies of an earlier age also. On the whole, the language of this Agama does not conform fully to the characteristics of any of the Prakrits described by the

grammarians; but it shares something with each of them. Though the contents are quite varied and cover a wide range of human knowledge conceived in those days, the subject-matter of this canonical literature is mainly the ascetic practices of the followers of Mahavira. As such, it is essentially didactic, dominated by the supreme ethical principle of ahimsa. But, subject to that, there is a good deal of poetry and philosophy as well as valuable information about contemporary thought and social history including biographical details of Parsvanatha, Mahavira, and their contemporaries. Many narrative pieces, such as those found in the Uttaradhyayana, are interesting and instructive and remind one of the personalities and events in the Upanisads and the Pali texts. From the historical point of view, the life of Mahavira in the Acaranga, information about his predecessors and contemporaries in the Vyakhyaprajnapati or Bhagavati and the Upasakardasaka, about his successors in the Kalpa-Sutra, and about monachism practised in the days of Mahavira in eastern India in Dasa-vaikalika are all very valuable [4].

DISCUSSION

The Commentaries on the Jaina Canon

A vast literature of commentaries has grown round the Agamas themselves. The earliest of these works are the niryuktis, attributed to Bhadrabahu. They explain the topics systematically in Prakrit verse, and elaborate them by narrating legends and episodes. Ten of these works are available. Then, there are the bhasyas similarly composed in Prakrit verse. These, in some cases, have been so intermingled with the niryuktis that it is now difficult to separate them. The bhasyas carry the systematization and elaboration further. These texts, of which there are eleven available, are mostly anonymous. The elaborate bhasya on the Avasyaka-niryukti is, however, attributed to Jinabhadra Ksamarsamana and that on the Kalpa-Sutra to Sanghadasagani. The curnis, of which twenty texts are available, are prose glosses with a curious admixture of Prakrit and Sanskrit. Some of them contain valuable historical information as well. The Avasyaka-curni, for example, makes mention of a flood in Sravasti, thirteen years after Mahavira's enlightenment. The Nisitha-curni contains a reference to Kalakacarya who invited a foreigner to invade Ujjain. All the curnis are indiscriminately ascribed to Jinadasagani.

The last strata of the commentary literature consist of tikas which carry the expository and illustrative process to its logical conclusion. They are written in

Sanskrit retaining, in many cases, the Prakrit narratives in their original form. The well-known tika writers are Haribhadra, Silanka, fSanti Suri, Devendra alias Nemicandra, Abhayadeva, Dronacarya, Maladharin Hemacandra, Malayagiri, Ksemakirti, Vijayavimala, Santicandra, and Samayasundara. Their activities were spread over a period of 1,100 years between the sixth and seventeenth centuries. A number of other forms of commentaries called dipikas, vrttis, and aoaciirnis are also extant.

The next commentary on it is Tattvartha-raja-varttika of Akalanka (eighth century) which offers more detailed explanations of the sutras, as well as of the important statements of Pujiyapada. The Tattvartha-sloka-varttika of Vidyanandin (ninth century) gives expositions in verse and makes valuable clarifications. For yogic practices, the Jnanarava of Subhacandra and the Yogasastra of Hemacandra are valuable guides, while the Ratna-karanda-sravakacara is more popular amongst the laity. Jaina Sanskrit literature is considerably enriched by a series of works on Nyaya (logic) begun by Samantabhadra and Siddhasena Divakara and followed up by Akalanka, Vidyanandin, Prabhacandra, Manikyanandin, Hemacama, and many others [4], [5].

Jaina Narrative Literature in Sanskrit and Prakrit

The narrative literature of Jainism has mostly as its subject-matter the life of one or more of its sixty-three great men. These are the twenty-four Tirthankaras, twelve Cakravartins, nine Baladevas, nine Narayanas, and nine Prati-Narayanas. In the lives of the Tirthankaras the five auspicious events (kalyanaka) namely, conception, birth, renunciation, enlightenment, and salvation, receive special attention from the poets. The conquest of the six sub-divisions of Bharata- khanda is the main achievement of the Cakravartins. The Baladevas are charged with the special responsibility of getting rid of the tyrants of their times, the Prati-Narayanas, with the assistance of the Narayanas. They form triples. Rama, Laksmana, and Ravana form one triple while Balarama, Krsna, and Jarasandha form another, these two triples being the last of these nine triples; it is they who, next to the Tirthankaras, have inspired most of the narrative poetry. The narration as a rule begins in the saintly assembly of Lord Mahavira with a query from Srenika, the king of Magadha, and the reply is given by the chief disciple of the Tirthankara, namely, Gautama. A rich literature of this kind is found, written in Prakrit and Sanskrit as well as in Apabhramsa.

The earliest epic available is the Paumacariya of Vimala Suri, which gives the Jaina version of the

Ramayana. It has marked differences from the work of Valmiki which was, no doubt, known to the author. The language is chaste Maharastri Prakrit and the style is fluent and occasionally ornate. Just as Valmiki is the adikabi of Sanskrit, Vimala Suri may be called the pioneer of Prakrit kavya (poetry). According to the author's own statement, the work was produced 530 years after Mahavira's nirvana that is, at the beginning of the first century A.D. The Padma-carita of Ravisena (seventh century) in Sanskrit follows closely Vimala Suri's work, and the same epic is beautifully rendered in Apabhramsa by Svayambhu (eighth century), and later on by Raidhu. The linguistic interest and poetic charm of the Apabhramsa works are remarkable as they set the model for the earliest epics of Jayasi and Tulasidasa in Hindi [6], [7].

Jinasena's HarivamSSa Purana (eighth century) is the earliest Jaina epic on the subject of the Mahabharata, the chief heroes being the twenty-second Tirthankara Neminatha and his cousin Krsna Narayana. The Apabhramsa version of it is beautified by the genius of Svayambhu and his later followers, Dhavala and Yasahkirti. The most comprehensive work, and again the earliest of its kind, is the Mahapurana of Jinasena and Gunabhadra (ninth century). The first part of it, called the Adipurana, ends with the nirvana of the first Tirthankara, Adinatha or Rsabhadeva, while the second part, called Uttarapurana, narrates the lives of the rest of the Tirthankaras, and the remaining salakapurusas. The work of Jinasena may be called the Jaina encyclopaedia. It enlightens its readers on almost every topic regarding religion, philosophy, morals, and rituals. The philosophical knowledge of the author is demonstrated by his commentary, the Jayadhavala, and his poetic ability is evinced by his Parsvabhyudaya-kavya in which he has transformed the lyrical poem Meghaduta by Kalidasa into an equally charming epic on the life of the twenty-third Tirthankara. This whole Mahapurana has been rendered into Apabhramsa with commensurate skill and in charming style by Puspadanta in his Tisatthimahapurisa-gunalankdra (tenth century). Another Sanskrit- version of it is found in the Trisasti-Mahapurusa-carita of Hemacandra which again has a charm of its own. Its historical value is enhanced by the additional section called the Parsistaparvan or Sthaviravali-carita which gives valuable information about the Jaina community after Mahavira's nirvana [8], [9].

CONCLUSION

The Sangama literature, emerging in the Tamil region of South India encompasses a collection of texts composed by both Buddhist and Jain authors. These works reflect a unique synthesis of Tamil culture and Buddhist/Jain ideologies. Sangama literature includes poems, narratives, didactic works, and philosophical treatises that explore a wide range of topics, such as love, ethics, and spiritual realization. Odia literature, originating in the eastern region of India has been deeply influenced by Buddhist and Jain thought. Odia literature encompasses a diverse range of works, including devotional poetry, narratives, and philosophical treatises. These texts showcase the interplay between Odia cultural traditions and Buddhist/Jain philosophical concepts, enriching the literary and spiritual landscape of the region. The Buddhist and Jain literary traditions have had a profound impact on the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of South Asia. These texts have shaped the philosophical discourse, religious practices, and social values within their respective traditions. They have also contributed to the broader literary heritage of India influencing subsequent generations of scholars, poets, and thinkers.

In conclusion, the history of Buddhist and Jain literature encompasses a vast and diverse body of texts composed in languages such as Pali, Prakrit, Sanskrit, Sangama literature, and Odia literature. These literary traditions have played a crucial role in preserving and propagating the teachings and philosophies of Buddhism and Jainism, while also contributing to the broader literary and intellectual heritage of India. The insights contained within these texts continue to inspire and enlighten scholars, practitioners, and enthusiasts alike, fostering a deeper understanding of Buddhist and Jain thought and their cultural impact.

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Gandhara School, Mathura School of Art; Architecture: Hindu Temple Architecture, Medieval Architecture and Colonial Architecture

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ABSTRACT: This study provides an overview of various schools of art and architectural styles in India including the Gandhara School, Mathura School, Hindu Temple Architecture, Buddhist Architecture, Medieval Architecture, and Colonial Architecture. It highlights their distinctive characteristics, historical contexts, and cultural significance. The Gandhara School, flourishing in the Gandhara region (present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan) from the 1st century BCE to the 5th century CE, blended Greek and Indian artistic influences. This school of art produced exquisite sculptures depicting Buddhist and Hindu deities, characterized by naturalistic Greek-inspired features combined with traditional Indian iconography. The Mathura School, originating in the ancient city of Mathura in northern India developed around the same time as the Gandhara School. The Mathura School predominantly focused on the representation of Hindu deities, producing sculptures with distinct regional characteristics. The art of the Mathura School emphasized the emotive expressions and sensuous features of the deities. Hindu Temple Architecture evolved over centuries, showcasing remarkable diversity across different regions of India. It encompasses various architectural styles, such as the Nagara and Dravidian styles. Nagara-style temples, prevalent in North India feature towering spires (shikharas) and intricate carvings. Dravidian-style temples, prominent in South India exhibit grand entrances (gopurams) and elaborate sculptures. Buddhist Architecture encompasses a wide range of structures, including stupas, monasteries, and rock-cut caves. These architectural forms developed during different periods and regions in India showcasing distinctive features. The Great Stupa of Sanchi, the rock-cut caves of Ajanta and Ellora, and the monastic complexes of Nalanda are notable examples of Buddhist architecture.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

At times it becomes very important to be reminded that we are that civilization which has spanned at least 4,500 years and which has left its impact on nearly everything in our lives and society. There are 26 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India. This is less than six other countries. Is this not a tangible proof of the creative genius of this ancient land, people, and also of the gifts bestowed on it by nature? Be it the Bhimbetka's pre historic rock art at one end or the innumerable palaces, mosques, temples, gurudwaras, churches or tombs and sprawling cities and solemn stupas on the other hand. Across the length and breadth of the country one can find many beautiful buildings. Some are monuments, palaces, temples, churches, mosques and memorials. Many of them had their foundation before Christ and many after the coming of Christ. Many generations have been a part of this

architecture which stands mighty and lofty reminding us of that glorious past which has been ours. This is because art and architecture forms an important part of Indian culture. Many distinctive features that we find in the architecture today developed throughout the long period of Indian history. The earliest and most remarkable evidence of Indian architecture is found in the cities of the Harappan Civilization which boast of a unique town planning. In the post Harappan period architectural styles have been classified as Hindu, Buddhist and Jain, the medieval period saw the synthesis of Persian and indigenous styles of architecture. Thereafter the colonial period brought the influence of Western architectural forms to India. Thus, Indian architecture is a synthesis of indigenous styles and external influences which has lent it a unique characteristic of its own. Culture comprises a plurality of discourses. Architectural forms are the most visible discourses of past civilizations. Indian

civilization presents a very rich and diversified architectural tradition [1], [2].

Architecture: Meaning, Form and Context

In common parlance, architecture is a study of forms: about plans, designs, motifs and how they have evolved over time. But built spaces are a medium to study societies as well. Architectural spaces, both sacred and secular have a functional aspect, in the sense that they fulfil the need for what they were created. A temple or a mosque is a house of worship and a king's tomb or a palace has royal connotations, a commemorative edifice proclaims what it is meant to, and houses are built to protect people and communities. Through these physical types, we get to know the technical knowhow of the times, the processes of their creation, patterns of patronage, and a given society's metaphysical system as the architectural forms draw upon contemporary cultural and philosophical discourses. Power and authority are as much reflected in these built spaces as are notions of aestheticism that are otherwise embodied in contemporary literature.

Architecture is also a medium to study society because built spaces delineate communities, give them a sense of belonging and a cultural identity. Architectural forms become spaces where various identities and groups are formed, in which some are included, while 'others' are not. Often these spaces become sites of contestations, conflicts, state formation, assimilation and exclusion - generating multiple meanings. They are lived spaces with firm social moorings. At the same time, monuments, even religious structures have multilayered histories and not belong to one monolithic community or compact power structures. They are always shared spaces where different individuals and communities come together to create it. They have multiple affiliations. Architectural forms therefore, are not just a study of forms, the pure exotica, but they are a part of a larger social cultural history.

Religion, in all time and space has always been a major propeller of architectural creations as of other artistic activity. In the Indian context, from the Buddhist stupa and chaitya to the Hindu temple, and then to the Muslim mosque or the Christian church, religion has stimulated all art. However, this is not to mean that the Buddhist chaitya gave way to the Hindu temple to be replaced by the Muslim mosque and so on. There is no takeover of one style from another, nor is there any 'high' point or 'low' ebb. Present scholarship rejects the notion of a Gupta 'classical age' and post-Gupta centuries to be one of decadence. As a matter of fact,

some of the finest temples were constructed in the post-Gupta period, as testimonies to India's fine architectural tradition. Both sacred and secular architecture instead, manifests a continuous process of adaptation and transformation across different regions and communities and is as much inclusive of local forms as of forms that came from beyond the borders. Overlap and interaction is the key to understand Indian architecture. And since there is no linear development in Indian architecture, the discipline being a multiple discourse, we need to move away from the primacy of one region, period, dynasty or patronage. This would then also mean that we need to move away from the factor of 'influence' and instead lay stress on the processes behind the architectural endeavours, which are multilayered, with multiple meanings and paradigm shifts. No architectural type is a self-contained category with a monolithic identity. Monuments need to be analysed in relation to their own historical and ideological contexts. And finally, this would also mean, that architecture is not just a study of forms of icons or decorative motifs, of spatial and scientific technical production or of even the pure functional but is a part of a larger history of culture, society and politics [3], [4].

