



कला यस्मिन् प्रतिष्ठिताः
इन्दिरा गाँधी राष्ट्रीय कला केन्द्र
INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

Thoughts on Rivers and Riverine Culture

4th Nadi Utsav Seminar Proceedings

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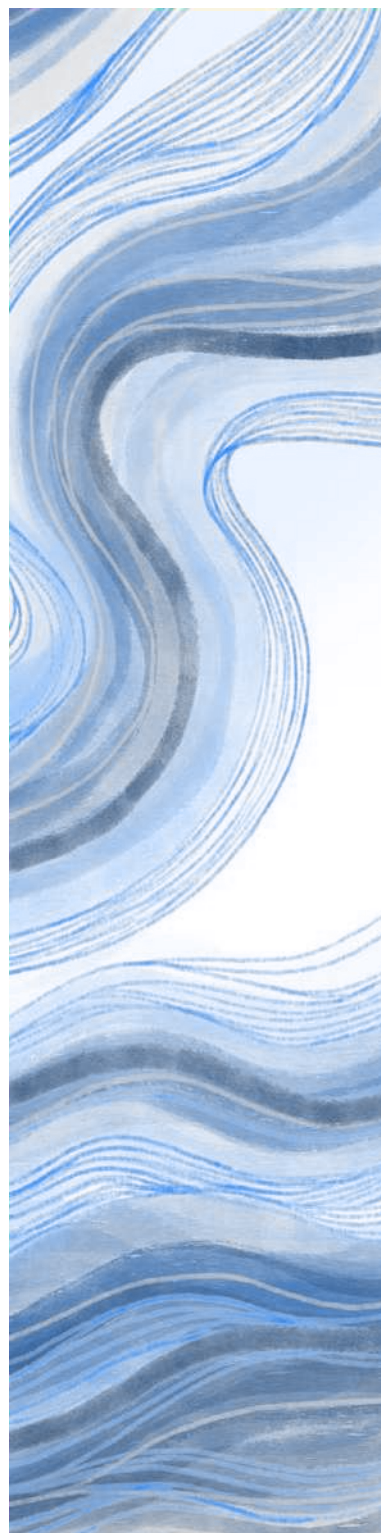
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Foreword

When we discuss cultures and cultural expressions, we generally talk of a culture that is visual and performance centric. But there are some aspects of our culture that have traditional and social merits, but do not get discussed much. One such culture is the riverine culture. Across traditions in India, rivers are not only a geographical feature that give us water, but inspire emotion, faith, and devotion.

In India, rivers are not merely addressed just by their names, but also as mothers, sisters, and daughters. The river Ganges, is usually not addressed as Ganga but as Ganga ji, because the river Ganges invokes spiritual connection. However, along the way, we have forgotten our sacred relationship with our rivers- our understanding of rivers has been reduced to the definitions described in Civics and Geography lessons in schools.

Unfortunately, even the young generations who live on the banks of rivers have forgotten their emotional, cultural, and social connection with the rivers. For instance, if residents of Delhi, including the youth, are asked what their relation to river Yamuna is, they will have no normative idea. Because, a lot of the city's residents do not even know that the city is built on the banks of the river Yamuna, let alone the direction in which the river flows.

The irony is, if we would not understand the relation to our rivers then how can we protect or develop them? When one cultivates no emotional connection with a river, how will one know the songs, games, tales, dances, and visual arts that have developed at the banks of our rivers?

To throw more light on our rivers and to create more awareness about its surroundings, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) has undertaken a project that would study the diverse cultures that have sprouted on the banks of several rivers of India; with the goal to inspire interest in India's river cultures. With this objective, IGNCA has successfully organised three editions of Nadi Utsav in the last three years. Today marks the beginning of the 4th Nadi Utsav celebration, in Delhi, with an aim to spread awareness among the people of Delhi, that the city they call home is built on the banks of river Yamuna. Under Nadi Utsav, seminars, debates, film festival, painting competitions, and discussions on India's riverine culture are organised.

One of the main objectives of organising Nadi Utsav is to invite school and college students so that they can imbibe this knowledge, take it forward, and rekindle the relationship with rivers.

Another objective of Nadi Utsav is to deliberate on how these stories, poems, songs, and arts, influenced by the rivers can be preserved so that the next generation is inspired to revive their connections with the rivers, which would in turn lead to rejuvenation and restoration of the rivers.

With these words, I invite all Nadi- Premis to be a part of the Nadi Utsav and enrich our endeavours with their presence, thoughts, and ideas. As we all keep working together for our rivers and riverine culture, I hope that we meet at Nadi Utsavs again and share more stories of the rivers with each other.

Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi

Member Secretary

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

New Delhi





नदी को धन्यवाद कहने का समय

‘प्रकृति का अपना कैलेंडर होता है। हर कुछ सौ साल में वह अपने कैलेंडर का पृष्ठ बदल देती है’- पर्यावरणविद् अनुपम मिश्र की इस बात को नदियां, पर्वत और मौसम, समय-समय पर सच साबित करते रहते हैं। दुनिया भर में हो रहे पर्यावरणीय आंदोलन हमें चेता रहे हैं कि प्रकृति का कैलेंडर एक काले, अंधेरे पृष्ठ में प्रवेश कर रहा है। यह आश्चर्यजनक और निराशाजनक दोनों है कि जीवन का पूजनीय स्रोत, अब अपनी धीमी मौत मर रहा है।

आबादी और अर्थव्यवस्था बढ़ने के साथ, जल संसाधनों की मांग बढ़ गई है। बुनियादी ढांचे के नाम पर नदियां विकास का शिकार हो रही हैं। कोलोराडो, सिंधु और येलो जैसी दुनिया की विशाल नदियां अपने अत्यधिक दोहन के कारण समुद्र तक पहुंचने में विफल हो जाती हैं। बांध और डायवर्सन जैसे मानवीय हस्तक्षेप नदियों के प्राकृतिक प्रवाह को बदल देते हैं जिसका असर मौसमी पैटर्न में भी नज़र आता है। बाढ़ का प्रवाह मछलियों की संख्या बढ़ाता है और जलीय जीवों के जीवन चक्रों को आरंभ करने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है, जबकि कम प्रवाह नदी तटीय वनस्पति के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है। हमने इस पूरे सिस्टम को ही छेड़ दिया है। बेशक हमारे द्वारा बनाए गए बुनियादी ढांचे ने जल आपूर्ति, जलविद्युत, नौवहन जैसे आर्थिक लाभ दिए हैं लेकिन इसका सीटीसी यानी ‘कॉस्ट टू कंट्री’ बहुत ज्यादा है। हमने मानवीय हस्तक्षेप के पारिस्थितिक परिणामों पर ध्यान ही नहीं दिया।

यह समझने की ज़रूरत है कि नदी को पारिभाषित कर उसमें बदलाव नहीं किए जा सकते, वह अपने प्राकृतिक स्वरूप में ही मानव कल्याण और जैव विविधता को पोस सकती है। जैसे तटीय क्षेत्रों में भोजन की उपलब्धता या डेल्टा में मैंग्रोव के बहाने मानव जीवन संभव बनाना। लेकिन त्वरित विकास के चक्कर में हमने इस प्राकृतिक लय को बाधित कर दिया। प्रत्येक नदी मानवीय व्यवधानों के प्रति अलग-अलग प्रतिक्रिया करती है और उसका परिणाम पहले नदी के स्वास्थ्य पर फिर नदी तट पर बसे समाज के स्वास्थ्य पर नज़र आता है।

भारत सहित लगभग सभी सभ्यताएं बहते पानी के किनारे विकसित हुईं। हमारा देश तो विशेष तौर पर नदी संस्कृति की विविधताओं वाला देश है। नदी न केवल सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक, राजनीतिक या आर्थिक रूप से हमारे जीवन का हिस्सा है, बल्कि यह हमारी मानसिकता के केंद्र में है, एक शुद्ध आध्यात्मिक-आत्मा की यात्रा में हमारे अस्तित्व का मूल है।

समय बदला और हम अपनी नदी से दूर हो गए। अपने ‘वाटर बिज़डम’ को भूल गए। नदी, कुएं, तालाब सिर्फ वाटर रिसोर्स बन कर रह गए। टैप वाटर ने जल संस्कृति को भुला दिया जो अपने तट पर आने वाले मानव समूहों के जीवन, संस्कृति और भाषा को आत्मसात कर लेती थी। एक साफ़ नदी का तट जागरूक समाज का प्रतिबिंब होता था, हमने उस आईने को ही काला कर दिया।

इन्दिरा गाँधी राष्ट्रीय कला केन्द्र (IGNCA) ने नदी संस्कृति के बदलते दौर को पहचानने, विचार-विमर्श करने और उसके सांस्कृतिक इतिहास को सहेजने हेतु पहल की है। हम सब इसे नदी उत्सव कहते हैं। नदी उत्सव में नदी को सुनने, गुनने और बुनने के लिए अकादमिक जगत, फ़िल्म जगत और लोक संस्कृति से जुड़े लोग पहुँचते रहे हैं।

हर साल की तरह चौथे नदी उत्सव 2023 में भी फ़िल्म फ़ेस्टिवल, सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रमों के अलावा दो-दिवसीय राष्ट्रीय संगोष्ठी का भी आयोजन किया गया। इस संगोष्ठी में संस्कृति और विज्ञान, विश्वास और तर्क, धर्म और अर्थव्यवस्था को नदी संदर्भ में देखा गया। गंगा, जो भारत की पहचान है, से लेकर ब्रह्मपुत्र की मर्दाना छवि तक, नर्मदा के स्थापत्य कला से लेकर दक्षिण गंगा के जल बेसिन और

यमुना के बाढ़ के मैदानों के साथ सतत विकास तक के विषयों को सेमिनार में मथा गया।

सेमिनार का विषय था, “नदी का आभार: मानव और नदी जीवन के बीच सामंजस्य को पुनर्जीवित करना”। सेमिनार को मुख्य विषय के अनुरूप ही कुछ उप-विषयों में वर्गीकृत किया गया जो नदी और नदी पथ के जीवन के हर पहलू को अपने में समाहित करने की कोशिश करते हैं। उप-विषयों को देखिए—

- 1- एक संस्कृति के रूप में नदी: नदी किनारे की सांस्कृतिक विरासत- इसमें पारंपरिक ज्ञान, कला, लोक संस्कृति और वास्तु निर्माण शामिल हैं।
- 2- सभी के लिए नदियां: नदी संसाधनों की पहुँच और उपलब्धता विषय के तहत जल सुरक्षा, सामुदायिक स्तर पर संघर्ष, नदी समर्थित आजीविका और सभ्यताओं के सूत्रधार के रूप में नदियों की चिंताओं पर नज़र डाली गई।
- 3- नदी बहाली, पुनर्वास और स्थिरता पर चर्चा करने के लिए एक तकनीकी सत्र रखा गया। इसमें वर्तमान समय में जल विज्ञान, आकृति विज्ञान, नदी पारिस्थितिकी और प्रदूषण पर एक मज़बूत उपस्थिति देखी गई। शहरी परिदृश्य में नदी, सिकुड़ती नदी और उसके सांस्कृतिक स्थानों की निराशाजनक स्थिति पर भी बात हुई।

डॉ. श्वेता तिवारी ने ‘प्रदूषण और शुद्धता से परे: दैनिक जीवन में गंगा नदी की आध्यात्मिक प्रतिध्वनि’ पर अपने विचार-विमर्श में पवित्र गंगा मैया के प्रति समर्पण में राष्ट्र की भावनाओं को शामिल किया है, जिसमें मात्र आत्म-शुद्धि प्राप्त करने के लिए नदी का ध्यान नहीं रखा जाता। शोधपत्र अनुष्ठान और पारिस्थितिकी चुनौतियों के बीच के अंतर्संबंधों से गुजरता है। यह आधुनिक पर्यावरण जागरूकता के बीच पवित्रता को बनाए रखने का एक दिलचस्प मामला है।

सुश्री पृथा चक्रवर्ती ने ‘नदी के गीत: बंगाल के भटियाली गीतों का विश्लेषण’ सामने रखा है। यह शोधपत्र हाशिए पर पड़े नदी तट के समुदाय का अपनी नदी के प्रति भावनात्मक समर्पण है। यह एक तरह से मछुआरों की गीतात्मक गवाही का वर्णन है। भटियाली उन नाविकों और मछुआरों का आह्वान था, जो बंगाल की खाड़ी और हुगली या पद्मा के बीच आवाजाही करते रहे। वे परंपराओं और विश्वासों के सहारे हिंदू, इस्लाम और बौद्ध धर्म के शांतिपूर्ण सह-अस्तित्व को महसूस करते और जीते। साथ ही खेती और मछली पकड़ने जैसी दैनिक गतिविधियों से भी जुड़े रहे। यह शोधपत्र भटियाली रचना की बदली हुई प्रकृति की खोज करता है जो अब गंगा/पद्मा बेसिन के कटाव के परिणामस्वरूप होने वाली तबाही के शोक से ग्रसित है। यह शोधपत्र इसलिए महत्वपूर्ण है क्योंकि यह नदी के बदलते मार्ग के कारण नदी और उसके निवासियों के बदले हुए जीवन को उजागर करता है।

सुश्री ग्लोरी रोज रॉय का शोधपत्र ‘भारतीय नदियों को पुनर्जीवित करना: यमुना के बाढ़ के मैदानों के साथ विचारशील और सतत विकास के माध्यम से नदियों और शहरी समुदायों का पोषण’, वास्तव में एक मानवशास्त्रीय अध्ययन है जिसका आधार नदी का प्रवाह है। शोधपत्र में रूपक की तरह मौजूद प्रवाह को सार्थक बातचीत और आलोचनात्मक दृष्टिकोण से समझने का प्रयास किया गया है। सुश्री रॉय का शोध बताता है कि नदी के बदलते स्वरूप समझने का सारा बोझ मज़दूरों और नाविकों पर लाद दिया गया है। जबकि नदी में हो रहे नकारात्मक बदलाव की जबाबदारी आर्थिक गतिविधियों पर ज़्यादा है। बेशक नाविक अपनी नाव में सवार लोगों को नदी में कचरा ना फेंकने के लिए प्रेरित करते हैं। आखिर नदी ही तो उनकी रोटी की गारंटी है। वे पानी में रहते हैं और उसके बदलते व्यवहार को समझते भी हैं। नदी जीवन के लिए अमृत भी हो सकती है और मृत्यु की राख को भी अपने में समेट सकती है।

डॉ. प्रांजल बरुआ का शोधपत्र, जिसका शीर्षक है, ‘नदी के किनारे आजीविका: असम के तिनसुकिया जिले में डिब्रू सैखोवा राष्ट्रीय उद्यान के अंतर्गत लाइका गाँव के मिशिंग समुदाय के बीच एक केस स्टडी’, असम की सबसे बड़ी मैदानी जनजाति मिशिंग की कठिनाइयों को उजागर करता है, जिसे जगुन क्षेत्र की ओर पुनर्वासित किया जाना है। ब्रह्मपुत्र से होने वाले कटाव के कारण राज्य द्वारा शुरू किए गए पुनर्वास अव्यवाहारिक और अवैज्ञानिक हैं। मिशिंग जनजाति के सामने स्वदेशी रीति-रिवाजों और परंपराओं पर सामाजिक-आर्थिक निर्भरता और सांस्कृतिक अलगाव का एक दर्दनाक चित्रण है। यह शोधपत्र आजीविका के लिए नदी के महत्व की पड़ताल करता है।

वास्तुविद् धनश्री निगुड़कर ने 'दक्षिण गंगा की जल संस्कृति: नासिक गाथा' पर अपना शोध प्रस्तुत किया। यह शोधपत्र नासिक शहर के महज कालक्रम पर नहीं बल्कि उसकी भौगोलिक रूपरेखा, जलवायु, क्षेत्रीय इतिहास पर जोर देता है। यह वह शहर है जिसे गोदावरी ने रचा है। यह शोधपत्र दक्षिण गंगा की धारणा और उसके संसाधन प्रबंधन की पहचान कराता है ताकि साहित्यिक दस्तावेजीकरण, पारंपरिक ज्ञान और विरासत को सहेजा जाए।

वास्तुविद् मेधा दुबे व अपूर्वा दुबे ने अपने संयुक्त पत्र 'पवित्र नदी नर्मदा: पूजनीय भूभाग और स्थापत्य अनुष्ठान' पर खोज की। नर्मदा पौराणिक कथाओं और धर्म में एक पवित्र स्थान रखती है। नर्मदा के तट प्राचीनतम तीर्थयात्रा और पूजा के केंद्र हैं। नर्मदा स्थापत्य शोध में महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि उत्तर और दक्षिण भारत की स्थापत्य शैलियों का संगम एक साथ आता है। यह शोधपत्र मध्य भारत की जीवनरेखा नर्मदा के सांस्कृतिक और धार्मिक परिदृश्य के महत्व को दर्शाता है।

डॉ. विवेक चौहान के शोधपत्र का शीर्षक था, 'नदियों को धन्यवाद देने की अनुष्ठान आधारित परंपरा- दिल्ली शहर में यमुना नदी में किए जाने वाले अनुष्ठानों की केस स्टडी'। शोधपत्र नदी को धन्यवाद देने में व्यक्तिगत भागीदारी पर अधिक जोर देता है जो शाब्दिक, मौखिक, चित्रात्मक से लेकर अनुष्ठानिक रूप में भिन्न हो सकते हैं। नदी अनुष्ठान, मानव और नदी संबंधों को खूबसूरत बनाते हैं।

डॉ. सबीहा मजीद ने अपने शोधपत्र 'ब्रह्मपुत्र की गाथाएँ' में भूपेन हज़ारिका के गीतों को असमिया चेतना के प्रतीक के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया। इन कहानियों में इस शक्तिशाली नदी के साथ असम की प्रतिध्वनि है। उनके तर्क हज़ारिका के दो गीतों, 'विस्तार है अपार' और 'महाबाहु ब्रह्मपुत्र' पर आधारित हैं। इन गाथाओं में ब्रह्मपुत्र को एक पारिवारिक मुखिया के रूप में दर्शाया गया है। यह भावनाओं, इतिहास, आत्मनिरीक्षण और आकांक्षाओं को आकार देता है जो असमिया पहचान के साथ प्रतिध्वनित होते हैं।

हिंदुस्तानी संगीत की शिष्या **सुश्री मधुरा प्रमोद किरपेकर** ने अपने लेख में कृष्ण-यमुना संबंधों को विभिन्न रागों की रचनाओं द्वारा व्यक्त किया है। राग भैरव में 'जमुना में गेंद डार ग्वाल-बाल-हारे', राग गौड़ मल्हार 'सावन में जमुना पुलिन में' इसके सुंदर उदाहरण हैं। यह पेपर स्थापित करता है कि हिंदुस्तानी शास्त्रीय एवं उपशास्त्रीय संगीत भारत की महान सांस्कृतिक विरासत का एक श्रेष्ठतम प्रतीक है।

भारत के इसी संगीतमय विरासत के इतिहास को खंगालते हुए **डॉ. चित्रा शंकर** ने नदी और संगीत के संबंधों को स्थापित किया है। उन्होंने भारतीय प्राचीन ग्रंथों में भरपूर मौजूद सरस्वती नदी की महिमा को इसका आधार बनाया है। सरस्वती नदी के सहारे वे सिंधु-सरस्वती पुरातात्विक स्थलों की विवेचना करती हैं और बताती हैं कि कैसे पुरावशेष अपने दौर की संगीतमय व्याख्या करते हैं।

उपरोक्त शोध प्रबंधों में झलकती एवं वर्तमान परिस्थिति में परिलक्षित होती इन चुनौतियों के समाधान के लिए वैश्विक सहयोग और ठोस प्रयासों की आवश्यकता है। इसमें ग्रीनहाउस गैस उत्सर्जन को कम करना, जल प्रबंधन में सुधार, नदी संरक्षण प्रयासों को बढ़ाना और जल सुरक्षा को प्राथमिकता आदि पर ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है। नदियों के प्राकृतिक प्रवाह को संरक्षित करना, उनकी पारिस्थितिक अखंडता को बनाए रखना बेहद अहम है।

अभी सक्रिय कदम उठाकर, हम यह सुनिश्चित कर सकते हैं कि नदियां मौजूदा जलवायु चुनौतियों का सामना करने में जीवंत और लचीली बनी रहें। हमारी नदियों के खत्म होने से न केवल पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र पर असर पड़ेगा, बल्कि मानव सभ्यता की नींव भी खतरे में पड़ जाएगी, जो सहस्राब्दियों से इन जलमार्गों पर निर्भर रही है। इस बारे में जागरूकता बढ़ाना और भविष्य की पीढ़ियों के लिए नदियों की रक्षा और संरक्षण के लिए सार्थक कदम उठाना महत्वपूर्ण है।

मुझे प्रसन्नता है कि चौथे नदी उत्सव की राष्ट्रीय संगोष्ठी रूपी विचार-मंथन से निकली अकादमिक चर्चा को इस पुस्तक के रूप में ला पाने में हम सफल रहे। इस संस्करण में शोधपत्रों के साथ ही विद्वानों के विचार भी लेख रूप में शामिल हैं। आचार्य श्रीवत्स गोस्वामी ने

नदी उत्सव के उद्घाटन सत्र में यमुना और कृष्ण के आपसी संबंध को पर्यावरणीय आंदोलन की तरह स्थापित किया। उनकी तर्कशीलता सहजता से यह स्थापित करती है कि कैसे कृष्ण ने सभी राक्षसों या दानवों का नाश किया लेकिन कालिया नाग को जान से नहीं मारा, उसे यमुना छोड़कर समुद्र में जाने का आदेश दिया। उनका वक्तव्य बताता है कि कालिया में नदी प्रदूषण का प्रतीक है जिसे पूरी तरह नष्ट नहीं किया जा सकता, सिर्फ उसका तार्किक निपटारा किया जा सकता है। प्रदूषण के तार्किक निपटारे की आवश्यकता हर दौर में बनी रही है। स्वामी चिदानंद मुनि भारत में नदी चेतना का चर्चित चेहरा रहे हैं और लगातार नदी-समाज संबंधों को नई दिशा देने के लिए प्रयासरत रहे हैं। परमार्थ आश्रम में प्रतिदिन होने वाली गंगा आरती वास्तव में नदी के प्रति मानवीय कर्तव्य की संकल्पित व्याख्या है। हरित न्यायाधिकरण के अध्यक्ष न्यायमूर्ति प्रकाश श्रीवास्तव ने अपने वक्तव्य में न्यायाधिकरण के उद्देश्यों और जमीनी सच्चाई के बीच जागरूकता बढ़ाने पर जोर दिया। नदियों को लेकर हरित न्यायाधिकरण के लगातार निर्णयों ने पर्यावरण-कार्यकर्ताओं के मन में उम्मीद जगाए रखी है। डॉ. अनिल प्रकाश जोशी ने अपने विशेष वक्तव्य में पर्यावरण के बहाने देश की आर्थिकी का खाका खींचा कि कैसे हम अपनी प्राकृतिक संपदा, जो हमें बेहद आसानी से उपलब्ध है, की सही कीमत को समझने में लगातार विफल रहे हैं। हमारी विफलता ही है कि अब पानी और ऑक्सीजन दोनों ही डिब्बाबंद उपलब्ध हो रहे हैं। नदी उत्सव संगोष्ठी में अपनी सक्रिय भागीदारी सुनिश्चित करने के लिए सभी अध्येताओं, शोधार्थियों का धन्यवाद। धन्यवाद इस पुस्तक के निर्माण से जुड़े संपादकीय एवं डिज़ाइन टीम का भी।

नदी उत्सव की लगातार सफलता में इन्दिरा गाँधी राष्ट्रीय कला केन्द्र परिवार की सतत मेहनत छिपी है। आईजीएनसीए न्यास के अध्यक्ष श्री राम बहादुर राय स्वयं एक पर्यावरणीय कार्यकर्ता रहे हैं, अब तक हुए सभी नदी उत्सवों में उनका आशीर्वाद मिलता रहा है। नदी उत्सव, केन्द्र के सदस्य सचिव डॉ. सच्चिदानंद जोशी की मानस संतान है। किसी भी कला माध्यम से नदी अभिव्यक्ति इसके मूल में रही है। नदी उत्सव में बड़ी संख्या में लोगों की भागीदारी रही लेकिन सुचारू व्यवस्थाओं के चलते नदी प्रेमी सभी कार्यक्रमों में आसानी से शामिल हो सके, केन्द्र की निदेशक डॉ. प्रियंका मिश्र की सक्रियता से यह संभव हो पाया। केन्द्र के जनपद सम्पदा विभाग के अध्यक्ष प्रो. के. अनिल कुमार के कुशल नेतृत्व में नदी उत्सव अपने हर संस्करण में कुछ नए कार्यक्रम जोड़ने में सफल रहा है। केन्द्र के मीडिया सेंटर ने नदी उत्सव को सोशल मीडिया के माध्यम से देश-विदेश के पर्यावरण जागरूक लोगों तक पहुँचाया है।

दिल्ली के स्कूलों के बच्चों का डलिया भर धन्यवाद जिन्होंने अपनी कूची से नदी उत्सव में नए रंग भर दिए। इस पुस्तक में बच्चों के बनाए कुछ चित्रों को शामिल किया गया है।

अंत में, नदियों को यह छोटी सी कोशिश समर्पित करते हुए सभी नदी प्रेमियों को हृदय से धन्यवाद। आशा है नदी उत्सव से निकले ये विचार पाठकों के मन में अपनी नदी के प्रति संवेदना का एक नया पहलू पैदा करेंगे।

अभय मिश्र

नई दिल्ली





नदी रस की बात पुरानी

कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने ।

प्रणतक्लेशनाशाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/उत्तरार्धः/अध्यायः ७३/१६)

पहले मुझे यह विडंबना लगती है यह जो नदी उत्सव, मानव का संकल्प, कहीं भी मानव किसी परिस्थिति में हो, एक ही है कि हमारा जीवन उत्सव कैसे बने? उत्सव कैसे बने? और बने ही नहीं, उत्सव बना रहे, किन्तु हुआ नहीं। संकल्प सबने लिए किंतु मानव जीवन उत्सव बना नहीं रह सका। क्या कारण होगा? जब विचार प्रारंभ हुआ तो पाया कि मानव जीवन के उस उत्सव स्थल जिसको हम अपना पर्यावरण कहते हैं, जिसकी गोद में खेलते हैं और खेलना चाहते हैं, वह अस्वस्थ है।

विचारकों ने जब भी बात की नदी के बारे में, जो जल तत्त्व का देह है और जीवंत देह है, प्रवाहित देह है, वह जल है क्या? उसी बात को छान्दोग्य स्पष्ट करता है कि घनीभूत ठोस जल ही पृथ्वी है, वही पर्यावरण है, वही वातावरण है, वही आकाश है, जल ही देवता है, जल ही मनुष्य में भी है, पशु पक्षी भी जल के रूपांतर हैं, कीट, पतंग, घास, वृक्ष आदि सभी पानी का कुछ न कुछ मूर्त रूप हैं। और इस बात को देख मनीषी गार्गी ने चकित हो याज्ञवल्क्य से अद्भुत प्रश्न पूछा कि क्या जगत का ताना-बाना जल पे बुना गया है?

कस्मिन्नु खल्वाप ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति॥ बृह. ३,६.१ ॥

यह जो ओत प्रोत है, ताना-बाना है, यह कहाँ से आया है? और कठोपनिषद तो आगे बढ़ जाता है और कहता है:

यः पूर्वं तपसो जातमद्भ्यः पूर्वमजायत ।

गुहां प्रविश्य तिष्ठन्तं यो भूतेभिर्व्यपश्यत । एतद्वै तत् ॥ ६ ॥

(कठोपनिषद्/द्वितीयोऽध्यायः/प्रथमवल्ली)

जीवात्मा के प्रकट होने से पहले से जल है। सृष्टि जल से ही मूर्तिमान होकर प्रकट होती है क्योंकि यह पृथ्वी भी उस जल से ही निकलती है और जब निकली और सृष्टि की प्रक्रिया प्रारंभ हुई तो ऊपर हिम था और नीचे जल था, केवल जल था, और जीवन को शक्ति देने वाला जो अन्न हमको पृथ्वी देती है, क्या जल के सहयोग के बिना वह यह कृपा हमारे ऊपर कर सकती है?

तो यदि हम देखें कि यह 'पृथिव्याम् आपो रसम्' यह जीवन को, जो हमारा संकल्प है कि नीरसता से सरसता की और ले जाना ही है, तो देखना होगा कि रस कहाँ है? तो एक कहानी नदी रस को समझने के लिए आपके सामने रखना चाहूँगा।

बात पुरानी है, बात कृष्ण की है, जिनकी बात सुनने से पुण्य मिलता है- पुण्यः श्रवणकीर्तनः

तो हुआ यह कि अपने मित्रों के साथ वे जंगल में खेल रहे थे, गौ-चारण कर रहे थे, एक दैत्य आ गया। और दैत्य बड़ा सूक्ष्म था। सब चिल्लाने लगे कि 'दैत्य आ गया, दैत्य आ गया'! कृष्ण ने कहा कि दिख नहीं रहा! बोले दिखेगा कहाँ से? हमको प्राणांतक प्यास लगी है। यह प्यास नामक दैत्य आ गया है। हमारी रक्षा करो। तो बोले, जमुना जी पे चलते हैं, जल पीते हैं।

ईक्षयामृतवर्षिण्या स्वनाथान्समजीवयत् ॥

श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १५/५०)

अथ गावश्च गोपाश्च निदाघातपपीडिताः
दुष्टं जलं पपुस्तस्यास्तृष्णार्ता विषदूषितम् ॥
(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १५/४८)

वे जो एक-एक बूँद के लिए तरस रहे थे, यमुना का विष से दूषित जल उन प्यासों ने पिया। पीते ही मर गए। कृष्ण के ग्वाल-बाल, गाय, बछड़े सब मर गए। तब कृष्ण ने अपनी दृष्टिपात् करके एक अमृत वर्षा की और सबकी पुनर्जीवित किया। तो यह क्या चमत्कार है?

ईक्ष्यामृतवर्षिण्या स्वनाथान्समजीवयत् ॥
(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १५/५०)

आसन्सुविस्मिताः सर्वे वीक्षमाणाः परस्परम् ॥
(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १५/५१)

आखिर उस गोविंद की अनुग्रह की दृष्टि क्या थी?

किस दृष्टि से जीवन वापस मिला है, उस दृष्टि को यदि हम खोजने की चेष्टा करें, तो कृष्ण ने देखा कि जहाँ पर यह दुर्घटना घटी, वहाँ पर गड़बड़ी थी और वह गड़बड़ी आज तो बहुत ज़्यादा multiplied है लेकिन गड़बड़ी थी, जल दूषित था।

श्रप्यमाणपया यस्मिन् पतन्त्युपरिगाः खगाः ॥
(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १६/४)

कृष्ण काल में यदि कोई पशु, पक्षी, कोई भी यमुना के ऊपर से निकल जाता था, तो उन विषैली गैसों के प्रभाव से मर जाता।

प्रियन्ते तीरगा यस्य प्राणिनः स्थिरजङ्गमाः ॥॥
(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १६/५)

तटस्थ जितने वृक्ष आदि थे, प्राणी थे, जीव जंतु थे, वो सब मर जाते थे। इतनी प्रदूषित यमुना थी! तो क्या करें? परिस्थितियों को कोसें? अपने देश की सरकार को कोसें?

कृष्ण कदंब पे चढ़ गए और खोलते हुए विष के जल में यमुना को स्वस्थ करने के लिए स्वयं कूद पड़े। कालिया का विषाक्त दह पूरी यमुना को खत्म करने पर तुला था। उन्होंने कहा कि विष को हटाना पड़ेगा।

तस्य हृदे विहरतो भुजदण्डघूर्ण
वाघोषमङ्ग वरवारणविक्रमस्य ।
(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १६/८)

कृष्ण का विक्रम देखते ही बनता था कि उनके विशाल बाहु, उनके चरण, और वे घूम रहे हैं, एक चक्र की भाँति उस विषैले जल में घूम रहे हैं। तो यह क्या प्रयोग था? मानव व्यवस्थाओं में पहली बार यह STP (Sewage Treatment Plant) का प्रयोग था।

क्रीडन्मुं परिससार यथा खगेन्द्रो
बभ्राम सोऽप्यवसरं प्रसमीक्षमाणः ॥
(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १६/२५)

कालिए के संग पैतराबाजी हुई, आगे जाना, पीछे जाना, आगे जाना, पीछे जाना, ETP (Effluent Treatment Plant) में जो पहिया चलता है वह सीधा-सीधा नहीं चलता, प्रदूषण को अगर अलग करना है, sedimentation करना है तो पैतरेबाजी करता है।

एवं परिभ्रमहतौजसमुन्नतांसम्

(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १६/२६)

उस पैतरेबाजी से वह प्रदूषण रूपी कालिया, उसका तेज खतम हो गया and it became disintegrated.

आनम्य तत्पृथुशिरःस्वधिरूढ आद्यः ।

(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १६/२६)

श्री कृष्ण जैसा प्रेमी मानव इतिहास में आपको दूसरा मिलना मुश्किल होगा। किंतु कृष्ण जैसा निर्दयी भी मिलना मुश्किल होगा। कोई भी यदि असत्, कोई भी रूप धरके श्री कृष्ण के सामने आया चाहे वह दाई के रूप में आया, चाहे पशु पक्षी के रूप में आया, चाहे गऊ के रूप में आया, चाहे बैल के रूप में आया, चाहे गुरु के रूप में आया, चाहे भाई के रूप में आया, पितामह के रूप में आया, कृष्ण ने पलक झपकने की देरी नहीं की, उसका नाश किया केवल कृष्ण अपने जीवन में एक व्यक्ति को छोड़ते हैं, जीवनदान देते हैं और वह है कालिया, तो समझ में मुझे नहीं आता, आज तक समझ में नहीं आया कि कालिया से क्या दोस्ती थी? उन्होंने अघासुर को मारा जो सर्प योनि का है तो ऐसा भी नहीं कह सकते कि सर्प योनि से मित्रता थी इसलिये उसको छोड़ दिया।

क्षीणायुषो भ्रमत उल्बणमास्यतोऽसृङ्

नस्तो वमन् परमकश्मलमाप नागः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १६/२८)

जो sedimentation हुआ और कालिया ने जो उल्टियां की हैं, जो विष भरा हुआ था वह अलग से प्रवाहित हो गया, और आश्चर्य हुआ कि कालिया ने अनुग्रह मांगा कृष्ण का।

अनुग्रहं निग्रहं वा मन्यसे तद् विधेहि नः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १६/५९)

आप चाहे तो मुझे मार दीजिए, या मुझे छोड़ दीजिए। कृष्ण ने कहा-

नात्र स्थेयं त्वया सर्प समुद्रं याहि मा चिरम् ।

स्वज्ञात्यपत्यदाराद्व्यो गोनुभिर्भुज्यतां नदी ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १६/६०)

यहाँ पर पूरी-पूरी विडंबना खुलके सामने आ जाती है.. नदियों की जो आज विडंबना है, जल तत्त्व की जो विडंबना है, जो हाहाकार है, वह यहाँ पर समझ में आता है। श्री कृष्ण हंसते हुए कहते हैं, तुझे मारूंगा नहीं, तेरा दमन करूंगा, दमन को अंग्रेज़ी में कहते हैं containing, उस sedimented pollutants को उन्होंने container में डाला, समुद्र में आए, समुद्र में जाओ, hazardous waste, मोहर लगा दी और आज जो विकसित देश हैं, जो वैज्ञानिक रूप से विकास कर चुके हैं, उनके पास भी कृष्ण का अनुसरण करने के अलावा कोई उपाय नहीं है, आज Asia Pacific की पूरी geopolitics, केवल इसी बात पे नृत्य कर रही है कि आप अपने कूड़े को Atlantic में क्यों नहीं डाल रहे? आप Pacific में क्यों नहीं डाल रहे? आप हिंद महासागर में क्यों नहीं डाल रहे? क्यों आप हम छोटे-छोटे देशों के जल को आप विषाक्त कर रहे हैं?

कृष्ण कहते हैं- मैं परम भगवान हूँ, परम सत्ता हूँ, किंतु प्रदूषण को पूर्णतः समाप्त करने की ताकत मेरे पास भी नहीं है, ना कोई विज्ञान है मेरे पास। आज भी प्रदूषण को मारने का कोई उपाय नहीं है, अलग करने के उपाय तो बना लिए हैं हमने, किंतु प्रदूषण को नष्ट करने का उपाय नहीं है।

तदैव सामृतजला यमुना निर्विषाभवत् ।
अनुग्रहाद् भगवतः क्रीडामानुषरूपिणः ॥
(श्रीमद्भागवतपुराणम्/स्कन्धः १०/पूर्वार्धः/अध्यायः १६/६७)

श्री कृष्ण ने यह जो खेल किया कालिया के साथ, वह एक सामान्य मनुष्य की तरह किया है, भगवान की तरह नहीं किया और यह संदेश दे रहे हैं हमको कि जब मैं मनुष्य रूप में प्रदूषण को दूर कर सकता हूँ तो तुम भी तो मनुष्य हो, तो तुम पहल क्यों नहीं कर रहे? तुम जल में क्यों नहीं कूद रहे?

श्री कृष्ण के साथ नारियों का सहयोग बहुत बड़ा है- बृज की प्रेमिकाओं, गोपिकाओं की गिनती कोई नहीं कर पाया, शुकदेव भी नहीं कर पाए, हाँ, उनकी पत्नियों की गिनती हो गई, 16,108! क्या आप बता सकते हैं कि वृन्दावन में, मथुरा में, और द्वारिका में जो तीन सर्ग हैं, श्री कृष्ण की लीला के, कौन सी नायिका, कौन सी नारी उनके साथ रहती है? वह है यमुना, ब्रज में भी वो यमुना के हृदय में खेलते हैं, मथुरा में भी यमुना के साथ हैं और मूर्तिमान कालिंदी बनाके उसको अपने साथ द्वारिका रखते हैं, राधा को नहीं रखते, रुक्मिणी को नहीं रखते, कुब्जा को नहीं रखते, केवल यमुना को रखते हैं।

यमुना की प्रतिष्ठा, एक छोटी सी कथा भागवत के दशम स्कन्ध में आती है लेकिन अद्भुत कथा है। नंद बाबा एकादशी के दिन स्नान करने जाते हैं और उनको वरुण लोक के दूत पकड़के ले जाते हैं। तो श्री कृष्ण वरुण लोक पहुँचे और वरुण को डाँट लगाई कि हमारे पिताजी को तो छोड़ देते, चोर भी दो-चार घर छोड़के चलता है। वरुण बोले एक गड़बड़ी हुई, रात्रि काल में नदी का विश्राम का समय है और उस समय आपके पिताजी भोर के पहले ही निशीथ काल में प्रवेश कर गए थे। तो नदी के विश्राम काल में जो बाधा पहुँचाई, इसलिए हमको इनको पकड़के लाना पड़ा।

तो नदी की मर्यादा को यदि हम समझने लगेंगे, आज का वृन्दावन जो श्री कृष्ण का धाम है, वह कहता है की नदी की शुद्धता और नदी की पवित्रता, इसमें बहुत फ़रक है। आज यदि ओखला का बैराज कृपा न करे, और जल मल संस्थान से शुद्ध किया हुआ पानी ना भेजा जाए, तो राधा रमण, श्री बांके बिहारी लाल स्नान नहीं कर पाएंगे, यह सत्य है। वह sewage का treated पानी आज भी यमुना जल के रूप में, क्योंकि यह पवित्रता अभी जीवंत है, यमुना के प्रति पवित्रता का भाव बनाने में कई सदियाँ लगी हैं, रातों रात नहीं बन जाता। यदि मैं इस सूचना को बाँटता फिरूँ कि ओखला के जल मल संस्थान का जल ही बिहारीजी के अभिषेक का जल है, तो आप सोचिए कि कितना बड़ा आघात मैं इस संस्कृति पे करूँगा? यह जानना आवश्यक है कि शुद्ध वस्तु पवित्र नहीं हो सकती और अशुद्ध वस्तु भी पवित्र हो सकती है। आज भी कीड़े बिलबिलाते हुए यमुना के जल में लोग डुबकी मार रहे हैं, यमुना मैया की जय बोलते हैं, आचमन कर रहे हैं, जल पी रहे हैं, हम और आप नहीं पी सकते, लेकिन वे पी रहे हैं, करोड़ों लोग पी रहे हैं, क्योंकि पवित्रता अभी मारी नहीं गई है, शुद्धता तो मर गई तो श्री कृष्ण क्या करते हैं, हमको दिखाते हैं कि नदियों की सहायता करनी पड़ेगी, नदी हर जगह तो पहुंचेगी नहीं, तो नदी का जो दूसरा परिवार है, जो तालाब हैं, जो जोहड़ हैं, जो कुंड हैं, उनको जीवंत करो।

श्री कृष्ण ने नंदगाँव में छप्पन कुंड बनाए क्योंकि नंद बाबा के नौ लाख धेनु जल कहाँ से पीएंगे? यह रेगिस्तानी इलाका है और यमुना पूरे बृज में तो है नहीं, छप्पन कुंड केवल नंदगाँव में बनाए, water harvesting की तकनीक को इस जगत में स्थापित करने का काम भी श्री कृष्ण ने किया और आज भी पूरा सौराष्ट्र जल के टाँकाओं पर ही टिका हुआ है। यह तकनीक कृष्ण बृज से सौराष्ट्र की ओर ले गए थे।

शास्त्र कहते हैं कि श्री कृष्ण ने जानबूझके एक सामान्य मनुष्य की तरह लीला की क्योंकि मनुष्य ही मनुष्य को प्रेरित कर सकता है। और लीला करके उदारता से बार-बार आते हैं, पर्यावरण की बार-बार सेवा करते हैं, किंतु हम क्या कर सकते हैं? हम यदि उनकी लीलाओं का अनुकरण करें, जल की महिमा को समझें।

यमुना का संदेश है कि जीवन और मृत्यु दोनों छोरों के बीच में जो कुछ घटता है और दोनों छोरों का भी मैं साक्षित्व करती हूँ, और यह आज

भी, अभी भी चल रहा है। जनम में भी जमुना पूजन होगा और मरण के बाद भी यमुना में ही एकाकार होगा। एक तकनीक बृजवासियों ने निकाली है विश्राम घाट पे, केशी घाट पे, नदी की आरती और यह मैं देख रहा हूँ बचपन से, करीब साठ वर्ष का मेरा अनुभव है कि जिन जिन घाटों पर यमुना जी की आरती की जाती है नदी उस घाट को नहीं छोड़ती। इसका मतलब है कोई भौतिक तत्त्व के अतिरिक्त एक भावनात्मक शक्ति भी है जो उस भौतिक जल को वहाँ बनाए रखती है। आज वृंदावन में केशी घाट को छोड़ के सब घाटों को यमुना छोड़ चुकी है किंतु केशी घाट की नहीं छोड़ती क्योंकि वहाँ पर आरती कभी बंद नहीं हुई, विश्राम घाट पे कभी आरती बंद नहीं हुई, विपरीत परिस्थिति में भी यमुना वहाँ रहती है।

जो भारत का सांस्कृतिक भाव भूगोल है, जो mapping है, उनमें से यदि हम नदियों के जाल को हटा दें तो वह collapse कर जाएगा, कुछ भी होगा नहीं, वहाँ कुछ मिलने वाला नहीं है। नदी से मानव ने अपना जीवन उत्सवमय बनाया है किंतु नदी क्या अपना उत्सव खुद मना सकती है क्या? नदी के कारण से तो हमारा जीवन उत्सव बन गया जन्म से लेके मृत्यु पर्यंत, किंतु नदी जो बह रही है, जो अपने देह को पिघलाके और समस्त बाधाओं में नाचती, कूदती, हटाती, यह करती, वह करती और इतनी लंबी यात्रा करती है तो वह किसलिए कर रही है? अगर नदी की दृष्टि से हम देखें तो भारत की संस्कृति जो भरत मुनि की दी हुई, स्थापित की हुई संस्कृति है, जिसमें ब्रह्म है, रसरूप, रस स्वरूप है, उस नदी संस्कृति की देह की जो नाड़ियाँ हैं, वो हमारी नदियाँ हैं।

यह Nadi Utsav में Nadi जो लिखा है, यह बहुत सुंदर है! नदी भी है और नाड़ी भी है, नदी glacier से जब निकलती है तो क्यों निकलती है? वह अपने परम तत्त्व को परम प्रियतम को प्राप्त करने के लिए, खोज करने निकल पड़ती है। परम तत्त्व कौन है?

'रसो वै सः' वह एक रसमय विग्रह है, रसमय तत्त्व है, और उस रस यात्रा को, उस साधना को नदी प्रारंभ करती है और रस सागर से एकाकार होके ही चैन लेती है, उसके पहले चैन नहीं लेती। किंतु उस बीच में एक विलक्षण घटना घटती है कि वह जो रसब्रह्म है उसके तीन आयाम नदी को समझ में आ जाते हैं- सत्, चित् और आनंद- और इन तीन आयामों पर ही पूरी रस संस्कृति, भारतीय संस्कृति, चेतना, कला, साहित्य, सब कुछ इसी के ऊपर टिका हुआ है। तो साध्य जब त्रिआयामी है तो नदी कहती है कि मुझको भी तीन आयाम से बहना पड़ेगा, वे तीन आयाम साधना के तीन नदी बन जाते हैं भारत में, मूर्तिमान बन जाते हैं, राम भगति जहाँ सुरसरि धारा, यह जो भक्ति का योग है, भक्ति मार्ग है, वह गंगा का रूप लेके मानव के बीच में प्रवाहित होता है। विधि निषेधमय कलिमल हरणी, रवि नंदन वर्णी, सूर्यपुत्री जो यमुना है, वह कर्म योग की मूर्तिमान प्रवाह धारा है, प्रवाहित धारा है और सुरसई ब्रह्म विचार प्रचारा, जो ज्ञान का शुद्ध मार्ग है, ब्रह्म विचार का मार्ग है, वह मार्ग सरस्वती की धारा है तो भारतीय संस्कृति सागर में पहुँचना है तो इन धाराओं के सहारे चलना पड़ेगा। ये धाराएं कट- कट के नहीं चलतीं, ये organically integrated हैं और इसलिए आपको यह देखके ताज्जुब होगा जब हम cultural mapping को देखते हैं, खाली प्रयाग में त्रिवेणी और संगम नहीं है, हिमालय में जैसे ही आप उतरना शुरू करेंगे कई संगम पड़ते हैं। दक्षिण भारत में जाइए, संगमेश्वर महादेव का इतना बड़ा तीर्थ स्थान है कि जो उत्तर के किसी भी तीर्थ को लज्जित करेगा, वहाँ भी संगम है, आंध्र प्रदेश में संगम है, कर्नाटक में संगम है, तमिल नाडु में संगम है, यह संगमात्मक, त्रिवेण्यात्मक जो संस्कृति है हमारी, और वह एक प्रश्न में आ जाती है जब नारदजी पूछते हैं अपने गुरुओं से कि

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तीनों को सुख कैसे मिले, उसका नुस्खा हमको मिलना चाहिए। यह जो हमारी रस संस्कृति है, जो नदी संस्कृति है, जहाँ पर ये नदियाँ हमारे उस संस्कृति के देह की नाड़ियाँ बनती हैं, नाड़ियों में शुद्ध प्राणतत्त्व युक्त प्रवाह होगा तभी हम स्वस्थ रह पाएंगे।

आचार्य श्रीवत्स गोस्वामी
निदेशक, ब्रज प्रकल्प, वैष्णव विचारक
वृंदावन, उत्तर प्रदेश



सीवेज से दृश्यमान यमुना

चार दशक पहले करीब 1986-87 की बात होगी। अनुपम मिश्र ने दो नावों का इंतज़ाम करने का आग्रह किया। उनका सुझाव था कि दिल्ली की यमुना को नाव से देखा जाए। दिल्ली में यमुना बाईस किलोमीटर बहती है। दो नावें इसलिए क्योंकि बीच में आईटीओ पड़ता है। आईटीओ के आरपार नाव नहीं चल सकती। तो तय हुआ कि एक नाव से वज़ीराबाद से आईटीओ तक और फिर दूसरी नाव में आईटीओ से ओखला तक चला जाए। इस तरह हम चार-पाँच लोगों ने दिल्ली की यमुना को देखने-जानने की कोशिश की।

यदि वज़ीराबाद को दिल्ली की यमुना का पहला नाला माना जाए तो ओखला की गिनती छब्बीसवें नाले के रूप में होगी। आज भी यमुना का यथार्थ यही है कि दिल्ली की यमुना यही छब्बीस नाले चलाते हैं।

सरकारें आती जाती रहती हैं लेकिन यमुना की तस्वीर नहीं बदलती। यहां तक कि वो दिल्ली के समाज के चिंता के केंद्र में भी नहीं है। दिल्ली के लोग उत्सव मनाने इंडिया गेट जाते हैं, उनके 'प्लेस टू विज़िट' वाली लिस्ट में यमुना नहीं होती।

यह सोचने की बात है कि दावों, दावों, और इरादों के बावजूद यमुना में गिर रहे नालों को रोका क्यों नहीं जा रहा है। पिछले तीस सालों में जब भी, जिसकी भी सरकार रही है, उसने यमुना को लेकर झूठ बोला है। दिवाली के बाद हर साल यमुना ज़ाग से भर रहती है, और छठ के कारण ज़ाग भरी यमुना की तस्वीरें मीडिया में जगह पा जाती हैं। क्योंकि ज़ाग के बीचों बीच हमारी मां-बहनें हाथ जोड़े खड़ी होती हैं। हर वर्ष छठ की तैयारी के दबाव में गंगा नहर का पानी यमुना के बड़े हिस्से में ट्रांसफ़र कर दिया जाता है जिससे ज़ाग दब जाता है, लेकिन कई बार प्रदूषित पानी की मात्रा ज़्यादा होती है और ज़ाग नज़र आता रहता है। दिवाली के पहले होने वाली ऊपरी गंगा नहर में सफ़ाई के दौरान भी दिल्ली में पानी की सफ़ाई पर असर पड़ता है। इससे यमुना और भी ज़्यादा प्रदूषित नज़र आने लगती है। क्योंकि यमुना की मुख्य धारा में कोई पानी है ही नहीं। वहाँ सिर्फ़ डोमेस्टिक और इंडस्ट्रियल सीवेज है, यह सीवेज हमेशा ही हाई टॉक्सिक होता है लेकिन गंगा नहर के द्वारा आने वाला पानी इसे काफ़ी हद तक डायल्यूट कर देता है, इतना कि इसे ट्रीट किया जा सके।

यमुना में पानी की उपलब्धता और उसमें दिल्ली के योगदान पर एक नज़र डालिए। एक बाल्टी में सामान्यतः 4 गैलन पानी आता है, एक मिलियन गैलन मतलब 45 लाख लीटर से ज़्यादा और दिल्ली में हर रोज़ 720 मिलियन गैलन मलमूत्र और इंडस्ट्रियल सीवेज पैदा होता है। इसे बाल्टी के हिसाब से समझेंगे तो केल्व्यूलेटर फ़ैल हो जाएगा। पूरी क्षमता के बावजूद दिल्ली सरकार 500 मिलियन गैलन सीवेज ही ट्रीट कर पाती है।

दिल्ली की यमुना का सच यही है कि वह अपने ही सीवेज से दृश्यमान है। यदि नज़फ़गढ़ सहित सभी नाले यमुना में डालने बंद कर दिए जाएं तो यमुना एक सूखा मैदान बन जाएगी जिसके कुछ हिस्सों में केवल दलदल होगा। दिल्ली के वज़ीराबाद से ओखला के बीच मात्र बाईस किलोमीटर के क्षेत्र में यमुना अस्सी फ़ीसद प्रदूषित होती है। यानी यमुनोत्री से लेकर प्रयागराज संगम तक कुल प्रदूषण में 80 फ़ीसद योगदान दिल्ली का है।

अब तक तक्ररीबन आठ हजार करोड़ रुपये यमुना सफ़ाई के नाम पर खर्च हो चुके हैं। नीति नियंताओं से यह सवाल पूछा जाना चाहिए कि उनकी कोशिशों में कहाँ कमी रह गई। राइन नदी का उदाहरण हमारे समाने है कि कैसे फ़्रांस की सरकार और लोगों ने मिलकर अपनी नदी को साफ़ कर लिया। पहले सत्याग्रह सफल हुआ करते थे अब वोट की ताकत ही सफलता दिला सकती है। राजनीतिक पार्टियों में यह डर होना चाहिए कि यदि वे नदी के प्रति संवेदनशील नहीं रहेंगे तो उन्हें वोट नहीं मिलेगा।

नदी उत्सव जैसी कोशिशों से हम प्रदूषण पर अपने योगदान को कम कर सकते हैं। यदि यमुना के समानांतर पाइप डालकर इन नालों का पानी दिल्ली के बाहरी हिस्से में ले जाकर ट्रीट किया जाए तो समस्या काफ़ी हद तक दूर हो सकती है। साथ ही मुख्य धारा में पानी की उपलब्धता बढ़ाने के लिए यमुना के दोनों किनारों पर तालाब बनाए जाने चाहिए। ये तालाब मुख्य धारा को रिचार्ज करेंगे और यमुना में पानी की कमी दूर करेंगे।

राम बहादुर राय

अध्यक्ष, इन्दिरा गाँधी राष्ट्रीय कला केन्द्र न्यास
नई दिल्ली



Towards Clean Ghats and Clear Rivers

India's cultural fabric is intricately woven with the threads of its rivers, which serve as the lifeline of the nation and profoundly impact its inhabitants. Beyond their physical presence, these rivers hold a revered status in Indian spiritual and cultural traditions and are immortalised in its literary works, symbolising deep spiritual and cultural significance. Acknowledging the sacred role of rivers, the Indian government has made the preservation and purification of these water bodies a top priority. Under the astute leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, India has embarked on a journey to safeguard its rich river heritage. The ambitious “Namami Gange” campaign has emerged as a milestone in spreading awareness about the sanctity of rivers among the masses. This initiative has galvanised efforts to rejuvenate the river Ganga and other revered rivers, aiming to restore them to their former glory. Beyond mere rhetoric, tangible steps have been taken to tackle the myriad challenges confronting India's rivers. Prime Minister Modi's personal commitment to river conservation has spurred action at every level of governance. His vision transcends political divides, emphasising the need for collective responsibility and concerned action to revive the nation's water bodies. Moreover, individuals like Shri Shrivastava currently serving as the Chairman of the National Green Tribunal, have played a pivotal role in propelling forward initiatives for river conservation. Their tireless dedication and innovative strategies have injected renewed momentum into the cause.

As India charts its course towards sustainable progress, the preservation of its river heritage emerges as a testament to its dedication to environmental stewardship. The holistic approach adopted by the government, coupled with active citizen participation, offers hope for the rejuvenation and safeguarding of India's rivers for future generations. In essence, the nurturing of India's river heritage transcends mere environmental concerns; it embodies a commitment to honouring the nation's rich legacy and collective identity. Through collaborative efforts and unwavering determination, India is poised to reclaim its role as the guardian of its sacred rivers, ensuring their vitality and purity. In our quest to preserve India's rivers, two fundamental principles guide us: awareness and action. It is through heightened awareness that we embarked on our journey, seeking the blessings of Mother Ganga through the initiation of Ganga *aarti*. It was her benevolence that paved the way for such endeavours to become possible, igniting the inception of Ganga *aarti*. Our pilgrimage to Mansarovar, permitted by the Chinese government 28 years ago at an altitude of 17,800 feet, further reinforced our commitment to river worship. Subsequently, along the banks of the Bagmati River in Kathmandu, we conducted *aarti*. Witnessing the littered shores, we realised the necessity to cleanse the Bagmati before immersing ourselves, prompting a collective effort resulting in pristine shores within two hours, whereupon we conducted the *aarti*. The transformation of Varanasi's riverfront owes much to the intervention of our Prime Minister. In 1999, a collective resolution united all to clean the ghats, culminating in the resumption of *aarti* ceremonies. Following this, *aarti* commenced at Dashashwamedh ghat, leading to subsequent ceremonies along the banks of the Ganga, Gomukh, and across the nation's shores. Driven by this awakening, we continued our journey forward.

Even amidst the Kumbha Mela, concepts such as Clean Kumbha and Green Kumbha have been introduced. Trees have been planted along the riverbanks, recognising that forests are the lifeline of rivers. In 2016, Kumbha celebrations at the Shipra's banks saw 74 hectares of forests planted.

It is a duty upon us to dedicate our time to contribute to the cause of river conservation. By protecting our rivers, we safeguard ourselves because without rivers we cannot survive. It is imperative that our actions must cease any further pollution of our rivers. Rivers are pure, and they shall remain so. Their essence cannot be tarnished by any force. To embark on the rejuvenation of our rivers, we must resolve to celebrate River Festivals. We must become vocal advocates for our rivers. While we cannot create water, we certainly can preserve it. The agony of rivers running dry should serve as our inspiration. We have shattered the heart of the Earth. Yet, our Prime Minister has drawn inspiration from the Ganga; therefore, the Ganga has never discriminated. It flows through numerous fields and will continue to flow as rivers flow relentlessly, devoid of hope. The question remains: for how long can we keep its banks clean?

We must utilise all available technology for this cause. Organising River Festivals to awaken others, and ourselves, is crucial. These initiatives contribute significantly. The land along the riverbanks has become expensive and commercialised. The sustainable shores have now become saleable. Those shores that once taught us the art of restraint are now venues for commerce. Hence, from Upper Kashi onwards, Rudraksha trees have been planted to promote eco-tourism instead of hotel tourism. We must rename riverside drives as meditation drives, attracting people to these spaces. Alongside, promoting Rudraksha tourism and meditation tourism can revitalise the area. Rivers are our culture; if culture survives, nature survives, ensuring the survival of our progeny and securing our future. Our endeavour is for all to come together, travel, and create more and more ponds. For instance, in Rishikesh, many people died while descending the jungle path because elephants came down to drink water. Following a survey, 75 ponds were built. In Haridwar, 40 million pilgrims were provided bags to dispose of off waste, seen on their journey downhill. The plan now is to build reservoirs after water rises. Trees should be planted on all birthdays, in schools, hospitals, and along roadsides, with continued care for three to five years. We should save water from pollution, keep single-use plastic at bay, and ensure organic farming instead of chemical farming along riverbanks. Purchasing grains from farmers to strengthen their resolve, will benefit both farmers and the poor. The Prime Minister has not only transformed Organic Thali into a Global Thali, but has also initiated the Anna Yojana. In the coming years, River Festivals must be organised on the banks of the Ganga so that a revolution can be brought about in the years to come because where there is faith and reverence, there is a way.

Swami Chidanand Saraswati
Spiritual Head, Parmarth Ashram
Rishikesh, Uttarakhand





Rivers: Our Quintessential Lifelines

In environmental jurisprudence, the discourse on the indispensable role of rivers in shaping civilisations and sustaining life has become increasingly pertinent. As an ardent advocate for the conservation of natural resources and a keen observer of the intersection between law and ecological imperatives, it is imperative to expound upon the profound significance of rivers, drawing from a confluence of legal, cultural, and historical perspectives. During a reflective moment, I recollect a poignant dialogue with Shri Chidanand Swami, where we delved into the pressing need for the conservation of the revered river Shipra. This encounter catalysed an in-depth exploration of the multifaceted dimensions of river ecosystems and their profound impact on the collective consciousness of societies worldwide.

Rivers, beyond their geographical and hydrological attributes, possess a symbolic and spiritual resonance, serving as conduits for mental and spiritual purification. The cultural fabric of India, intricately woven with myths and folklore surrounding its rivers, imbues these water bodies with significance that extends beyond the physical to the metaphysical realm.

In the agricultural landscape, rivers emerge as quintessential lifelines, sustaining the livelihoods of farmers and playing a pivotal role in the agrarian economy. Acknowledging the inherent connection between environmental elements and national pride, citizens bear the constitutional responsibility, as outlined in the Fundamental Duties, to preserve and protect these vital resources.

A jurisprudential analysis further underscores the judicial and legislative framework established to safeguard rivers. Citing a pertinent Supreme Court verdict, I posit that the legal machinery has articulated the imperative for environmental conservation, emphasising the duty of every citizen to contribute to the preservation of wildlife and natural habitats.

Evolving our gaze beyond the national borders, a comparative examination of global case studies, including the transformative journeys of Love Canal, Kyobo River, and Thames, offers valuable insights. These international experiences serve as both cautionary tales and sources of inspiration, precipitating the inception of national initiatives such as the Ganga Action Plan and the National Ganga Mission. The National Green Tribunal emerges as a formidable institutional response to environmental challenges, dedicated to adjudicating matters related to the protection and conservation of rivers. By adjudicating cases with environmental ramifications, the tribunal plays a pivotal role in shaping the legal landscape governing river ecosystems.

Justice Prakash Shrivastava
Chairperson, National Green Tribunal
New Delhi



On Developing a Water-Centric Approach

Over 250 years ago, the Industrial Revolution fundamentally reshaped Europe's development by ushering in a new economic era focused on industries, agriculture, infrastructure, and employment. However, as our understanding of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) evolved, a critical question emerged: What is the contribution of natural resources, particularly rivers, to our economic prosperity? Amid escalating environmental challenges, the health of waterways has become a pressing concern. Although, pollution and the degradation of river ecosystems do not directly factor into GDP calculations, their impacts on public health and the economy are profound. This article explores the intricate relationship between rivers and GDP, emphasising how our actions towards these waterways influence not only our economic metrics but also our broader environmental and societal well-being.