DISCUSSION

Perception of India's Architectural Tradition: Historiography

The history of Indian architecture, as a systematic study, was first taken up in British India. Several influential writers, from 1874 - 1927, set the future trends of scholarship. Most viewpoints that were current till recently, were influenced by the writings that appeared from mid 19th century onwards. From Henry Cole's publication of the catalogue of the Indian collection at the then, South Kensington Museum (1874) to Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy's classic, History of Indian and Indonesian art (1927), several issues regarding Indian art and architecture were debated and frameworks, largely derived from western methodologies, were put forward. Partha Mitter divides these writings and their approaches into two broad groups: archaeological and transcendental. To the first group, classical European art was the exemplar of perfect taste against which all Indian art and architecture was to be judged. This is easily discerned in the writings of its major protagonists: Henry Cole, R. Orme, H. Colebrooke, James Fergusson, Vincent Smith and George Birdwood. This approach did much to further formulate the orientalist canon, seen in James Mill's History of British India

written in 9 volumes (1817-20), where the principal orientalist vision received its first classic articulation. Rediscovery of India's cultural past in these colonial writings was founded on the premise that to control the present better, you need to know the past of the ruled better. Primacy of religion and race were crucial in understanding Indian architecture for this approach. Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam were the markers of Indian cultural identity. In this paradigm, Vedic and Buddhist periods were periods of pristine purity, while medieval Hinduism coincided with decay as evidenced from overtly decorative temples. The debate concerning Aryan versus Dravidian centred on Buddhist art being alone worthy of appreciation as it was Aryan and influenced by Graeco-Bactrian antiquity. In some writings, Islamic art too was superior and rational because it came from outside and Islam did not have the constraints of the Hindu caste system. Central to this construct is the foreign origin of Gandhara, as it was influenced by Greek art.

The second group was concerned with characterizing Indian art as transcendental and can be called nationalist in its approach. The writings of these art historians, led by Ernest Binfield Havell and Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy centred on Indian art embodying an idea, an inner world of beauty that has an intrinsic meaning. Based on classical norms of Neoplatonist doctrines, this approach read all Indian art as spiritual. The spirituality of Indian art was underlined when Coomaraswamy informed that nature was transcendental and existed on a metaphysical plane in the artist's mind, which was then externalized and represented in material art form in his work. The vehicle through which this happened was a special technique of vision, the practice of yoga, known to the traditional Indian artists. Even the architectural form of the dome, to Coomaraswamy, was a work of imagination and not one of technicality. However, Coomaraswamy too, like the other writers, took refuge in western thought and knowledge of Platonism to explain Indian art. Again, although, Coomaraswamy was right in assessing the role of religion in Indian art, but when it came to explaining the precise relation between art and religion or the nature of Indian art, he took recourse to collective metaphysical generalizations.

The problem with this approach is that it does not show how the meaning is derived, or how to read meaning in a form by virtue of its intrinsic properties. Much of writing today explains the exact nature of this relationship in more concrete and individual ways, rather than in generalized collective notions. Indian art

and architecture has to be studied in specific religious, cultural, political and social contexts. Different endeavours and forms have to be assessed from their own specific contemporary positions. With this backdrop of what 'architecture' should mean and by drawing from recent writings, we shall try to unveil some architectural forms and their meanings from India's cultural past.

Harappan Period

The excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro and several other sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation revealed the existence of a very modern urban civilisation with expert town planning and engineering skills. The very advanced drainage system along with well planned roads and houses show that a sophisticated and highly evolved culture existed in India before the coming of the Aryans. The sites of the Indus Valley Civilization were excavated under the Archaeological Survey of India established by the British. The Harappan people had constructed mainly three types of buildings-dwelling houses pillared halls and public baths.

Main features of Harappan remains are:

1. The settlements could be traced as far back as third millennium BC. Some important settlements were excavated on the banks of the river Indus particularly at the bends that provided water, easy means of transportation of produce and other goods and also some protection by way of natural barriers of the river.
2. All the sites consisted of walled cities which provided security to the people. The cities had a rectangular grid pattern of layout with roads that cut each other at right angles. The Indus Valley people used standardised burnt mud-bricks as building material.
3. There is evidence of building of big dimensions which perhaps were public buildings, administrative or business centres, pillared halls and courtyards, there is no evidence of temples. Public buildings include granaries which were used to store grains which give an idea of an organised collection and distribution system.
4. Along with large public buildings, there is evidence of small one roomed construction that appear to be working people's quarters.

5. The Harappan people were great engineers as is evident from the public bath that was discovered at Mohenjodaro. The 'Great Bath' as it is called, is still functional and there is no leakage or cracks in the construction. The existence of what appears to be a public bathing place shows the importance of ritualistic bathing and cleanliness in this culture. It is significant that most of the houses had private wells and bathrooms.
6. At some sites a dominant citadal was excavated in the western part containing the public buildings including the granaries. This can perhaps be treated as evidence of some kind of political authority ruling over the cities.
7. There is evidence also of fortifications with gateways enclosing the walled city which shows that there may have been a fear of being attacked. Lothal, a site in Gujarat also has the remains of a dockyard proving that trade flourished in those times by sea [5], [6].

Another remarkable feature was the existence of a well planned drainage system in the residential parts of the city. Small drains from the houses were connected to larger ones along the sides of the main roads. The drains were covered and loose covers were provided for the purpose of cleaning them. The planning of the residential houses were also meticulous. Evidence of stairs shows houses were often double storied. Doors were in the side lanes to prevent dust from entering the houses. The most important features of Harappan architecture are their superior town planning skills and cities that have been built on a clear geometric pattern or grid layout. Roads cut each other at right angles and were very well laid out. As the Indus Valley settlements were located on the banks of the river, they were often destroyed by major floods. In spite of this calamity, the Indus Valley people built fresh settlements on the same sites. Thus, layers upon layers of settlements and buildings were found during the excavations. The decline and final destruction of the Indus Valley Civilization, sometime around the second millennium BC remains a mystery to this day. The Harappans had the knowledge and skill of sculpting and craft. The world's first bronze sculpture of a dancing girl has been found in Mohenjodaro. A terracotta figure of a male in a yogic posture has also been excavated. Beautiful personal ornaments, soft

stone seals with a pictorial script and images of humped bulls, Pashupati unicorn have also been excavated. The Vedic Aryans who came next, lived in houses built of wood, bamboo and reeds; the Aryan culture was largely a rural one and thus one finds few examples of grand buildings. This was because Aryans used perishable material like wood for the construction of royal palaces which have been completely destroyed over time. The most important feature of the Vedic period was the making of fire altars which soon became an important and integral part of the social and religious life of the people even today. In many Hindu homes and especially in their marriages, these fire altars play an important role even today. Soon courtyard and mandaps were build with altars for worship of fire which was the most important feature of architecture. We also find references of Gurukuls and Hermitages. Unfortunately no structure of the Vedic period remains to be seen. Their contribution to the architectural history is the use of wood along with brick and stone for building their houses. In the 6th century B.C. India entered a significant phase of her history. There arose two new religions - Jainism and Buddhism and even the Vedic religion underwent a change.

Almost simultaneously larger states sprang up which further provided for a new type of architecture. From this period i.e. the expansion of Magadha into an empire, the development of architecture received further impetus. From now it was possible to trace Indian architecture in an almost unbroken sequence. Emergence of Buddhism and Jainism helped in the development of early architectural style. The Buddhist Stupas were built at places where Buddha's remains were preserved and at the major sites where important events in Buddha's life took place. Stupas were built of huge mounds of mud, enclosed in carefully burnt small standard bricks. One was built at his birthplace Lumbini; the second at Gaya where he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, the third at Sarnath where he gave his first sermon and the fourth at Kushinagar where he passed away attaining Mahaparinirvana at the age of eighty. Buddha's burial mounds and places of major events in his life became important landmarks of the significant architectural buildings in the country. These became important sites for Buddha's order of monks and nuns - the sangha. Monasteries (viharas), and centres of preaching, teaching and learning came up at such places. Congregational halls (chaitya) for teaching and interaction between the common people and the monks were also built up. From now on religion began

to influence architecture. While Buddhists and Jains began to build stupas, Viharas and Chaityas, the first temple building activity started during the Gupta rule.

Cave Architecture

The development of cave architecture is another unique feature and marks an important phase in the history of Indian architecture. More than thousand caves have been excavated between second century BC and tenth century AD. Famous among these were Ajanta and Ellora caves of Maharashtra, and Udaygiri cave of Orissa. These caves hold Buddhist viharas, chaityas as well as mandapas and pillared temples of Hindu gods and goddesses. Temples were hewn out of huge rocks. The earliest rock-cut temples were excavated in western Deccan in the early years of the Christian era. The chaitya at Karle with fine high halls and polished decorative wall is a remarkable example of rock-cut architecture. The Kailash temple at Ellora built by the Rashtrakutas and the ratha temples of Mahabalipuram built by the Pallavas are other examples of rock-cut temples. Most probably the stability and permanence of rocks attracted the patrons of art and builders who decorated these temples with beautiful sculptures [7], [8].

The Temple

Buddhism was the earliest Indian religion to require large communal spaces for worship. This led to three types of architectural forms: the stupa, the vihara and the chaitya. Many religious Buddhist shrines came up between the 1st century BCE - 1st century CE. Stupa, originally the focus of a popular cult of the dead, is a large burial mound containing a relic of the Buddha. It celebrates the Buddha's parinirvana (end of cycle of suffering), symbolizes his eternal body, and is an object of worship. Not many stupas have survived from these early times but the Great Stupa at Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh with its majestic four gateways (1st century BCE/CE) has survived intact. There is evidence of community patronage of landowners, merchants, officials, monks, nuns and artisans associated with these Buddhist projects.

These simple structures, in the early medieval period, from the 6th - 13th century CE, began to expand, horizontally and vertically. This period in Indian history is marked by great temple building activity. The shrines, dedicated to various deities from the Hindu/Jain pantheon were a product of Bhakti or devotional Hinduism, the characteristic ideology of the early medieval centuries. Down the years, these temples became more institutionalized. Like around the 7th century CE, there was a significant change in

the nature of the temple in peninsular India as its organization became more complex. Rich donations of land, cash and other riches were made to these shrines that became the hub of social and economic activities. They were great craft and cultural centres and fostered many traditional performing arts. Many of them, as tirthas (pilgrimage centres) were located on trade routes, which in turn led to urbanization in early Medieval South India. Each region experimented and responded in its own local way and the temple forms with what we are familiar today emerged more definitive. Three distinctive styles, often overlapping, can be discerned, confirming that there was no all India uniform style.

The Hindu temple is the enshrined deity's house devalaya, and his or her palace prasada, where the priests cater to his or her daily needs. The temple is a holy site tirtha where the devotees come to perform the circumambulation pradakshina to earn religious merit. The heart of the temple is the garbhagriha literally, the 'embryo chamber', the sanctum sanctorum, where one is meant to feel the presence of the deity. The installation rituals of Hindu deities go back to the late Gupta text, the Brihatsamhita. The development of the Agamas, ritual texts, and especially the Pancharatra tantric system in the 5th century CE, led to elaborate temple rituals with metaphysical interpretations. These worship ritual texts, went hand in hand with the rise of Tantricism, a major movement that challenged Bhakti. Gradually, more functional buildings were added to the basic structure. These were the pillared halls (mandapa), the added portico (ardhmandapa), a connecting vestibule to the sanctum sanctorum, and surmounting the garbhagriha, the spire shikhara.

Regional variations led to Hindu temples being broadly classified into the northern type (Nagara), belonging to the area between the Himalayas and the Vindhya and the southern type (Dravida), falling in the region between river Krishna to Kanyakumari. A third one, taking the features of both these types is the Vesara, located between the Vindhya and the Krishna. However, these are at times only arbitrary classifications as Nagar temples are found in Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh and Dravida can be seen at Ellora in the Deccan. The distinction rests on the shape of the tower, the ground plan and the elevation. The Nagara tower (shikhara) has a curvilinear slope with a fluted disc (amalaka) at the pinnacle. The Dravida tower (vimana) is pyramidal, follows a dome and cornice pattern with diminishing stories (tala), and is crowned by a square, polygonal or a round dome. The Nagara elevation consists of a series of projections

(rathas) and recesses, whereas the walls of the Dravidian type are relieved by enshrined images in recesses at regular intervals. In south India temples are enclosed within enclosure walls having gate towers (gopuras), marking the entrances. The Vesara or the Chalukyan (also called the Karnataka - Dravida tradition) is the mixed type, located in the Deccan region. The Chalukyan, actually speaking has the same source of inspiration as the Dravidian, the earliest examples being at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal in the Bijapur district in Karnataka. Aihole alone has as many as 70 temples. Temples in the regions of Bengal, Kashmir and Kerala evolved their own local variation, while subscribing to either of the styles.

The architectural treatment of these three sections, are ingeniously treated as well. A series of mouldings lighten the plinth, the spreading base of which seems to grip the pavement of the terrace, like the roots of a tree. The central section of the walls and openings of the interiors are treated by the use of solids of walls as well as voids of horizontal range of window openings, thus bringing in light and air. This feature at the same time throws a band of light and shadow on the surface, enhancing the structure's beauty. This is best exemplified in the balconied windows of Kandariya Mahadeo. This central zone of the exterior has another outstanding feature, a decorative motif of two or three parallel friezes, filling in the wall spaces between the openings. They follow the alternate projections and recesses of the walls and are carried around the building. Human figures, both ideal and mundane are depicted in these friezes, the entire surface being covered, often in erotic postures. Kandariya Mahadeo alone has some 650 figures, moulded in high relief on its outer walls, the iconography conforming to the Shaiva Sddhanta Tantric sect.

In the final section, there are, in these temples, separate roofs for each compartment. Each roof of the structures follows a pattern. The smallest and the lowest is on top of the portico, next in height is on the central hall, the two sweeping up in line with the mass to the tall shape of the shikhara, surmounting the whole. The Khajuraho roofs are domical, unlike the Orissan pyramidal, but their surface texture in horizontal strata is much the same. All this grouping of roofs gives the appearance of a centripetal movement towards the spire, the high pinnacle. The spires of Khajuraho are most refined and elegant. They have a decisive incline as they mount up. The grace is further enhanced by the balanced distribution of the miniature turrets or urusingas that are superimposed

on the sides to break the mass, thus lending a more melodic outline to the volume [9], [10].

CONCLUSION

Medieval Architecture in India witnessed the fusion of indigenous styles with Islamic influences. The Indo-Islamic architectural styles, such as the Mughal, Deccan, and Indo-Islamic regional styles, blended elements of Islamic design, such as domes, arches, and minarets, with traditional Indian motifs and structures. Colonial Architecture emerged during the period of British colonial rule in India. It showcased a mix of European architectural styles, including Gothic, neoclassical, and Victorian influences. Colonial-era buildings, such as government structures, churches, and educational institutions, were characterized by their imposing facades, intricate detailing, and symmetrical designs. These diverse schools of art and architectural styles reflect the cultural, religious, and historical evolution of India. They are a testament to the artistic achievements, craftsmanship, and architectural genius of various periods and regions. The architectural heritage of India continues to inspire contemporary designs and serves as a reminder of the rich cultural legacy embedded in the country's architectural landscape. In conclusion, the Gandhara School, Mathura School, Hindu Temple Architecture, Buddhist Architecture, Medieval Architecture, and Colonial Architecture represent distinct artistic and architectural styles in India. Each style reflects the unique cultural and historical contexts in which they developed, contributing to the rich tapestry of Indian art and architecture. These diverse traditions continue to be celebrated and preserved, offering a glimpse into India's magnificent architectural heritage.

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Indian Painting Tradition: Ancient, Medieval, Modern Indian Painting and Odishan Painting Tradition

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ABSTRACT: *This study provides an overview of the Indian painting tradition, covering ancient, medieval, and modern Indian painting as well as the distinct Odishan painting tradition. It highlights the key characteristics, historical development, and cultural significance of these artistic traditions. Ancient Indian painting traces its origins back to the rock art found in caves and shelters across the subcontinent. These prehistoric paintings showcase primitive yet expressive depictions of animals, human figures, and everyday life. Over time, painting flourished in various ancient Indian civilizations, including the Indus Valley Civilization, Ajanta and Ellora, and the frescoes of temples and palaces. Medieval Indian painting witnessed the emergence of distinctive regional styles. The Mughal School of painting, influenced by Persian and Central Asian artistic traditions, reached its zenith during the reigns of emperors Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan. It is characterized by meticulous attention to detail, intricate miniatures, and vibrant colors. The Rajput and Pahari Schools of painting, on the other hand, developed in the princely courts of Rajasthan and the hills of Himachal Pradesh respectively, reflecting indigenous styles and themes. Modern Indian painting emerged during the colonial era and the subsequent independence movement. Influenced by Western art techniques and ideas, artists like Raja Ravi Varma and Amrita Sher-Gil introduced new perspectives and themes to Indian art. Modern Indian painting encompasses a wide range of styles, from traditional to abstract and experimental, reflecting the diverse artistic expressions in post-independence India.*

KEYWORDS: *Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Marriage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

Of various art forms, painting has always been a very powerful medium of cultural tradition and expression. It is associated with values, beliefs, behaviour of mankind and provides material objects to understand people's way of life, their thought process and creativity. In simple words, painting has become a bridge to our past, reflecting what people think and want to depict. Painting is also a part of tangible material culture, where human creations are termed as artifacts and helps in understanding the cultural values. It is a human way of transforming elements of world into symbol, where each of it has a distinct meaning and can also be manipulated. Compared to sculpture, painting is easier to execute and that is why Stone Age people chose it as an expression of their beliefs and imaginations. In fact, painting marks an entirely new phase in the human history and is regarded as a giant cultural leap. Painting in contemporary Indian literature is also referred as 'Alekhya'. In other words, it is a medium of expression of artist's instinct and emotion reconciled

and integrated with his social expression and cultural heritage. Literacy records which had a direct bearing on the art of painting show that from very early times painting both secular and religious were considered an important form of artistic expression and was practiced. This need for expression is a very basic requirement for human survival and it has taken various forms since prehistoric times. Painting is one such form with which you may have been acquainted in some way or the other. Indian painting is the result of the synthesis of various traditions and its development is an ongoing process. However while adapting to new styles; Indian painting has maintained its distinct character [1].

Ancient Indian Painting Tradition

Painting as an art form has flourished in India from very early times as is evident from the remains that have been discovered in the caves, and the literary sources. The history of art and painting in India begins with the pre-historic rock painting at Bhimbetka caves (M.P.) where we have drawings and paintings of animals. The cave paintings of Narsinghgarh (Maharashtra) show skins of spotted deer left drying.

Thousands of years ago, paintings and drawings had already appeared on the seals of Harappan civilization. Both Hindu and Buddhist literature refer to paintings of various types and techniques for example, Lepyacitras, lekhacitras and Dhulicitras. The first was the representation of folklore, the second one was line drawing and painting on textile while the third one was painting on the floor.

Mural paintings are done on walls and rock surfaces like roofs and sides. Cave no. 9 depicts the Buddhist monks going towards a stupa. In cave no. 10 Jataka stories are depicted. But the best paintings were done in the 5th – 6th centuries AD during the Gupta age. The murals chiefly depict religious scenes from the life of the Buddha and the Buddhist Jataka stories but we also have secular scene. Here we see the depiction of all aspects of Indian life. We see princes in their palaces, ladies in their chambers, coolies with loads over their shoulders, beggars, peasants and ascetics, together with all the many beasts, birds and flowers of India. In India both murals are painted on thin coat of limestone mixture dried with glue, and frescoes are painted on wet lime plaster are found. It is also noticed that in ancient times the colours used in these paintings are derived from natural organic pigments.

Painting in the Pre-Classical period (upto A.D. 350)

The earliest example of painting can be traced to Upper Paleolithic age and specimen of it has been found in the rock shelters, caves of Asia, Europe, and Africa, etc. The early paintings were merely rough outline of non-descriptive nature but over a period of time, it became graceful, descriptive and colourful through use of variety of colours derived from local earth and minerals. In context of India the earliest evidence of painting is from Nevasa (in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra) and rock shelter caves of Bhimbetka (in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh). Excavations at Nevasa have yielded two pieces of pottery having painted figures of a dog and a deer with a pair of wavy horns. Though these are linear representation, yet it gives a sense of volume and feeling for life. It can aptly be referred as the earliest specimen of creative painting in India.

The first evidence of cave painting from Bhimbetka is essentially murals, directly executed on the walls of cave. The technique of painting deep inside the cave was a difficult task, requiring considerable skill but the authors of cave painting perfected it. Like other rock shelters of the world, elaborate drawing and painting has been done on the walls of Bhimbetka caves. Executed mainly in red and white and occasional use of green and yellow--the basic themes of paintings

has been taken from everyday life such as hunting, dancing etc. Animals like bison, tigers, lions, wild boars etc have been abundantly depicted. In some caves religious and rituals symbols occur frequently. Human figures appear in stick like forms and hunting scenes are drawn in sharp line and angles- representing movement and life. An interesting aspect of these paintings is that there is neither inflation of particular human figures which might reflect class distinction within society nor there is any suggestion of agricultural or pastoral activities. Super imposition of paintings at Bhimbetka suggests that same canvas was used by different people at different times. The oldest paintings are believed to be 12,000 years old but some of the geometric figures date to as recently as medieval period.

Scholars have speculated about underlying motive of this art. At one end of the debate is the concept of 'art for arts' sake', i.e. just for aesthetic pleasure and at the other end are those, who have read so much meaning into it. Cave paintings should not be dismissed as primitive art of primitive people. In fact these paintings not only show artistic sophistication but also their highly evolved thinking process and keen observation. In the words of Henri Breuil, "Upper Paleolithic paintings were magical in nature with an aim to exert control over some objects or natural phenomenon." It also marks the beginning of religious belief – a particular way of looking at the world. The murals on the walls of rock shelters of a relatively later age have also been found in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. We have no record of paintings from protohistoric Indus Valley to the historical period. However, the earliest evidence of painting in the historical period is from the middle of 1st century B.C, found in vaulted ceilings of Yogimara [2].

DISCUSSION

During the classical period (350-700 AD), the art of painting had achieved high aesthetic and technical standard. In the Classical text like the Kamasutra of Vatsayana, it is referred as one of the sixty-four arts. The popularity of painting is also evident in the Brahmanical and Buddhist literature, where there are frequent references of 'Citragaras' (picture galleries) and techniques like 'lepya citras' (representation in line and colour on textiles), 'lekhya citras' (Sketches) and 'dhuli citras' (alpanas). The 'Brhatsamhita' (circa 6th century A.D.) and the 'Vishnudharmmottara Purana' (circa 7th century A.D. introduce technical details such as-method of preparation of ground for

painting Vajralepa), application of colour, rules of perspective etc. Works of Bhasa, Kalidasa, Vishakhadatta, Bana also contributed to that intellectual ferment of the Classical period especially the theory and the technique of painting.

One of the best examples of the Classical paintings is from the Ajanta Caves, painted between circa 200 B.C. and A.D. 600 Ajanta has thirty one Caves, built in two phases first one was around 2nd century B.C. and second was between 4th and 6th centuries A.D. In both phases, the art was patronized by the Hindu rulers the Satvahanas (in the early period) and the Vakatakas (in the later period). The cave paintings of Ajanta are often referred to as frescoes, but A.L. Basham disagrees with it. A true fresco is painted while the lime plaster is still damp, where as, the murals of Ajanta were made after it had set. The famous Ajanta caves can be considered as ancient art galleries. The earliest paintings are sharply outlined where as the latter are more carefully modeled. The principal colours like red ochre, yellow ochre, indigo blue, lapis lazuli blue, chalk white, lamp black, geru and green have been widely used. The Indian art has been inspired by spiritualism and mystical relationship between the God and man. The earliest recorded art was inspired by religious Hindu background and it was later replaced by the popular Buddhist art. The philosophy of aesthetics was closely related to thoughts in the Upanishads and thus art played a very important role in the Indian religious life. Inward vision, sense of great peace and tranquility – are the hall marks of Indian art. The early caves of Ajanta are of the Hinayana order, where the monks worshipped symbols such as stupa, wheel etc.

Oldest surviving paintings are of cave number X. Large bodies of surviving paintings are associated with the Mahayana Buddhism belonging to 5th and 6th centuries A.D. and here Buddha is represented in human form and worshipped as God. The paintings of 5th and 6th centuries A.D. also depict the Jataka tales i.e., stories of Buddha in his previous life. The paintings of Ajanta caves are, although based on the Buddhist themes, yet they bear a secular message than the religious. The depiction of Princes in their palace, ladies in their harems, flowers, fruits, animals, ascetics, mystical creatures – presents the whole image of time. Qualities of virtuous life, journey of soul into cycle of rebirths, illusion of material world, cheerful scenes of everyday life, humanity, compassion, grief – is very well portrayed in the paintings like ‘the Padmapani, the bearer of lotus’, ‘the dying Prince’ etc. One of the most striking aspect of Ajanta painting is

the sympathetic, humane treatment of animals and emphasis to create a work out of the artist’s own vision. According to Lawrence Binyon: ‘in the art of Asia, Ajanta occupies supreme and central position’ [2].

Medieval Indian Painting

The advent of Islam and the spread of Islamic influence, initiated a new period in Indian history the medieval period. It also had a direct impact on the realm of painting. The pattern of large scale paintings, which had dominated the scene, were replaced by the miniature painting during the 11th and 12th centuries A.D. The miniature paintings are small paintings. They were often part of manuscripts written at the time and illustrated the subjects of the manuscript. Thus, a new kind of illustration was set during the period under review.

Painting during the Sultanate Period

There are very few illustration, which can be ascribed to the Sultanate period (13th century - 15th century A.D.), e.g., the Bustan manuscript, the illustrated manuscript Nimat Nama painted at Mandu during the reign of Nasir Shah Khalji. Nimat Nama represents early synthesis of indigenous and Persian style, though it was latter which dominated in the paintings. Another type of painting known as Lodi Khuladar, flourished in the Sultanate domain of North India extended from Delhi to Jaunpur.

3Mughal Painting

Medieval painting is, largely represented by the Mughal School, which developed during the period of the Mughal empire (16th -19th centuries A.D.). Renowned for their brilliant colours, accuracy in line drawing, detailed realism, intricacy and variety of themes – the Mughal paintings were a class by themselves. It was distinct from all other styles and techniques of Pre- Mughal and Contemporary Art. Contrary to Delhi sultanate, the Mughal paintings were more popular and widespread. There were several factors responsible for it – urbanization, better administrative system, exclusive patronage by the rulers and nobility, synthesis of cultural values and tradition of Central Asia, integration of Mughal economy with world economy, etc. In fact painting became a widespread source of livelihood during the rule of Mughals.

The Mughal paintings reflect two types of cultural tradition – ‘high culture’ and ‘popular culture’. The notion of ‘high culture’ is equated with the sophisticated elite class with an exclusive taste and

high culture products are not shared by the ordinary people as they are expensive, artistic and intellectual creations. The 'popular culture' is usually equated with the common people and products of 'popular culture' are common, cheap and easy to understand. In the context of Mughal empire, the 'high culture' was exclusive domain of Mughal emperors, their nobles who gave exclusive patronage to the artists, whereas, the 'popular culture' was associated with aspirations, norms, customs of the general Mughal society and in spite of lack of patronage, it continued to survive, for example, the bazaar paintings.