A question arises: What is the contribution of rivers to our GDP? And if a river gets polluted and we fall ill, does this come under GDP? Pollution of rivers or their death does not directly appear in GDP calculations, but when we fall sick and seek medical treatment, those costs are included in GDP. Similarly, the construction of hospitals, the growth of fisheries production since 1950, and other economic activities related to the aftermath of river pollution are all counted in GDP. This highlights a critical disconnect: while GDP measures economic output, it does not account for the environmental degradation that leads to these economic activities. Therefore, understanding the contribution of rivers to our economy requires a broader view that includes the indirect costs and benefits of maintaining healthy waterways.

Sustainability, a concept that gained prominence in 1972, redefined our approach to development by emphasising the balance between economic growth and environmental and social equity. This framework insists that economic activities must account for the health of four critical environmental pillars: air, water, forests, and soil. Each pillar is essential for sustaining life and ecological balance. Air quality influences health and climate; forests provide crucial services such as habitat, carbon storage, and water regulation; healthy soil supports agriculture and filters water; and watersheds, which have lost 40% efficiency in regions with degraded forests, are key to managing water resources and maintaining water flow. Any decline here disrupts rainfall patterns and reduces water availability, highlighting the interconnectedness of these elements. The well-being of rivers, which rely on clean air, robust forests, and stable soils, illustrates the need to incorporate environmental sustainability into economic decisions. Especially in areas where natural resources are vital for both economic and ecological stability, maintaining this balance is essential for a sustainable future.

There is a growing consensus that we should establish a dedicated collective focused on

ecological issues. Despite GDP becoming a central measure of economic performance around 1940 and being widely adopted by governments—such as the U.S. Congress in 1992 and China in 1994—this metric has traditionally prioritised economic growth while often overlooking ecological health. This narrow focus can result in economic activities that deplete natural resources and damage ecosystems, with long-term costs that GDP fails to capture. To address these shortcomings, it is crucial to integrate ecological considerations into our economic metrics. By doing so, we can more accurately assess the true costs and benefits of development, ensuring that economic policies foster not only financial prosperity but also environmental sustainability and resilience. This integrated approach would help balance economic activities with the need to protect and restore our natural ecosystems, leading to more informed and sustainable decision-making.

Water is fundamental to life, vital not only within our bodies but also for the well-being of our planet. Rivers, which are crucial for supporting ecosystems and human civilisations, face growing threats from various human activities, such as pollution, dam construction, and unsustainable land use. Recent environmental crises, like the devastation caused by water mismanagement in Libya and the alterations in river courses in Himachal Pradesh, underscore the severe consequences of our actions on water systems. These crises reveal how interconnected trees, wildlife, and entire ecosystems are through water cycles. Healthy rivers support biodiversity, provide clean drinking water, and enable agriculture and industry, forming the backbone of ecological and economic stability. Adopting a water-centric approach—prioritising the conservation and sustainable management of water resources—is essential to preserve this critical element of our environment. Such an approach ensures that ecosystems remain resilient, biodiversity is protected, and the benefits that rivers provide to our economy and communities are maintained for future generations.

Water and air management should be integrated. Rivers and rainfall are beyond our full control, as shown by unpredictable weather patterns and the increasing frequency of extreme events. The situation is more dire in mountainous regions where nature's fury is more visible. We must recognise the interconnectedness of natural systems and manage them holistically. Managing water and air resources must be a unified effort, given their deep interconnection and the complex dynamics of natural systems. The challenges of controlling river flows and rainfall are compounded by the unpredictable nature of weather patterns and the rise in extreme weather events. This unpredictability, driven by climate change, emphasises the need for integrated management strategies. The situation is particularly critical in mountainous regions, where the impacts of nature's volatility—such as floods, landslides, and altered water courses—are more destructive. Recognising the interplay between water and air systems is essential, for instance, deforestation affects rainfall patterns and water retention, while air pollution can influence climate and weather. A holistic approach that considers these interactions can improve resilience against environmental challenges, enhance resource management,

and protect both ecosystems and human communities from the escalating impacts of climate-related disruptions.

According to my experience in the Himalayan states, I have seen how the degradation of natural resources leads to socio-economic challenges. Communities here face poverty, limited access to healthcare and education, and migration, which exacerbate unsustainable practices such as deforestation and overexploitation of resources. I have witnessed how deforestation and forest degradation have devastated our forests, disrupting ecosystems and reducing essential services like water regulation and soil conservation. The land degradation and soil erosion caused by unsustainable agricultural practices have made hill communities more vulnerable to landslides and floods. Mismanagement of the Himalayan rivers through overexploitation and pollution has threatened aquatic biodiversity and disrupted the lives of downstream communities. Climate change and glacial retreat are accelerating, altering precipitation patterns and increasing the risk of flash floods and water shortages.

I pursued a doctorate in Botany, focusing on the flora of the Himalayas and in 1986, I founded the Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organisation (HESCO) with a vision to conserve the fragile Himalayan ecosystem while promoting sustainable livelihoods for local communities. Through HESCO, I have led initiatives that blended research with community engagement, addressing the interconnected environmental and socio-economic challenges of the region. We have conducted studies on sustainable land use practices, forest conservation, water resource management, climate adaptation, and renewable energy. These efforts have provided critical insights, guiding policymakers and communities towards environmental sustainability.

Recognising the crucial role of local communities in conservation, I have focused on empowering them through capacity-building programmes. By promoting sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, and traditional crafts, we have worked to enhance livelihoods, reduce dependency on fragile ecosystems, and encourage community stewardship of their natural surroundings. My dedication to the Himalayan region has been recognised with numerous accolades, including the Rolex Award for Enterprise and the Padma Shri. This recognition isn't not just about personal achievement, it is about inspiring a new generation of environmentalists, researchers, and community leaders to actively engage in conserving and sustainably developing the Himalayas.

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Beyond Pollution and Purity: The Spiritual Resonance of the Ganges River in Varanasi

Dr. Sweta Tiwari

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“O Ganga, may my existence be in you. You are at the beginning. You are in the end... you are in the middle, you are everything. You alone are the primordial Prakriti”

(Tagore 1982:19:5, 82-84).

Introduction

Water, a substance so fundamental to life, transcends its physical attributes to become a capital of immense political, social, and religious significance. Beyond its essential role as a sustainer of life, water holds a unique position as a purifier and ablution agent in various faiths. It is the focal point, culturally constructed and surrounded by multifaceted values and meanings. It is imperative to recognise that rivers and water bodies are not merely hydraulic systems, they are complex ecosystems that sustain life and support diverse communities. Human beings, as integral components of river ecosystems, possess the agency to shape the destiny of the water bodies. Their decisions, influenced by varying conditions such as abilities, resources, and willingness, contribute significantly to the overall health or degradation of river ecosystems. As a researcher immersed in the intricate dynamics of people-environment interaction along the ghats of the sacred river, Ganga, my exploration delves into the multifaceted characteristics of this revered water body. Symbolising life itself, rivers transform from mere geographical features to spiritual entities, with the Ganga, in particular, treated as an elixir of life in various literary works. As Strang (2004) aptly notes in her work *The Meaning of Water*, “Ganga is the metaphor of social, economic, and political relationships-a barometer of the extent to which several lives revolve around water”. Strang (2004) highlights the Ganga River’s pivotal role in shaping and reflecting the intricate social, economic, and political fabric of the region through which it flows. As one of India’s most venerated rivers, the Ganga transcends its physical existence as a waterway to become a living entity that profoundly impacts the lives of millions. It serves as a vital resource, providing water for drinking, agriculture, and industry, thereby sustaining the economic livelihoods of countless communities. Beyond its economic importance, the Ganga holds profound cultural and religious significance, particularly within Hinduism, where it is revered as a sacred river.

The waters of the Ganga are believed to possess purifying qualities, capable of absolving sins and facilitating spiritual liberation. This intricate interconnection between economic dependence, social structures, and spiritual beliefs positions the river as a powerful metaphor for the interconnectedness of human life and the environment. The state of the Ganga—whether clean and free-flowing or polluted and constrained—reflects the broader social and political priorities of the region, functioning as a barometer of how communities manage and value their natural resources. The condition of the Ganga thus mirrors the broader societal challenges and opportunities, including issues related to governance, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation. The river's health is inextricably linked to the well-being of the societies it supports, making its preservation a matter of both ecological and human significance.

The sacred city of Varanasi, also known as Kashi or Banaras, holds a profound spiritual significance in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Nestled on the banks of the holy Ganges, it is believed to be one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world. The Ganga, as a unifying force, flows gracefully along the ghats (riverfronts) of Varanasi, yet each ghat serves as a microcosm of distinct social activities intertwined with the river's presence. It becomes evident that devotional practices, steeped in tradition, often overlook ecological considerations, as the river assumes an authoritative Sanskrit voice in everyday rituals and ceremonies. The Ganga ghats emerge as vibrant arenas where theological metaphors intersect with the enforced identities of international tourists, environmental concerns, economic dynamics, and caste politics. This convergence results in a kaleidoscope of attitudes and perspectives, shaping the complex meanings associated with the river. Drawing from scriptures, scholarly writings and my own Ph.D. work, I juxtapose the physical characteristics of the Ganga's waters with its overpowering cultural significance in the quotidian lives of people. Through an autoethnographic lens, I engage deeply with the lived experiences and narratives of individuals who inhabit and interact with the Ganga on a daily basis.

To truly understand the spiritual resonance of the Ganges and its impact on the everyday lives on the ghats of Varanasi, it is crucial to delve deeper into the multifaceted layers of religious symbolism, cultural practices, and the interwoven narratives that shape the collective consciousness of this ancient city. The spiritual resonance of the Ganges is deeply ingrained in the lives of the people who gather on the ghats, or the steps leading down to the river.

“I come to the ghat daily, I walk down the steps, keep my clothes with one of the pandas and gaze the river for some time. Before the sun rises, I make sure I am knee deep into the river. I bathe in the river and chant my prayers while bathing. I come out of the river and ask the pandas to put some vermillion on my head. With wet clothes in a plastic packet, I leave for home.”

(Excerpts from fieldwork by Ramesh Gupta)
(Sweta, 2018)

The daily scene at the ghats is a familiar one, with individuals like the one in the preceding conversation making their way for an early morning ritual of bathing before continuing with their day. The routines, though integral, often become so ordinary that they seldom become topics of conversation. The *pandas*, responsible for the proceedings on the ghats, maintain a certain silence about the intricacies of their roles. Similarly, whether they be tourists, pilgrims, or casual visitors, their expressed motivations for being there often revolve around an affection for the place or the religious significance associated with the river.

The day-to-day interactions with the Ganga may, on the surface, appear mundane, lacking any apparent uniqueness. Attempts to extract detailed accounts of individuals' activities or how they organise themselves around the river reveal a tendency for respondents to either romanticise the river when their routines are unremarkable or struggle to elaborate beyond the fundamental trio of "*nahana, riyaaz, and prarthana*" (bathing, exercise, and prayer) (Sweta, 2018). Encouraging individuals to reflect deeply on their everyday engagements proves to be a challenging endeavour. Anthony Giddens articulates the essence of everyday life, portraying it as a realm where much of our actions lack explicit reasoning. Our choice of attire, our meandering walks, and countless other mundane activities constitute a fabric of day-to-day social engagement that defies easy explanation. These actions are woven into the tapestry of our existence, challenging us to elucidate their motives beyond their mere presence and occurrence (Tomlinson 1997:174).

While life around the Ganga ghats may be characterised as banal, even the seemingly trivial aspects of existence contribute to the comprehension of social order (Simmel 1950). Understanding everyday life requires an anthropological exploration that surpasses individual perceptions, delving into the intricate social structures and organisations that shape our daily realities. Mead (1934) contends that the regular organisation of people is not instinctual but culturally determined. In a similar vein, Husserl (1970:380-381) conceptualises everyday life as the "life world," a realm perpetually taken for granted, constantly pre-given, and universally acknowledged as the shared world of all. Bourdieu (1990:150-155) posits that the everyday understanding of individuals in the broader world is intricately linked to personal dispositions.

Deriving from this it can be assumed that the practices around the river Ganga are drawn from the in-depth meanings that people take from the river as a sacred and significant. The sacred essence permeates the inert quality of the landscape, providing it with a distinctive frame of vision. The sacred landscapes serve as orientations exclusively meaningful for religious individuals. Sacred space holds existential significance for the religious person, as every undertaking necessitates a prior orientation—an establishment of a fixed point. Hence, religious individuals have consistently sought to anchor their abode at "the center of the world," exemplified by the positioning of Kashi or Banaras at the earth's center (Eliade 1963:22). The sustenance of the Ganga's sacredness lies

in the rituals embedded within it. Rituals, with their intricate theories, function as blueprints for numerous routinised and mundane activities. Defined as “thoughtless actions—routinized, habitual, obsessive, or mimetic- purely formal, secondary, and mere physical expressions of logically prior ideas” by Bell (1992:19), rituals contribute to the sacred landscape’s fabric. Durkheim views rituals as means to foster collective beliefs and as a switch point between external moral constraints and individual feelings (Munn 1973:583). Geertz equates rituals with ethos, asserting that in ritual, the lived world and the imagined world converge under a single set of symbolic forms (1973).

The Ganga, consequently, embodies both the lived and imagined worlds. Through everyday practices, the Ganga is experienced as sacred place- a *tirtha* or liberating ground. The dialectic relation between the lived and imagined worlds manifests on the riverfront, where Banaras is simultaneously the city of light (Kashi) and the city of joy (*anandvan*). Rituals materialise the sacred symbols ingrained in the landscape, transcending mere functionality to become potential arenas for social conflict. In this interplay of symbolism and practice, the river encapsulates the dual nature of Banaras, serving as a tangible canvas where the city’s textual imagination is vividly lived and experienced. Texts glorifying the Ganga have been universalised through ethnographic writings, transforming into modern Mahatamyas, turning the Ganga into the greatest symbol of purity. The nature of Ganga is humanly, but it has the cosmic powers. It is not a river. It is considered as goddess. The river Ganga undergoes a metamorphosis, transcending its physical existence to become an embodiment of divinity, referred to not as a mere water body but as mother ‘*Maa*’ (Sweta 2018). Pilgrims develop an intense sense of devotion, elevating the Ganga’s existence to a divine plane. In the everyday lives of pilgrims and Banarasis (residents of Banaras) alike, the river Ganga sustains multiple meanings, serving as a cosmic fluid that connects the people across globe (Eck 1982 & King and Brockington 2005). For many tourists, the river-ghat system offers a plethora of yogic India, orientalism in its original form. For Hindus, coming from different parts of the country, Ganga is *moksha dayini* (liberating) and for some Banarasis, Ganga is the breadwinner. For Muslims, Ganga is cosmos of Hindu-Muslim *tahazeeb* (culture). Tourists not only contribute to the footfall but also bring with them a piece of their culture. For many, Ganga flows in the clean minds i.e., to say *Man changa to kathoti mein Ganga* (For a pure mind, the Ganga can be anywhere). For some, encountering the river is inevitable, as it’s the only way to truly appreciate its merits and benefits. The ghats become the blurred spaces of religious reverence, cultural melting pot, pilgrimage, tourism, pleasure market, politics, environmental awareness, each smudging into the other, and overshadowing the other. However, the exalted religious status of the river is always supreme. The *bhakti bhav* (religious sentiments) for Ganga subsumes everything.

The *puranic* devotion to Ganga is mindfully fixed on emotions. The auspiciousness is attached with eternal purity. Ganga is eulogised as the river which can even purify the gods and the goddesses. King and Brockington (2005:158) say that “there is a missionary zeal in both the epics and puranas to promote devotion to the Ganga”. The pilgrims are

so excited about the merits of the river that even the chilling winds do not stop them from taking the holy dips. The dichotomy between the river as a cosmic being and the river as an ecological being is seen in the practices shaped around it.

“She (Ganga) is believed to be the elixir of life, the holiest, the purest form of life on earth. She sustains all the living beings, liberates them from all the sins.”

(Excerpts from Narada Purana, as narrated by Mahant Girishwar Pandey)

He further defines Ganga as a reliever from all the sorrows. Ganga is such a high form of cosmic energy that she is believed to be the existence of the human souls. She is the primordial nature and nothing can defy her. The pilgrims see in Ganga the reflections of cosmic energy that runs the world. She is the only goddess who is a part of their everyday life. The morning and evening prayers, every daybaths to meritorious *snaan* (bath), rites of passage (birth, marriage, childbirth, death) the river is the part of everything.

Ganga has plasmic roots in everyday life of Banaras. With the rise of the sun from behind the sands, the bathers take a holy dip in the river. The shops start selling the paraphernalia of devotion like sacred thread, sandalwood, white whisks, and lamps. People flock to perform religious activities. The clutter reduces by afternoon and again the ghats come to life with the bells and conches of Ganga *aarti*. All these activities are guided by the stories people have heard about the metaphysical river Ganga. The stories link the sacred with everyday life. It makes the sacredness comprehensible. The promotion of various traditions on the ghats of Banaras is the result of the rich stories and legends associated with the place and the river. “Ganga takes the impurity of everyone. She dose not discriminate on the basis of caste. *Sab barabar hain maa ke liye*. (Everyone is equal for the mother), says Hari ji, the barber on the ghats. The *puranic* scripts glorify the divinity of Ganga. They detail out a rhetoric which is interpreted into actions. “Ganga”, a local Ganga lover says “has been misunderstood by the devotees.” “Taking a dip in Ganga will not liberate anyone. Throwing away all your waste and dirt will not give merit. Shedding all the dirt into the river will only kill it.”

Everyday Glimpses of Ganga’s Sanctity: Perspectives from Banaras’ Boatmen and Pandas

One way of experiencing the river is *darshan* or gaze. Gazing involves a subject-object relationship, an experience that people derive from viewing, making sense of their surroundings. *Darshan*, defined as a respectful visual exchange, establishes a unique intimacy between deity and worshipper. Babb describes it as a “fluid current of sight” coursing between the devotee and the image (1981:5-7). The act of *darshan*, a pivotal aspect of daily life intertwined with the river, involves a nuanced form of visual practice. It extends beyond mere biological vision, often encompassing conscious and culturally shaped viewing practices. *Darshan*, bathing in the river, and taking a holy dip constitute

“an experience” in context of Ganga (Turner and Brunner, 1986:35). Capturing everyday experiences necessitates an exploration of the sensory dimensions that people encounter. The Ganga as sensory waterbody, is replete with visuals, sounds, smells and feelings. Sensory consumption becomes a crucial means to experience a landscape fully, engaging all senses along with an active and reflective mind (Yi-Fu-Tuan 1979). On the ghats, two distinctive visual sensory experiences emerge: the sacred gaze or *darshan* and the tourist gaze. Ganga, in this context, is not only observed but also consumed in diverse ways. The boatmen and *pandas* (priests), play a vital role as intermediaries between the river Ganga and the devout pilgrims seeking divine blessings through the ritualistic act of *darshan*.

Within this sacred landscape, the boatmen, affectionately known as the Gangaputras or sons of Ganga, emerge as pivotal figures, their lineage tracing back to the mythical era when they aided Lord Rama in traversing the revered river. Today, these boatmen assume the roles of both custodians and facilitators of religious rituals, embodying the spiritual and practical significance of the Ganges. Beyond their role as mere transporters across the sacred waters, the boatmen serve as *pundits* of the river, their livelihoods linked to the sanctity of the Ganges. Their boats become vessels not only for ferrying pilgrims and tourists but also for channelling spiritual experiences through *darshan*. With each passing ghat, a unique narrative unfolds- the boatmen, often overlooked as mere conveyors, metamorphose into conduits of history, elucidating the myths, practices, and contemporary significance associated with each site. It is through their engaging tales that the essence of the Ganges is communicated, transcending the superficiality of a tourist’s gaze.

The practice of storytelling, often perceived as a routine activity, assumes a significant and transformative role when boatmen narrate tales to pilgrims and tourists as they navigate the sacred waters of the Ganga. This narrative tradition is deeply intertwined with the cultural and spiritual experiences of those who journey along the river. The storytelling along the Ganga not only serves as a means of conveying historical and religious narratives but also reinforces the river’s status as a living symbol of spiritual and cultural heritage. The stories told by boatmen are thus not merely recitations of myths but are active engagements that shape the pilgrims’ and tourists’ perceptions of the Ganga, imbuing their journey with a sense of reverence and connection to the divine. In this unfolding tableau, storytelling becomes a vessel for cultural transmission, a means of enriching historical knowledge, and a testament to the intertwined spirituality of the river and the city. The boatmen’s narratives encapsulate not only the historical significance of Banaras but also contemporary practices, famous culinary landmarks, and various facets of daily life. As they navigate the labyrinth of ghats, the boatmen breathe life into the river, stones and structures, infusing the landscape with a living history. Through their narratives, the boatmen carve a space for Banaras within the collective memory of those who traverse the sacred waters, ensuring that the Ganges remains a river not solely of water but of stories, myths, and enduring spirituality.

In the spiritual realm, the *pandas* assume the role of intermediaries, connecting the river Ganga with the pilgrims who flock to its banks seeking divine blessings. For some pilgrims, a pre-established association exists with specific *pandas*, guiding them directly to the *chauki* (wooden bed). Others, unbound by prior commitments, approach the *pandas* of their choosing. Upon reaching the designated *chauki*, pilgrims deposit their belongings and assume their positions. The *chauki* transforms into a sacred enclave where the ensuing *puja* unfolds. The wooden *chaukis*, each with its unique identity, serve as both the physical and metaphorical interface between the spiritual and economic realms of the Ganges. The *chaukis*, with their tangible value, represent the economic underpinnings that sustain the *panda's* livelihood. The ritual begins with a customary act- the *panda* sprinkling the sacred waters of the Ganga upon the pilgrim, a symbolic initiation into the spiritual proceedings.

The *panda* guides the devotee through the ritual, commencing with the *sankalp*, a solemn vow expressing the intent of the worshipper. The subsequent steps involve the performance of specific *puja paths* or religious activities dictated by the pilgrim's devotion or desires. The *chaukis*, in this context, emerge as spiritual stations, facilitating a connection with the divine. Pilgrims partake in rituals with unwavering faith, accepting the *pandas'* methodologies without questioning. The magnetic pull of the Ganges beckons pilgrims from far-flung corners of the globe, each fervently yearning to partake in the hallowed ritual of *darshan*, an intimate communion with the sacred river.

Eck elucidates *Darshan* as the “auspicious sight”, involving standing in the presence of a deity, beholding the divine image with one's own eyes, and reciprocating the gaze with the deity (Eck 1986:1). This sacred gaze encapsulates the consumption of spirituality, transforming the landscape into a wellspring of profound experiences. For pilgrims, it unfolds as a sacred *darshan*, while tourists indulge in a leisurely gaze. The construction of the gaze, in any historical epoch, hinges upon its relationship with its antithesis- non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness. The nature of a tourist gaze is contingent on its contrast with non-tourist experiences, particularly those rooted in domestic and occupational spheres (Urry 2002 [1990]: 1-2). Unlike the sacred gaze, the tourist gaze is a recreational pursuit, with the river and ghats providing sensory encounters for travellers and non-Hindus alike. However, both entail a quest for authenticity, as the visual experiences in *darshan* and tourist gaze demand direct encounter or mediated representation. The river, deemed sacred, and the ghats, symbolic of sacred tirthas, serve as conduits for pilgrims to accrue merit through their embodied gaze.

Entranced in a state of profound reverence, these pilgrims singularly perceive the Ganga as the agent for absolving sins, an ethereal entity holding the key to spiritual liberation. Sins emanate from bad karma. The undercurrent of their journey is woven with the anxiety of absolving the sins and yearning for celestial rewards. Rooted in the tenets of Hinduism, the emphasis on karma permeates their consciousness. However,

the contemporary globalised landscape introduces nuances, blurring the dichotomy of good and bad karma. Actions deemed virtuous for some may bear adverse connotations for others, and vice versa. Ganga is the great bathing site to absolve sins and gain merit, especially on important calendrical days like Ganga Dussehra, eclipses, Dev Deepawali, Pitripaksha, New moon, Ekadashi, and so on. The sacred act of bathing, inherently meritorious, acquires a nuanced complexity in its execution. Rituals pertaining to the sacred cannot exist in a realm of simplicity; rather, they demand meticulous detailing and elaborate procedures. The *pandas*, assuming the mantle of spiritual guides, meticulously devise these procedures, offering a structured mechanism for human interaction with the divine goddess Ganga. Through rituals and hymns, they orchestrate the sacred bath, infusing it with profound meaning and cosmic significance. The purity and beneficence of Ganga are such that a little water is also carried back home (Sweta, 2018).

The pilgrims, enveloped in *shraddha* or absolute devotion, trust implicitly in the sanctity of the river. The infectious presence and proximity of the river create an aura of sanctity, purifying both body and soul. The *pandas* skilfully leverage this proximity, intertwining the spiritual and the practical, thus, making a livelihood by assisting pilgrims in their sacred endeavours. Motivated by an innate spiritual pull, people gravitate towards the river, driven by a collective belief that the mere act of performing rituals with the Ganga as a witness, using her sacred waters, ensures the success of their puja. In this sacred dance between pilgrim, panda, and the Ganga, the river becomes a dynamic nexus of holiness, weaving together rituals, faith, and the ceaseless flow of devotion along its timeless ghats. The holiness of the Ganga is embraced as a common understanding, a fundamental truth that underpins the entire ritualistic process.

In this intricate choreography, the Ganga transcends its physical form, metamorphosing into a metaphorical metalanguage. As a potent religious symbol, it accommodates multiple interpretations, echoing the sentiments articulated by Brockington (1996:196). The river becomes a celestial nectar, an amalgamation of cosmological forces embodied by planets and stars. The Ganges, under the adept guidance of the *pandas*, assumes a multifaceted identity, symbolising not merely a geographical entity but a spiritual continuum with layers of significance awaiting exploration by the devout pilgrims.

The Paradoxical Dichotomy of Ganga: Sacred Devotion and Environmental Realities

In the routine rituals by the river, influenced by *puranic* expressions of devotion, vows, merits, and ascetic practices, the ecological integrity of the river comes into scrutiny, raising concerns about the physical health of the Ganga. In navigating the chaotic and uneven spaces of the Banaras ghats, one is compelled to confront the dualism inherent in perceptions of the Ganga's health. The dichotomy between *dushit* (impure) and *pradushit* (dirty) frames offers contrasting lenses through which the river is viewed, reflecting the tension between its religious sanctity and environmental degradation. In an ongoing endeavour spanning several decades, the Indian government has tirelessly

pursued the task of cleaning the sacred Ganges river. From the initiation of the Ganga Action Plan in 1985 to the National Ganga River Basin Project in 2008, and most recently, the Namami Gange Programme launched in 2014, substantial financial resources have been allocated to restore the ecological health of the revered river (Das and Tamminga 2012; Jamal and Sen 2022; Sharma et al. 2021).

A report published by Monika Mandal on Scroll.in illustrates the data from the Central Pollution Control Board of India revealing a significant financial commitment to Ganga cleanup efforts, with approximately Rs 20,000 crore invested between 1986 and 2014. Since 2014, an additional Rs 13,000 crore has been allocated, with these funds being fully utilised by October 2022. This financial outlay reflects a shift towards a more technical and strategic approach to addressing river pollution, aligning with evolving government policies aimed at improving the river's condition. Despite substantial financial investments in cleanup efforts, pollution remains a significant issue. Reports from NGOs and government agencies reveal ongoing environmental challenges, underscoring the tension between the river's sacred status and its physical health. An independent evaluation by the Sankat Mochan Foundation, a prominent NGO established in 1982, underscores the ongoing challenges. The assessment, conducted on May 5 and June 24, involved sampling water from multiple points along the Ganges in Varanasi. The results were alarming: faecal coliform bacteria levels were found to exceed permissible limits by a staggering factor of one million, far surpassing the acceptable standard of 500 per 100 millilitres. Additionally, the dissolved oxygen levels, essential for aquatic life, were found to be close to the minimum threshold of 7 mg/l at most sampling points. More concerning was the Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), which measures the amount of oxygen required by decomposers in the river. The BOD levels at most sites exceeded 3 mg/l, indicating a higher demand for oxygen and suggesting significant pollution that hampers the river's ability to sustain aquatic life. This disparity between financial investment and actual water quality highlights the complexity of addressing river pollution and the need for continued and enhanced efforts in river conservation and management (Mandal, 2023).

The confluence of ecological pollution and religious significance forms a complex interplay along the sacred Ganges River. Mary Douglas, in her seminal work, characterises “dirt as a matter out of place” (1966:53), a concept that resonates with the polluted segment of the Ganga, referred to as *pradushit*. Here, ‘*pra*’ signifies outside or outer, emphasising the contextual nature of defining dirt or purity, intricately tied to the notion of place. The cultural construction of purity and pollution finds its anchor in the specific locations along the river. The significance of these concepts is inseparable from the reference point provided by the sacred places. Without such a frame of reference, the classification of anything as pure or impure becomes elusive. Consequently, the pollution and degradation, occurring in areas deemed “outside”, are perceived as not directly affecting the inherent purity of the river.

The paradoxical dichotomy between the spiritual essence of the Ganga and its physical manifestation unfolds in this narrative. Offerings such as food, hair, flowers, lamps, and ashes made to the river bring joy and peace to the devotees. However, this external expression of devotion takes a toll on the river's tangible form. Despite the belief that the Ganga originates from the feet of the supreme lord, the influx of sewage and solid waste impedes its pristine flow, diminishing the divinity inherent in its physical embodiment. A poignant perspective emerges from the words of a frequent bather who asserts, "*Ganga kisi bhi roop mein ho, nadi, nala, nahar, ganga hi rahegi. Yeh behti gandagi se ganga ka swabhaw nahi badal jayega*" (Ganga will remain Ganga in all its forms. Its nature won't be altered by the flowing impurities). This encapsulates the enduring spiritual identity of the Ganges, resilient in the face of external challenges, maintaining its sanctity across diverse manifestations. A pilgrim, hailing from the vibrant state of Gujarat, echoed sentiments akin to those shared by many who embark on a sacred journey to the revered Ganga River. Inquiring about her willingness to immerse in its waters, I, astonished by the apparent pollution, questioned, "Will you take a dip in this river?" Her response, delivered with unwavering affirmation, conveyed a profound faith: "Yes, I have come from Gujarat to bathe in the Ganga. This dirt is superficial; *Ganga kabhi gandi nahi ho sakti* (Ganga can never become dirty)."

Her conviction revealed a deeply ingrained belief system where the act of bathing in the Ganga transcends the physical state of its waters. Despite the visible pollution, the devotee perceived the river as an entity capable of spiritual purification. The ritualistic act of bathing, practiced on numerous ghats year-round, introduces detergents, soaps, and discarded clothes into the river. However, in the pilgrim's perspective, this act symbolises a reciprocal relationship between the devotee and the sacred river. The devotees offer everything to the Ganga through the act of bathing, trusting in the river's transformative power to turn impurities into merits. This sentiment finds its roots in sacred texts, which, though cherished for their spiritual significance, pose ecological challenges to the sustainability of the river. He claims that Ganga can cleanse itself of sins, for Lord Vishnu, the embodiment of sin-absolution, resides within the river's heart.