The Mughal painting did not develop in vacuum. It had clear influence of different tradition of contemporary world, namely, Persian, Timurid, Mongolid, Chinese and European. The diffusion of these styles with the indigenous style created a new living tradition of painting, popularly known as Indo-Sino-Persian art. Initially, the Mughal style of painting had dominant Mongolid characteristics but gradually the Mongolid elements diminished and the Indian characteristics came to the forefront. Thus diffusion of various styles led to creation of a new cultural element. The Mughals used paintings as a tool of display of political power, imperial ideology, authority, status and economic prosperity. The Mughal paintings were very rich in variety- in terms of themes and colours. Some of the themes were- illustration of battles, scenes from court life, wild life, hunting, portraits, etc. Rich use of colours obtained from precious stones, metals like gold and silver-were also hallmark of the Mughal paintings.

The decline of painting, which began in the period of Shah Jahan, became distinct in the reign of Aurangzeb (A.D. 1658-1707). Painting was essentially a court art-loss of royal patronage, closing of the royal ateliers did contribute further to its decline but at the same time it did not stop altogether. It became confined to the studios of nobles, princes of royal blood and was less naturalistic in comparison to the court paintings. Being closely based on the Mughal style, these are often termed as sub-imperial paintings or bazaar paintings. This form of painting was inexpensive, less time consuming and meant largely for common man who used it for decorative purpose. However, the technical qualities of the Mughal style were sustained. Aurangzeb's portrait with Shaista Khan and a hunting scene are among the finest Mughal paintings of this period [3].

Successor Schools of Miniature Painting

As the Mughal structure crumbled, strong nobles created their own domains in Bengal, Oudh and other

parts of India. It was at these places that new schools of painting based on imperial traditions flourished. The schools of painting that developed in Jaipur, Jodhpur and Bundi were collectively came to be known as the Rajput school of painting. It was greatly influenced by the Mughal style. It had paintings on themes like seasons (barahmasa), melodies (ragas), mythology (depicting Radha and Krishna) in addition to prevalent themes. The Kangara School of painting and its off-shoot Tehri-Garhwal, however, developed independently. The Deccan paintings which were far removed from realism, represented delicate rhythms of Persia, lush sensuality of south and exotic elements of Europe and Turkey. The theme of Deccan paintings were based on love, music, poetry rather than the realities of life. The glint of the Mughal art did not disappear completely even in the last phase of Mughal rule. Artists continued to paint but on a limited scale and this can be proved with an example of existing Mughal portrait of the last Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah II.

Modern Indian Painting

The decline of the Mughal Empire was accompanied by the control of English East India Company in A.D. 1757 over north-eastern region, thus laying the foundation of British Raj. The colonial era, not only had profound impact on the contemporary politics, society, economy but also on culture. In the realm of art, Indian art gave into new fashion brought by the English. The art was no longer confined to court but began to be taught and patronized by art schools, art societies, etc. With the introduction of academic art, there was more emphasis on Victorian illusionistic art, oil portraits, naturalistic landscapes, etc. In place of courtly patronage, artistic individualism was encouraged. The new breed of colonial artists enjoyed high social status and were in contrast to humble court artists of the Mughal period.

The Company School

As the English East India Company expanded its purview during the late 1700's, large number of its employees moved from England to India in search of new opportunities. The new landscape, unusual flora and fauna, stunning monuments, exotic new people caught the attention of English travellers, Company Sahibs and Mem Sahibs. They began to hire Indian painters in 18th and 19th centuries A.D. to capture the quaint oriental images. Thus in the cities ruled by the English East India company, the Company School of painting emerged under western influence.

It introduced the idea of India to Europe on one hand and European Academy style of painting in India on the other. The Company paintings were characterized in medium by the use of water colours and in technique by the appearance of linear perspective, shading, etc. Aesthetically, they were descendents of the picturesque scenes of India created by the artists like Thomas Daniel and William Daniel. The English East India Company not only engaged artists for economic surveys and documentation of natural history but also to produce ethnographic subjects like, castes, professions, etc. The hub of Company paintings were centres like Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, Varanasi and Patna, where either the English had a factory or commercial interest. Calcutta was among the early major centre of Company paintings. The patrons like Lord Impy and M. Wellesley hired the artists to paint birds, animals, plants, etc. Sheikh Mohammad Amir of Karraya was in great demand for his elegant renderings of themes related to the British life in Calcutta. In comparison to Calcutta, the development of Company painting was late in Delhi. Its painting market expanded after British occupation of city in A.D. 1803 [4], [5].

The magnificent Mughal monuments of Delhi were the most popular subject. Among the famous artists of Delhi, Ghulam Ali Khan was known for his scenes of village life and portraiture. Delhi's artists were unique in using ivory as a base for painting. At Patna, Sewak Ram was known for his large-scale paintings of festivals and ceremonies. The Company styles of painting of different cities were distinguishable by style, which grew out of and heavily influenced by earlier local tradition. In the early phase of the Company School of painting i.e., the 18th century, the artists depended on few key patrons but by the beginning of 19th century, the enterprising artists had begun to create paintings for bazaar on subjects like festival, costumes, castes, etc. However, the Company style of painting did not develop throughout the country. Rajasthan, Hyderabad, Punjab continued to patronize traditional art form but on a limited scale. With the introduction of photography in early 1840's, the school lost its momentum but at the same time created an environment in which Art Schools and societies were used as an instrument for disseminating academic art by the English East India Company. It was also an attempt to improve Indian taste as a part of its moral amelioration. The reaction to the Company School in the mid 19th century was two-fold. On one hand Raja Ravi Varma adapted a distinct method to evolve a new style of painting of Indian subjects where

as on the other hand the 'Nationalist school' represented by the nationalist painter preferred to look at Indian themes and manifested it in the works of the famous 'Bengal School'.

Raja Ravi Varma (A.D. 1848-1906)

Raja Ravi Varma of royal family of Travancore received formal training in painting, before entering the 'low' profession of paintings against his family's objections. His paintings were inspired by the Victorian art but were more akin to art form of the royal court. Raja Ravi Varma achieved recognition for his depiction of the scenes from the epics of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and thus rose to be a remarkable portrait painter, prized by both, the Raj and the Indian elite. He attained widespread acclaim after he won an award for an exhibition of his paintings at Vienna in A.D. 1873. His fusion of Indian tradition with the technique of European Academic art, created a new canon of beauty in which characters like Shakuntala, Damyanti, etc. were portrayed shapely and gracefully. The Indian nationalists initially hailed his depiction of past, in spite of being unfamiliar with his philosophical outlook, but during the second half of the 19th century, his works began to be criticized as hybrid, undignified, unspiritual expressions.

According to the critiques, "The mythical characters of glorious past were reduced to the level of ordinary human". He was also criticized for the fact, that his paintings overshadowed traditional art form because of their widespread reproduction as Oleographs flooding Indian culture with his version of Indian myths, portrayed with static realism. In spite of the criticism that he was too showy, sentimental in his style, his paintings appealed all segments of the society and remains very popular even today.

The Bengal School

The belief in India's glorious past and spirituality was responsible for upsurge of a new kind of nationalist sentiment, which questioned the academic art style promoted by Indian artists like Raja Ravi Varma and the British Art School. The 'Bengal School of Art', the first art movement in India was associated with Indian Nationalism promoted by people like Ernest Benfield, Havell, and Abindranath Tagore, etc. The Bengal School emphasized on the depiction of art that would be Indian in soul and content. In other words, the emphasis was on indigenous and nationalist ideology of art. The torchbearers of 'Cultural Nationalism' in Bengal were the Tagores - an important representative of the Bengal School, Abindranath Tagore (A.D. 1871-1951) belonged to this family. He created his

own indigenous style, expressing India's distinct spiritual qualities. Though trained in Academic Art, his works were also influenced by the Mughal art, especially 'The Last moments of Shah Jahan'. Abindranath's association with Japanese artist Kakuzo Okakura Tenshin, around [6].

A.D. 1900 in Calcutta, made him aware of the spirit of Far Eastern Art. He adopted wash technique, light brush stroke and delicate lines of Japanese art. Tenshin regarded India as a source of Buddhist art of Japan. With an aim to challenge western values, Tenshin developed a link with Abindranath Tagore to construct Pan-Asianists model of art, assimilating different Asian Cultural tradition. This cultural movement on one hand represented differences between the Asian spirituality and European materialism and on the other hand Asian resistance to European Colonialism. One of the best paintings associated with the Bengal School is Abindranath's 'Bharat Mata'. Painted in the background of A.D. 1905 nationalist unrest, the portrait of Mother India is depicted as a young woman, holding objects symbolic of Indian nationalist aspiration in the manner of Hindu deities. The Bengal School influence declined with the spread of modernist ideas in the 1920s. However, in spite of strong attack on the academic art, on pretext of being opposed to Indian Cultural tradition, the Western influence continued.

One of the most important figures in Indian modernism was Amrita Sher-Gil. She was many year ahead of her time in mid-1930s. Her training in art at Paris and Italy made her technically accomplished. Her early paintings display western influence but after her return to India there was complete transformation in her work. She rediscovered originality, freshness of ancient Ajanta, Ellora and the value of Indian miniature. Her main mission was to express the naive life of Indian people. She gave her subject's large, doleful eyes, vacant stares and expression of submission. Her paintings, the 'Bride's Toilet', the 'Brahmachari', and 'The South Indian Village' reveal her passion for India. Sher-Gil has been criticized for not identifying with the national struggle, which was in its final phase during her last years. In spite of criticism, one can not ignore this fact that, her paintings also became her voice against domination of the British in India.

Odishan Painting Tradition

Through the century Odisha has retained its cultural identity within the mainstream of pan- Indian culture. A land of rich and diverse artistic acivements, Odisha's art and culture are the products of a long

historical process in which the sprittual, philoshopical and the human dimensions have merged to yiled the finest effects of a cultured and civilised life. The cultural heritage of Odisha is reflected in its vibrant art forms. Odisha has distinct tradition of painting, architecture, sculpture, handicrafts, music and dance. Odisha boasts of a long and rich cultural heritage. Due to the reigns of many different rulers in the past, the culture, arts and crafts of the state underwent many changes, imitations, assimilations and new creations, from time to time. The artistic skill of the Odishan artists is unsurpassable in the world.

Wall Painting of Odisha

Mural always rest on the architecture as its Canvas and is a beautifying element in any place of art. Human being always try to beautify its surrounding because to beautify is a primal urge of mankind since its beginning and for this reason paintings are noticed on the walls of prehistoric caves. Since mural paintings are associated with structures, this painting tradition have come and gone with the construction and destruction of structures. The life of a mural is dependent on the life of the structure, where paintings are done. Fragile nature of the ground material and the binding media also often make damage the paintings. Besides, Odisha's tropical climate and repeated occurring of natural calamities like flood, fires, and cyclones damaged the structures and so also the paintings on it.

Notwithstanding the above observations Odisha has a very long tradition of painting, beginning from prehistoric times down to the present century. Besides the faint traces of painting in Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves, which would have probably given an idea of Jain mural traditions, Odisha has two other groups of paintings, Buddhist and Brahmanical. The painting at Sitabinji in Keonjhar district is the lone example of murals in the whole of eastern India of the Gupta period, which carries the reflections of classical Buddhist mural traditions or classical Indian mural traditions though not depicting a Buddhist theme. With the Sitabinji paintings the history of mural paintings starts in Odisha and ends with Brahmanical ones in later mathas and temples. When Brahmanism embarked upon a vigorous career through the Bhakti movement, a number of mathas sprang up all over Odisha to work as centers of religious dissemination. These mathas were sort of monasteries under the management of Mahanta who were responsible for preaching. These mathas have concentration of paintings on their walls, which have no any connection with the presiding deity and the religious affiliation of

the mathas. The wall paintings in the mathas almost follow a definite thematic content irrespective of the ideology of the religious institution and the deity. To site an example, the Biranchinarayana temple in Buguda in the district of Ganjam, though has an image of the sun, worshipped in shrine, has Krishnalila and Ramayana paintings on the walls.

In Odisha, there are also many temples, where wall paintings are noticed. Basically temples of later period which were contemporaneous with the mathas depicted paintings on its interior side. Probably these temples initiated the mathas and provided paintings inside the interiors for educating the devotees with puranic and religious narrations. The wall paintings of Odisha have a wide range of themes like religious including Vaisnavite, Saivite, Saktas, Graha and other theme like mythical and decorative subjects. Krishnalilā is an important motif in the painting tradition of Odisha. Among the Bhagavata motifs the scene of vastraharana is important. There are numerous example of vastraharana scene i.e. the Jagannatha temple at Puri decorated with painting, here the jagamohana in its interior has scene of vastraharaēa in relief. Radhakanta temple at Digapahandi is also depicted with vastraharana scene. In the wall paintings of Odisha the painters have dealt with some decorative elements, which includes portraiture of animals with different lively actions for example in the Dharkote Jagannath Temple the decorative panel composed of elephants, cows and calves, monkeys, camels and cranes. Here elephants are shown with different lively actions with their young one; the calves suck milk from their mother [7], [8].

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the paintings of Ancient, Medieval and Modern periods of Indian history were intense essence of their culture. Its grandeur left strong visual impacts on the viewers. The Cave paintings expressed the aesthetic sense of the cave dwellers where as the mural and frescoes of ancient and early medieval period depicted the aspects related to religion, day-to-day life and imperial authority. The Mughals reflected high cultural tradition, synthesizing Chinese, Turkish, European and Indian features in it. The Mughal paintings were not simple works of art but valuable documentary evidence for cultural life of Medieval India---courtly as well as ordinary life. The Modern

Indian painting schools, like the Bengal School reflected nationalist fervours in the paintings and resistance to British rule in their own way. Thus, the nature of Indian painting changed with the times and represented the age significantly and elegantly.