The dichotomy between the Ganga's metaphor of merit and its tangible pollution creates a perplexing scenario. The Sankat Mochan Foundation, led by the late Veer Bhadra Mishra, has valiantly worked to combat Ganga's pollution. Their advocacy emphasises that the physical purity of the river should coexist with its spiritual sanctity, challenging the prevalent notion that spiritual devotion might overshadow environmental well-being. Amidst the *aartis*, rhythmic drumming, and joyous dancing, the rituals of Ganga *pujan* unfold. The fragrance of burning ghee in lamps mingles with the aroma of rose petals and marigold gardens, creating an intoxicating symphony of devotion. The echoes of "*Har Har Mahadev, Har Har Gange*" reverberate, sanctifying the Ganga a thousand times over. The Ganga emerges not merely as a physical entity but as a transcendent, divine force that absorbs the sins of its devotees and transforms them into spiritual merit.

Conclusion

Water, as a symbol, is universally revered in various religious traditions, endowing it with an inherent sanctity. Banaras, as a city, derives its rational foundation from the profound sanctity attributed to the Ganga. This sacredness is not merely an abstract concept; rather, it is meticulously preserved in ancient texts, such as Mahatamyas, Puranas, and folklore, forming the bedrock of the city's spiritual identity. Ganga, in this sacred milieu, transforms from a mere geographical entity to a lived experience. The narratives of belonging to the river are diverse and plentiful, each contributing to the cosmic essence that defines the Ganga. While not all stories culminate in a cosmic finale, they collectively underpin the river's cosmic significance.

The designation of Ganga as a mother is an acknowledgment of its nurturing nature, emphasising the river's role in sustaining life. Pilgrims, recognising the majestic presence of the river, bow down in reverence, establishing a profound connection with the sacred waters. This act of bowing transcends a mere ritual; it symbolises an acknowledgment of Ganga's immense cosmic strength, derived from the inherent fertility of its waters. In the world religions, water consistently occupies a sacred position, and Ganga attains the status of a sacred being due to the potent powers it embodies. The fertility inherent in Ganga's waters contributes to its cosmic significance, symbolising not just a physical entity but a living force with transformative capabilities. The cultural construction of purity and pollution finds its anchor in specific locations along the river, intricately tied to the sacred places. The influx of offerings, while symbolising devotion and peace for the devotees, poses challenges to the river's tangible form. The Ganga's enduring spiritual identity, resilient in the face of external challenges, is encapsulated in the unwavering faith of pilgrims who perceive the river as capable of spiritual purification despite visible pollution. The river Ganga is not just a physical entity flowing through the ghats of Varanasi; it is a sacred landscape where spirituality, culture, environmental concerns, and daily life converge. Its essence is felt in the narratives of boatmen, the rituals conducted on the *chaukis*, the sensory experiences of *darshan*, and the complex interplay between the sacred and the polluted. The Ganga embodies a complex interplay of spirituality and environmental reality. While it is revered as a sacred river capable of granting spiritual liberation, it also faces significant ecological challenges. Understanding this duality requires acknowledging both the profound spiritual meanings and the pressing environmental issues surrounding the river. As Varanasi continues to evolve, the Ganges remains an ever-flowing source of inspiration, spiritual solace, and cultural heritage, embodying the timeless essence of this ancient city. Ganga, the cosmic mother, beneath her grace, my head humbly bows in reverence.

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Songs of a River : Analysing the Bhatiali Songs of Bengal

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Bhatiali, also Bhatiyali, is a genre of river-songs sung by boatmen and fishermen across the region of Bengal and Bangladesh. Bhatiali is sung during the boat's downstream movement and resembles the movement of the tide. According to the prominent Bhatiali singer, Abbasuddin Ahmed, the melody of Bhatiali "ascends from the earth to the vast expanse of nature around and descends to earth again. The long drawn-out tune expresses the emotional mind of the singer in a straight and simple way" (1957, 47). The genre incorporates aspects of materiality and spirituality that are embedded in the lived experiences of the fishing communities of West Bengal and Bangladesh.

Bhatiali are folk-songs that are crucial to the occupation of boating and fishing in the rivers. Bengal and Bangladesh are riverine countries where the rivers, Ganga, Padma, Meghna and Brahmaputra (Jamuna in Bangladesh), shape the culture and identity of the place. The communities who sing the songs mostly belong to the lowest rungs of the society and are discriminated on the basis of their caste and occupation. As a result, these songs not only highlight their integral relationship to their occupation, but also create an alternative way of expressing their associations with the divine.

The songs incorporate aspects of *dehatatva* philosophy that looks at the corporeal body as the medium to reach the divine, along with metaphors associated with the boat. As an essential part of the "occupational folklore" of the boatmen, fishermen, and shepherds of Bengal and Bangladesh, these songs are bereft of any sectarian and religious bias (Majumdar 2009, 133). The boat, the boatman, and the river take on symbolic interpretations in the songs that dissolve the binaries between the abstract and the corporeal.

The boat represents the human body, the boatman represents the soul as well as the divine, the two banks of the river represent the material and the spiritual worlds, while the river with its ebb and flood tides represents life. The whole act of boating is transformed into a spiritual act of passage from the material to the transcendental realm, a motif very similar to the mainstream Hindu belief of the river as a "hierophanic space" that connects the mortal world with the divine (Eliade 116-117).

Bhatiali, as it exists today, is an amalgamation of the oral and written forms. With the decline in traditional boating and fishing methods, the songs are undergoing changes that indicate the ways in which folk traditions adapt to co-exist with the changes in a society. Abbasuddin Ahmed classified various forms of river-songs which were prominent across Bengal and Bangladesh: Bhatiali, Bhaoaia, Murshidi, Sari, Jari among others. Today In the contemporary times, all these forms have coalesced into the form of Bhatiali, especially in the region of Malda in West Bengal as traditional boating and fishing methods have become redundant in the area. The genre, which earlier comprised of a lone singer singing in an undulating voice while sailing downstream the river has transformed into “polligeeti” or songs of the village, where the singers sing with the accompaniments like *ektara*, *dotara*, *tabla*, *flute*, and the *harmonium*. Additionally, the whole village participates as audience. The shift of the songs from the river to the land also indicates the gradual distancing of the community from the river. In the following sections, this shift with reference to few Bhatiali songs has been highlighted. These Bhatiali songs were collected from the folk-singers from the area of Panchanandapur in Malda, West Bengal.

Songs of Devotion

In the songs of eminent Bhatiali singers like Abbasuddin and Jasimuddin, the images of the lives of the people are entwined with a deep sense of spirituality. The influence of Baul and Murshidi songs on the genre is also prominent across several anonymous songs, which the local singers also classified as *bhaktigeeti* or songs of devotion. In the song, *Maya Nodi Kamne Jabi Baeya, O Rongila Desher Naiya?* (Hey boat, from the colourful country! How are you going to sail through this river of illusion?), the singer warns the boatman to sail carefully in the river, which is life itself:

***Hey, boat! On this river’s slippery bank
Six women huddle together.
Don’t forget your way upon seeing their beauty.
Because the moment you forget,
You will drown and die gasping for breath.¹***

The song is influenced by *Lalon Geeti*, songs associated with Lalon Fokir, and talks about the spiritual corruption of man through imageries of the river and boat. The river is represented as an unsafe way of passage, and the boatman is advised to row his boat very carefully. The river is epitomised as life itself and is full of dangers. The boat is one’s own body, crafted meticulously, but one small mistake can bring devastating consequences. The tone used in this song is that of caution and not accusation- the singer asks a passing boatman to be cautious of the vices and illusions covering the river’s stretch and protect one’s body from spiritual corruption. The six beautiful women are the six vices- *kaam* (sexual urge/desire), *krodh* (anger), *lobh* (greed), *moh* (attachment/illusion/delusion), *mod* (arrogance), and *mathsourjyo* (envy).

¹ Sung by Lakkhan Chandra Sutradhar, Malda 2022.

In an another song, composed by Abdul Alim “O Sarbonasha Padma Nodi” (O destructive Padma River!), the devastation caused by the river’s floods and erosion is connected to the moral and spiritual corruption of humanity. The singer is lost in the vastness of the ever-expanding Padma River and fears the impending storms:

O destructive Padma River!
O Padma, looking at your violent storms,
My heart trembles with fear.
Lest you kill me, dragging me into your destructive waves.²

The river’s storm is literal and metaphorical- the traveller is lost because the storm has changed the landscape by eroding the familiar landscape, and the storm also represents the hardships in a person’s life. The six boatmen are the same six maidens addressed in the previous song, and are the reasons behind the destruction of the body and mind. Goaded by six sins, the body becomes weak, and the mind loses control. As a result, the individual can no longer find his or her way in the vastness of life, and when struck by hardships in the form of despair, the individual struggles helplessly with a corrupt mind and body. The river Padma is a destructive force which leads men astray and destroys them.

In the songs mentioned above, the difficulties of living on the shifting riverbed are enmeshed with a deep sense of spiritual guidance. The songs are not only songs of boatmen, but also depict the state of the human soul, which one finds in the Hindu religious traditions. These songs highlight how the aspect of spirituality is not separate from materiality and the ways in which discriminated sections of the society weave their own spiritual narratives from their deep associations with nature.

Bhatiali incorporates environmental changes and the landscape into a spiritual crisis. The river in these songs acts as an agent of awakening and corruption, highlighting its ambiguous nature. Like life, the river is impersonal, and man must find his way through it. The influence of *dehatattva* is prominently etched in all the songs. According to the *dehatattva* philosophy, which is endorsed by the *Lalon panthis* (disciples of Lalon Fokir), Bauls, and other Vaishnava religions in the area, the human body rather than the mind is considered sacred and the ultimate medium to reach the divine.

Songs of Erosion: Bhangon-geet

The songs are composed by the local singers who combine the aspects of their changing realities surrounding the river and their hopes and crises. The spiritual connotations that are found in the compositions of the 1980s are changing into cries of despair pertaining to the increase in the erosion of the rivers, Ganga and the Padma. These songs are distinct from the other songs due to their increased references to the erosive nature of

² Sung by Ranjana Sarkar, Malda 2022.

the river and the resulting despair of the people. The spiritual degradation mentioned in the earlier songs is also replaced by a tone of hopelessness and despair where the river is accused of being a malevolent and destructive agent rather than a sublime entity.

The transition of the river from a spiritual to a completely material realm indicates a gradual distancing of humanity and the rivers. The integral bond shared by the people with the rivers is severed due to the mechanisation of boats and commercialisation of fishing methods. With increased dependence on technology, both in terms of the boating and fishing occupation along with the building of dams across the rivers, the dynamics of man-nature relationships are becoming increasingly fragile with every passing day.

In these songs the river's spiritual associations is replaced with constant references to erosion and the grief and sorrow of the bereaved villagers who have lost their kith and kin in the waters of the river. In a song titled "*Meghnar Kule Ghar Bandhila Boro Asha Kore*" (On the shores of Meghna, I built my home), the destruction caused by the river is the highlight of the song. The earlier references to the six eternal sins and man's own delusion and spiritual corruption are replaced with a sense of despair and hopelessness. The singer proclaims that despite losing his home and children, he built a home again, only to see it being washed away:

***I saw my young son and daughter drift away in the river in this home.
Till today, I have been searching for them on the river's chars.³***

The song indicates that nature is a much stronger force than a man's attempts to domesticate her. Man's arrogance lies in the fact that he presumes that his attachments will remain safe, while the river constantly breaks that illusion. In the earlier song "Hey boat from the colourful country", the singer cautions the boatmen to protect their bodies from the temptations of the world, but in this song the voice is that of despair. This further indicates that in the earlier songs, where the singer and the river were inseparable, in this song there is a clear division between the singer and the river.

It is interesting to note that the occupational aspect behind the composition of the songs has changed along with changes in its mode of reception. Initially sung by travelling boatmen without any audience, these songs are now sung only in front of an audience, especially during Gambhira festival or during protests. The songs depicting the pain and loneliness of solitary boatmen travelling around the rivers have turned into songs of grief and loss pertinent to a community devastated by the rivers. At the Gajan festival held at Malda, an eminent local Baul singer, Bibhuti Sanyasi, sang a very poignant Bhatiali song on a similar theme of grief and loss of the community. Before starting his song, he briefly introduced the song's background to the audience, which revolved around the lives of those communities who have lost everything to Ganga's

³ Sung by Dulal Das, Malda 2022.

erosions. He informed the audience that his song was based on the lived experiences of people from Manickchak, Domhat, and Panchanandapur areas. He said “some have lost their children, some women have lost their husbands, some men have lost their wives, and many have lost their land and home to Ganga’s womb and are living under the trees.” (Bibhuti Sanyasi, personal interview, Malda, 2022) The song represents the painful reality of the ecological refugee, whose pleas for help go unattended by the gods and the government. The song addresses the river by her names- Ganga and Padma, to incorporate communities of Bengal and Bangladesh:

**O Ganga! O Padma!
Hundreds of homes she has wrecked,
Like the kalbaishakhi storm.
Oh! Do not build your homes there
Like me on the chars of the Padma,
Do not build your homes.⁴**

The song uses allegorical representations for the communities- the Mynah, the Jacobin Cuckoo, the jackal representing the margins, and the Brahmini Kite depicting the position of power, i.e., the upper caste/class. Across Bengali folklore, the Mynah, also known as *Shalikh*, is considered to epitomise love and bonding. Hence, the erosion that snatched away peoples’ loved ones has buried the expressions of love and endearment. The Jacobin Cuckoo, locally known as the *Chatak*, is the harbinger of rains, as it is believed to feed on moonbeams and aid in the creation of clouds. It is also believed that the bird cannot bend its head to drink water and cries for water while looking up to the skies. Humanity is in a similar predicament to the *Chatak*, which has lost its home and is trapped after being surrounded by water it cannot drink.

The jackal, locally called *Khek Shiyal*, is often represented as a cunning creature across stories. However, its cries are also associated with incessant rain. A common superstitious belief is that the cries of a jackal bring ill omen. Shankar, another name for Shiva, who is believed to be present during the Gambhira festival to listen to the people’s pleas, also feels helpless when he hears the pitiful cries of the people devastated by Ganga’s erosion. The singer, therefore, equates the cries of the people with the cries of the jackal, designating an ill omen and the God who is equally helpless as themselves. Interestingly, the Ganga/Padma is addressed as a *kulbadhu*- the daughter-in-law. She is expected to be an incarnation of the Goddess Lakshmi and bring wealth and prosperity to her husband’s home. But the river turns into a demonic force by destroying everything and killing the householder in the process.

It is noticeable that the location of the song has shifted from the river to land. The frequent references to the *chars* (sandbars) indicates the predicament of the settlers who are pushed to the fringes of the society by the growing demands of development.

⁴ Sung by Bibhuti Sanyasi, Malda 2022.

Earlier, the dilemma of the boatman was to reach ashore and not get lost in the river of illusion, that is life itself. However, in this song, the boatman-singer is directly accusing the river of causing him grief. Death and homelessness have replaced the quest for spiritual transcendence. In the process, this has also severed the bond between man and the river.

Furthermore, the earlier mystical songs had a cyclical pattern of despair and hope, but the later songs, which I have classified as *bhangan-geet* (songs of erosion), are steeped in distress without any ray of hope. These songs belong to the Bhatiali tradition, but the tone shifts from mysticism surrounding life and death to a helpless resignation in the face of the river's cruelty. The trauma of displacement and homelessness is prominently evoked across the *bhangan-geet*, where the river has been completely manifested as a malevolent entity. Unlike the spirituality that was identifiable in the earlier Bhatiali songs, the compositions of the *bhangan-geet* are more material. Furthermore, unlike the earlier songs, where the boundaries between man and river were difficult to interpret, the recent *bhangan-geets* clearly demarcate the river as an "other" to humanity.

Conclusion

Folklore is an integral part of every community. In addition to providing an inside view of a community, it also enables one to analyse how changes in the folk traditions reflect the changes in the lived experiences of marginalised communities. Bhati ali, as a genre, can provide substantial insights in the changes in the perception of the rivers Ganga and Padma in West Bengal and Bangladesh. This in turn can engage in a scholarship that looks at the river through the lived experiences of people whose lives are shaped by the river/s. Anjali Capila (2022) in her extensive work traced how the folk songs of the Ganga from Gangotri to Haridwar highlights the ways in which the local communities addressed crucial environmental discourses surrounding industrialisation and pollution of the Ganga through their songs.

Folk songs, such as the Bhatiali, can be seen as an important medium of analysing the intricate ways in which rivers and humanity are connected. This will in turn enable us to curate a holistic approach towards conservation of water bodies. These songs also indicate the adverse effects of development and commercialisation of traditional occupations. Hence, these can provide an important counter-narrative to the celebratory narratives surrounding technological advancements that often jeopardise the riverine ecosystems by changing the behaviour of the river. As such, the folk-songs and traditions, are crucial in understanding the ecological problems arising from the demands of development and the price paid by a certain section of humanity whose voices often remain silenced and marginalised.

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Revitalising Indian Rivers: Nurturing Rivers and Urban Communities through Thoughtful and Sustainable Development along Yamuna's Floodplains

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Introduction

The idea of development around rivers has always been a controversial subject of discussion. In fact, development has varying definitions from various lenses. State pursues development with the prospects of profit. Be it dams, tourism or the riverfronts, the state is visionary but short-sighted ideas of creating a space or water body which can be a source of profit for itself, the state, and amusement for the spectators. However, the ecological aspects of “rivers” are unfortunately not taken into consideration while making decisions. Forgetting the river while dealing with the river is the new trend of urbanisation.

Comparative Development Models: European Rivers vs Indian Rivers

Kimberley Kinder in her book “The Politics of the Urban Water: Changing Waterscapes in Amsterdam”, showcases certain models of development around the rivers in Amsterdam, especially around River Amstel. Her book provides an account of how the West pursues and plans the development of a river in cities. The European rivers in urban settings were developed without floodplains. The book demonstrates the absence of an understanding of floodplains for the river in the European planner’s imagination. One can clearly see in the pictures provided, how the river is structured in a manner where the infrastructures such as roads, riverfronts, apartments, etc. are constructed right next to the river.



Figure 1: Apartments right next to the edge of the river in Amsterdam. Source: Kinder, K. (2015) The Politics of Urban Water: Changing Waterscapes in Amsterdam.

In the postcolonial era, India has been stuck with the idea of imitating the West for the development of its rivers and cities. Thus, one can see various infrastructures that are

quite non-supportive of the ecology of the rivers. One can argue that such structures help in keeping the river region clean or may boost tourism and revenue of the state. However, to understand the infrastructures, we need to know the basic ecology of the Indian rivers.

Most Indian rivers originate from Himalayan ranges and gush down with a certain flow. The rivers here are prone to flooding, thus, they do demand a healthy floodplain to expand and seep into the ground. Indian rivers within India are also different, and demand different treatment based on the size of the river and the weather conditions. The image explains the nature of Indian Rivers which keep changing their course during both pre and post monsoon. Thus, according to the basic flow and pattern of Indian rivers it is important to consider that floodplains are an integral part of rivers and should not be seen as a barren region for capitalistic gains (Lahiri-Dutt & Samanta, 2013).

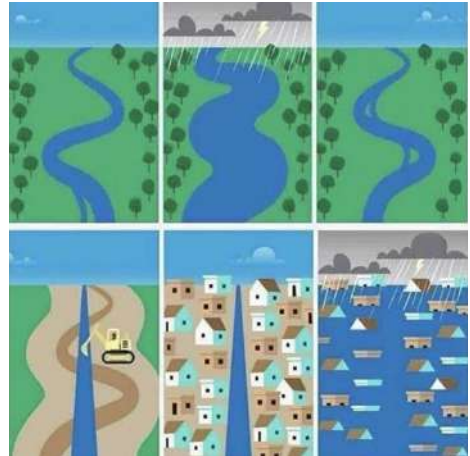


Figure 2: River and floodplain (which river and floodplain) during pre monsoon, monsoon and post monsoon
Source: Google

Bela Estate through the Lens of History: Colonial Legacies and Contemporary Challenges

Yamuna river in Delhi has a long history of floodplain irrigation. Anecdotal accounts tell the story of around 2000-3000 farmers who gradually brought agriculture to the floodplains in the 1930s. Early maps demonstrate the relevance of Yamuna River to the Mughal rulers (Dasgupta, 2018). Many of the historic buildings were constructed near to the water body for aesthetic, strategic, and economic purposes. Thus, one can clearly observe how various forts and monuments were built near Yamuna in Delhi. In addition to offering them strategic advantage and control of trade routes, Mughals had a deep aesthetic connection with rivers and water bodies. Based on various writings on rivers and its portrayal during the Mughal era, one learns that rivers for the Mughals were a sight of luxury, serenity, and escape. It also symbolises the sense of appreciation for beauty of nature that the royalty had in the region (Dasgupta, 2018). However, this perception of the river drastically changed with the colonial era.

During the colonial times, a redefinition of river as a resource was spread amongst the riverine communities. Earlier the floodplains were seen as part of the river and now with colonial rulers there was a clear demarcation of the land and the water. The land surrounding the river was seen as an economic resource by the colonial state. Thus, floodplains suddenly grabbed a lot of attention and so did the floodplains of Yamuna in Delhi also become relevant for the British (Lahiri-Dutt & Samanta, 2013).

Therefore, Yamuna floodplain located near the present day Rajghat region was decided to be used as a grazing land for the horses of the British troops. It was informed by the present-day dwellers on the floodplain that to cultivate the land as a grazing land, it was handed over to a man named “Moolchand” about whom less is known; thus, the area came to be known as Moolchand Basti. Moolchand had invited many other farmers from his village in Rajasthan to cultivate the floodplain into a grazing land. Post Independence, this Moolchand Basti was taken over by the Delhi Peasant Cooperative Society which mainly acted as a governing body over the land and its revenue in Moolchand Basti. This Cooperative Society was a non-constitutional organisation and Moolchand being a part of the society, could acquire the land on lease for a certain period. However, post-independence the floodplain was now used for the purpose of agriculture of the cash crops by the ones who settled themselves in Moolchand Basti.

Bela Estate as we know it today is a part of larger Moolchand basti. In an interview, Rekha from Bela Estate revealed that it is their third generation living in Bela Estate since the time of Moolchand and farming on these floodplains have been their livelihood since the colonial times. They have all documents which include the Lagaan receipts during the British era of 1933, Aadhaar, electricity bill, voter ID etc. on the address of Bela estate. So, these people claim themselves to be farmers and have contributed to the sustenance of the city for quite a long time. They live in non-permanent structures to combat flood and river’s nature. The cycle of waste management is well maintained in the case of Bela estate. The animal waste was used as manure and the fodder was used as food for the cattle. These people basically had a dependency on Yamuna in terms of livelihood and day to day survival. Their practice was contributing towards food security of the city and reduction in carbon footprints.

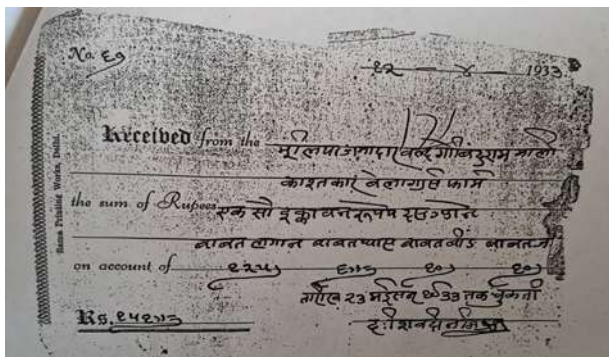


Figure 3: Lagaan receipt of a Bela Estate farmer, 1933.
Source: Author

Today, the community is facing a massive eviction drive by DDA (DDA press clips, 2023). These residents are tagged as squatters, encroachers, and illegal slum dwellers. The community has been on protest since April 2023 under the Geeta Colony flyover. They claim that for them their livelihood of agriculture is precious, and evictions are an unjust process.

Yamuna Today: An In-Depth Examination of a Troubled River

To understand the current situation of Yamuna, one can refer to the figures from Yamuna Monitoring Committee (YMC) Report 2019-20. The report clearly shows how

Yamuna starts its journey in its clean and pure form, but by the time it leaves Delhi, it completely transforms itself into a mere “drain”.

Pollutants and their concentration levels in Yamuna significantly impact the productivity of its floodplain. Thus, Yamuna, starting from Paonta Sahib in Himachal Pradesh, has cleanest water at the origin. However, the water quality deteriorates extremely after

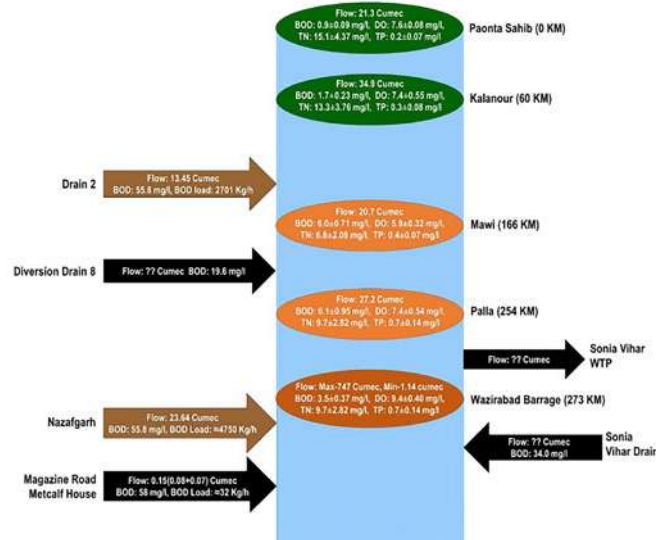


Figure 4: Pollutants in Yamuna from Paonta Sahib till Wazirabad Barrage.
Source: YMC Report 2019-20

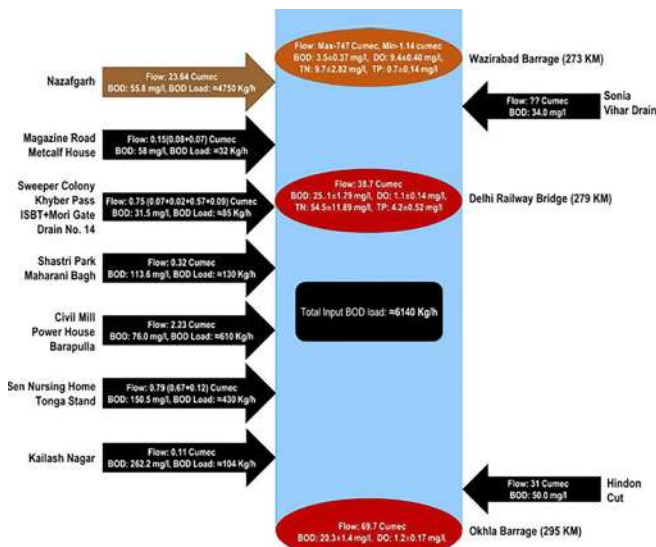


Figure 5: Pollutants in Yamuna from Wazirabad Barrage to Okhla Barrage
Source: YMC Report 2019-20

Palla, where Yamuna enters Delhi leaving Uttar Pradesh border. The main reason stated by most of the ground activists and environmental reports, such as the Centre of Science and Environment (CSE), is that the flow of the water is drastically reduced after Wazirabad due to the water treatment plants. This plant provides drinking water to the entire city of Delhi.

A lot of drains connect with Yamuna after Wazirabad as shown in the figure. Due to less flow in the river, the installed Sewage Treatment Plants (STP) for most of the drain water fail to complete the cleaning process. This is due to the reason that STP doesn't have enough water to dilute and mix the slurry properly for a treatment. As a result the untreated sewage meets the river at various openings from Wazirabad till Kalindi Kunj (Okhla).

Bela Estate, the region, which was solely dependent on agriculture, now has a water body next to it with Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) 25 mg/l, instead of 2 mg/l, Dissolved Oxygen (DO) 1 mg/l, whereas it should be above 8 mg/l. From

Wazirabad barrage till Okhla barrage, the flow reduces from 747 cumec to 38.7 cumec (Chandra & Sajwan, 2020). Also, there is a high concentration of Nitrogen and Phosphate content in water. This data forced the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to declare Yamuna floodplains unfit for farming or any kind of consumable agricultural practices. Over the period the water quality has deteriorated instead of improving. Though the Delhi government has undertaken multiple drives for treatment and cleaning of Yamuna, unfortunately, the river related policy makers are way behind in understanding the ecology and preservation methods. Such gaps between the policy makers and the grassroot communities are the reason for the drastic failure of river-related policies.

Re-imagining Urban Floodplains

Today as per the modern approach of development, the attempt is to make rivers accessible to the urban dwellers. Thus, major projects of riverfronts are approved and implemented. Rivers as a source for recreation and a source for revenue generation through tourism is a trend with all water bodies in urban cities. However, despite many critiques, Agriculture has been a tried and tested practice on floodplains which brings no harm to the river or to the land. Also, land being fertile acts in favour of the practice. The practice of agriculture in Bela Estate contributed to the sustenance of the city for quite a long time. However, the river's pollution is a major reason for polluted floodplains, and thus, one can state that the intense urbanisation is clearly responsible for abandoning an entire community which was solely dependent on floodplain agriculture.

In Peril: The Imperative of Safeguarding Our Rivers

While discussing the safeguard measures taken towards protecting and preserving a river, the major steps taken by the government become quite an important aspect. The Government of Delhi has been initiating multiple plans and projects in order to make the river fit enough to be termed as a river and not as a drain. Few initiatives that have been undertaken are Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) system, Interceptor Drain Treatment Plant (IDTP) methods, and machinery for clearing silt from the river and drains. All these initiatives have a nominal budget of more than hundreds of crores; however, these terribly fail due to low flow or faulty machineries. Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) came out with a report in 2009 which clearly stated that effective flow in Najafgarh drain is claimed to be 1500 ml/d in 2007 and based on the pollutants it might remain the same in 2045, despite using IDTP. Also, the IDTP can only clean less than 60% of the Najafgarh drain (River Pollution Unit Centre for Science and Environment, 2009). These facts raise questions on the expensive methods and machinery used to improve the quality of the river. It is not just the machinery, but also a lack of coordination within various government agencies, be it Central Government, State Government, Delhi Development Authority (DDA), or NGT. All this leads to a faulty system of bringing a change to the present scenario (Echeverri-Gent, 2018).



Figure 6: A farmer from Bela Estate, Source: Author

However, with awareness amongst the city dwellers and basic ideas of decentralised sewage treatment systems can help to a certain extent in controlling sewage dumping into the river. With the present scenario of rivers, it is obvious to question if there can be a solution to the concerns of rivers. According to the YMC Report 2019-20, it was reported that during COVID, an anaerobic reaction due

to a particular bacterium in the river helped in self-cleaning Yamuna to a certain extent, and it was quite noticeable. Thus, it is an evident proof that with a certain regulation on industrial effluent probably the original nature of the river can be revived.