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An Overview on Divisions of Indian Classical Music

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ABSTRACT: This study provides an overview of the divisions within Indian classical music, a rich and ancient musical tradition that has evolved over centuries. Indian classical music is characterized by its melodic and rhythmic intricacies, improvisation, and deep connection to spirituality. Indian classical music is broadly divided into two major systems: Hindustani classical music and Carnatic classical music. Hindustani classical music is predominantly practiced in North India while Carnatic classical music is associated with South India. These two systems have their unique styles, repertoires, and performance practices. Hindustani classical music further consists of several divisions, including raga, tala, and gharana. A raga is a melodic framework that defines the pitch structure, melodic ornamentation, and emotional essence of a composition. Tala refers to the rhythmic framework, with a specific cycle of beats and rhythmic patterns. Gharana represents a particular lineage or school of music, characterized by its distinctive performance techniques, repertoire, and stylistic nuances. Carnatic classical music, on the other hand, encompasses divisions such as ragam, thanam, pallavi, and varnam. Ragam is the melodic framework, which defines the scale and melodic structure of a composition. Thanam is the improvised exploration of a ragam, showcasing the artist's creativity and virtuosity. Pallavi refers to the central theme or refrain of a composition, often elaborated with intricate melodic and rhythmic variations. Varnam is a complex composition that combines both melodic and rhythmic elements, serving as a training tool for aspiring musicians.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Geography, Heritage, Classical Music, Indian Culture, Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Songs and dances portray the various stages in our lives. They reflect the socio-religious customs and practices of rural people earlier, but now are a part of modern city culture also. They are linked through centuries of celebration and might have started with fertility rites to obtain prosperity for the agricultural community i.e. fertility of land and cattle but also of birth and survival of children. There are many reasons for celebration that it is difficult to list them. India is a land of rich culture and heritage. Since the beginning of our civilization, music, dance and drama have been an integral aspect of our culture. Initially, these art forms were used as medium of propagation for religion and social reforms in which music and dance were incorporated to gain popularity. From the Vedic era to the medieval period, the performing arts remained an important source of educating the masses. The Vedas laid down precise rules for the chanting of Vedic hymns. Even the pitch and the accent of singing different hymns have been prescribed. There was more of exemplary presentation through them than education or social reforms. Presently, these art forms

have become means of entertainment for people all over the world [1], [2].

Concept of Performing Arts

What is art? "Art is an expression of all characteristics of the human mind aesthetically". These characteristics, i.e. the varied human emotions, are known as 'RAS'. In Hindi, 'ras' literally means a sugary juice. It signifies the ultimate satisfaction of 'aanand'. Human emotions can be categorized into nine sub-headings or 'navras'. They are: Hasya-laughter, Bhayanak-evil, Shringar- aesthetics, Rudra-chivalrous, Karuna pathos, Vir-courage, Adbhut-astonishing, Vibhatsa- terrifying glory, Shaanti peace, Shringaar -decorating one's self, etc. Art reflects human emotions and human beings spontaneously express their frame of mind through various art forms. Thus the intellectual mind merges with the artistic streak, giving birth to art. The expression is reflected in various styles like singing, dancing, drawing, painting, acting, sculpture. Some of these are expressed through live performances and others through visual arts. Sketching, painting, sculptures are visual arts. Singing, dancing, acting are attributes of performing arts. Music from time immemorial has been the most popular art form of India. They are Sa,

Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ne The earliest tradition of Indian music may be traced to Sama Veda which contained the slokas that were put to music. Chanting of Vedic hymns with prescribed pitch and accent still form a part of religious rituals. Another major text is Matanga's Brihaddesi compiled between eight and ninth century AD. In this work ragas were first named and discussed at great length. Sangeet Ratnakara written by Sarangdeva in the thirteenth century mentions 264 ragas. A variety of string and wind instruments were invented over the period of time [3], [4].

Divisions of Indian Classical Music

During the medieval period Indian classical music was broadly based on two traditions, the Hindustani classical music prevalent in North India and the Carnatic music of South India.

Hindustani Classical Music

Hindustani classical music may be traced back to the period of the Delhi Sultanate and to Amir Khusrau (AD 1253-1325) who encouraged the practice of musical performance with particular instruments. He is believed to have invented the sitar and the tabla and is said to have introduced new ragas. Most of the Hindustani musicians trace their descent to Tansen. Different styles of Hindustani music are Dhrupad, Dhamar, Thumri, Khayal and Tappa. It is said that Tansen's music had the effect of magic. He could stop the rising waves of the Yamuna and by the force of his 'Megh Rag' he could cause the rain to fall. In fact his melodious songs are sung in every part of India even now with great interest. Some of Akbar's courtiers patronised Musicians like Baiju Bawra, Surdas etc. The most popular ragas are: Bahar, Bhairavi, Sindhu Bhairavi, Bhim Palasi, Darbari, Desh, Hamsadhvani, Jai Jayanti, Megha Malhar, Todi, Yaman, Pilu, Shyam Kalyan, Khambaj. India also has a rich variety of musical instruments of different types. Amongst the stringed instruments the most famous are sitar, sarod, santoor and sarangi. Pakhawaj, tabla and Mridangam are percussion or tal giving instruments. Likewise, flute, shehnai and nadaswaram are some of the chief wind instruments.

The musicians of Hindustani classical music are usually associated to a gharana or a particular style of music. Gharanas refer to hereditary linkages of musicians which represent the core of the style and distinguish them from the other. The gharanas function in gurushishya parampara, that is, disciples learning under a particular guru, transmitting his musical knowledge and style, will belong to the same

gharana. Some famous gharanas are Gwalior gharana, Kirana gharana, and Jaipur gharana. Devotional music like kirtan, bhajan, ragas contained in the Adi Grantha and singing in the Majlis during Muharram also deserve a special place in Indian music. Along with this, folk music also shows a very rich cultural heritage.

Carnatic Music

The compositions in Carnatic music may be attributed collectively to three composers who lived between AD 1700 and 1850. They were Shyam Shastri, Thyagaraja and Mutthuswami Dikshitar. Purandardasa was another great composer of Carnatic music. Thyagaraja is revered both as a saint and an artist and epitomises the essence of Carnatic music. The main compositions are known as kriti and are devotional in nature. The three great musicians experimented with new forms. Some notable musicians of this period are Maha Vaidyanath Ayyar (1844-93), Patnam Subrahmanya Ayyar (1854-1902) and Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar (1860-1919). Flute, veena, nadaswaram, mridangam, ghatam are some of the instruments to accompany Carnatic music. Despite contrasting features between Hindustani and Carnatic music, one can find some similarities, for example, the Carnatic alapana is similar to alap in Hindustani classical. Tilana in Carnatic resembles Tarana of Hindustani. Both lay stress on tala or talam [5], [6].

DISCUSSION

Modern Indian Music

With the British rule came Western music. Indians adopted some of their instruments such as violin and clarinet to suit the demands of Indian music. Orchestration of music on stage is a new development. Use of cassettes replaced oral transmission of tunes and ragas. Performance which were earlier limited to a privileged few have now been thrown open to the public and can be viewed by thousands of music lovers throughout the country. Music education no longer depends on the master-disciple system but can be imparted through institutions teaching music.

Musicians

Amir Khusrau, Sadarang Adaranga, Miyan Tansen, Gopal Nayak, Swami Haridas, Pt. V.D. Paluskar, Pt. V.N. Bhatkhande, Thyagaraja Mutthuswami Dikshitar, Pt. Omkar, Nath Thakur, Pt. Vinaik Rao Patwardhan, Ustad Chand Khan, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Ustad Nissar Hussain Khan, Ustad Amir Khan, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, Pt. Kumar Gandharva, Kesarbai Kerkar and Smt. Gangubai

Hangal are all vocalists. Among the instrumentalists Baba Allaiddin Khan, Pt. Ravi Shankar, Ustad Bismillah Khan, Ustad Alla Rakkha Khan, Ustad Zakir Hussain are some of the well known musicians [7].

Folk Music

Besides classical music India has a rich legacy of folk or popular music. This music represents the emotion of the masses. The simple songs are composed to mark every event in life. They may be festivals, advent of a new season, marriage or birth of a child. Rajasthani folk songs such as Mand and Bhatiali of Bengal are popular all over India. Ragini is a popular form of folk songs of Haryana. Folk songs have their special meanings or messages. They often describe historical events and important rituals. Kashmir's Gulraj is usually a folklore and Pandyani of Madhya Pradesh is a narrative put to music. Muslims sing Sojkhwani or mournful songs during Muharram and Christmas carols and choral music are sung in groups on the festive occasions.

Dances of India

In traditional Indian culture the function of dance was to give symbolic expression to religious ideas. The figure of Lord Shiva as Nataraja represents the creation and destruction of the cosmic cycle. The popular image of Shiva in the form of Nataraja clearly shows the popularity of dance form on the Indian people. There is not a single temple atleast in the southern part of the country which does not show the sculptures of the dancers in their different forms. In fact classical dance forms like Kathakali, Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Manipuri, Kuchi pudi and Odishi are an important part of our cultural heritage. It is difficult to say at what point of time dance originated, but it is obvious that dance came into existence as an effort to express joy. Gradually dances came to be divided as folk and classical. The classical form of dance was performed in temples as well as in royal courts. The dance in temples had a religious objective whereas in courts it was used purely for entertainment. In both cases for the artists devoted to this art form, it was no less than praying to God.

In southern India Bharatanatyam and Mohiniattam developed as an important aspect of the rituals in temples. Yakshagana, a form of Kathakali in Kerala, tells us stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata whereas Kathak and Manipuri are mostly related to the stories of Krishna and his leela (exploits). Performance of Odissi is related to the worship of Lord Jagannath. Though the Krishna leela and the stories related to

Lord Shiva was the theme of Kathak, this dance came to be performed in royal courts in medieval times. Manipuri dance was also performed for religious purposes. Folk dances evolved from the lives of common people and were performed in unison. In Assam people celebrate most of the harvesting season through Bihu. Similarly Garba of Gujarat, Bhangra and Gidda of Punjab, bamboo dance of Mizoram, Koli, the fisherman's dance of Maharashtra, Dhumal of Kashmir, and Chhau of Bengal are unique examples of performing arts that gave expression to the joys and sorrows of the masses [8].

As far as the analytical study of this art form is concerned, the Natyashastra of Bharata, is a primary source of information, and basically deals with drama. Bharata has discussed dance and its various angas (limbs) in detail. Facial expressions, body movements, hasta mudras and the footsteps have all been brought together under three broad categories namely, as nritta (pada sanchalan), nritya (anga sanchalan) and natya (abhinay). Both men and women took keen interest in dance but generally women dancers were looked down upon in society. However, with the efforts of great music thinkers and various religious and social reform movements, people have started to hold women performers with great respect.

Presently, all the three art forms are flourishing in the country. Musical institutions have opened up giving opportunities to many. Schools, universities have departments of music. Indira Kala Vishwa Vidyalaya of Khairagarh is a university of music, Gandharva Maha- Vidyalaya, Kathak Kendra and many institutes in the south are all propagating music in their own ways. Music conferences, Baithaks, lecture, demonstrations are all spreading music to nooks and corners of India. Societies like Spic-macay, India International Rural Cultural Centre have worked very hard to bring about a rapport and bondage with artists and the modern generation. Abroad musicians have also flourished and different institutions of music started by Pt. Ravi Shankar, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, Alla Rakkha etc. are prestigious teaching centres for foreigners. Many foreign universities also have facilities of art forms giving degrees and diplomas to students. All over the world Indian artists are invited to perform and participate in various festivals and occasions [9].

CONCLUSION

In the last few decades the status of dance as well as its performers has changed. Young people have started

learning dance to enrich their personal qualities. In some of the schools, colleges and universities separate departments have been established for imparting training in dance. Several renowned classical dancers have been awarded national awards like the Padmashree and the Padmabhusan. Throughout the different periods of history starting from the dancing figure found in the Indus valley civilization to the present, Indian people have expressed their joys and sorrows by singing and dancing through various art forms. This art form has been used to express their love, hatred, their aspirations and their struggle for survival which ultimately led to the enrichment of our culture. Indian classical music is a highly disciplined and codified art form, passed down through generations of musicians and scholars. It requires years of dedicated training, mastery of intricate techniques, and an intuitive understanding of the improvisational aspect of performance. The music is performed in various settings, including concerts, recitals, and religious ceremonies, where it serves as a means of spiritual and emotional expression. In conclusion, the divisions within Indian classical music, such as Hindustani classical music and Carnatic classical music, play a crucial role in shaping the unique character and expressions of this ancient musical tradition. These divisions, with their specific melodic, rhythmic, and stylistic nuances, provide a framework for musicians to explore the vast repertoire, engage in improvisation, and connect with the deep spiritual and emotional aspects of the music. Indian classical music continues to inspire and captivate audiences worldwide with its timeless beauty and profound artistic depth.