It is a hard reality that Delhi has abandoned the river, more than the British did. The intimacy and dependency have been brought down to a nullified extent. Probably, that is the reason why city dwellers see infrastructures on floodplains as perfect form of development, while considering the traditional knowledge as barbaric and unfit for the city (Dasgupta, 2018). This idea of being unfit for the city is not just for the practice, but also for the practitioners of it. Therefore, the dwellers of the Bela Estate are just one example of displacement due to polluted rivers, certainly there must be a longer list to consider the injustice caused due to urbanisation.

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Livelihood along the River: A Case Study among the Mishings of Laika Village under Dibru Saikhowa National Park in Tinsukia District, Assam

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Introduction

Rivers are a primary source of water for many communities around the world. People use river water for drinking, cooking, bathing, and washing clothes. Rivers provide water for irrigation, which is essential for growing crops. Rivers are home to a wide variety of fish species, which provide an important source of protein for many people. Fishing is also an important economic activity in many regions, providing jobs and income for local communities. Rivers have long been used as a means of transportation, allowing people to travel great distances and transport goods from one place to another. Considering these viewpoints, the present paper throws light on the art of living of the people of Laika village which is situated about 12 km north of the district headquarter of Tinsukia of Assam. It is situated at the heart of Dibru-Saikhowa National Park and is surrounded by the mighty river Brahmaputra in the North and river Dibru in the West. There are various studies on livelihood along the river (such as Food and Agriculture Org., 2018, Pandit, A., A. Ekka, B. K. Das, S. Samanta, L. Chakraborty and R. K. Raman., 2019, S Manasi, Latha N and K V Raju., 2009 and so on). Standard anthropological methods have been used to collect the relevant data.

Laika comprises of three villages namely Laika Rigbi, Laika Pomua, and Laika Pasidiya. People living there are mainly dependent on Brahmaputra, as it is the only means of their transportation. The river also helps them in the trading of milk, wood, etc., and provides suitable paddy field.

The village is inhabited by Mishing community (the second largest plain tribe of Assam) with a population of about 2500, and they live in pile dwelling houses. The total household number is 572 as per the census report 2019 by the Govt. of Assam. Laika Rigbi has 92 households, Laika Pomua with 308 households, and Laika Pasidiya has 172 households. As per the history of the village, people came from Mokok Cheleng area of Dhemaji District to this present habitat during the time of 1950's earthquake.

The Mishing: The Mishing or Mising, also called as Miri are ethnic tribal group inhabited in the upper Assam namely Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and also found in three district of Arunachal Pradesh that is in East

Siang district, Lower Diban Valley and in Lohit district (Satola,2017).

The Mising community is Indo-Mongoloid tribe by origin, live between the segments of river Brahmaputra. Originally, they were in hill areas and lived along with the Adis in Arunachal Pradesh. After coming to the plain areas of Assam, they are now inhabitants in the districts of Assam. Misings migrated from Eastern Himalayan region of Tibet, but still a few Misings live in Arunachal Pradesh also. The meaning of the word is Mi (Men), Yashing (Bright or Good), which means “We are bright or Good people”. Mishing people are river based; they followed mainly the course of Brahmaputra gradually spreading on the banks of its tributaries like Dihing, Dikhow, Disang and Subansiri (Kumari and Dutta, 2012). As per 2011 Census of India, the population of Mising in Assam is 6,80,424 of which 3,45,786 are male and 3,34,638 are female, with sex ratio of 967 per thousand (Morang, 2020).

Livelihood Pattern of the People: The people have their indigenous customs and traditions. Since, the villages are surrounded by rivers; every year flood submerges the villages and washes away their lifeline. Being forest dwellers, they are mainly cultivators, and cattle and buffalo rearing and fishing are their only occupations. They are compelled to live like a gypsy without basic needs of the modern life like electricity, education, health facilities, transportation, and communication. The frequent flood and soil erosion affect the people for which they are forced to struggle without sufficient food and clothes. Flood erosion turned their agrarian economy, which was dependent on farming and fishing, into living as forest dwellers. Humans and pigs share the same shelter when the area is flooded.

Initially, many government development schemes were implemented in the village. In the year 1956, the Govt. of Assam established Laika Pomua L.P. School for educating the children. Health centres were set up, PWD roads were constructed. Overall development was carried out by the Govt. of Assam. But unfortunately, since 1986, the Forest Department of Assam has been gradually reprovoking the basic rights of the Laika forest village. In the same year, 640 sq. km area was declared as Dibru-Saikhowa Wildlife sanctuary without the consent of the forest villagers.

Again, in the year 1997, a total area of 765 sq. km was declared as a Biosphere Reserve. Finally, the whole wildlife sanctuary was declared as a National Park in the year 1999 without the consent of the forest villagers. According to Wildlife Protection Act 1972, no human activities or habitation could be situated inside the National Park. The declaration of National Park without shifting the aboriginal tribal people totally violated the tribal rights and human rights as well.

The Govt. notification of 20th October 1999, in connection of Dibru-Saikhowa National Park declaration, clearly assured the forest villagers that they would be enjoying every right like before until they were rehabilitated. But later, 800 families of Laika forest village were being deprived of every right and obliged to lead a primitive life. They were

forced by the government to vacate their age-old habitat and implemented many rules and regulations (such as vehicles were not allowed inside the National Park) that the village people had to follow.

Since the year 2006, an uninterrupted movement for rehabilitation has been carried out by the villagers and All Mising Students Organisation, and as a result the newly formed BJP central government led the state government to adopt Rs10 crore in its first budget session for initial processing of people rehabilitation, but it did not get manifested in the later days.

In the year 2017, the villagers faced heavy flood in the month of June and July by the river Brahmaputra which led to heavy soil erosion, and the villagers had to move to the reserve forest. They have been demanding for their rehabilitation since then.

Simultaneously, under the pressure of the villagers and All Mising Students Organisation movement, on 21st July 2017, a written assurance was given by the Forest Department of Assam to rehabilitate them within eight months, which expired on 21st March 2018. The written assurance was never fulfilled and remained assured on the paper. In 2018, due to devastating flood, several cows and pigs died.

In the year 2020, Tinsukia district administration identified 320 hectares of land at Ouguri in Lakhpathar area for settling the Mising people, but it was later withdrawn after the local Moran community, led by the All-Moran Students' Union (AMSU), opposed the proposed movement.

In the year 2021, the villagers protested for 29 days continuously by camping in front of D.C. Office of Tinsukia District. Finally, by February, the District Administrator declared that the Laika people will be rehabilitated to Namphai, which is situated under Jagun division of Tinsukia district. It was declared that in the first phase 160 households from Rikbi and Pasidia were to be settled in Namphai, and later on in the second phase, 412 households were to be settled in Paharpur. The distance between Paharpur and Namphai is 32 km.

In Namphai, the government announced to provide 72 hectares of land, and in Paharpur 166 hectares of land. In the year 2021, 109 households were taken from Rikbi and Pasidia and were made to settle in Namphai. The 109 households have already passed one and half year in their new habitat. They depend on agriculture besides cultivating vegetables. There is a small canal called Namsik Nala, where they catch fish and sometimes sell in the nearby areas.

On 5th September 2023, again the remaining 51 households were rehabilitated in Namphai, but till now they have not been permanently settled, instead they are sheltering in temporary camps. However, government provides them free rations, in charge of the village head.

It, was observed that the Tangsa people of Arunachal Pradesh occupied the boundary lands of Paharpur and they provided that areas to Mr. Jewel Ali in lease for 20 years for tea cultivation without any permission of Assam Government. Now these Tangsa people oppose Assam Government that they will not allow the rehabilitation process in Paharpur (i.e., people will not be allowed to rehabilitate in Paharpur) as they are engaged as workers in the tea garden for 20 years.

On 6th September 2023, a meeting was held with the CM of Assam at Bypass Road in Gelapukhuri of Tinsukia where the Mising Students Union raised this problem. Finally, the CM asked the DC and the MLA of Jagun to call up the leaders of Tangsa to Guwahati to solve this problem.

Despite this year's long continuous process of rehabilitation of Laika village people from Dibru-Saikhowa National Park to Nampai and Paharpur in Jagun, people are still continuing their traditional occupation of fishing and cattle and buffalo rearing at the banks of Dibru-Saikhowa river.

Case Study: *Sarat Pegu of Laika has been engaged in fish trading for 20 years. Under him 25 employees work whose duty is to catch fish from the river. They get monetary benefit of Rupees 80-400 depending on the variety of fishes. The best season for fishing starts from December and continues till May. He gets 300-400 kg of fish every day. There are few persons who are engaged in syndicate of fish. Every day he earns a profit of up to 5000 Rupees with this business.*

Every villager also deals in trading of milk and earns up to Rupees 20000 per month, and with these earnings they educate their children and take out their monthly expenditures.

But they have been exploited by syndicate members. They are compelled to sell local fish at Rupees 50 or 60 per kg to the syndicate members at Guijan ghat or at Tinsukia town while the price is Rupees 200 outside. They are forced to sell fishes or other products at the price fixed by the syndicate members. They also sell milk.

Conclusion: Rivers are very useful to the villagers. They collect water from rivers in pots for their day to day uses. They also catch some fish from the rivers for food and sell some of them in the market to earn money. Besides, rivers are the only means of their transportation. The villagers feel very sad as they have to come out from the National Park and have to change their age-old occupations. They requested the Assam Government, through DC and DFO of Tinsukia, for rehabilitation and compensation in other places namely Jagun or Nampai. But the never-ending government process wrapped in red tape has sealed the trouble of these innocent people who are still living in primitive style. But they still hope that the government will complete the process of rehabilitation and compensation so that they could start a new life like other people.

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The Water-Culture of 'Dakshin-Ganga', the Nashik Saga

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Nashik as a city of Indic-origin and a town that has modelled through numerous “urbanisations”, history shall not be perceived in linear fashion of mere chronology but a built all-round experience of migrations, geographical contour, climate and people centric affair providing different vantage points towards a continual of regional history. The political narration of Nashik’s place making, would be outlined by the power-play and mass migration, against that of social narration, through regional texts both portraying “Godavari” as a sustaining source. While architectural monumentality of the historical places around the river deliver physical eventful evidence of “her” being a pivotal force is weaving fabric of Nashik. Often the contexts are blurred, as one of three narrations get hooked to the bandwagon called “cultural-lineage” or colloquially Varsa ¹, building narratives of the past, over physical manifestation of the present, people centric history, everyday battles they face, the current context of concretisation, degeneration of the



Figure 1: Evolution of Nashik from tiny settlement to City guided by Municipal laws: along the southern dip of Dakshin-Ganga

¹ Varsa: Refers to hereditary succession to a title or an office or property, or any attribute or immaterial possession that is inherited from ancestors, or that which is inherited, Prabhat Singh, ‘6 charts that explains India’s water crisis’, Livemint, April 28, 2015, <<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/g7fuaF2aQkO9lPiPAjMyL/Six-charts-that-explain-Indias-water-crisis.html>>

riparian zones and their urge to protect their age-old habitat, still both connects and disconnects them with the river.

As a city that supports Kumbha and many more live traditions, the impacts of global economy, changing nature of pilgrimage, commoditising pilgrim, flooding tourism, industrial trespassing, heavy construction alongside the riparian zones, changing landesque patterns of both north and south banks of the river, have managed to breach the cultural and religious piousness of the Goda ghat as a precinct, elaborating the emotional, spiritual and physical ties that the citizens carry, for Goda ghat, as a genetic memory etched down through generations, the contribution of the entire society in utilisation and cherishing the source of water, establishing “her” as a cultural-entity, and the shrinking cultural spaces in today’s context around her. Predominantly, understanding settlement patterns to understand water as a “culture” against the forced construct that has been showcased in the later phases of urbanisation, as the post-Independence, advent of the mechanised world shifted the “water-drama” and made it eccentric. It has compelled us to deviate from the traditional means and methods of commoditising water, procuring a breach in-between the “water” as a culture and “human” a subject. For instance, the yearly swell patterns of the infant; Godavari-ganga and the kind of repertoires it projects in the “cultural” weave of Nashik as a settlement.

Nashik’s development thrived and flourished on both sides of Godavari as she, is an infant river cutting through the basaltic terrain of the Sahyadri, making it impossible to expand beyond the natural terrains and achieve her full potential. This natural-geographic alignment at Nashik plays an extensive role in determining the character of the settlement. Hence, categoriing Godavari and her behavioural traits at Nashik and understanding multiple stages of her life cycle as well as her journey from origin–Delta becomes extremely crucial.

Regardless of its water source, a stream follows the downwards slope, and is joined to other tributaries. These small 1st order and 2nd order streams join hands to form rivers. They create a dendritic drainage network at length. Based upon their basin widths rivers get classified as - Infant, Mature and Old, and that “Nashik” as a settlement had evolved and nourished along the length of a peculiar southern-dip of the river. In today’s context, Nashik’s extent and embodiment as a religious town, would sum up to 1/10th of the current smart city fabric. As a city of Indic–origin, narrating people’s history and version of the river, her traditional wisdom, and performing lineage is much of an ambitious affair.

The town had modelled through numerous urbanisations, and hence history should not be perceived in a linear fashion of mere chronology but a built all-round experience of migrations, geographical contour, and people centric affairs.

The River Skeleton: Godavari, is a rain fed river, and is non-perennial unlike Yamuna or

Ganga. The river is likely to swell during monsoons and dry up in the summers. One of the initiatives to regulate water flow of Godavari begins during the tail end of the British rule in India. The structural work was commissioned during early 1946, and completed in 1956. The “Gangapur-dam” was commissioned and built at Nashik in 1965, under this scheme disturbingly, the frequency of cyclic swelling of Godavari during monsoons increased greatly thereafter. In both the cases empty river beds post January till the time of rains is a natural character and the city of course has responded. It accommodates the swell as well as enjoys the empty bed. The river flow cuts land into 2 sides called *tat* and *pad*. That is settlement where the river cuts the land, and the *pad* are the floodplains. The empty plains of the river known as *patangan* house activities based on cyclic swelling patterns. Later the river changes its course and moves southwards. She continues to run south for a span of 2 - 5 kms, and later shifts northwards again for her eastward travel.

The settlements around this southward stretch of the river are atoned as Nashik. As a contemporary Indian city, Nashik portrays advanced expressions of the age-old past, growing exponentially to meet the never-ending requirements of its urban population. In this tussle of upgrading themselves, settlements have time and again accommodated housing, industries, commercial establishments, and civic infrastructure. While the urban outlook sometimes accords some symbolic importance to tangible monumental in cities, there is a gap in integrating age old fabric with that of the current planning. This implies

that ecological, historical, aesthetic, socio cultural, religious and traditional economic qualities of the cities need to be recognised, safeguarded, and utilised equally and effectively as part of growth. The value system that the epicentre of any urban age-old settlement portrays is our heritage. Apart from the exquisite

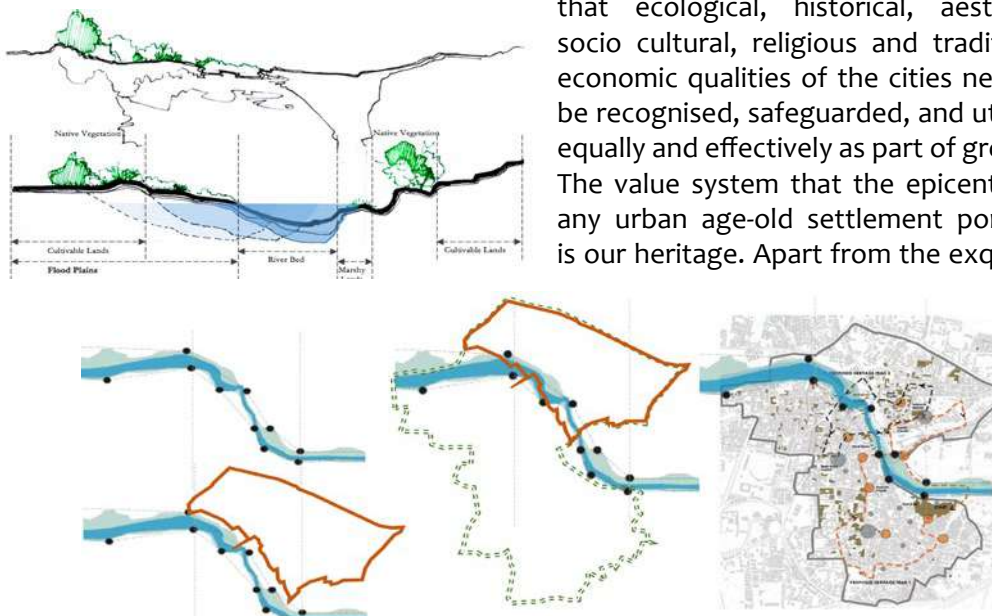


Figure 2: Scope of a “river-bed” and its impact over spanning out of settlements, Source: Author

historical play that safeguards Nashik’s place as a religious pilgrim center, there are a few arcanas behind place-making of “Nashik”.

The Factors Pivotal in Determining the Place-Making of Nashik: It is both a process and a philosophy, and Nashik falls in the family of Asian shade loving cultures, where the crux of our homes have always been densely packed community spaces. The city is an interesting intersection of measured organic responses, shared throughout historic timeline since inception. Although, the settlement turned city adopted different names through different ages, there are many colloquial non-verifiable, theories afloat regarding etymology of the word “Nashik”. The Gazetteer of Bombay (1883): History, p.535, quotes it being renamed Nashik in the year 1818, after it was annexed by Peshwas from Mughal clutches, who called it Gulshanabad briefly.

Geographically, Nashik lies in North-western part of Maharashtra, guarded by the horizontal offshoot “Satmal range” of Sahyadris. These hills form a protective covering around as though a cocoon, and Godavari, meanders cutting the city into two parts, right from its origin till the time it dips southward and begins its journey into the hinterlands towards Indian ocean.

The river stretches for 13 km through the city, and the religious precinct is limited to about 1/10th of it, commonly addressed as Goda ghat or Ganga ghat. Many literary texts such as Gautami Mahatmya and Sri Godavari Mahatmya, both include stories associated and woven around the banks of river Godavari. It is but a common trait in the Puranas to replicate the sacred geography. Both of the texts plot around deities, revisiting, migrating, replicating from original place to other. As a source of prosperity, divinity, and supporting life, “Godavari” and her “water-basin”, has accorded with the status of being a “mother”. The analogy runs beyond the formations of ‘Brahmapurana’, ‘Nadisukta’, and Valmikiramayana, chapter 40 Verse 12.

अन्वीक्ष्य दण्डकारण्यं सपरवतनदीगुहम् ।
नदीं गोदावरीं चैव सर्वमेवानुपश्यत ॥ १२ ॥ (वाल्मीकिरामायण)

anvīkṣya daṇḍakāraṇyaṁ saparvatanadīguham |
nadīm godāvarīm caiva sarvamevānupaśyata || 12 ||



Figure 3 and 4 from left to Right: Scope of a ‘river-bed’ and its impact over spanning out of settlements.

Figure 4: The different swell patterns of ‘Ganga-Godavari’ and flood markers along the river basin and: ‘Dutondyamaruti’ as an iconic flood marker.

Thus, the river fulfils the material needs and requirements of man and tends to them as a mother. It is so considered that the high-mountains from which the river originates is a fatherly body while the river and her tributaries the daughters of the mountain. Yet, often, the river is looked upon as a “woman” without a husband, she is just widely a mother and a daughter, but never a wife.

The River Footprints along the City: ²Godavari originates from Brahmagiri, a lofty, wall-like sentinel in the Sahyadri mountain ranges of Nashik, Maharashtra at an elevation of about 1295 meters. Town of Trimbakeshwar at the foot of Brahmagiri practically owes its existence to Godavari’s glory. It is a Jyotrilinga (enlightened/lighted shiva) and the stone linga (symbolic phallus) is made of three indentations in a smooth rock each for Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh, the holy trinity of the Hindu Pantheon. Constant water trickles from Mahesh’s indentation. Hence the name Trimbakeshwar: Lord with three eyes. The town as well as the mountain itself is dotted by Teerthas (sacred springs), Kundas (sacred spring tanks) and Sangams (sacred confluences).

She travels through the extents of Nashik city, she is joined by subsidiary rivers at various intervals such as Aruna, Varuna, Godavari (Triveni Sangam) at ³Ramkunda, Saraswati-Godavari Sangam at Balaji Mandir, Kapila-Godavari Sangam at Tapovan, Nasardi-Godavari Sangam at Takli Road, Darna-Godavari Sangam at Darnasangvi, and lastly Kadwa-Godavari Sangam at Nandur-Madhmeshwar. At present, the riparian zones alongside north and south banks of the entire Godavari are to quite some extent reclaimed by landfill for creating civic amenities and infrastructure. The anthropogenic interventions alongside the river banks including embankments, channels, canal roads, creation of artificial levees, concretised channel beds, riffles, culvers, guilles have undoubtedly changed the morphological character of the river.

Currently, the fluvial features around the city are highly altered. These major changes are observed around high-density footfall zones. The major changes are along Panchavati and Ramkund zones and between Holkar and Kannamwar Bridge, driven by extensive tourism.

The Present is the Past: There are different vantage points towards continual of regional history, and any work of “history” would be narrated differently whenever the contexts change or differ. The political narration of the place is generally outlined by the power-play and mass migrations. A social narration, through regional poems, and literary evidence would be people centric, while the architectural edifices and monumentality of the historical places would deliver hard-bound physical eventful evidence. Often the pictures are blurred, as only one of three narrations get hooked on the bandwagon of “cultural-lineage” or colloquially known as Varsa. Hence, the people centric history, the everyday battles that they face, the current context of concretisation, degeneration of

2: उगमः Story of Godavari and Vaitarna’s Origin, SANDRP

3: Valmikiramayana, Gita Press, Gorakhpur.

the riparian zones, and their urge to protect their “age-old” habitat, still connects and disconnects them both with the river. One can move towards the future present, only by building narratives of the past.

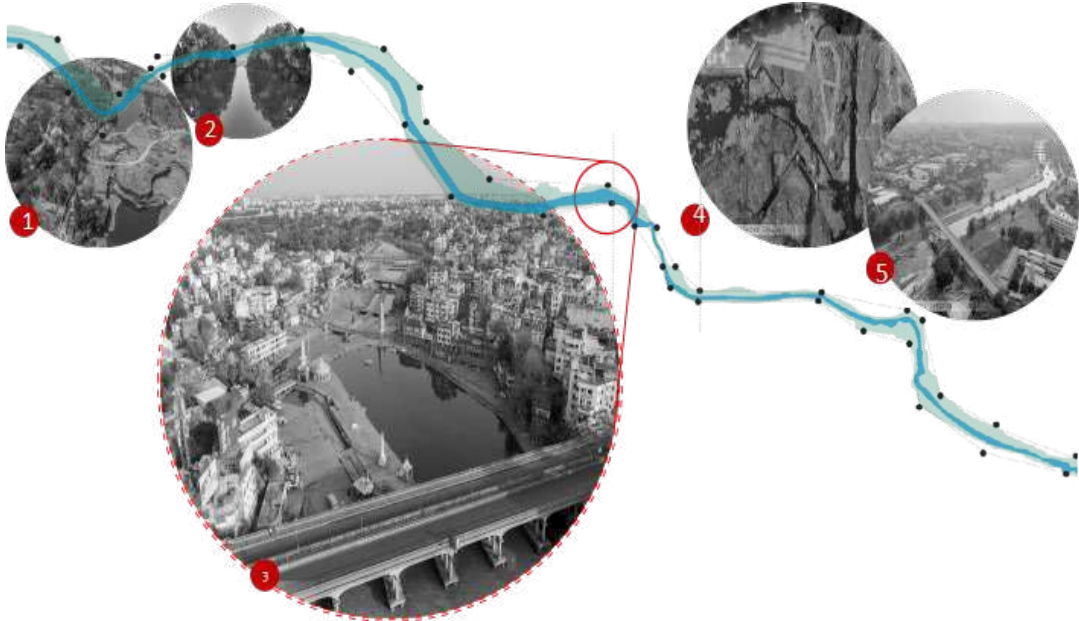


Figure 5: River enters the city, River in the city, and River exits the city

- Geologically the potholes and the nature of Basaltic Terrain–Upper Godavari basin, provides traces of Cretaceous Eocene age.
- Both left and right bank canals of the river have numerous dykes and potholes, those are suggestive of a shift from a turbulent to relatively stable flow conditions.
- The north and the south banks of the river before it enters the old core: Riparian ecosystems generally have a linear form as consequence of their proximity to rivers and streams;
- Energy and material from the surrounding landscape pass through riparian ecosystems in much greater amounts than those of any other wetland ecosystem; They are functionally connected to upstream and downstream ecosystems and are laterally connected to upslope (upland) and down slope (aquatic) ecosystems.

Global economy, changing nature of pilgrimage, commoditising pilgrims, flooding tourism, industrial trespassing, heavy construction alongside the riparian zones, changing landesque patters of both north and south banks of the river have managed to breach the cultural and religious piousness of the Goda ghat precinct. The river, too, awaits construction of many forms, it is not likely that she stresses on being as it is, yet the urbanisation around her through many decades and eras have cumulatively narrated the growth patterns vividly visible today.

Furthermore, I have elaborated on a historical perspective of various eras, classifying the widening of the river, identifying different power centres that have emerged along the river course in the Upper Godavari Basin, and the effects it must have on settlement patterns of today. This would generate a schematic of how different aspects of urbanisations along the river edges have modelled the current fabric of Godavari at Nashik, and their relativity with the historical narratives of the known literary textual documentation.

⁴The river statistics is but one aspect of how river is put up in the public forum, there is another identity, of her 'a flowing body'. The crowd and the residents carry forward a memory of hers, collecting it every monsoon. The swell of the river and the patterns she etches has gracefully, modelled the architectural manifestations on the left and the right banks of the river.

The Geographical and Climatic Reality: The interactions between geography, conditioning, and purpose have together crafted regional architecture around us. A city house and a rural dwelling are both poles apart and yet tailor-made for a "human" as an end user. The difference between them can be the journey from simpler behavioural patterns towards complex orchestrated intentions. Studying human interactions with the built form essentially helps us understand the wider scope of urbanisation. Individuals acquired smaller tasks in a larger societal fabric, reducing the risk capacities and encouraging cultural threads to weave into complex fabric. These urban-centres were producing, consuming, distributing, employing, arranging the economic complexities. Such is how urbanisation took over the basic human factorials. We find traces of such primordial centres in the hinterlands of the Western Ghats, commonly known as *padas*. The northwestern domains of Western Ghats is a home to numerous such small organic age-old settlements. The traditional architecture displays striking similarities with the regional vernacular architecture, whereas the monumentality is an outcome of conditioning of place and culture. I would here argue, that the geographical arrangement and conditioning of the Western Ghats plays an important role in determining the footprint of foothill settlements. These vernacular demure houses are densely knit on triangular foothills facing the leeward side to safeguard the settlement from natural forces, and do not possess competitiveness or ambitions infused with the building heights. Particularly the hamlets of Western Ghats possess a holistic approach of understanding the earthen building and different styles of constructions validating them for accuracy. They have put to use the most abundantly available materials in the region such as earth, clay, hay, gravel, wattle, and weeds to construct abodes that exhibit responsive and accommodative spaces. Arguably, the comprehensive understanding of earthen structures and a hands-on approach that each one learns while building, enabled the tribal communities to develop individual responses.

⁵The Literal History of Settlements around Godavari during Late Mauryan Periods – Satavahana Period: 1st Urbanisation: Settlements at Nashik can be traced back to times of Mauryan King Asoka, built edifices of the time are not found. Most likely Nashik rose to power during the Satavahana dynasty and Gautamiputra Satakarni's reign. The family derived its name and power after the death of Asoka. The capital of the family was Pratisthan, i.e., modern day Paithan in the Aurangabad district. The rulers derived a

4. R. Umamaheshwari, *When Godavari comes, People's history of a river*. Aakar Books, 2014, p.143.

5. Yashoda Devi, 'The History of Andhra Country 1000 A.D. -1500 A.D', Gyan Publishing Home, 1993.

Dr. V.V. Mirashi, 'The History and inscriptions of the Satvahanas and The Western Kshatrapas', Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, Bombay, Appendix IV, The Queen's Cave Nashik, pp.114-118.

major chunk of support from its matrimonial alliances called the Maharathis.

There are mentions in the Matsya Purana about a family and is addressed as Andhra, dynasty that ruled for 450 years originally hailed from western Maharashtra through inscriptions at Naneghat near Junnar and Trirashmi caves at Nashik.

The first king of the Andhra (i.e., Satavahana) dynasty in Puranas is Simukha (Shrimukha), who is also known for a relief statue of his at the Naneghat cave. We do not know the extent of this kingdom, but it must have comprised at least Poona, Nashik, Ahmednagar, and Aurangabad districts. As his son Satakarni was minor, his brother Krishna ascended the throne. He commissioned an inscription in the cave which he got excavated for the Buddhist monks near Nashik. His Mahamatra (governor), who is described as a Shramana of Nashik, is said to have caused it to be excavated. Krishna is described in this record as belonging to the Satavahana family. Marking the earliest urbanisation around Nashik as a settlement.



Figure 6: The trading patterns along with river basins and mountainous terrains of the Western Ghats.

All evidences from Naneghat and its neighbouring areas suggest that the pass was one of the gateways of an early historic Deccan trade route connecting the ancient ports of Kalyan, Sopara, Chaul with the localities, hinterlands, trade centers and market towns like Junnar, Nashik, Nevasa, and Paithan.



Figure 7: The trading patterns along with river basins and mountainous terrains of the Western Ghats.

The site Naneghat has a large manmade cave constructed under Satavahana or the local Maharathi patronage, along with some cisterns and other unfinished caves at the head of the pass. The main cave bear a large inscription of Naganika, the queen of Satavahana King Sri Satakarni I written in two parts. On deciphering the Inscription, NG-7 incised in early Brahmi letters, according to Bühler.

⁶Out of the two sons of Satakarni, Vedishri and Shaktishri, Vedishri is bestowed upon with the title of the Lord of Dakshin Patha (Deccan) and one of the greatest warriors on earth. This followed by the conquests in the reign of Hala and the tussle that grew in-between the Shaka Kshatrapas and the Satavahanas. Nahapana, a Shaka Kshatrapa probably appointed by the contemporary Kushana Emperor, was ruling over Konkan, Poona, Nasik and some other districts of Maharashtra as well as some portions of Central India as far north as Ajmer.

The Process called Urbanisation: We find evidence for the Neolithic (ca. 2300-1800 BCE), Chalcolithic (ca. 1800-1050 BCE) and Megalithic (ca. 1050-500 BCE) settlements throughout the Deccan, also we can confirm pre- Satavahana period of the early phase (ca. 500 BCE – 400 CE) with an increase in pottery shards and iron implements from excavations at early historic sites. The late 3rd century BCE, witnesses localised production of pottery, iron equipments, clothing in the southern Deccan and long-distance trade at the western ports (Sopara, Kalyanak, Bharukachchha) got accentuated. The two major forces in play: The ⁷*Uttarpatha* and *Dakshinpatha* were always occupied and developed. There were some major westward migrations from central plateaus (eastern/ north-eastern) on account of this trade triangle.

In the entire tussle of finding appropriate locations to settle and ways to travel, many of the river basins were explored. 1. Thal Route (Vigatapuri-Kasara Pass), 2. Bor Route (Khandala Pass), and 3. Tamhini Route (Pune-Paud Mulashi Pass), each of the routes flowing into the ports of Kalyanak, Sopara, and Murud-Janjira (Chaul), respectively were discovered at first during this period. This drew the interest of the Northern empires as well as neighbouring kingdoms. Owing to such extensive production centres and trade, a series of elaborated towns evolved around the westward zone of the Sahyadri. Nashik happens to be one of them. At the time, Nashik was probably a smaller settlement of maximum 70–80 houses scattered around the southern dip of River Godavari.

I would, thus conjecture, though urbanisation is a recently coined terminology, the concept of an urban precinct is an age-old phenomenon, and that Nashik, as an area portrays a history of proliferating timely.

⁸The first expansion that the city witnessed was at the time of W. Kshatrapas, followed by Satavahanas – Yadavas – during Nizamshahi – The Peshwas – Colonial Period. Nashik regional boundaries prospered as it lay on the highway from Tagara and Pratishthan to Bharukachchha. It acted as an exchange ware house for the exchange of goods that was carried out from both Pratishthan and Tagara. Nashik played a warehouse, tended to overseas export at

6: Vasudev Vishnu Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, vol. 1 (Nagpur: The Vidharbha Samshodhana Mandal, 1960), 118–127.

7: Citations from *A History of South India from the Prehistoric times to fall of Vijaynagara*, authored by K.A. Nilakanta Sastri

8: R.S. Morwanchikar, 'Pratishthan Te Paithan', Sahyadri books. *Paithan Chi Dharmik Vatchal*, Pt. 1, (1-61) 2008, p.7.

Bharukachchha and Kalyanak. A great quantity of onyx stone from Pratisthan, a plentiful supply of fine linen cloth from Tagara, and all kinds of muslins and mallow-coloured stuffs and several other kinds of merchandise were carried by wagons to these western coast from Nashik. The settlement must have greatly prospered and benefited by this trade. And present day 'Main road' marks the earliest trading route that connected with the Uttarpatha, back in the time.

Dynamics of a Medieval City: Medieval cities were mostly trade centres and served the interests of trading communities, various guilds, patrons, merchants and business class. Their populations were always well-defined and included a healthy proportion of tradesmen, dependents, and ancillaries. These towns thrived over the agricultural inputs from the hinterlands. The political structure of these towns was autocratic in nature. Such towns were intermediary in aspects of land extends, hierarchy, demography, agricultural produce, and trade with respect to urban trading centres - ports and villages. Apart from the above, they shouldered the responsibilities to act as military headquarters, and to regulate law and order in surrounding areas.

The Yadavas started ruling the “Maharatta” areas by the end of 10th century and ruled over parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka for almost 200 years. From previous records at , Chandwad (Chandradityapura) and Sinnar (Sindinagari) were Yadava capitals prior to their migration to Devagiri. They were the last clan of Hindu rulers to have ruled over a major part of Maharashtra and has witnessed many socio- cultural changes and second phase of urbanisation can be traced around Govardhan, while the old- gaathan produces traces upto 12-13th CE. This can be associated with the second urbanisation initiated during the Yadava rule, whilst they rose to power as a feudatory of the Chalukyas of Kalyani.

⁹ The founder of the family was Dridhaprahara (son of Subahu). His capital was Shrinagara as stated in the Vrata-khanda. An early inscription at Chandradityapura, which is identified with modern 'Chandor/ Chandwad' in the Nasik district. His son and successor, Seunachandra, from whom the country ruled over by him came to be known as Seunadesha corresponds to modern day Khandesh. It comprised the country extending from Nasik to Devagiri. Thereafter the Yadavas founded the city of Devagiri and established it as their Capital. From a stone inscription found at Anjaneri a minor branch of Yadava kula, was stationed as Anjaneri. Seunadeva of this branch made some grants to a Jain temple. Seunadeva calls himself Maha-samanta and evidently was dependent on the main branch.

9: Rawal Ramnath R. Maharashtra. 'Identification of the place mentioned in Inscription of Vasai Copper Plate', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Vol.78, 2017, pp. 1010-1012.

Nashik has a history of largely depending on mass-migrations for expansions. The lineage of his successors of Kings Satakarni I, as Pur Gotra Ega or Paur Gamasa and Skandhastambhi with two immediate successors of Satakarni II as Lamodara and Apilaka. The name Apilaka is variously mentioned in Matsya Purana, and Brahmanda. Vishnu and Bhagavata Puranas mention Apilava, Apolava and Divilaka respectively.

¹⁰ The affluent class, displeased and ill-treated by the Imperial Yadav King Ramachandra migrated from Paithan to Nashik, marking the first large scale migration that built the town. Introducing a new school of building (temple architecture), introduced by the Chandelas in central India was adopted by Hemadpant, the prime minister of the last two 'Yadav' Kings. Many settlements have thus evolved as temple towns and provided ample scope for pilgrimage and tourism activities hitherto, and Nashik is one of those few towns. Construction of temples in the river basin, as flood marks, marking the ghat- precinct, stepped wells and tanks in and around the temples was tremendously rampant as a 'patraonage' module. There are different vantage points towards continual regional history. Any work of 'history' would be narrated differently whenever the contexts change or differ. The political narration of the place, generally outlined by the power-play and mass migrations.

¹¹ Although the social transitions along the river are blurred, the references of a The Maharathi consciousness was prevalent in Deccan, from the pre-Dnyaneshvar period. Dnyaneshvar's work – *Bhavarthadipika* (A.D.1290) mentions conception of a typical Marathi house, bazaar peth and commercial aspects of a settlement.

Hence, although as a part of a vast region of the Deccan that included Karnataka and Telangana-Andhra, the Marathi house – 'Wada' must have existed and begun to model in the late 13th century. In today's context, what we refer to as the Marathi house, assumed a tangible form with the rise of the Peshwas. It was during their stay at the helm of the Maratha kingdom from the late 17th century to 1818, when the city of Pune was surrendered to the British, that the *wada* architecture came to full prominence. It was an architectural expression that could be suitably interpreted for the poor and the rich alike based on their own demands, without losing its core characteristics.

'Godavari' is a sense of emotion at Nashik. She is addressed as Ganga, with immense respect and affection. The geographical weave of the city and the geographical alignment of the "nava-shikha" (nine summits) divides the embankments and flood plains on either side of the river. Colloquially, known as the 'तट/ cliffward' bank with a

10. Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed.), *Money and Market in India, 1000-1700*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994, p4.

11. Vaidehi Vasanta Pujari, 'Some Aspects of Bazaar in early Medieval Deccan: Glimpses from Contemporary Marathi Literature', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, Vol.62, 2001, pp.218-226.

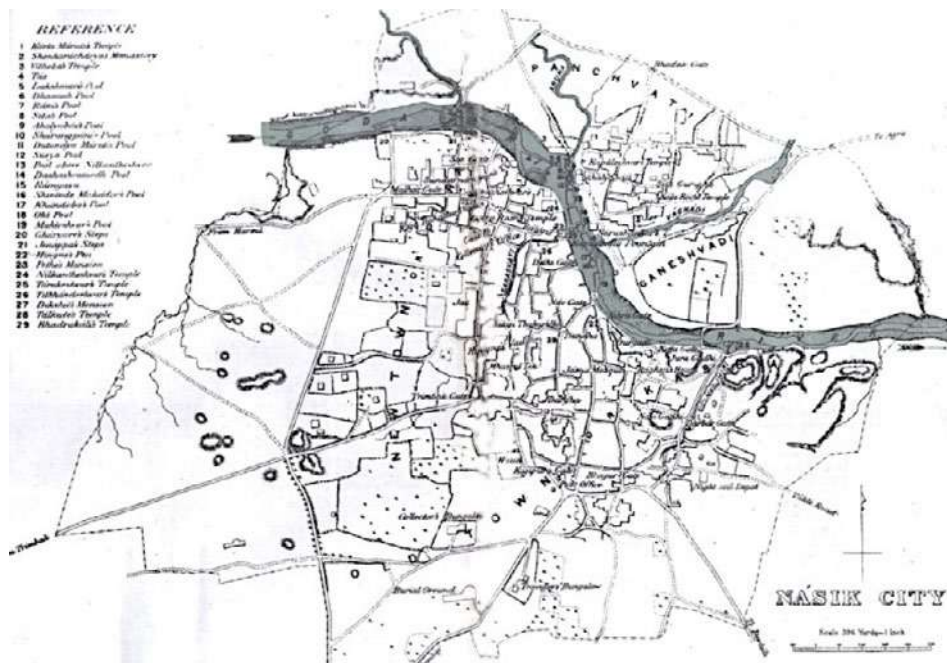


Figure 8: Owing to the Landform observations from, conducted during my thesis revolving around structural study of Main-road and Bhandi-Kapad-Saraf Bazaar of the core settlement, I could state that, "The fabric of the 'Godavari-ghat precinct', is suggestive of an architectural response, that has evolved out of the conditioning of the place and majorly governed by the climatic expressions of the area.

retaining wall, while *pat* derived from the word "*patangan*", the foreground or the flood plains. The intent and organic interactions of the religious footprint with physical geography mostly determines the sacred geography of the region. As the spatial arrangement is not dictated to any fixed form. It organically evolves and redefines itself through the narratives of "time" of "era". The residents, devotees, travellers, traders, and communities visiting the precinct, often impart meaningful interventions to physical topography, they have territorialised the Triveni-Sangam (Aruna, Varuna and Godavari) transforming its built environment through the mediums of human activities and necessities.

¹²Nashik as a settlement, finds its balance over the fulcrum of socio-cultural, revenue-trade, and religious activities, out of which the first two very prominently had gripped the left/south bank of the river. As the Marathas took over the North-western critical location on the fall of the Nizams, they were keen on developing a cultural epicentre in the early 17th century CE. The Peshwas could foresee the virtuous nature of the town and aligned in as the *Dakshin-Kashi* and the *Dakshin-Ganga*. ¹³ As the Nashik Keshetra was blessed with pious mentions throughout Padmanagar during Satyuga, Trikantaka

12: Krishnamurthy Mahadeo Kulkarni, 'Urban structure and Interaction, A study of Nashik City Region'. Concept Publishing Company, *Historical Evolution and Current Status*, 1981, pp.10-21.

13: Gazetteer of Bombay, Vol XVI, 1883, *Nashik*, pp. 462-535.

during *Tretayuga*, *Janasthana* during *Dvaparyuga* and *Navashikha*, *Nashikya*, during the *Kaliyuga*.

The tangible forms of sacred presence are easily narrated through physical attributes, such as florists, *prasadalays*, presence of cattle, eateries, vending of *puja-samagri* and many others, with physical geography, one can measure distances, areas, and use them to distinguish between the scales of territories or at times even ideas of time to document the changes in physical spaces and places.

Although, the tangible defines the physical character of the place, the intangible is the soul-essence of such places on behalf of its virtues, spiritual and literary evidences are known as '*tirtha*'. Whereas the peripheral outreach of it, governed by geological and climatological similarities and defined boundaries, correspond to *kshetra*, together they are known as *tirtha-kshetra*, while Ganga is the soul or the essence of this *tirtha-kshetra*. I would argue here, that the relationship in-between man and water originated in the dawn of sedentary lifestyle and ancient civilisations, we know this through various archaeological evidences of thoughtful built-forms, and deep relations entangled with it. Nashik, has adopted different names throughout ages. The glory of Godavari *tirtha-kshetra* remained unearthed during long invasive periods for more than 300 years. When the administrative reigns were reinstated with Marathas, the economic stability and growth started to reflect in their attempts to glorify built form of the Temple Architecture and their will to glorify Nashik as Dakshin-Kashi. As the Maratha political powers grew and so did their aspirations.

The Maratha Patron of Peshwa were keen on reviving the lost temples and this phase was known as the Middle Phase of Building, resulting in remodelling of 'ghat' precinct inclusive of steps leading towards riverfront to access waters governed by temples along the banks and minor deity-shrines in the river.

There are about 30 temples and shrines scattered throughout the river basin, belonging to the Shaiva, Vaishnava, and the Shakta cults. Apart from Kashi, Nashik would be one of the few places of the Indic civilisations that has all the three cults intersecting in a radius of about 1.5 kms. From the literary textual mentions, out of the 17 Kunds feeding the river basin, today only three remain.

The festivity annual cycles have a major role in defining the chronology. It offers a multi-dimensional method of structuring time, combining information about lunar days, solar days, lunar months, solar months, the movements of the sun and the moon in relation to stellar constellations, and other astronomically defined time spans. This makes the Hindu calendar vastly more complex than the western calendar, that is built around only two basic units of time. The age-old core pre-dominantly remains active accommodating various rituals throughout the year apart from the remarkable patterns.

There is a tandem in between the annual festive cycles of lunar calendar and association of theirs with the spiritual/ritualistic behavioural codex of the ancient core.

Preservation and conservation of traditional systems of social and impersonal relationships that develop a meaningful connection with the past is a task we have in our hands as a millennial generation today.

Although the term “cultural heritage” and “living traditions” have evolved to quite an extent over the recent decades, and efforts are taken to increase awareness regarding the traditions of the past, those still prevail. We as a community have to understand that cultural heritage is not just the architectural produce, monuments, or collection of antiquities.



Figure 9: The temple town/ old core of Nashik, and the entire land bank schemes of Godavari ghat. With mapped temples and minor shrines

The Hindu is actually a lunar calendar that takes into consideration the movement of moon, and the sun as observed from earth. All of the 12 lunar months are the time that the earth takes to orbit around the sun.

The geographical arrangement and conditioning of Western Ghats mostly play an important role in determining the footprint of such leeward mountain settlements. The

houses are densely knit, on triangular foothills facing the leeward side to safeguard the settlement from natural forces.

Architectural manifestation is, but celebration of life, and encodes emotional content and emotes feelings. Whether in form of architectural tools of intervention with the sequence, with vision and auditory senses being used as a primary tool to modulate housing or (common) architecture. Particularly the hamlets of Western Ghats possess a holistic approach of understanding the earthen building and different styles of constructions validating them for accuracy. Over a period of time, the crude responses transformed into architectural grammar, and later, community derivatives and now are

followed as legacy or *varsa*.

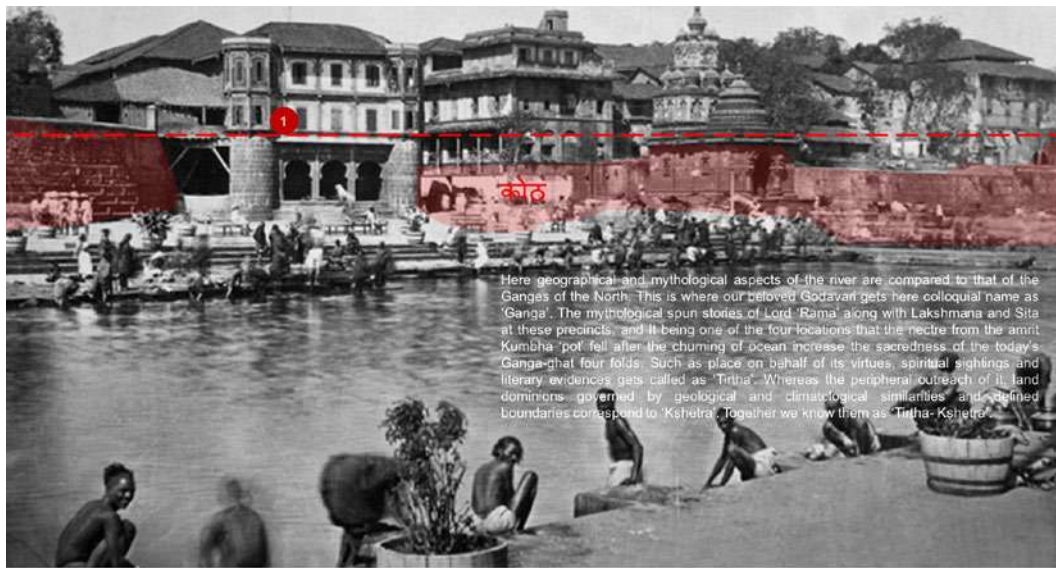
3.	सीताकुंड	1733
4.	श्री कपालेश्वर मंदिर	1738
5.	श्री नारोशंकर मंदिर	1747
6.	श्री मुरलीधरपातालेश्वर मंदिर	1778
7.	श्री विठ्ठल मंदिर	1755
8.	श्री सुंदर नारायण मंदिर	1756
9.	श्री उमामहेश्वर मंदिर	1758
10.	श्री पंचरत्नेश्वर मंदिर	1758
11.	श्री गोराराम मंदिर	1782
12.	श्री तिळभंडेश्वर मंदिर	1763
13.	श्री तिळ्या गणपती मंदिर	1767
14.	श्री मुर्देश्वर मंदिर	1770
15.	श्री बालाजी मंदिर	1771
16.	श्री नवश्या गणपती मंदिर	1774
17.	श्री गंगा -गोदावरी मंदिर	1775
18.	श्री मुरलीधर पातलेश्वर मंदिर	1778
19.	श्री गोराराम मंदिर	1782
20.	श्री तारकेश्वर मंदिर	1780
21.	श्री काशी विश्वेश्वर महादेव मंदिर	1785
22.	श्री अहिल्याराम मंदिर	1786
23.	श्री यशवंत महाराज मंदिर	1887
24.	श्री निळकंठेश्वर मंदिर	1752

Table 1: Listing of temples and minor shrines at the Old Core: Nashik and Panchavati.

This might appear as a one-way colonising source; it is a sincere dialogue that we have engaged in since long-lost ages. Any lifestyle that has emerged from the conditioning of the past, that we carry along as “heritage”, is never a blank surface etched over a day. These are narratives inscribed and shaped by the indigenous based on cartographic gazes, local produce, natural resources, and climatic probabilities.

The heritage “speaks back” to geography; in ways those blend in through various aspects of sacred, secular, transcendent, mundane, and allow different forms of experience, modes of practices and senses of the world. Thus, the yearly routine or the schedule we have aligned for ourselves of the rituals and festivities is an interface, earlier simply known as traditions. Although the terms “cultural heritage” and “living traditions” have evolved to quite an extent over the recent decades, and efforts are taken to increase awareness regarding the traditions of the past, those still prevail. Cultural heritage is not just the architectural produce, monuments, or collection of antiquities.

The river banks start being interactive, at various visual planes as Bhadrapada Magha sets in. Pola, Hartalika, Rishi Panchami, Ganesh Chaturthi, Ghatasthapana, and Vijayadashami, during Ashwin, Sharad Ritu, Tripuri Purnima, Balipratipada, Chhath Puja, Dhanatrayodashi, Narak Chaturthi, Laxmi Puja, on the onset of Kartik. These festivities



Old Ganga ghat with people doing their daily chores on both the sides. Even though this photo does not show the Ram Setu, currently the bridge stands there. Also seen is the Balaji mandir.

Figure 10: The koth/ or the first interface between the river and the settlements during the Maratha period.

spanning out throughout the basin embed the concepts of performing a ritual, hybridity of the past and the present, identity that the place is engaged with from such kinetic temperaments to the physical changes that the river ghat precinct reinforces time and again, integrating Godavari with every ounce of living traditions, celebrated along the banks of the river, such as Rahaadi, Ram-Rath Yatra, Hari-Hara Bhet, Ganeshchaturthi, Veer Dajiba (*nachawane*), Kartiki Pournima, and many more celebrations at all micro, meso, levels scale upto the millions of devotees visiting Godavari waters for a holy dip at Simhastha Kumbha.

The Houses as a Response to Stimuli: Building a house is a cultural phenomenon, hence, the form and organisation of a house is largely dependent on its cultural and geographical setting. In contemporary times, the purpose of the house is much more than a utilitarian idea, and serves a greater objective, rather than only providing shelter. It is a shelter that is suggestive of the occupant's lifestyle and requirements. A house, thus, is also social unit of space. The social dimension, applied to an individual house, into multiples of all six dimensions.

Today, in current contemporary context, the planner, architect community attempts to weave all six dimensions of ekistics into building a community, and a humble *wada*, is an embodiment of the above.

What exactly is a *wada*? These humble abodes have evolved from the Yadava period to that of Peshwai, yet their soul remains untouched. Throughout the second half of the 17th century, Peshwas pondered over improving civic amenities and building

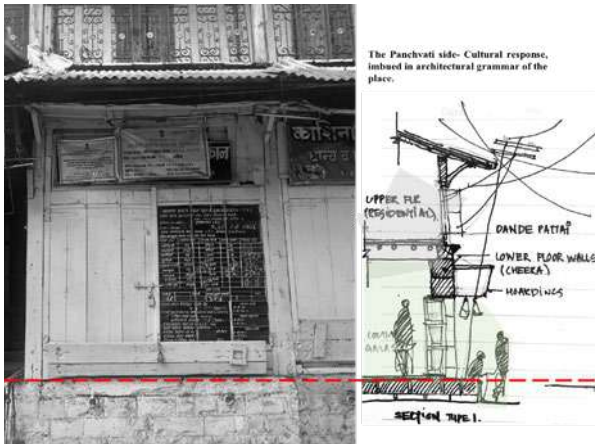


Figure 11

activities. Majorly administrative and residential Wadas were built during this period.

Although they are inward designs, a Marathi wada was far from being just another introvert block. On the contrary, it gave a sense of depth, dissimilar to the inward reality of a human being, which is different from his physical appearance.

The spacial-utility of these abodes are governed by internal zoning, and are divided into public, private, and semi-private. The external walls and central core of were mostly dressed in stone masonry varying from 6' to 8', to harbour internal staircases and locking systems.

The type is a cumulative of indigenous materials of the land, climate response specific to hot – dry, measured rainfall depending on which of the five parts of Maharashtra the wada belongs to the plan of such dwellings revolve around a number of chowks and quadrangles called - Courtyards. Constructing enclosures around these thus, securing a perfect balance of: 1. Open-semi open spaces, 2. No. of chowks determining the nature, and the functionality of them, 3. The composite systems (terraces + sloping) accommodating night cooling and outdoor sleeping activity, and 4. mutual shading and heating. Particularly a wada, is an example of local authenticity. It depicts the uniqueness of this region, through use of building materials, passive design techniques, accommodation of social structure, and building type. Rejecting the standardisation trend it refuses to follow the westernised single-family-house type, the house is able to well represent the time in which it was created, while, also, being able to fit in with the present. Even today some of the wadas are surviving relics of the past. The design of the house respects history, by following the time-tested architectural type of a courtyard house.

¹⁴The Typological Level involves the adaptation of bioregional building traditions and historically situated building types in the design of contemporary buildings that are capable of evoking a sense of connection with history, community, nature and place. Rather than merely replicating historical forms, buildings functioning at this level enter critically into a conversation with the past in order to create something that is both familiar and yet somehow always fresh and new. At this level of design, culturally based meanings are continuously created and deeply rooted building traditions are continually

14: Gary J. Coates, *Towards Phenomenology of Place and Place Making: Interpreting Landscape, Lifeworld aesthetics*, Kansas State University, 1984, pp. 6-8.

given new life. Buildings at this level also embody the principles of biophilic design, connecting building users to elemental nature and to the patterns, rhythms and forms of the natural world, thereby fulfilling our intrinsic need to be connected to the regenerative processes of life.

The first concern of the Marathas was safety and defence of any settlement and town that was under their governance. Hence, it was important for the towns and settlements

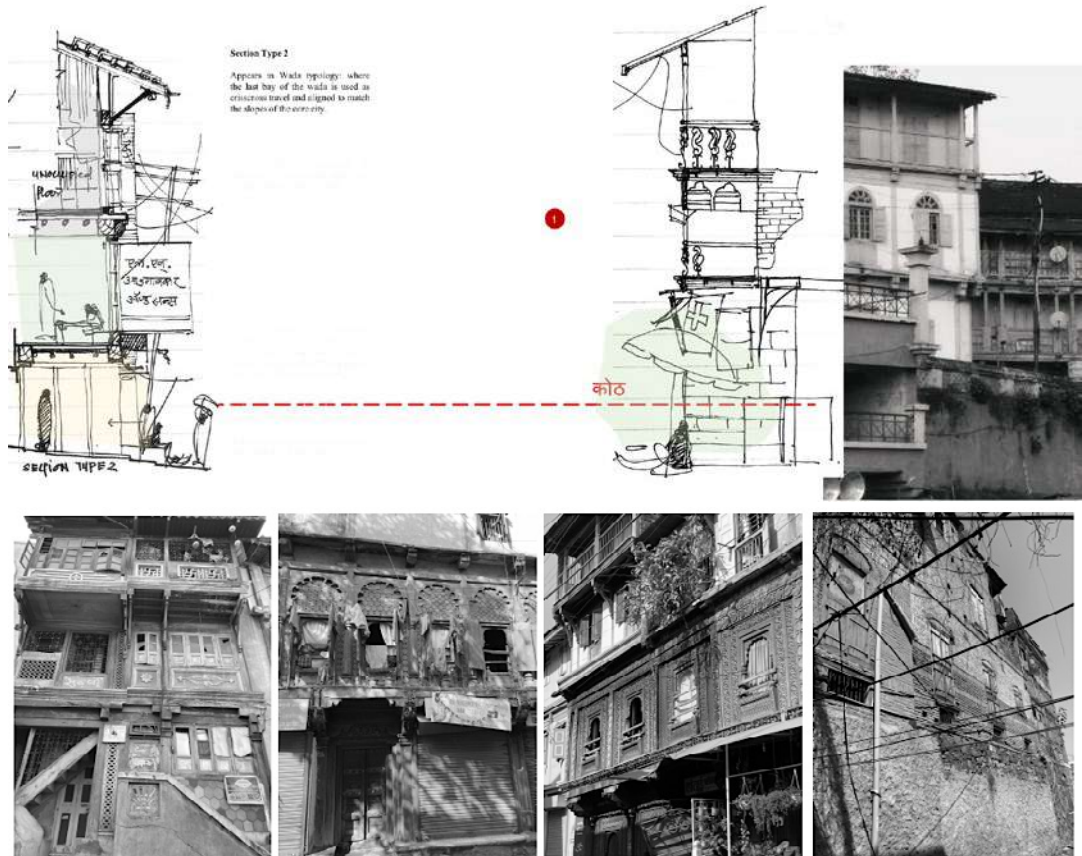


Figure 12: Facades and their treatments as a response to the stimuli offered by the city

to be under the protective observation of a fortress or protective layer of defence. In case of an attack the subjects were to move to safety and hence its connectivity with trace routes were equally important. As the settlements had required water source as a primary requirement, for smooth functioning of the civic requirements of the people, towns are built, expanded and nurtured around prominent basins of the Rivers of the Western Ghats.

A certain typology of building dwellings that is extensively used in the Maharashtrian belt of – Konkan, Ghat, Khandesh, Marathwada and Vidarbha is typically known as

wada-architecture. The type is a cumulative of indigenous materials of the land, climate response specific to hot-dry measured rainfall depending on which of the five parts of Maharashtra the *wada* belongs to the plan of such dwellings revolve around a number of *chowks* and quadrangles called courtyards. Constructing enclosures around these thus securing a perfect balance of:

- Open-semi open spaces and number of these *chowks* determine the nature and the functionality of them.
- The composite roofs (terraces and sloping) accommodate night cooling and outdoor sleeping activity. The urban form density facilitates mutual shading keeping the vertical surfaces in shade throughout the long, hot days of summer except for the time when the sun is at the zenith.
- The courtyards help the settlement to cool down in the night by releasing the heat. The same courtyard also allows the heat to penetrate during the winter.
- The east-west oriented structures, narrow streets, common wall structures form a dense urban fabric that breathes through the smaller indoor open spaces like courtyards.
- Raised plinth and submerged courtyard, that remains in shade on account of the proportions of built mass used around it, carrying the loads of upper floors, also as a protective element to safeguard the house from external threats, if any. They served both domestic as well as political purposes and are basically two to three storey oldest structures in the city.

Conclusion

Traditional communities have worked with water systems, have perpetuated growth and allowed critical insights for building economic systems. These systems often are a collective of traditions, practises, lifestyle, and hitherto many much grassroots practices those are carried forward in the form of cultural legacy. It is crucial for the social health, to enable the transition to a re-growth or post-growth political economy either in India or at the global level.

- Water and water-culture is the essence of steady-state approach towards enabling an informed and thankful society. The accelerating water crisis illustrates why redefining growth is no longer a choice, it is an imperative.
- It is clearly showcasing the growing distance and schism between river as a source and humans as beneficiaries. As the dynamics of the contemporary world and effects of rigorous urbanisations along with damification, water and water

resources are now looked upon as a “commodity”.

- Godavari, has been rigorously and regularly given setbacks in systematic manner that has caused a significant reduction in the sedimentation loads of the river, owing to two major factors, creation of dams and sand mining activities. (Dr.Shilpa Dahake, Godavari: Worshipped, Destroyed & Forgotten river of Nashik, SANDRP. 2017)

- The current deterioration of riparian zones around Godavari are mostly due to exorbitant changes in the land-use patterns, construction of around 650 dams including smaller-check dams, increased forceful agricultural belts and extensive nick-point mining, forming futuristic systems of water commons, taking inspiration from but not being limited to traditional practices, is a complex, but not insurmountable challenge. (Water Resources Department, Govt. of Maharashtra, Integrated State Water Plan for Maharashtra, Vol II- Godavari and Mahanadi Basins)

- The concepts have been passed down over generations through “legacy” what we have known as *sanskar*. This legacy is not just restricted to “human/social – behaviour”, but runs down deep into architectural forms, designs, geometrical alignment, iconology, material-culture, and much more.





Sacred River Narmada: Revered Terrain and Architectural Rituals

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The Narmada River holds a unique place in Hindu mythology and is often considered one of the holiest rivers in the country. It is believed to have divine origins, with its waters considered sacred and purifying. This reverence for the river has shaped the surrounding landscape and given rise to a wealth of ritual architecture and religious practices along its banks.

The Narmada has transformed its surroundings into a sacred landscape, with towns and cities along its course becoming centres of pilgrimage and worship. Devotees from all over the world visit these places to perform rituals, bathe in its pure waters, and seek spiritual solace. The river's banks are adorned with temples, ghats, forts, and other religious structures, creating a unique architectural tapestry that reflects the profound spiritual connection between the river and the people.

Ritual architecture along the Narmada River is characterised by its blend of architectural styles, with influences from North and South India coming together in harmony. Temples dedicated to various deities, especially Lord Shiva, are prominent features of this landscape. The ghats along the river provide the perfect setting for religious ceremonies, cultural events, and the observance of important festivals. The architectural elements serve not only as places of worship but also as cultural landmarks that preserve the region's rich heritage.