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A fundamental study of Drama: Indian Theatre

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ABSTRACT: This study provides a fundamental study of drama and Indian theatre, exploring its historical origins, key elements, performance styles, and cultural significance. Indian theatre has a rich and diverse tradition that spans thousands of years, encompassing various forms of dramatic expression. The study of Indian theatre begins with its ancient roots in Sanskrit drama. Sanskrit drama, originating around the 1st century BCE, is characterized by its poetic language, elaborate stagecraft, and profound philosophical themes. Influenced by the *Natyashastra*, a comprehensive treatise on performing arts, Sanskrit dramas were performed in royal courts and featured a blend of music, dance, and dialogue. Indian theatre extends beyond Sanskrit drama to encompass a wide range of regional and folk theatre traditions. Each region of India has its distinct theatrical forms, such as *Yakshagana* in Karnataka, *Kathakali* in Kerala, *Jatra* in West Bengal, and *Nautanki* in Uttar Pradesh. These traditions often incorporate local languages, music, dance, and cultural themes, reflecting the diversity and vibrancy of Indian culture. The key elements of Indian theatre include *rasa* (emotional flavor), *bhava* (expression), *abhinaya* (gesture and acting), and *natya* (theatrical presentation). *Rasa*, representing the emotional essence of a performance, is central to Indian theatre aesthetics. *Bhava* refers to the expression of various emotions through facial expressions, body language, and vocal modulation. *Abhinaya* encompasses the art of conveying meaning through gestures, movements, and expressions. *Natya* combines all these elements to create a cohesive and immersive theatrical experience.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Drama, Geography, Heritage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous tradition as well as modern research trace the origin of Indian drama to the Vedas. In the Ramayana we hear of drama troupes of women while Kautilya's Arthashastra mentions musicians, dancers and dramatic shows. Drama is a performing art, which has also been practised since times immemorial. Drama could spring from a child's play. The child enacts, mimics, and caricatures which was definitely the beginning of drama. Since early times mythological stories of war between the gods, goddesses and the devils is known. Bharata wrote *Natyashastra* and created the plays known as *Asura Parajaya* and *Amrit Manthan*. *Natyashastra* is one of the greatest texts written in the field of drama and other performing arts. The next epoch is that of the great Bhasa who wrote plays based on the stories of Udayana, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, Swapana Vasabhatta being his masterpiece. In the second century B.C. Patanjali's *Mahabhasya* refers to several aspects of drama i.e. the actors, the music, the stage, *rasa* in the performances called *Kamsavadha* and *Balibandha*. While referring to drama, Bharata has mentioned *nat* (male artists), and *nati* (female artist), music, dance, musical instruments, dialogues, themes and stage. Thus we find that drama achieved a great level of perfection during the age of Bharata. For Bharata, drama is a

perfect means of communication. He also started the concept of an enclosed area for drama. There is mention of a community called 'shailoosh' which had professional drama companies. The practice of singing heroic tales became popular. As a result professional singers called *kushilavas* came into existence.

During the age of the Buddha and Mahavira, drama was a means of communicating the principles of their respective religions. Short skits and long plays were enacted to preach and educate the masses. Music and dance also played a vital role in increasing the appeal of drama. In the ancient period till the tenth century, the language of the educated, was Sanskrit. So dramas were performed mostly in this language. However, characters belonging to lower classes and women were made to speak Prakrit. Kautilya's Arthashastra Vatsyayan's *Kamasutra*, Kalidasa's *Abhijnan Shakuntalam* were all written in Sanskrit and were significant plays of those times. Bhasa was another celebrated dramatist who wrote thirteen plays. Prakrit plays became popular by the tenth century AD. Vidyapati who lived sometime during the fourteenth century was an important dramatist. He introduced Hindi and other regional languages in the form of songs. Umapati Mishra and Sharada Tanaya were also instrumental in promoting drama during this time [1], [2]. In the context of drama, two types developed- the classic drama, which had intricacies of theme and

subtle nuances of dramatic traits and folk theatre. It was of spontaneous and extempore nature. Local dialect was used in folk theatre and hence in different provinces many types of folk theatres developed. Acting with accompaniment of music and dance was the popular practice. Many names were given to the forms of folk theatre in different provinces like: Bengal - Jatra, Kirtania Natak, Bihar-Bideshia, Rajasthan - Raas, Jhumar, Dhola Maru, Uttar Pradesh - Raas, Nautanki, Svaang, Bhaand, Gujarat – Bhawaii, Maharashtra - Larite, Tamasha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka - Kathakali, Yakshagana

Instruments like dhol, kartal, manjira, khanjira were some props used in folk theatre. The medieval period was rich in music and dance but theatre did not get much prominence. Wajid Ali Shah, a great patron of art was also an important patron of drama. He enthused artists to participate in theatre and supported them. In the southern region, folk theatre with the use of local dialects was more popular. The advent of the British in the country changed the character of the society. In the eighteenth century a theatre was established in Calcutta by an Englishman. A Russian named Horasim Lebedev founded a Bengali theatre which marked the beginning of modern Indian theatre in India. English drama, especially by Shakespeare, influenced Indian drama. The stages evolved by educated Indians were different from traditional open air theatre. The stages now had rolling curtains and change of scenes. A Parsi company founded in Bombay showed that theatre could be used for commercial purposes. Dramas began to depict tragedies, comedies and the complexities of urban life. Dramas were now written in different regional languages. Side by side, folk theatre like jatra, nautanki, khyal (Rajasthani folk), and naach also flourished. Another aspect which influenced performing arts was the adaptation of folk forms to classical forms. Connoisseurs in different fields made their respective arts a medium for serving the cause of the masses. So they adapted the popular folk arts to reach out to people. A similar situation appeared in the case of writing of drama. Vidyasundar, a popular drama of the medieval period, was influenced by jatra. Geet Govinda, an exemplary work by the great poet Jayadev, weaved stories of Krishna in kirtania natak and jatra style.

At present, a lot of experiments are taking place in the field of drama. Western influences are very clear in the works of Shambhu Mitra, Feisal Alkazi, Badal Sarkar, Vijay Tendulkar and others. Presently, various types of dramas are flourishing and some of them are: Stage

theatre, Radio theatre, Nukkar or street plays, Mono drama (one man show), Musical theatre, Short skits, one act plays etc. For the content and thematic aspect of dance and drama, we must examine the works of creative literature. The most important literary event, which influenced not only dance and drama but painting also, was the composition of Jayadeva's Gita-Govinda in the 13th century. Its great impact can be seen on dance and drama forms all over India from Manipur and Assam in the east to Gujarat in the west; from Mathura and Vrindavan in the North, to Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the South... Innumerable commentaries on the Gita- Govinda exist throughout the country. There are a large number of manuscripts dealing with the Gita-Govinda as material for dance or drama and this work has been the basic literary text used by many regional theatrical traditions. The spread of Vaisnavism during this period gave further impetus to the development of different forms of dance, drama and music.

DISCUSSION

Drama is an art form which has a long historical background in India but its analytical review and grammatical study was presented by Bharata in Natyashastra. In this text, it has been mentioned that music and dance are essential parts of drama. Ramayana, Mahabharata and the plays, written by Kalidasa, Bana Bhatta and Bhasa are examples of the combination of all the three art forms- music, dance and drama. Some of the popular dramas are as follows: Meghadutam Kalidasa, Abhijnan Shakuntalam Kalidasa, Padmavati Madhusudan, Harshacharitam Bana Bhatta, Neel Devi Bharatendu, Satya Harish Chandra Bharatendu, Andher Nagri Bharatendu, Chandraval Jai Shankar Prasad, Ajatshatru Jai Shankar Prasad, Rajyashri Jai Shankar Prasad, Chandragupta Jai Shankar Prasad, Prayashchit Jai Shankar Prasad, Karunalaya Jai Shankar Prasad, Bharatendu Jai Shankar Prasad.

Historical Analysis and some other aspects of Indian Theatre

Theatre is very much a part of India's ancient history. It was earlier believed to have Greek influences but this notion is today dismissed. Early Indian theatre was indigenous with ancient texts like Rigveda, Atharvaveda and the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana providing material for playwrights. A fifth Veda concerned with a religiously correct form of drama was later added and it became known as 'Bharata's Natyashastra'. This text, originally written

in Sanskrit, is particularly striking due to its detailed directives on how theatre ought to be performed. India had its own bards - Kalidas, Bhavabuti and Bhrata. The first famous play for Europeans was Kalidasa's Shakuntala which was translated by Sir William Jones in 1789.

Modern Indian theatre emerged during British rule. It began as an outlet to vent frustration against the rulers. Soon enough it became the medium through which various socioeconomic issues like secularism, nationalism and casteism were highlighted. This was the only time the concept of 'national theatre' came up, according to theatre critic and playwright Ramu Ramanathan: "Arts and creatives became absorbed in the larger movement aiding political parties. However, after Independence, regionalism took over and Indian theatre was no longer national."

Regionalism is the most striking feature of modern Indian theatre. In a country with 29 states and 114 identified languages the formation of regional theatre was inevitable. Bhavai from Gujarat, Nautanki from Uttar Pradesh, Tamasha from Maharashtra etc were all highly popular in amongst their individual linguistic audiences. Hindi theatre and the newly formed English theatre became part of the urban landscape. The 80s were one of the golden decades of theatre with the emergence of playwrights such as Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Sarkar, who apart from writing their own plays took interest in their contemporaries and translated their works. This brought a sense of unification again but it was short-lived.

According to Mr Ramanathan, English theatre in India has taken a few baby steps. "It is not as big as regional theatre but things have tremendously improved in the last 10-15 years. However Indian-English plays are yet to acquire the same popularity as an Indian-English novel or film." This does not imply the absence of native Indian languages in cities. Gujarati theatre today remains highly popular, producing about 40 plays a year with some productions even staging shows abroad. Theatre veteran Darshan Jariwala thinks it is possible to live full-time off Gujarati theatre as they are popular and many plays are formulaic. He says, "Gujarati and Marathi mainstreams are not attuned to welcoming substantial experimentations; they do have a 'parallel' theatre movement, which is heartening."

This highlights an important factor instrumental in Indian theatre today-finance. Manhar Gadhia, a theatre producer with over three decades of experience, suggests choosing between experimental and commercial theatre has been an issue since day one.

He says: "Experimental plays can hardly see profits in terms of money. One can expect acknowledgment, goodwill, awareness about one's group and sometimes minimal profit or break-even cost. It's a different scene in commercial theatre [3], [4]. Either you make profits or losses; it's simple business like any other."

Present Scenario of the Performing Arts

Presently, all the three art forms i.e. dance, music and drama are flourishing in the country. Several music institutions like Gandharva Mahavidyalaya and Prayag Sangeet Samiti have been imparting training in classical music and dance for more than fifty years. A number of schools, colleges and universities in India have adopted these art forms as a part of their curriculum. Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwa Vidyalaya of Khairagarh is a university of music. Kathak Kendra, National School of Drama, Bharatiya Kala Kendra and many institutes are all propagating music in their own ways. Music conferences, baithaks, lecture demonstrations are being organised and musicians, music scholars, music teachers and music critics are trying to popularise music and dance. Societies like Spic-macay, Sangeet Natak Academies are also working hard to protect, develop and popularise Indian music, dance and drama at the national and even international level.

At the international level musicians have made significant contribution. Different institutions of music started by Pt. Ravi Shankar, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and Ustad Alla Rakha Khan teach Indian music to foreigners. Many foreign universities have departments of Indian performing arts and they award degrees and diplomas to students. All over the world Indian artists are invited to perform and participate in various festivals. Various agencies like Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Ministry of Human Resource Development continuously propagate all these art forms by giving grants, scholarships and fellowships to renowned artists as well as to young artists and by arranging exchange programmes in the field of Indian music, dance and drama.

Indian Cinema

From Raja Harishchandra to 'Hate Story', Indian Cinema has had a profound effect on motion pictures across the world since the early 20th century. A hundred years ago Dada Saheb Phalke made a movie about a king who never lied. Phalke's inspiration came from an English film 'The Life and Passion of Christ' and he too wanted to translate the lives of Indian Gods to the screen.

Silent Era

On May 3, 2012 Indian Film industry turned 100. Going back in the silent era, producer director Dadasaheb Phalke laid the foundation stone of Indian film Industry with a block buster 'Raja Harishchandra'. The movie was first screened on May 3, 1913. Phalke introduced India to world cinema at a time when working in films was taboo. As working in cinema was forbidden, there were only male actors in the first Indian film 'Raja Harishchandra'

First Talkie Film

Though, Indian cinema waited for almost 18 years to get the first sound film Alam Ara. Directed by Ardeshir Irani, Alam Ara was first debuted at the Majestic Cinema in Mumbai on March 1931. The movie received huge response from the audience and police aid was sought to control the mob outside the Majestic Cinema. The movie also set the trend for Friday release in Indian film industry. At this period, people started recognizing film making as an art and started attracting talents from all corner of society.

First Colour Film

'Kisan Kanya' was a 1937 Hindi feature film which was directed by Moti B. Gidvani and produced by Ardeshir Irani of Imperial Pictures. It is largely remembered by the Indian public on account of it being India's first indigenously made colour film.

Indian Cinema and Politics

A study of the vicissitudes of Indian cinema would throw light on the progress of technology, especially cinematography, and the changing political scene and social mores and attitudes. The silent films launched by Phalke, which had titles in English, Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu, by and large related to myths and legends. The stories were familiar to the audience and required minimum commentary. Historicals also proved very popular; Harsh, Chandragupta, Ashoka and the Mughal and Maratha kings strode the silver screen amidst cardboard pillars and in tinsel costumes. Strangely enough, while in the nineties we are still arguing over whether or not 'kissing' should be shown on screen, in the first decade of Indian cinema, with the British paying scant attention to censorship except when the Establishment was attacked in any way; leading heroines of the day kissed their leading men without inhibitions, like Lalita Pawar in *Pati Bhakti* (1922). With the advent of Gandhiji came the plea for according a better status to women, the removal of untouchability and a cry for religious harmony. The silent era of Hiralal Sen, Baburao Painter and R.

Nataraja Mudaliar came to an end when Adershir M. Irani produced his first talkie, Alam Ara in 1931. If Phalke was the father of Indian cinema, Irani was the father of the talkie. But the talking film had come to stay. Considering that even the silent film had a preponderance of songs, the talkie came to be more of a single; the heroes and heroines sang their way through the three-four hour movie. Histrionics and appearances counted less; a singing talent was all that mattered. To this day the Indian film song has a unique thrill. The music director, the song writer and the playback singers have an unparalleled status in India's cinema [5], [6].

While it is almost impossible to even list all the luminaries of Indian cinema over ten decades, the Wadia Brothers deserve special mention, before going into the different genres. JBH and Homi Wadia were the forerunners of the stunt film the thirties was a period in Indian cinema when 'Wadia' and 'Nadia' were synonymous. Australian by birth, Mary Evans came to India with a dance troupe. She became stunt actress for the Wadias, earning the sobriquet "Fearless Nadia".