The Narmada, is not just a physical water body; it is a symbol of spirituality, purity, and devotion deeply ingrained in the hearts of the people. The rituals and architectural marvels along its banks stand as a testament to the enduring religious traditions and cultural vibrancy of the region. This sacred river, with its revered terrain and architectural rituals, continues to be a source of inspiration and a spiritual lifeline for millions of believers in India.

The Narmada River, often referred to as the lifeline of central India, is not just a geographical feature but a sacred entity deeply embedded in the spiritual fabric of the nation. This paper further explains the study by elaborating three cities of Amarkantak, Jabalpur, and Maheshwar with three different terrains in detail.

The Narmada Valley: The term Narmada Valley has been used to denote the cultural landscape in the study. Typically, cultural landscapes do not strictly adhere to geographic boundaries, but in the case of the Narmada Valley, they align quite closely. We are focusing on a region that stands out due to its distinctive geological composition. The Narmada Valley encompasses a vast river basin with an extensive catchment area of approximately 98,800 square kilometers. The defining feature of this valley is its significant rock formations, which effectively separate it from the surrounding landscape in terms of its physical geography.

What is Ritual Architecture?

Ritual architecture refers to the design and construction of buildings and spaces specifically intended for religious, spiritual, or ceremonial activities. These structures are created to accommodate and facilitate various rituals, worship practices, and communal gatherings associated with a particular faith or belief system. Ritual architecture can be found virtually in every culture and religion worldwide, and it often reflects the values, traditions, and symbolism of the people who use it.



Figure 1: Depicts the different types of spiritual and religious activities that are related to the river.

a) Poojas being conducted on stone sculptures b) Narmada aarti c) Ghats and boats d) Semantics related to the religious symbols like trishuls depicting God Shiva

Key features of ritual architecture may include:

- 1. Symbolism:** Many ritual buildings are rich in symbolic elements. For example, the layout, orientation, and design of the structure may have deep spiritual significance. Certain architectural features, such as arches, domes, spires, or specific colours, may hold symbolic meaning.
- 2. Sacred Spaces:** Ritual architecture creates designated sacred spaces where people can engage in worship, meditation, prayer, and other religious activities. These spaces are often designed to inspire a sense of awe and reverence.
- 3. Altars and Sanctuaries:** Most ritual architecture includes a focal point, such as an altar, shrine, or sanctuary, where religious rituals and ceremonies take place. These areas are typically adorned with religious symbols and artefacts.
- 4. Aesthetics:** The aesthetics of ritual architecture can vary widely depending on the culture and religion. Some may feature intricate and ornate details, while others may prioritise simplicity and minimalism.
- 5. Materials:** The choice of materials can also be significant. Some ritual

buildings are constructed from stone, while others use wood, brick, or other materials. These materials can hold cultural or symbolic importance.

6. Spatial Layout: The layout of the building often reflects the religious practices associated with it. For example, a cathedral in the Christian tradition typically has a cruciform shape, symbolising the cross, while Hindu temples often have a central shrine surrounded by open courtyards.

7. Accessibility and Ritual Flow: Ritual architecture is designed to facilitate the flow of people during religious ceremonies. It ensures that participants can move through the space in an organised manner and participate in rituals according to established traditions.

What is “Revered Terrain”?

“Revered terrain” refers to a geographical area or landscape that is highly respected, esteemed, and honoured due to its cultural, historical, religious, or natural significance. It is a place that is held in great reverence or deep respect by a community, society, or culture, often because it is considered sacred, hallowed, or spiritually important. This term emphasises the special and elevated status of the land or terrain in the eyes of those who regard it with profound admiration and veneration.

In the context of the Narmada River, “revered terrain” refers to the special and highly esteemed significance of the Narmada River and its surrounding landscape in Indian culture and spirituality. The Narmada is often regarded as a goddess (Narmada Devi) and considered one of the seven sacred rivers in Hinduism, and it holds deep religious and cultural importance for millions of people in India. It is associated with spiritual purification and devotion. Pilgrims undertake journeys along the banks of the Narmada, visiting sacred sites, temples, and ghats (steps leading to the river), performing rituals, and seeking blessings.

The term “revered terrain” in the context of the Narmada River signifies that this river and the landscape through which it flows are held in high reverence by the people of the region and are considered a spiritually significant and sacred place. It reflects the deep cultural and religious connections that exist between the Narmada River and the people who inhabit its banks.

Architectural Responses to the Varied River Terrain of the Narmada: The Narmada River flows through a wide range of geological terrains, including hills, plateaus, valleys, alluvial plains, and deltaic regions. These diverse landscapes have not only shaped the natural environment but have also played a significant role in the architectural heritage of the areas along its banks. This research paper “Sacred River Narmada: Revered Terrain and Architectural Rituals” delves into the architectural responses to the varied river terrain of the Narmada and seeks to understand how local architectural styles have evolved to adapt to these distinct landscapes.

Figure shows the main rock formations that make up the Indian shield. On close observation, one will find that mostly the rivers have either one or two types of rock formations only, but due to its geological setting, the Narmada valley is having all these different types of rock formations at different places.

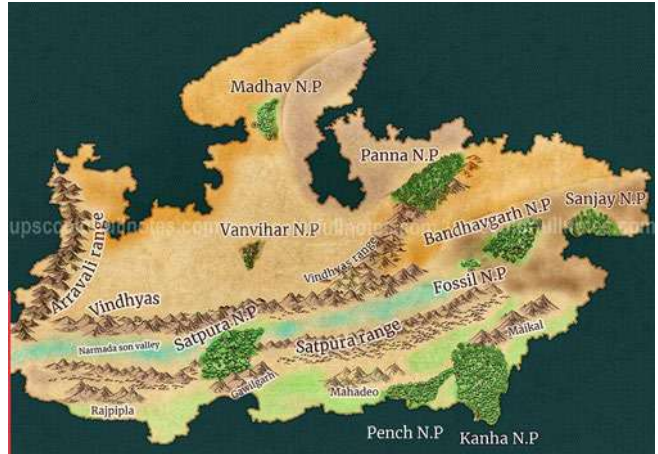
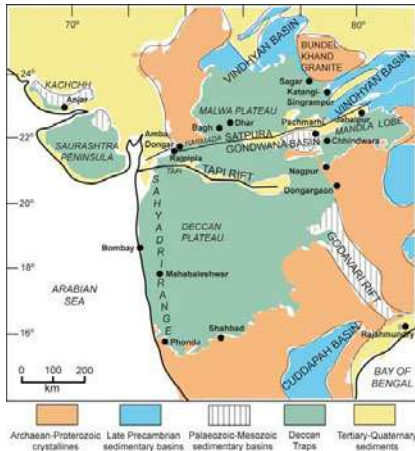


Figure 2: Depicts the geographical diversity along the river basin.

a) Highlights the path of river on the map of India b) Shows the terrain on the map of Madhya Pradesh (MP) (Source: Google Images)

Significance: Understanding the relationship between river terrain and architecture along the Narmada River will not only shed light on the cultural and historical context of the region but also has practical implications for contemporary architectural practices. It can inform sustainable and contextually relevant architectural designs that respect the natural environment and heritage of the area. Additionally, this research paper contributes to the broader field of architectural and cultural studies, offering insights into how geography influences human-built environments.

Architecture Rituals along River Narmada:

Ghats and Bathing: Ghats along the Narmada River are prime locations for various rituals. Pilgrims and devotees often gather at these ghats for ritualistic bathing, which is believed to cleanse the soul of impurities. The architecture of these ghats is designed to accommodate large gatherings and provide easy access to the river.

Aarti (Worship with lamps): Aarti is a traditional Hindu ritual involving the waving of lamps in a circular motion to the deity. Along the Narmada River, especially in towns like Maheshwar and Omkareshwar, elaborate aarti ceremonies are performed at designated ghats. The architectural design of these ghats often incorporates platforms and spaces for priests to conduct the aarti.

Pilgrimage Routes and Temples: Along the banks of the Narmada, there are pilgrimage routes that connect various temples and sacred sites. These routes often have

architectural features like pavilions, resting places, and markers to guide pilgrims. The temples themselves are architectural marvels, adorned with intricate carvings and often situated in picturesque locations.

Ritual Circumambulation (*parikrama*): Devotees perform a circumambulation or *parikrama* of sacred sites along the Narmada River. The architecture of these sites may include pathways, steps, and markers for pilgrims to follow during the ritualistic walk around the sacred spot.

Ritual Offerings and Donations: Temples along the Narmada River receive various offerings from devotees. Architectural elements like donation counters, *hundi* (donation boxes), and spaces for priests to receive offerings are integral parts of temple architecture.

Ghats for Immersion of Ashes: The Narmada River is considered sacred for performing the last rites and immersing the ashes of deceased loved ones. Special ghats and facilities are designed to facilitate this ritual, providing privacy and convenience to the grieving families.

Festivals and Celebrations: Various festivals, such as Maha Shivaratri and Narmada Jayanti, are celebrated along the Narmada River with grand processions, decorations, and cultural performances. Temporary architectural structures like pandals (canopies) and stages are set up for these events.

Conservation and Restoration of Sacred Architecture: Efforts are made to conserve and restore the architectural heritage associated with the Narmada River. This includes maintaining historic temples, ghats, and other sacred structures.

Environmental Awareness and Eco-Friendly Practices: In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need to protect the Narmada's ecosystem. It's high time, that we must opt for the eco- friendly architectural interventions/ infrastructure and waste disposal systems to preserve the river's purity.

Along the Narmada River, architecture often includes community spaces where people can gather for discussions, religious discourse, and cultural events. These spaces contribute to the cultural life of the region.

This leads to the question to understand how the diverse terrain of the Narmada River has influenced architectural styles and practices. It can be understood by looking into these sub topics:

1. Building Materials: The Narmada River has had a considerable influence on architectural designs. Its spiritual significance inspires temple designs, and its diversified

terrain promotes sustainable practices. This influence is seen in stone sculptures, timber components, and vernacular materials. Modern infrastructure coexists alongside ancient temples, resulting in a distinct architectural combination along the Narmada's banks.

Example: In the hilly regions near Amarkantak, where the Narmada River originates, one can find temples and structures constructed primarily from locally quarried stone. For instance, the Narmada Udgam Temple is built using the abundant Basalt from the surrounding hills. The availability of stone in this terrain has led to the extensive use of this material in temple architecture. These on top are known as the “GROUP OF MONUMENTS” as these are the temples without any sculptures or deities, and the bottom ones are called “NARMADA UDGAM TEMPLES” which are a group of 22 temples constructed around the *kund* or reservoir from which the river Narmada originates.



Figure 3: Narmada Udgam Temples at Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh (Source: Authors)

2. Architectural Styles: Many different building styles, each representing specific cultural and historical influences, may be seen along the Narmada River. The architectural diversity along the banks of the river is remarkable, ranging from massive temples embellished with Dravidian and Nagara motifs to detailed wood carvings and complex stone facades. Series of hillside temples, riverside palaces and plain-based houses exist in the area.

Example: The Mandhata Island region can be taken to elaborate more on the topic, where Omkareshwar is located. The architectural style of the Omkareshwar Temple reflects the island's unique geological features. The temple's design integrates the island's rocky terrain into its structure, and the temple is known for its distinctive *shikhar* (spire), which resembles the shape of a hill.



Figure 4: Omkareshwar Temple, Madhya Pradesh a) Satellite made image showing the geographical context of ground and the river that flows between hills and forms the island (Source: Google Images)

3. Cultural and Religious Influences: Along its course, the Narmada River's varied terrain-which is greatly influenced by cultural and religious factors-has shaped building styles and practices in a significant way. Architects have altered designs to mix with the natural surroundings, demonstrating a concern for the environment, whether they are on steep cliffs or fertile plains. Along the riverbanks are temples and sacred places that serve as both cultural and religious landmarks. They are distinguished by their elaborate carvings and symbolic architectural aspects, which tell stories from mythology and represent spiritual beliefs. These elements help in attaching a particular semantics to the design elements of the structures. This skillful weaving together of architecture and the varied terrain highlights the strong cultural and religious impact along the Narmada River, resulting in a distinctive architectural fabric that is in tune with the local past.

Example: The town of Omkareshwar, named after Lord Shiva (Omkareshwar), features temples with architectural elements that reflect the religious significance of the area. The Omkareshwar Temple itself is a Jyotirlinga temple, and its architecture embodies the spiritual and cultural identity of the region.



Figure 5: Omkareshwar Temple, Madhya Pradesh a) Omkareshwar Temple, b) Siddhanath Temple (Source: Google Images)

4. Construction Techniques: The Narmada River's varied geography has influenced architectural styles and practices, resulting in a variety of building methods along its banks. In rocky areas, where the terrain is rough, creative techniques are used to integrate buildings into the surrounding nature. Mud- brick construction is a common

architectural style on flat plains that makes use of locally accessible resources. Terraced buildings are necessary in hilly areas in order to maintain stability and demonstrate flexibility in a variety of settings and climates. These methods contribute to the rich architectural legacy of the area by blending in with the land's natural contours.

Example: In the flood-prone areas along the Narmada River's plains, traditional houses often have raised platforms or stilts to protect against seasonal flooding. These raised constructions are a response to the terrain and are designed to keep homes above the water level during the monsoon season.



Figure 6: The ghats protected the fort against seasonal flooding.
a) Maheshwar Fort, Maheshwar (MP) (Source: Google Image) b) Rai Bhagat Kothi, Mandala (MP) (Source: Authors)

5. Climate and Architecture: The Narmada River's diverse geography has had a considerable impact on architectural styles and techniques, especially in response to the changing climates along its banks. The region's tropical environment has influenced design, with features such as verandas, courtyards, and roof patterns incorporated to give shade and maximise natural ventilation. Buildings in places with heavy rainfall may have sloping roofs and gutters to efficiently channel water away. These concerns indicate a thorough awareness of environmental conditions and show how climate-responsive architecture is integrated into the Narmada River region's cultural fabric.

Example: In regions with hot and arid climates, like parts of Gujarat along the lower Narmada, architectural designs prioritise features that provide shade and natural ventilation. Courtyards with trees and open verandas are common architectural elements in this terrain to help cool the interiors of buildings.



Figure 7: a) Plan of a haveli (Gujarat) b) Inner courtyard of a haveli (Gujarat) c) Front facade of a haveli (Gujarat) (Source: Google Images)

6. Architectural Elements: The Narmada River's varied terrain has had a significant impact on architectural styles and practices, moulding the incorporation of many architectural features along its banks. Buildings follow the natural curves of the ground, with verandas, courtyards, and terraces serving both utilitarian and aesthetic reasons. Ornate carvings, elaborate facades, and symbolic motifs decorate structures, reflecting cultural and religious influences. These architectural aspects not only enhance the landscape's beauty, but they also represent the region's rich legacy and traditions.

Example: Along the banks of the Narmada River in Maheshwar there are numerous ghats with ornate architecture. These ghats often incorporate steps leading into the river, allowing easy access for bathing rituals. The design of these ghats is tailored to the riverine environment and serves both functional and spiritual purposes.

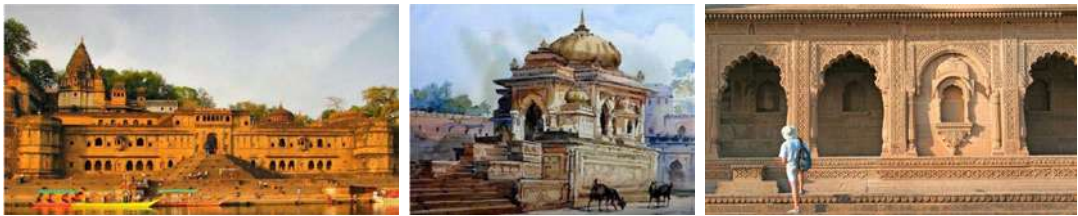


Figure 8: a) Ghats of Maheshwar (MP) b) Painting of Bithobaji's cenotaph (MP) c) Front facade of Ahilyabai's Fort showing intricate carvings on arches (MP) (Source: Google Images)

7. Historical Evolution: The diversified topography of the river Narmada has played an important role in determining the historical evolution of architectural styles and activities, particularly in terms of rulership and trade. As many monarchs consolidated their dominions along the river, building styles frequently mirrored their cultural and political influence, resulting in a confluence of multiple architectural traditions. Furthermore, the river's strategic placement allowed commerce routes, allowing for the movement of architectural ideas and materials between regions. This historical interplay between rulership and trade helped to shape the dynamic growth of architectural styles along the Narmada River, enriching the region's constructed history.

Example: In Maheshwar, the Ahilya Fort is an excellent example of the historical evolution of architecture. The fort's design evolved under the patronage of Queen Ahilyabai Holkar, and it reflects Maratha architecture, with its grand gateways, courtyards, and ornate balconies.

8. Conservation Challenges: The complex topography of the Narmada River presents architectural conservation issues due to erosion, flooding, and urbanisation. Natural disasters and encroaching urban development pose risks to preservation efforts, challenging the delicate balance of cultural protection and sustainable growth. Conservationists must work to conserve historical structures while resolving the delicate challenge of preserving architectural heritage in the face of fast change.



Figure 9: a) Human activities showing the connection between ghats and river Narmada with respect to the natural terrain (b) The beautiful arched openings and jharokhas carved intricately to admire the river and surrounding natural beauty from the fort itself. Location: Maheshwar, MP (Source: Authors)

Example: The town of Maheshwar has faced challenges related to the preservation of its historic ghats and temples due to erosion caused by the river's flow. Conservation efforts have involved architectural interventions, such as the use of stone revetments to protect the ghats from erosion while preserving their traditional appearance.



Figure 10: a) Outer wall of the fort b) Carvings related to natural elements of the river (fish in this case) on the platforms along the ghats to perform sacred rituals c) Temple submerged in the river at the time of floods (Location: Maheshwar, MP) (Source: Google Images)

The study focuses on three cities based along the river Narmada to highlight more about the topic.

1. Amarkantak: Amarkantak is a small hilly town in the state of Madhya Pradesh from where the River Narmada originates.

1. Building Materials: In Amarkantak, which is situated in a hilly and forested terrain, architectural structures, especially temples and ashrams, often use locally sourced stone and timber. The abundant basalt and other types of stone found in the surrounding hills are commonly used in construction. For instance, the Narmada Udgam Temple, dedicated to the source of the Narmada River, is built using locally quarried basalt.

2. Architectural Styles: The architecture of temples in Amarkantak reflects the hilly and forested surroundings. Temples like the Narmada Udgam Temple

and the Group of Monuments Temple complex incorporate elements from the local landscape. These temples may feature *shikhars* (spires) that mimic the shape of the surrounding hills.



Figure 11: a) Pataleshwar Temple (b) Vishnu Temple and Machendranath Temple (Location: Amarkantak, MP) (Source: Authors)

3. Construction Techniques: Given the hilly terrain and potential for soil erosion during heavy rains, architectural designs in Amarkantak often consider structural stability. Foundations of buildings are constructed to withstand the region's topography, and buildings may have sloped roofs to shed rainwater efficiently.

4. Climate and Architecture: Amarkantak experiences a temperate climate with cool winters. Architectural designs may include features such as large windows to allow ample natural light and cross-ventilation during the warmer months. These design elements help create comfortable indoor environments.

5. Architectural Elements: Ghats along the Narmada River in Amarkantak are designed to blend with the natural beauty of the region. The architecture of these ghats incorporates stone steps and seating areas that harmonise with the rugged terrain, offering pilgrims a serene place to perform rituals and take in the surroundings.

6. Cultural and Religious Influences: The architecture of temples in Amarkantak is heavily influenced by Hindu religious beliefs. For example, the Narmada Udgam Temple features intricate carvings and sculptures depicting Hindu deities and legends, creating a spiritual ambience that aligns with the religious significance of the source of the Narmada River.

7. Historical Evolution: Over the centuries, the architectural landscape of Amarkantak has evolved. While traditional temple architecture remains prevalent, newer structures, including guest houses and ashrams, have

incorporated modern design elements while respecting the natural surroundings. This single temple complex has seen the evolution of around 1000 years.

8. Conservation Challenges: Preservation of the architectural heritage in Amarkantak often involves addressing challenges related to weathering and natural wear and tear due to its hilly and forested environment. Conservation efforts aim to protect the historical structures while ensuring they remain functional and safe for visitors.

The architectural practices in Amarkantak reflect the unique geological and geographical features of the region, integrating them into the design of temples, ghats, and other structures. This alignment with the natural environment, along with the cultural and religious influences, creates a distinctive architectural identity in the source region of the Narmada River.

2. Jabalpur: Jabalpur is a significant city in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh with its own rich cultural heritage and historical significance.



Figure 12: a) Dhuadhar Waterfall, Bhedaghat (b) The colourful and lively activities on the ghat, Gwarighat (c) The oldest temple of Jabalpur, Chausath Yogini Temple (Source: Google Images, Authors)

1. Building Materials: In Jabalpur, which is the first biggest city on the river Narmada, architectural structures, especially temples and ashrams, often use locally sourced stone and timber. The specialty of this region is the availability of different types of stones found in the surrounding hills are commonly used in construction. The rocks can be specified as the Dharwar system of rocks, which is created by the erosion and deposition of Archaean rocks. It makes them the first metamorphic sedimentary rocks in India. The absence of fossils and the presence of granite, gneiss, slate, feldspar, quartzite, mica, schist, phyllite, etc., are the most important features of the Dharwar rock system.

2. Architectural Styles: The architectural style in Jabalpur is amalgamated due to the different rulers at different times, varying from the Kalachuri style architecture in Chausath Yogini Temple, Bhedaghat, to the Gond style architecture of various temples, then came the colonial architecture due to the influence of British which comprises several government official structures

like hospitals, police stations, high court etc.

3. Construction Techniques: Given the mixed terrain and potential for soil erosion during heavy rains, along with rocky bed which is earthquake prone, architectural designs in Jabalpur often consider structural stability. Foundations of buildings are constructed to withstand the region's topography. The construction techniques often range from stone masonry, to brick masonry and the latest being cement concrete.

4. Climate and Architecture: Jabalpur experiences a temperate climate with heavy rainfall, cool winters, and extreme hot summers. Architectural designs may include features such as large windows to allow ample natural light and cross-ventilation during the warmer months. These design elements help create comfortable indoor environments.

5. Architectural Elements: There are multiple ghats along the river Narmada at Jabalpur which encompasses different religious structures including temples and Gurudwaras are designed to blend with the natural beauty of the region. The architecture of these ghats incorporates stone steps and seating areas that harmonise with the rugged terrain, offering pilgrims a serene place to perform rituals and take in the surroundings.

6. Historical Evolution: Over the centuries, the architectural landscape of Jabalpur has evolved a lot in terms of elements as well as materials. For example, in Chausath Yogini Temple of Kalachuri dynasty, granite was the prominent building material, at the time of Gond dynasty the structures were made up of granite, sandstone, and bricks; and the colonial structures were mostly of brick and stone.

7. Conservation Challenges: Preservation of the architectural heritage in Jabalpur often involves addressing challenges related to encroachment, vandalism, and unplanned development. Apart from these, there are weathering and natural wear and tear due to rainfall and erosion. Conservation efforts aim to protect the historical structures while ensuring they remain functional and safe for visitors.

To summarise, Jabalpur is nonetheless a city rich in cultural heritage, architectural marvels, and artistic traditions. Exploring its temples, sculptures, cultural landscape, and artistic legacy provides valuable insights into the diverse cultural tapestry of central India.

3. Maheshwar: Maheshwar, formerly known as Mahishmati, is an ancient city based on the banks of Narmada River.



Figure 13: a) Cenotaph of Bithobaji (b) Ahilyeshwar Shivaalay (c) Small temples along the ghats of Maheshwar (Source: Google Images, Authors)

1. Building Materials: In Maheshwar, the architectural structures often use locally available materials such as sandstone and limestone. These materials are not only abundant but also reflect the geological features of the region. For instance, the Maheshwar Fort, a prominent architectural landmark, is constructed primarily from sandstone.

2. Architectural Styles: The architectural styles in Maheshwar reflect the historical and cultural context of the region. The Maheshwar Fort, built during the Maratha rule, displays Maratha architectural elements, including ornate gateways, courtyards, and balconies that provide a glimpse into the architectural heritage of the area.

3. Construction Techniques: Given the alluvial plain terrain along the Narmada River, construction techniques in Maheshwar often involve the use of foundations designed to withstand periodic flooding. The architecture of traditional homes and temples in the region accounts for the potential impact of seasonal river floods.

4. Climate and Architecture: Maheshwar experiences a tropical climate with hot summers. Architectural designs in the town may feature overhanging eaves, shaded courtyards, and *jharokhas* (overhanging enclosed balconies) to provide relief from heat and create comfortable living spaces.

5. Architectural Elements: The town's ghats along the Narmada River are integral to its architectural landscape. These ghats often incorporate steps, resting areas, and ornate designs that provide both functional and aesthetic value. The Ahilya Ghat, particularly, showcases intricate carvings and sculptures.

6. Cultural and Religious Influences: Maheshwar is known for its cultural and religious significance, especially its temples and ghats. The Maheshwar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, exhibits architectural elements that align with Hindu religious beliefs, making it an essential part of the town's architectural heritage.

7. Historical Evolution: Over the centuries, Maheshwar's architecture has evolved under the patronage of different rulers. The fort and several temples have undergone renovations and modifications, reflecting the changing architectural tastes and styles of different eras.

8. Conservation Challenges: Preservation of architectural heritage in Maheshwar often involves addressing the effects of weathering, erosion, and pollution on sandstone and limestone structures. Conservation efforts aim to protect the historical and cultural significance of these architectural landmarks. The geological terrain of Maheshwar, with its alluvial plains along the Narmada River, has contributed to the development of architectural styles and techniques that are well-suited to the local environment. The town's architecture showcases a harmonious blend of cultural, historical, and geographical influences, making it a significant cultural and architectural destination along the Narmada River.

Conclusion:

The phrase “Sacred River Narmada: Revered Terrain and Architectural Rituals” serves as a succinct and evocative title, encapsulating the profound significance and multifaceted nature of the Narmada River in India's cultural and religious milieu. It conveys the essence of this remarkable river's role as not just a geographical entity but as a spiritual force that has shaped both the physical and metaphysical aspects of the landscape along its banks.

The mention of the “spiritual essence” in the title alludes to the deep-rooted religious beliefs and cultural traditions associated with the Narmada River. For millennia, the Narmada has been venerated as a goddess, embodying purity and sanctity. It is considered a divine source of spiritual nourishment, where a simple act of taking a dip in its waters is believed to cleanse one's sins. This spiritual essence is the lifeblood of the river, nurturing the faith and devotion of generations of people who have sought solace and enlightenment along its shores.

The term “architectural marvels” in the title draws attention to the man-made structures that have sprung up along the riverbanks. These structures, including temples, ghats, and other ritual edifices, represent the tangible expressions of the deep spiritual connection people share with the Narmada. They are testaments to the artistic and architectural ingenuity of generations who sought to create spaces for worship, contemplation, and communal rituals in proximity to the sacred river. The blend of architectural styles and the intricate craftsmanship found in these structures showcase the dedication and reverence that have gone into their construction.

Moreover, the title underscores how the Narmada River has been a wellspring of

inspiration and devotion for countless generations. It has nurtured not only religious practices but also a profound cultural heritage that continues to flourish along its banks. The river's enduring impact on the region is described as "leaving an indelible mark on India's sacred landscape," emphasising that the Narmada is not just a body of water but a dynamic force that has shaped the beliefs, customs, and physical environment of the region over centuries. It has become an integral part of India's sacred geography, perpetuating its influence on the spiritual and cultural identity of the nation.

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Ritual Based Tradition of Thanking Rivers: A Case Study of Rituals Performed at River Yamuna in the City of Delhi

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Introduction

It was the middle of the day and I was sitting at Wazirabad Ghat of river Yamuna in Delhi, when two middle aged men entered the ghat with two big boxes of *mithai* (sweets) with them. Upon reaching the step of the ghat where their feet can touch river's water, they stopped and opened the boxes. The boxes contained sweets known as *eemarti* in it. One of the men, looking older, murmured some words before bending his head towards the river as if nodding to the river. After finishing his murmurings (most probably some prayers), he started putting *eemartis* in the river, first one by one and then four-five at the same time. Soon after, the second man started pouring milk in the river from a steel globular water container (*lota*), while the first man continued putting sweets in the river. When two *eemartis* were left, he held them in his hands, once again prayed to the river Yamuna and offered the sweets to the river's water. After that he folded his hands towards the river and bent to take the river's water in his hands. He then moved his hands towards his face with river water in them and touched the river water to his lips thrice, and then folded hands towards the river once again. The second man roughly followed the same ritual and then they simply walked back and left the ghat. (Fig. 1)



Figure 1: Two men (possibly brothers) offering *eemartis* and milk to river Yamuna

Rituals like this, are among the innumerable rituals performed at the banks of river Yamuna in the city of Delhi. But what's special in this ritual is the thankfulness felt for the river and its behavioural expression in the form of a ritual. Here thankfulness is not only felt, but also conveyed and/ or enacted. The two men, most probably brothers, were thankful towards river Yamuna as something they had wished for (from river Yamuna) had been granted to them (by the river Yamuna). At least they believed so. What they had asked for, generally belongs to the realm of secret(s) and is seldomly disclosed to others. This type of votive offerings or rituals are pretty common within the daily or

day to day practices of Hinduism and often the reason for visits to the temples, shrines and other sacred locations. But often these rituals remain obscured beneath larger and great traditions especially those of deity worship and festival celebration. Essentially, they are the 'Thanking Rituals'- Rituals thanking the deity, the sacred, the gods, the goddesses for listening to the prayers and giving what was wished for.

Seeking boons, blessings in general or something in particular from the sacred, is in a way omnipresent and a possible human universal. But what's interesting here is the ritualistic rendition of the motive of being thankful. And add to it the value of being a tradition that is continuing from time immemorial and that too for an environmental resource/ entity.

The Tradition of Thanking River Yamuna

The description of offering "*eemartis*" to river Yamuna as a thankful gesture to some votive means in the introduction, is a ritualistic rendition of what can be said as the tradition of thanking river Yamuna. The tradition has at its core a belief that river Yamuna can avert bad omen and bad times from one's life and/ or she will provide something you want or bring good times. For achieving this, you can simply pray to the river Yamuna (on its banks) and when it is granted you should go back and thank her for the same.

In fact, there are people who ritually visit the river and express their gratitude for something they have received (or believed to have received) from her. Some keep on performing this visit and thankfulness behaviour throughout their lives. Obviously, the impact of prayer or boon wished from the river had been substantial for them, or at least believed so. This belief and behaviour is no different from behaviour shown to other gods and goddesses or to other sacred entities, but river Yamuna seems to be the only environmental entity still enjoying this ritual.