The forties was a tumultuous decade; the first half was ravaged by war and the second saw drastic political changes all over the world. Filmmakers delved into contemporary themes. V. Shantaram, the doyen of lyrical films, made Dr. Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani- a tribute to Dr. Dwaraknath Kotnis who went out with a medical team to China and died there. South Indian films also gained great footing. AVM and Gemini were two of the most prolific producers turning out social drama in the South Indian languages as well as in Hindi. While the thespian actor Shivaji Ganesan delivered mind boggling soliloquies on screen, many of the politically inclined writers and actors of the south Indian screen began to use the medium for reaching out to people. The DMK stalwarts, Annadurai, Karunanidhi and MG Ramachandran did not even resort to subtlety. Just how effective was the use of the medium was amply proved with the party coming to power and MGR getting voted Chief Minister of the state. With government funds available for making films, the seventies saw an unhealthy divide between the existing commercial or mainstream cinema and the new parallel cinema or art films.

In the nineties, Indian cinema faces tough competition from television; the cable network gives viewers any number of channels and though the most popular channels continue to be the film based ones, the cinema halls have taken a beating. Cinema in India can never cease, it has gone too deep into our psyche. It

may undergo several reverses in fortune. With other mediums opening up, there will be a smaller market for films. Living as we are in a global village today, we are becoming a more discerning audience. Bollywood movies naturally comprise the majority of Indian film industry, while regional films make up the rest (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Bengali, Gujarati, and Bhojpuri etc). From Teflon coated candy floss romances peppered with lavish song-dance sequences shot in exotic locales, gritty underworld flicks, coming of age pangs of 20-somethings, kick butt action capers to social melodramas and tickle you pink stories - the Indian movies have just about touched every genre of entertainment.

The annual National Awards, in fact, makes it amply clear how little we know of Indian cinema beyond Bollywood and some regional language films. Pather Panchali(1955) directed by Satyajit Ray was among the earliest Indian films to have received global recognition (it got 11 international awards). Indian cinema has an identity that is very unique and unmatched. We have moved from the black and white silent films to 3D, but our cinema continues to retain its basic essence - to thrill. In the last 25-30 years, so many changes have innovated the way movies are made. If anyone watches a movie made in the 1970s now in a theatre, one would realise the technological limitations which the producers and directors faced then. There was no paid subscription television and even India's Doordarshan was limited to a few State capitals and aired the immensely popular dance and songs show Chitrahaar and a movie every Sunday. The certification rules also apply to foreign films imported into India dubbed films and video films. In the case of dubbed films, the Board does not have any fresh censorship for the visuals in general cases. The Certification does not apply to films made specifically for Doordarshan, since Doordarshan has its own system of examining such films.

National Film Awards

The National Film Awards are India's most prestigious awards for cinema. It began in 1954 and is managed by the Directorate of Film Festivals which was established in 1973.

The awards are given in several categories for Indian films made in Hindi and other regional languages. The 'Swarna Kamal' or the 'Golden Lotus Award' is given for the following categories: Best Film, Best Direction, Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment and Best Children's Film, while the 'Rajat Kamal' or the 'Silver Lotus Award' is given for

Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Art Direction, Best Music Direction and Best Lyrics among others.

India has the unique distinction of producing the largest number of films anywhere in the world and in many languages. India produces more than 1000 feature films and 900 short films every year. At a rough estimate, a total of about 15 million people see films in India every day, either in its over 13,000 cinema houses, or on Video and Cable. Films have played a major role in developing a post-Independence Indian identity. They have served as a very useful and emphatic medium to portray social, economic and political realities of the Indian society at different times. Films had a pervasive influence on the psyche of a common Indian, who often identified himself with the central character of the film, be it a hero or the heroine. For most Indians, cinema is integral to their lives; it is not a distant, 2-3 hour distraction, but a vicarious lifestyle for them. The large screen provides an alternative, an escape from the realities of day-to-day life. The cinema has largely been an urban phenomenon in India except in some states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, where they are equally popular in rural areas right from the beginning [7], [8].

The association of people with these art forms definitely makes them better human beings as the very nature of music, dance and drama elevates human soul and creates a pleasant atmosphere. The knowledge and practice of these art forms help in the development of one's personality. The people involved in these art forms can attain balance and peace of mind, self-restraint and love for all. Their performance makes them self-confident and capable of adapting to all circumstances. Negative feelings vanish as the soul of music, dance and drama teaches us all about loving and caring.

The three art forms - music, dance and drama have been an integral aspect of Indian culture. We owe much to Bharata, the author of Natyashastra for his contribution in the field of drama. The political turmoil in the country for many years did not diminish the influence of these art forms. The masses and the experts both took great pains and interest to retain the classicism in the art forms. Performing arts in India have been influenced to a significant extent by the Western impact. Even in the present times, there is an enhanced status of these art forms in the country and abroad. Drama is an art form which has a long historical background in India but its analytical review and grammatical study was presented by Bharata in Natyashastra. It is difficult to say at what point of time

dance originated, but it is obvious that dance came into existence as an effort to express joy. Gradually dances came to be divided as folk and classical. The classical form of dance was performed in temples as well as in royal courts. The dance in temples had a religious objective whereas in courts it was used purely for entertainment. In both cases for the artists devoted to this art form, it was no less than praying to God. In India the cinema industry is very famous. Making of cinema in India was started since the first decade of 20th century. Indian cinema industry is further extend its scope because a large number of films were produced every years in various vernacular languages of India. From Raja Harishchandra to 'Hate Story', Indian Cinema has had a profound effect on motion pictures across the world since the early 20th century. A hundred years ago Dada Saheb Phalke made a movie about a king who never lied.

CONCLUSION

Indian theatre is not only a form of entertainment but also serves as a medium for social commentary, cultural preservation, and spiritual exploration. It often addresses important social issues, mythological narratives, historical events, and moral dilemmas. Theatre festivals and performances continue to play a significant role in contemporary Indian society, fostering cultural exchange, community engagement, and artistic expression. The study of Indian theatre involves exploring its historical evolution, performance techniques, textual analysis, and cultural context. Scholars and practitioners delve into the rich repertoire of classical and folk plays, analyze the nuances of character portrayals, and study the various aspects of stagecraft, costume, and music. In conclusion, a fundamental study of drama and Indian theatre reveals the depth, diversity, and artistic excellence of this ancient art form. From Sanskrit

drama to regional and folk traditions, Indian theatre encompasses a vast range of performances that reflect the cultural heritage, social dynamics, and spiritual aspirations of the Indian subcontinent. The study of Indian theatre provides valuable insights into the history, aesthetics, and sociocultural dimensions of this dynamic and ever-evolving art form.

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Modes of Cultural Exchange: Through Traders, Teachers, Emissaries, Missionaries and Gypsies

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ABSTRACT: *This study explores the modes of cultural exchange through traders, teachers, emissaries, missionaries, and gypsies, highlighting their role in facilitating the exchange of ideas, customs, and knowledge between different cultures throughout history. Traders have long played a significant role in cultural exchange, as they traverse trade routes, establish commercial networks, and interact with diverse communities. Through their journeys, traders introduce new goods, technologies, and practices, while also assimilating local customs and traditions. This exchange of goods and ideas fosters cultural fusion and creates opportunities for cross-cultural interactions. Teachers and scholars have been instrumental in the transmission of knowledge and ideas across cultures. Through educational institutions, mentoring relationships, and scholarly exchanges, teachers facilitate the spread of intellectual and artistic traditions. They impart language, philosophy, literature, science, and religious teachings, shaping the cultural landscape of societies and fostering intellectual growth. Emissaries and diplomats represent their respective cultures and engage in diplomatic exchanges with other nations. Their interactions promote understanding, forge alliances, and facilitate cultural diplomacy. Emissaries convey the values, traditions, and customs of their homeland, while also acquiring knowledge and insights from the host culture, leading to mutual enrichment.*

KEYWORDS: *Cultural Exchange, Diversity, Drama, Geography, Heritage, Indian Culture, Philosophy.*

INTRODUCTION

The culture of India has been one of the great civilizing and humanizing factors evolved by man. For centuries together, the general spiritual life of the larger part of the continent of Asia 'meant mainly its response to the call of the eternal ideas discovered, systematized and humanized by the sages and saints of ancient India. In other word, cultures in Asia has been a complex fabric of life woven by several different strands of which India is the most prominent. Undoubtedly, India was a civilizing force in many backward countries of Asia. India was a civilizer, after the synthesis of Hindu culture, from about the beginning of the first millennium B.C down to the closing centuries of the first millennium A.D. Because it was during this long period that there was the cultural unification if India and it went on simultaneously with the cultural expansion of India in to overseas countries like Ceylon, Burma, Siam or Thailand, Indo-China, Malaya, Indonesia and to a large extent in to the countries of North-West like Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Turkmenistan in Central Asia. The transformation of the eastern countries like China, Korea and Japan was achieved through their close contact with the spiritual forces from India.

Thus in moulding the Asian culture, Indian share has been very significant. But India or more precisely the Hindu culture of India was not a civilizing force merely. It brought to them intellectual awakening, social consciousness and material prosperity. With many backward races of Asia, the sense of social order and organization, arts and crafts seems to have drowned for the first time with the advent of merchants and the Brahman and Buddhist missionaries from India. It not only brought material to uplift these backward peoples, but their dormant intellectual and other powers and talents were quickened to life and they were enabled to attain the fulfillment of those powers without any difficulty or hindrance. The Hindu culture thus helped other peoples to make their own contributions to world civilization, while it absorbed them and participated in the deeper and wider life [1], [2].

The Hindu culture brought to other nations their own spiritual ideas and values. In the case of an ancient and highly cultural people like the Chinese, contact with Indian thought gave the finishing touch in the formation and in the highest expression of their culture. Buddhism which was carried to China by the Indians brought home the Chinese the necessity of going into the fundamental questions of existence and

endeavor. Java and Siam, China and Japan enjoyed richness of life and witnessed the astonishing efflorescence of their minds and spirits manifesting itself in literature, fine arts and religious rituals which contact with Indian culture brought about. Assimilation and unfoldment and not hindrance and suppression was the key note of Hindu cultural expansion. Indian philosophy and culture went abroad not to destroy and ruin but to awaken and fulfill. It went there like the refreshing showers and life giving rain and not like the burning wind or the killing blight. Hence their achievement, unlike that of the western culture, is more than that of a mere force of material civilization or civilized organization.

Wherever the Indians went and settled, they spread their own culture but at the same time were absorbing the native cultural trends. Consequently, they evolved a new culture the key note of which was Indian. Thus, they created culture in other Asiatic countries, the values of which were awareness of the unity of the life and a love for the ultimate and the universal in preference to the immediate and the particulars. Even though India is surrounded by sea on three sides and the Himalayan in the north but that did not stop Indians from interacting with the rest of the world. In fact they travelled far and wide and left their cultural footprints wherever they went. In return they also brought home ideas, impressions, customs and traditions from these distant lands. However, the most remarkable aspect of this contact has been the spread of Indian culture and civilization in various parts of the world, especially Central Asia, South East Asia, China, Japan, Korea etc. What is most remarkable of this spread is that it was not a spread by means of conquest or threat to life of an individual or society but by means of voluntary acceptance of cultural and spiritual values of India. In this lesson we shall find out how Indian culture spread to other countries and the impact it had on these countries. This lesson also brings forward the beautiful idea that peace and friendship with other nations, other societies, other religions and other cultures help our lives and make it more meaningful [3], [4].

Colonial and Cultural Expansion

From time immemorial, the people of India had been maintaining free and intimate intercourse with the outside world, even in the pre-historic age, the Neolithic people had relations with countries of the Far East, and they emigrated in large numbers, both by land and sea and settled in Indo-China and the Indian Archipelago. In succeeding ages, while a rich and prosperous civilization of high degree flourished in the Indus valley, there was undoubtedly friendly and

familiar intercourse with the countries of western and central Asia. Of the two important races that moulded to a great extent Indian culture and civilization, the Aryans and the Dravidians entered into India from outside and necessary relations were established and maintained by them, at least for a few centuries, with the countries where they had lived before the occupation of India. From very ancient times, India had commercial relations both with the lands of the East and the West. The stories of the Mahabharat, the Jataks and the Katha Sarit Sagar have references to Indian merchants sailing to the countries beyond the seas in search of gain. A Jataka story informs us how Indian merchants sailed to the lands of Baveru (Babylon) with a varied cargo that included an Indian peacock. Other stories relate how Indian traders sailed to the region stretching from Burma to Indonesia-called Suvarnabhumi. Thus India had trade relations with Babylon, Syria and Egypt in the most ancient periods.

In the centuries immediately preceding the Christian Era, India had commercial and cultural relations with the countries of Central Asia in the north, Greek kingdoms of the west and the islands of the Pacific in the west. In the Mauryan period, such relation became more definite, compared to the past. The accounts of the Periplus and Pliny inform us that Indian merchants and missionaries sailed from such harbours as Barbarika, Barygaza, Muziris, Neleyanda, Bakari, Korkai and Puhar. Later on for the commercial purpose, Indians settled in some islands of the Arabian sea and the island of Sacotra and the port of Alexandria had colonies of Indian merchants. When the Roman Empire came into existence, Indians maintained political and commercial relations with the Romans. In the seventh century, when the Arabs controlled land and sea routes, India carried on active trade with the Arabs. Thus India's commercial relations with Babylonia, Syria, Egypt, Greece, Rome and Arabia left traces of Indian culture on the Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Arabian cultures, because culture and civilization follow in the wake of trade and commerce. Indian merchants, Buddhist and Brahmana missionaries, adventurous Kshatriya princes and enterprising emigrants sailed from India and settled down in the countries and islands of South-East Asia. There they introduced Indian customs, manners, philosophy, religions, rituals, literature and fine arts. In due course, they intermarried with the local peoples and Indianised them. Indianised kingdom soon came into being, either as a result of Indian imposing himself on the native population, or else through native chief

adopting Indian civilization. This process of Indianisation commenced in the third century B.C, and continued till the 13th Century A.D. It would, therefore, be not unreasonable to conclude that India had never led lonely and isolated life, completely cut off from the rest of the world. The view that ancient Indians were a stay-at-home people isolated from rest of mankind by mountains and ocean barriers and leading a peaceful, quiet and unadventurous life, within the discoveries. Many remains of Indian culture in various parts of Asia have been brought to light. These indicate that Indians went beyond the sea and the mountains that gird her and established colonies. Indian art and literature reaped its head abroad and Indian culture penetrated into some of the obscure corners of the world. [5]

DISCUSSION

Causes for the Hindu Cultural Expansion

It is true that cultures have been spreading in the wake of conquest and commerce. Undoubtedly, the spread of Hindu culture in the Far East began through commercial relations between Indian and the countries of the Far East. Lucrative commerce and economic gains encouraged Indians to sail across the Indian Ocean, go to distant lands and suffer innumerable difficulties and dangers. Being situated in the Indian Ocean, India occupied central position and in ancient times was on the sea-routes to culture and civilized countries of the world. Her geographical position enabled India to form a link between the East and the West. Consequently, Indians undertook innumerable voyages for the commerce. In ancient India Eastern countries like Java, Sumatra, Malaya were regarded as the veritable El Dorado which constantly eluded enterprising traders by promising immense riches to them. This view is reflected in the name *suvarnavipa* or *Suvaranabhumi* (Land of gold) which was applied to this vast region of the Eastern countries. The desire to acquire immense gold provided a potent stimulus to the Indians to sail to these countries. The uncivilized wild races came in close contact with these Indian merchants from whom they learnt the first lessons of culture.

Besides the enterprising merchants, the Buddhist missionaries and the Buddhist teachers, the torch-bearers of the Hindu culture accompanied the Indian merchant community to the distant lands. They carried the Indian thought and culture. But they did not go there as members of an alien ruling race with natural advantage by virtue of their superior position. Having no political power and administrative rights, Indian

missionaries used to mix amongst the wild and uncultured alien races and in face of overwhelming hindrances and great dangers used to deliver sermons to them and indirectly made them more cultured and civilized. Sometimes, Indian saints and sages set-up their hermitages in foreign lands, which in due course became the significant centres of Indian culture and spread the Indian cultural trends like a radio-station. Kaundinya and Agastya had such hermitages and Ashramas. Kaundinya's name is revered in inscriptions as the founder of the Hindu royal families in greater India.

Besides these two agencies –Indian merchants and missionaries many Indians who settled in foreign lands, contributed substantially towards Hindu cultural expansion. They had established their own colonies. Naturally, their cultural influence on the foreign peoples was very deep and far reaching. Sometimes, adventurous young Kshatriya princes sailed to the distant regions to seek their fortunes and carve out new kingdoms for themselves. The history of Indo-China provides many examples of such Indian Kshatriya princes and persons of royal blood. Consequently, Indians had established a large number of Kingdoms in the eastern countries. They had offered their own valuable contribution towards the formation of greater India. Thus, the principal agencies for the cultural expansion were merchants, emigrants and Kshatriya princes of royal families.

However, it should be noted that the Hindu culture did not spread in the wake of a world conquering king who carried head of his legions fire and sword, savage barbarians and innumerable sufferings. India neither enforced her cultural aggressively nor make herself manifest to the outside world in the person of world shaker and conqueror like Alexander, Caesar, Mahamad Ghaani, Chengiz Khan, Timur and Nadir Shah. Her *Digvijaya* or world conquest was the conquest of truth and law- the *Dharma Vijaya*. Those who disseminated Hindu culture abroad were impelled by inner spiritual urge and conscious will to carry the message of ideal spiritual life into distant lands. Their yearning for the general welfare and salvation of all persons inspired them to settle down in inaccessible lands and sacrifice themselves for the realization of the highest good and the conquest of piety. Herein lays the eternal glory of the Hindu culture. It built a unique empire-an empire sharing not in a political life under a suzerain, but in a common cultural and spiritual life in a commonwealth of free peoples. The empire that India built overseas and overland was conquered by the piety and the religious energy. The guiding

principles of this empire was Dharma or religious culture and righteousness Indian colonial empire differed fundamentally from those of western nations. Though Indians had established their colonies in the south-east Asia, but they did not think it right to settle down their growing population there, nor did they regard these colonies as profitable market for their expanding industries and increasing commerce. These colonies were never exploited anyway by the Indian emigrants' or conquerors. Moreover, there is nothing to show that the Indian states derived any political advantage or economic gain from this extensive empire. It is even doubtful whether the colonial powers maintained any regular contact with the political powers in India though the claims of Samudragupta that he exercised suzerainty over all the islands of South-East Asia might have reference to some of them. But the most outstanding effect of the establishment of this overseas Hindu Empire was the spread of Hindu culture and civilization in the distant lands [6], [7].

Medium of Indian cultural expansion

In ancient times, traders from India went to distant lands in search of new opportunities in business. They went to Rome in the west and China in the east. As early as the first century BC, they travelled to countries like Indonesia and Cambodia in search of gold. They travelled especially to the islands of Java, Sumatra and Malaya. This is the reason why these countries were called Suvarnadvipa (suvarna means gold and dvipa means island). These traders travelled from many flourishing cities like Kashi, Mathura, Ujjain, Prayag and Pataliputra and from port cities on the east coast like Mamallapuram, Tamralipti, Puri, and Kaveripattanam. The kingdom of Kalinga had trade relations with Sri Lanka during the time of Emperor Ashoka. Wherever the traders went, they established cultural links with those places. In this way, the traders served as cultural ambassadors and established trade relations with the outside world. Like the east coast, many cultural establishments have also been found on and near the west coast. Karle, Bhaja, Kanheri, Ajanta and Ellora are counted among the well known places. Most of these centres are Buddhist monastic establishments. The universities were the most important centres of cultural interaction. They attracted large numbers of students and scholars. The scholars coming from abroad often visited the library of Nalanda University which was said to be a seven storey building. Students and teachers from such universities carried Indian culture abroad along with its knowledge and religion. The Chinese pilgrim

Huien-tsang has given ample information about the universities he visited in India. For example, Huien-tsang describes his stay at two very important universities-one in the east, Nalanda and the other in the west, Valabhi.

Vikramashila was another university that was situated on the right bank of the Ganges. The Tibetan scholar Taranatha has given its description. Teachers and scholars of this university were so famous that the Tibetan king is stated to have sent a mission to invite the head of the university to promote interest in common culture and indigenous wisdom. Another university was Odantapuri in Bihar which grew in stature under the patronage of the Pala kings. A number of Monks migrated from this university and settled in Tibet. Two Indian teachers went to China on an invitation from the Chinese Emperor in AD 67. Their names are Kashyapa Martanga and Dharmarakshita. They were followed by a number of teachers from universities like Nalanda, Takshila, Vikramashila and Odantapuri. When Acharya Kumarajiva went to China, the king requested him to translate Sanskrit texts into Chinese. The scholar Bodhidharma, who specialised in the philosophy of Yoga is still venerated in China and Japan.

Acharya Kamalashela of Nalanda University was invited by the king of Tibet. After his death, the Tibetans embalmed his body and kept it in a monastery in Lhasa. Another distinguished scholar was Jnanabhadra. He went to Tibet with his two sons to preach Dharma. A monastery was founded in Tibet on the model of Odantapuri University in Bihar. The head of the Vikramashila University was Acharya Ateesha, also known as Dipankara Shreejnana. He went to Tibet in the eleventh century and gave a strong foundation to Buddhism in Tibet. Thonmi Sambhota, a Tibetan minister was a student at Nalanda when the Chinese pilgrim Huien-tsang visited India. Thonmi Sambhota studied there and after going back, he preached Buddhism in Tibet. A large number of Tibetans embraced Buddhism. Even the king became a Buddhist. He declared Buddhism as the State religion. Among the noteworthy teachers, Kumarajiva was active in the fifth century [6], [7].

Indian culture in East Asia

From Central Asia, Indian culture spread to China, Korea and Japan. The contact between India and China began around the 2nd Century B.C. Indian culture first entered China with two monk scholars-Kashyapa Martanga and Dharmarakshita who went to China in AD 67 on the invitation of the Chinese Emperor Ming Ti. After Kashyapa Martanga and Dharmarakshita,

there was a continuous flow of scholars from India to China and from China to India. The Chinese were a highly cultured people. They listened to the thrilling stories of the Buddha with great attention. The Chinese who came in search of wisdom wrote about India and the Indian culture to such an extent that today they are the most important sources of Indian history. Prominent teachers from the Indian Universities and monasteries became famous in China. For example, a scholar named Bodhidharma went to China from Kanchipuram. He went to Nalanda, studied there and left for China. He carried the philosophy of Yoga with him and popularized the practice of 'dhyana', (meditation), which was later known in China as ch'an. Bodhidharma became such an eminent figure that people began to worship him in China and Japan. The Buddhists philosophy appealed to the Chinese intellectuals because they already had a developed philosophical school in Confucianism. In the fourth century A.D the Wei Dynasty came to power in China. Its first Emperor declared Buddhism as the state religion. This gave an impetus to the spread of Buddhism in China. Thousands of Sanskrit books were translated into Chinese. Braving the hazards of a long and perilous journey they came to visit the land of the Buddha. They stayed in India and collected Buddhist relics and manuscripts related to Buddhism and learnt about it staying at the various educational centres. With the spread of Buddhism, China began to build cave temples and monastic complexes on a large scale. Colossal images were carved on the rocks and caves were beautifully painted from the inside. Dunhuang, Yun-kang and Lung-men are among the most famous cave complexes in the world. Indian influences are quite evident on these complexes. The two way traffic of scholars and monks was responsible for cultural contacts and exchange of ideas [8].

A number of Arab sources dating back to the tenth and thirteenth centuries inform us about several Indian works on medicine and therapeutics that were rendered into Arabic at the behest of the Caliph Harun al-Rashid, the ruler of Baghdad from AD 786 to 809. Indian scholars were also involved in these translations. For instance, the Sushruta Samhita was translated by an Indian called Mankh in Arabic. Apart from astronomy, astrology, mathematics, and medicine, Arabs admired with keen interest many other aspects of Indian culture and civilization as well. They translated Indian works on a wide variety of subjects, but did not remain satisfied with the translations and went on to work out original compositions based on or derived from the treatises

they translated. The other fields of Indian knowledge they studied included works on snake poison, veterinary art and books on logic, philosophy, ethics, politics and science of war. In the process their vocabulary was also enriched considerably. For instance, in the field of shipping, of which they were renowned masters, you can easily identify a number of Arabic words that had Indian origin: hoorti (a small boat) from hori, banavi from baniya orvanik, donij from dongi and so on.

India's contact with the Greco-Roman World

For a period of about a thousand years from the invasion of Darius to the sack of Rome by the Goath-India was in more or less constant communication with the west. Long before the arrival of Alexander the great on India's north-western border, there are references in early Indian literature calling the Greeks Yavanas. Panini, was acquainted with the word yavana in his composition. Katyayana explains the term yavanani as the script of the Yavanas.

The start of the so-called Hellenistic Period is usually taken as 323 BC, the year of death of Alexander in Babylon. During the previous decade of invasion, he had conquered the whole Persian Empire, overthrowing King Darius. He opened large number of colonies on the route through which he reached India and Alexander had indeed opened the East to an enormous wave of immigration, and his successors continued his policy by inviting Greek colonists to settle in their realms. Alexander's settlement of Greek colonists and culture in the east resulted in a new Hellenistic culture, aspects of which were evident until the mid-15th century. The overall result of Alexander's settlements and those of his successors was the spread of Hellenism as far east as India. Throughout the Hellenistic Period, Greeks and Easterners became familiar with and adapted themselves to each other's customs, religions, and ways of life. Although Greek culture did not entirely conquer the East, it gave the East a vehicle of expression that linked it to the West. The Greek not only opened the route between east and the west but as noted above largely emigrated and settled them in north- west India. The contact between India and the Hellenic world resulted in synthesis of east and of west which is clearly visible in the art and culture of India in the Pre Christian Era [9].

The Indians learnt many new things from the foreigners for examples minting of gold coins from the people of Greece and Rome. They learnt the art of making silk from China. They learnt how to grow betel from Indonesia. They established trade contact with the foreigners. The art and culture of the various

countries got itself reflected over the Indian culture as well as get reflected in the other countries also. The above study only throw a brief account on the different part of ancient world with whom India in ancient times maintain relation. In the subsequent study we will examine in details about the contact of Indian with above mentioned regions of ancient world with all their aspects. Indian culture spread to various parts of the world in ancient times through different modes. Indian Universities were famous for their standards of education which attracted students from many countries. These students acted as agents for spreading Indian culture. Sanskrit/Buddhist texts were translated into different languages. They became the best modes to spread Indian culture. A large number of monasteries and temples were built in all these countries where Indian culture and religion reached. Indian art styles were adopted by the artists of many countries. Indian Epics are famous in many countries. Missionaries, driven by religious beliefs, undertake journeys to spread their faith and engage in cultural exchange. They introduce new religious practices, rituals, and beliefs, while also adopting local customs and languages. Missionary activities often lead to the blending of religious and cultural traditions, giving rise to unique syncretic practices. Gypsies, with their nomadic lifestyle, have been carriers of cultural exchange. Their travels across regions bring them into contact with diverse communities, leading to the exchange of music, dance, storytelling, and craftsmanship. The nomadic lifestyle of gypsies facilitates the diffusion of cultural practices and traditions, contributing to the richness and diversity of global cultures. These modes of cultural exchange have shaped the course of human history, fostering cross-cultural understanding, innovation, and the development of shared identities. They have enabled the spread of art, literature, technology, and religious beliefs, leading to the formation of cultural hybridity and the emergence of new cultural expressions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the modes of cultural exchange through traders, teachers, emissaries, missionaries, and gypsies have played a crucial role in connecting diverse cultures, promoting mutual learning, and shaping the evolution of societies. These interactions have led to the fusion, adaptation, and transformation of cultural practices, contributing to the richness and diversity of human civilization. The understanding and appreciation of these modes of cultural exchange

enhance our knowledge of the interconnectedness and interdependence of global cultures throughout history.

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