It should also be mentioned that rituals being syncretic, they can range from very simple to highly organised coordinated activity. Here also at most basic level, ritual involves simply coming to the river's bank and one can simply stand facing the river, fold hands and bow the head towards river Yamuna. One can also recite some words or aarti or say whatever one feels like. Often words being said are: "Jamna mai ki Jai", "Jai ho Yamna Maiyya ki", "Jai Jamna". Interestingly, what is wished from the River and what had been granted is never disclosed, only chants for river Yamuna are said publicly. Very often incense sticks or *dhoop* are lighted. Sometimes the river is anointed with roli, *chawaal* or both. Many times, offerings are also made to the river, which again are very simple and economical like wheat flour or dough, flowers, sesame seeds, coconut, betel leaves, milk or cooked food like *poori subzi*. At times, flour is converted into small dough balls using fingers or using palm(s) and then offered. There can be any permutation and combination of the above or any other ritual practice(s) being considered apt by the performer(s). In one such ritual performance, I observed two women, sitting on the

ghats of river Yamuna at Ram Ghat in Delhi, offering dough balls to the river which they had carried in a steel container from home. One of them was elderly (most probably mother or mother-in-law), while the other was younger (daughter or daughter-in-law). The younger woman picked dough balls from the container and handed it over to the elderly woman. The elderly women took the dough balls from her, kept it between her folded hands, touched her folded hands with her forehead, then bowed towards the river and made the offering of the dough ball to the river. After making the offering, she would again fold her hands and bowed her head towards river Yamuna, showing her thankfulness to the river. This, they continued, till the container was empty. Afterwards, they collected all their belongings, and left the place. (Fig: 2)



Figure 2: Two women offering dough balls to river Yamuna



Figure 3: A Young man offering puffed rice and coconut to river Yamuna

In another instance of such ritual performance, a young man came to river Yamuna and offered puffed rice (*kheel*) and an open coconut to the river. After making the offering, he simply walked forward to take the river's water in his hands and poured back into the river. Post this, he prayed to the river thrice with folded hands and left. (Fig: 3)

On the other end of ritualistic syncretism, expressing thankfulness to river Yamuna, there are yajnas, poojas and even celebrations being organised by the whole family or group. During my fieldwork, I saw people organising ceremonies like *mundan* (Fig: 4) or *havans* (Fig: 5) at river's banks specifically for seeking the blessings of river Yamuna. Even festivals like Kanjak (Fig: 6) are also organised at the banks of river Yamuna every year. Many people visit river Yamuna's banks on various festivals and holy-days like Holi, Diwali, Rakhsbandhan, Chhath Puja, Amavasya, Mahashivratri, etc., among others and perform thanking rituals alongside. Some would distribute *prasad* to people when their desired wish is granted. River Yamuna has another special belief associated with her. She



Figure 4: A family performing *mundan* ritual at banks of river Yamuna



Figure 5: A family organising *havan* and taking services of a priest.



Figure 6: Hindu tradition of Kanjak being organised at river Yamuna's ghat

is considered very potent to ward off the evil eye (locally called as *nazar utarna*). Many people come to river Yamuna for this purpose. In one such instance, a couple arrived at the Wazirabad Ghat and faced the river but at a distance from one another. The husband evolved a coconut several times around his head and finally threw it into the river. Throughout this time, his wife was keeping her hands folded near her head (facing the river) and saying prayers. After throwing the coconut, the husband too folded his hands and prayed to the river, before leaving the site. (Fig: 7)



Figure 7: A couple at the river Yamuna's banks, the husband performing the *nazar utarna* ritual



Figure 8: A bhagat performing ritual in the evening

Many others believe in the special power of black magic and consider the banks of river Yamuna as an auspicious and powerful site, and they regularly visit (although often at evening or night) to perform their rituals. In these types of rituals, a ritual specialist is mandatory (locally called as *bhagat* or *bhagatji*). The bhagats and the ritual performer are among those who are most thankful to the river, obviously due to their belief in the potency of river Yamuna for the desired results (Fig: 8). River Yamuna is also deeply associated (locally) with rituals meant for avoiding death, misfortune, penance and tantric practices. In these cases, also, people first perform the ritual meant for their purpose and when it bears successful result, they come again to the river to express their gratitude. Many people come and shave their heads or beard and immerse the hair into the river water. (Fig: 9)



Figure 9: Shaving head as penance. After this, the hair will be offered to the river.

Another very important and related ritual performed regularly at the river Yamuna's banks is giving alms or donations. There is a belief that donating here accrues great merit to the donor. As a result, people donate money, clothes, sweets, foods, fruits, toys, and other articles. Sometimes precious things like gold or silver are also offered to river as well. With increasing price of gold and silver, this practice is in decline but can be seen seldomly.

The Mythology and History behind the Thankful Rituals to River Yamuna

The river Yamuna as per the Hindu oral tradition and the ancient Hindu scriptures, is described as the daughter of Sun deity, Surya and his wife Surenu or Sanjana, the daughter of Vishwakarma. Yamun is often portrayed as Surya's favourite child, which is evident from her other names- Suryatanaya, Suryaja, and Ravinandini'. The river Yamuna, Yamathe God of Death and the sage Manu are described as offsprings of Surya and Surenu.

There are many myths related to Yama and Yamuna. It is said that River Yamuna would often call Yama to her house but Yama could not come due to his busy schedule. One day Yama finally visited her house and Yamuna joyfully welcomed him with *tilak* and served him many meals. When Yama was about to leave, she asked Yama to make all brothers who visit their sisters on this day free from fear of death and have a good life. And this day is celebrated as Bhai-dooj since then. In Rig Veda, the story of the Yamuna describes her “excessive love” for her twin, Yama, who in turn asks her to find a suitable match for herself, which she does in Lord Krishna.

Yamuna thereby, is regarded as the lover and consort of Lord Krishna. She is also called as Krishanrupa i.e., having all the qualities of Lord Krishna. The tale is further detailed in the 16th century Sanskrit hymn, Yamunashtakam, an ode by philosopher Vallabhacharya. Here the story of descent to meet her beloved Krishna and to purify the world has been put in verse. The hymn also praises her for being the source of all spiritual abilities. While the Ganges is considered an epitome of asceticism and higher knowledge and can grant us *moksha* or liberation, it is Yamuna, who being a holder of infinite love and compassion, can grant us freedom from even death, the realm of her elder brother². As described in the hymn, she rushes down the Kalinda Mountain, and gets described as the daughter of Kalinda, deriving another name, Kalindi, forming the backdrop of Krishna leela. The text also talks about her water being of the colour of Lord Krishna, which is also dark.

In addition to being the lover and consort of Lord Krishna, River Yamuna is also intricately connected to Lord Krishna’s *leelas*. Whether it is story of Lord Krishna’s birth where Vasudeva (Krishna’s father) carried the baby through the Yamuna river and Yamuna trying to touch the feet of baby Krishna, or of dancing on the hoods of the serpent Kaliya, or his childhood mischiefs or *raas leela* at its banks or love with Rādhā; River Yamuna is inseparable from Lord Krishna. According to Pushtimarg, a sect of the Hindu religion which considers Krishna as the chief deity, Krishna grew up at the banks of Yamuna at Braj, and Yamuna is worshipped as his fourth consort and the goddess who asked the founder of the sect, Shri Vallabhacharya to recite Shrimad Bhagwat near her banks. In Pushtimarg belief, the river has three forms, spiritual, physical, and goddess³. It is the river of love, the love-lorn gopi (milk-maid) in the poet Jayadev’s imagination in Gita Govinda, which enjoins Radha to hasten and meet Krishna, who is waiting at the windswept banks of river Yamuna: ‘dhīra-samīre yamunā-tīre vasati vane vanamālī’⁴.

Bathing in or drinking the Yamuna’s waters is believed to wash away all sins. The Yamuna is seen as a river that bargains with her brother Yama for her devotees’ life (Haberman 2006). While the river is associated with purification before death, it is also concerned with the blessings of life.

River Yamuna in the anthropomorphic form is worshipped as a goddess having kurma (tortoise) as her *vahan*. The Agni Purana describes Yamuna as being black in complex



Figure 10: River Yamuna with Lord Krishna and Mahaprabhuji²⁹

ion, standing astride her mount, the tortoise, holding an urn bearing water in her hand ⁵. River Yamuna sculptures were erected on the entrances of *garbhagriha* of ancient temples along river Ganga during the Gupta period. A very popular pictorial description shows river Yamuna as a goddess with a garland in her hand along with Lord Krishna and Mahaprabhuji (Fig: 10).

Historically, Delhi is also known for the ‘Yogini’ cult i.e., worship of mother deities, something that can be traced in the Vedic literature and found scattered throughout the northern and central India. Delhi is said to be the apex of Yogini cult in the 9th to 12th century and one of the names of the city is Yoginipura. The worshippers of Yogini are also known as the practitioners of *tantrism* and black magic- both associated with river Yamuna as well (Chauhan, 2014). The local respondents add that among all rivers in India, river Yamuna is special. She is regarded as a young, unmarried girl who had grown up in Braj after taking birth at Yamunotri, while generally other rivers are considered married. They also mention that they never offer symbols of married women like *sindoor* to river Yamuna as offered to river Ganga and other rivers. If someone does that the person immediately gets identified as an outsider to the region.

The special worship status of River Yamuna in Delhi exists, seemingly, also because of the continuing historic ties with this geographical location. Delhi is among the most ancient cities known in Indian history and in common parlance, the city of Delhi is said to be settled seven times and plundered seven times. History puts at least eleven, of which seven were either in the vicinity of river Yamuna or right next to it. Earliest and most remembered is the Hastinapur city as mentioned in the Mahabharata. Thereafter, it had been a city of many rulers including the Rajput kings, Muslim Sultans, Mughals, British, and now of Independent India. The continuing vicissitudes for the local people, especially during Muslim and British rule, must have maintained locals’ reliance on the river and its resources. The resulting fortitude among people must have reinforced belief in the river Yamuna. This might also explain continuity of the ‘thanking ritual to the river’ in the city.

Amidst these special myths and beliefs, ritual syncretism, historic reasons the overall imagery of river Yamuna, remains same as the Hindu conceptualisation of rivers as mother figures, as goddesses, as sacred environmental entities, and converges to the Hindu tradition of river worship.

The Hindu Tradition of Worshipping Rivers

As of today, rivers in Hinduism are worshipped in two major forms viz., as environmental

entities, as sacred space/ geography/ landscape- as mentioned above in thanking rituals, and as an anthropomorphic form of a female deity (an exception is the Brahmaputra river, which is considered as male). The latter is observed in temples and pilgrimages like Yamunotri. The local respondents during my fieldwork always valued the former more than the latter with the words “Yeh to sakshaat roop hai” (this is the physical form of the goddess).

As per larger Hindu tradition of worshipping rivers, rivers are revered, prayed and worshipped since time immemorial. Rig Veda, the oldest among the Vedas, describes the sacredness of rivers through the Nadi Stuti Sutra. Ancient Hindu texts, mainly the Brahmanas including Aitareya Brahmana and Shatapatha Brahmana too tell about the river worship in general. They mentioned the merits of river worship and have prescribed specific procedures for worshipping rivers. Another old text, Kautilya’s Arthshashtra refers to the prevalence of the worship of mountains and rivers on festival days. The worship of rivers is also emphasised during times of droughts along with the rain God ‘Indra’. Vayu Purana specially mentions the river Yamuna and other rivers as sacred, worthy of being worshipped by gods and sages. (Compiled from Pandey, 1984).

The Hindu tradition of river worship in present times is extensively studied over time by several scholars. One of the first anthropologists to study rivers in India as sacred space was Prof. L.P. Vidyarthi. In his study of Benaras (Varanasi) with Prof. Jha and Prof. Saraswati, which was published as “The Sacred Complex of Kashi: A Microcosm of Indian Civilization” in 1979, he discussed the concept of a sacred complex. The study describes interactions with river Ganga as happening around the four cults identified in their study. These are a) Cult of Tirthas, b) Cult of Vishwanath, c) Cult of Ganges and d) Cult of Shamsan. His work shows how intricately river worship ‘cult’ is part of our tradition and of daily life and rituals.

Anne Feldhaus (1995) adds to this anthropomorphisation of rivers in India the cluster of values like wealth, beauty, long life, good health, food, love, and the birth of children. She also noted about sacred landscape that “the sources of rivers have been made into places of pilgrimage, complete with temples, tanks, steps, and other kinds of architectural arrangements designed to facilitate pilgrims’ visits and to highlight significant features of the places.” She adds that even the sites of confluence with other rivers or with oceans carries high religious significance- like the confluence of Yamuna and Ganga (and mythical Saraswati) at Prayag and confluence of river Ganga with Sea at Gangasagar. One can observe a general tendency among people to regard every river or rivulet, at times any water source as comparable to river Ganga or as originated from her.

Several scholars have noted the ritual practices surrounding rivers in India. Like David Haberman in his study of river Yamuna in the region of Braj describes a ritual eloquently as follows:

A woman dressed in a beautiful green sari removes her sandals, approaches the river's edge, and squats to place a wicker basket containing a heap of red roses, a few sticks of incense, and a copper pot full of milk on the sandy shore. She scoops up some water from the river with her right hand, takes three sips, and sprinkles the remainder on top of her head. Next, she greets the river with joined hands, saying "Shri Yamuna Maiya ki jaya" (Glory to Mother Yamuna). She then looks into the water and, with a loving smile, pours milk into the stream and places a few red rose blossoms on its surface. After this offering, she lights three sticks of incense, waves them before the river, and inserts them into sand by her side. She bows her head to touch the moist sand at the river's edge and then gets up to leave. (Haberman, 2006: 96).

Prof. Anne Feldhaus in her extensive study of religious practices associated with rivers in the state of Maharashtra notes water transportation from rivers to temples. She says:

Men take water from the Bhima River to the temple of goddess Bolhai, northeast of Pune.

She at the same time connects it to the broader level of actions and beliefs. She recorded that "what these men do is but one example of a ritual circulation of water that takes laces, it seems, all over India. Many pilgrims, for instance carry water from the Ganges to Varanasi to Rameshwaram, in the far south of India, and many more bring Ganges water home, keeping it for years in a sealed container in their household shrine".

In addition to these sacred site rituals, there are many rituals for worshipping rivers reported throughout the country. Like, in Tamil Nadu, Aadi Perukku is celebrated on the 18th day of the Tamil month of Adi. The festival pays tribute to the river's life-sustaining properties ⁶. In its neighbouring state, Karnataka, the ritual of *bagina* is celebrated to thank the rivers. In fact in this ritual as reported by Deccan Herald (on 11/09/2022 on its Twitter account), the Chief Minister Shri Basavaraj S Bommai performed the ceremony of offering *bagina* to the rivers Cauvery and Kapila (on behalf of people). *Bagina* is basically a thanks giving ritual when a river reaches its full capacity (recently when a dam reaches its max capacity) especially after a good monsoon. *Bagina* is an offering made from *mora* (a bamboo based holder) and things like rice, coconut, betel leaves, *kumkum*, and turmeric. In Karnataka, *bagina* is also given to married women on occasion of Gauri festival ⁷.

Although many more instances of Hindu tradition of river worship can be cited, it can be safely assumed that the Hindu tradition believes in thankfulness towards rivers and has a legacy of worshipping rivers, just like in many native cultures worldwide. And the tradition of worshipping river Yamuna is definitely an extended and established part of this tradition itself. And this tradition, this ritual rendition being happening on ground and recorded by scholars throughout the landmass, cannot be excluded from

the discussion of extant human-river relationship in context of India. This can even be generalised to the human-environment relationship concept often talked about due to recent geo-political developments related to the climate change.

Conceptualising the Tradition, Rituals, and Human-River Relationship

Anthropologically speaking, although at the risk of being generalist, rituals are the behavioural manifestation of beliefs under a tradition but when performed, rituals reinforce the beliefs and thus the tradition, enabling cultural memory and belief transmission. This iterative process followed overtime produces culturally sustainable relationships including relationship with the natural and built environment. In case of rivers, the Hindu rituals and traditions through this iterative process have created a human-river relationship in which people feel thankful towards the rivers and worship them.

However, not many people realise that until very recently, rivers were an integral-at times pivotal- part of our social structure and cultural realm. Rivers used to play a significant role in farming activities, providing potable drinking water, contributing fishes and other aquatic life forms for food and trading, and also as a means of transport. In fact there were several occupations directly or indirectly related to rivers for their livelihood-boatmen, divers, fishermen, priests, local merchants and/ or farmers. Of late there used to be bhistis who would fill their bags with freshwater and sell it to the thirsty passersby. Rivers are also used by those who rear animals like cows, ox, buffaloes, sheep, goats, and elephants. For them, the river had been a source of water, animal fodder, bathing space, ground for resting and/ or space for disposing off the dead ones. In addition, rivers are used for swimming, washing clothes, cleaning utensils, taking ritual baths, celebrating certain life events including cremation, organising fairs, spending leisure time, earning indirect livelihood, and festival celebration among others. At times river also mark the boundaries of villages and areas. (Chauhan, 2014). Worshipping the rivers might actually subsume thankfulness for all these functions that rivers used to perform for the society and culture. The celebration of festivals too underlines this tribute, although silently, to the human-river relationship.

But within the ambit of human-river relationship can this feeling of thankfulness can be so ubiquitous, shared and expressed as it appears from the above religious and mythological descriptions? Could departures or variations be possible here? Let's analyse this critically in this case study and check the possibility of any ritual-less or thankfulness-less relationship with the rivers.

Ideally one can be thankful towards rivers without being ritualistic, and ritualistic without being thankful towards the river. Experiences during fieldwork, however, allow possibility of the former but not of the latter. Being ritualistic without being thankful, is somehow difficult to conceptualise. People who come to the river banks for performing

rituals are indeed those who felt thankfulness towards the river. There seems to be no exception to this.

The former i.e., being thankful without being ritualistic is however very much possible, even within Hinduism. After all there would be many in the city who feel thankful to the river Yamuna or rivers in general, but had never gone to the banks of any river within the city or elsewhere. A visit to a river to express feelings of thankfulness and that through rituals would be even rare. But there are always people who have visited the river during some or other festive celebrations like Ganesh Visarjan, Durga Visarjan, Chathh Puja, etc. Some others have visited the annual Diwali fair at the Wazirabad side, while some had gone for some other ritualistic work like getting the river's water, soil of the river, cremation of some near and dear ones, but had no visit to the river otherwise. Some would visit river at a specific time of the year, and during those visits, they tend to convey their thankfulness to the river.

The real situation is more like a spectrum than being definite positions. Some visit very frequently, some occasionally, and some never, with maximum being skewed towards no visits. But they all felt thankful towards the rivers in general. During my fieldwork on river Yamuna in Delhi, I noticed that a large number of people tend to have a 'panoptical view' of the river Yamuna during monsoon from ITO bridge when it was flowing at flooding level and making headlines, but had never visited the river otherwise. Still more prevalent is the 'broadcasted view' from various media platforms. So people have seen the river Yamuna, but have never actually visited river Yamuna. Then obviously, they have never conveyed their thankfulness to Yamuna through rituals. Yet, if you ask them they will generally tend to feel thankful to the river. This is like having a suppositional belief of being thankful to the rivers.

Hence, theoretically, people having views of un-thankfulness to the river Yamuna is also possible but so far I haven't met a single one of them. This might be a reporting bias but the overall socio-cultural beliefs too point in this direction. Thereby, we can assume that thankfulness-less behaviour towards rivers is negligible enough and so is thankfulness-less ritualistic behaviour. Although the ritual-less but thankful behaviour towards river Yamuna is possible.

In fact, this can be said for the overall experience of rivers. While most of us thank rivers by remembering them in words, very few can remember them by linking to one's lived experiences and life's predicaments. This is so true in the age of technology, where pictures, religious myths, poems, songs, folk narratives, geographical, and other information related to river Yamuna or rivers in general is available at a click. Perhaps, this is all the more reason which is keeping people away from the river. At the same time, those who come to the river's bank seeking some help from the river, or looking for some intervention from the supernatural being manifested as rivers, tend to have a lived experience, cultural memory, and social transmission of rituals associated with the

rivers. And this makes the act of coming to the river to thank her and performing some rituals, distinct from other literal, oral, pictorial, or performing arts and also the cause for repetitive reproduction of act- socially or individually.

And this aspect, i.e. personal lived experience is perhaps common to people who feel thankful towards their rivers in context of the western countries. In context of latter ,ritualistic rendition of human-river relationship is practically non-existent. There people tend to have better lived experience with the rivers, as their contact is very frequent, more physical and non-panoptical. The people do feel thankful to rivers but they generally take the technological mediums to express their feeling of thankfulness rather than rituals. Like the following web post ⁸ by Rianna Sterk:

I am grateful to the river because it is powerful and relentless, but also predictable. I am grateful to the river because when you are in a rapid or surfing a wave there is nowhere else that you can be. You can only be in the present, in that moment feeling the movement of your boat through the water in a way that can feel so exhilarating and peaceful at the same time. I am grateful for the river because it quenches my thirst on hot days and provides me with hot tea on cold mornings. I am grateful to the river for the sounds it makes that lull me to sleep at night and the mist it creates in the morning, that I watch evaporate to reveal a reflection of calm and beauty that is unmatched by any mirror. I am grateful for the river in the way that it teaches me and humbles me. I am grateful for the river because it brings people and nature together in a way that feels whole. And as winter approaches, I am grateful for the ice that will form and provide me with a new way of traveling on skis. I will wait patiently and with my heart filled with joy knowing that in the spring I can surf that wave again and travel to beautiful and wild places with more wonderful humans. Thank you, river, and see you soon.

Following is another post ⁹ on the Internet:

We offer gratitude to the Rivers of Life- the rivers which have carved the lands and fed all the creatures, which have washed and nourished and shaped the people. We are thankful for the life-giving waters, the moving waters, the shining waters. For waterfalls, eddies, currents, for ever-changing patterns, for leaping fish, otters, invertebrates. We remember how our ancestors recognized the Rivers as sacred beings, tenderly offering them gifts and prayers.

Technology the western world seems to be transforming the thankfulness behaviour towards the rivers by reproducing it on different platforms other than religious rituals. Like on Pinterest, there are Peaceful James River Thank You Postcards ¹⁰. Technology is also generating social action among people like sending love letters to rivers like done by an online group named as 'Friends of Mississippi River' ¹¹. They have literally asked people to write and send love letters of memories or gratitude to the river in the year

2020. Before that, they used to call for prose, poetry, and photos related to the river as an annual event. In their own words “The heartfelt letters we received reflect deep appreciation for how the river continually gives- holding our past, inspiring our future, providing a sense of belonging, and always nudging us to connect more”. And as per their website, they had given the received love letters to a local artist (Susan Armington) who wove them into a river painting¹¹. Clearly there is no religiosity, tradition or ritualistic rendition involved in these descriptions. They are thankful, as they can enjoy being with the river- a condition that can be deducted as a result of rationalist environmental campaigns happening ever since the publication of “The Silent Spring” in 1962. From there, the rationalist idea of environment conservation and preservation had permeated the western environmental thought with notable success in conserving and promoting the environment overall. One of the chief characteristics of this success is the continuous use of new and upgraded technology for the cause of environment.

In India, however, technology is being used to bound, concretise and pollute the rivers, rather than protect or promote them. The entry of technology in the river-human relationship has proved deadly to the rivers (and its ecosystem), at least in the case of India. The only solace with respect to technology is that it has now been deployed to mitigate river pollution and is now shifting the overall narrative on rivers to pollution control and the river’s well being. Actual solution is still no way near. And the west-like campaign-oriented rationalist, environmentalist mode is found periodically and sporadically throughout the country. It is not a major force to reckon with. And unfortunately, the extant human river relationship in Indian context is totally opposite of what the ritual based thankful tradition or western rationalist campaign oriented environmentalist thought can lead us to believe.

The worst case scenario that can depict the extant river-human relationship in India exists nowhere else but where there is a strong ritual based tradition of thanking the rivers- i.e., at river Yamuna in the city of Delhi. Today’s river Yamuna is nothing like river when the Nadi Stuti Sukta was composed or even what it used to be at least 50 years from now. Today for most of the year, the stretch of river Yamuna, in the city of Delhi doesn’t resemble a river. It is just a sewage carrying drain, with an awful smell and no life sustaining potential. It is highly regulated, obstructed, and controlled in name of water supply to the city and disposal of all kinds of industrial and household waste. There are several bunds, barrages, and bridges that mark the river’s landscape today. In fact one can see the buildings, roads, a huge temple complex, a residential township, fruit farms, metro yard and station, and even agricultural fields on its floodplains; but not the flowing river Yamuna. The Yamuna flows only when authorities allow release of water which happens in only two scenarios: First, during the monsoon when the river tends to flood and secondly, when there is some important festival celebration like Visarjan or Chhath Puja. As a consequence, today rituals of thanking the river Yamuna in the city of Delhi have to be done in the lifeless, uninhabited, and polluted floodplains and river water. Flour balls or dough or other offerings are offered in the river, even knowing quite well that there is no aquatic life in it. Ritual performers lament this condition of the river and

often recollect, remember, and miss the old memories of the relationship they once had with the river.

The city of Delhi, being the country's capital, is also a representative of unprecedented urbanisation seen in the country. Its population is hugely diverse, densely packed, and the only metropolitan city (of the original four) that does not have a sea shore around it. It's landlocked geography makes the Yamuna river its only source of potable water. There are Hindon and Sahibi rivers, but their contribution is negligible as compared to the Yamuna. Delhi represents the epitome of changing lifestyle, values, practices, ways of production, and consumption among masses. This led to generation of huge amounts of solid, liquid, and gaseous waste and since it is not managed, it end up resulting in pollution. Delhi alone, on record, contributes 98% of the total pollution in the Yamuna basin. These processes over a period of time have led to the present social situation where the river is forgotten, by and large, by the very people still deriving water, food, travel, residence, and waste disposal services from it.

The situation is more or less similar in case of other Indian rivers, and yet rivers are considered as venerable and in fact worshipped like any other deity. Many scholars have studied this dualism and have explained their thoughts on it. Like Prof. Kelly Alley in her 2002 publication titled 'On the Banks of the Gangā: When Wastewater Meets a Sacred River', she tries to understand rituals vis-a-vis pollution in the river Ganga. She starts with a tourist's paradox of a polluted river being worshipped, which according to her is not a paradox at all for Hindus who believe in Ganga's sacred purity. She writes "at the present times, the Hindu understanding of sacred purity does not render purity and uncleanness mutually exclusive categories and conditions" [232]. In this publication, she too describes many rituals including those related to death/ cremation but with respect to the pollution in the river. In a subsequent publication titled "Ganga and Gandagi", she outlines the various interpretations of waste and river in the urban and sacred town of Benaras. She distinguishes the usage of word *pradushan* from *gandagi* with the latter being used to refer to the "human excrement, household garbage, dirty water flowing from drains, soap, human and animal corpses, dirt from bathing buffaloes and pan spit" (129). In another publication, she re-iterates her view that "Ganga (river) is believed to never be impure in spite of the 'gandagi' in it because the Ganga- the Goddess- the mother- takes it away". She does mention people who objectively point out the situation but also about the belief that many others believe that it is humans that are polluted, not the river.

Although Prof. Kelly Alley and other scholars talks about duality in extant human-river relationship in Indian context, to me its triplicity of religion, environmentalism, and pollution that defines and reproduces it. These three co-exist. The triad makes the question of revitalisation of river-human relationship more solution-oriented as now we can talk more clearly on how religion and rationalist thoughts are cancelling out each other and not the pollution.

Thanking the River: Revitalising the River-Human Relationship

The triad gives two variables to think and act upon the third element i.e., pollution to revitalise river-human relationship. Interestingly what is common to both variables is the thankfulness felt towards the river.

Let us first take the ritual based religious traditions. The very fact that rituals that convey the performers' thankfulness or gratitude towards the river- an environmental entity are followed even today, when the river is severely polluted and in a dire state; and when most others in the city are feeling thankful cursorily, deserves some appreciation. There are two reasons for it. First, it creates a kind of social participation between the river and ritual performers. And secondly, it brings forth and keeps alive the overall river-human relationship. So, the biggest advantage in India seems to be the Hindu belief in the sacredness of rivers, which is established by several religious scriptures including Rig Veda and myths. The reverence of rivers due to their contribution to individual and social life even till date cannot be denied. Ever since the Vedic times, the rivers are considered no less than deities and have elaborate worship rituals that include rituals for temples, rituals for ceremonies (river centric or not), and rituals for individuals or everyday worship. Within Hinduism, there can be many forms of worshipping rivers but it's there. And yet, in spite of such a strong cultural connect, many times when it comes to stopping pollution in the river or its exploitation, the situation is complex.

The second being the rationalist based environmental movements and practices that had produced result in the western context. The difficulty with this is that in India its seasonal and appealing to selected group of the people. It does not have the mass appeal like the first one. Nor it has a long, enriching and result producing history in the country. To me, it simply fails to reproduce itself socially enough in spite of the thankfulness inherently felt towards the rivers. There are no rituals like reproducing acts.

Now about the third entity of the triad i.e., pollution in the river. While pollution literally refers to the pollutants that can be physically located, scientifically measured, and treated numerically; it conceals the social nature of it. If analysed socially, it not only means the physical presence of pollutants but the socio-cultural processes that reproduce and reproduce it. To this once can consider the categorical failure of engineering to produce solutions to pollution and the bureaucratic mindset instilled by the colonial rule behind the treatment of rivers and water. I believe that the physical pollution can itself be reduced and treated to be less harmful. But it is difficult to change the administrative machinery or to nudge the engineering science to change course from binding the rivers to freeing them. In fact, the recent work on rivers have summarised the following causes of deteriorating condition of rivers in India:

- 1) Building of dams, bunds, barrages for controlling and diverting river water.
- 2) Concretisation of river's landscape by constructing roads, highways, bridges, and buildings.

- 3) Floodplain exploitation for agricultural produce.
- 4) Urbanisation and its effects on the traditional way of social set-up.
- 5) City waste disposal, including both household and Industrial waste.
- 6) Displacement of native communities.
- 7) Abandonment of river after it is drained of life, water, and other resources.

The last two reasons i.e., displacement of native communities and abandonment of rivers are long and thus, invisible processes, but they have had tremendous impact on the overall relationship with the rivers. But these processes over time had created a relationship of excessive exploitation, subduing century-old traditions and beliefs; and now surpassing environmentalist thought as well. So can we use rationalist thought to re-vitalise the relationship? Clearly not. And can rituals be used to re-vitalise this relationship? Again no, at least not in the current form. The situation of pollution, exploitation and abandonment of rivers is really grim in reality and beyond reversal through rituals alone. After all, when rituals were framed, the rivers were not as polluted as they are today. In addition, rituals presently are personal or unit centric in its focus. They tend to bring people to the river's banks but such visits are few and far between, un-coordinated, and not motivated to bring a change in the river's condition.

The religious essence of rituals has not incorporated the environmental activism in its fold and therefore, can not respond to the environmental concerns directly. However, if the purpose of rituals is to alleviate the river's condition and make a coordinated event where a large number of people come to the river's banks/ floodplain for the said purpose, some improvement can be hoped for. In other words, If there are enough people who come and perform the thanking rituals at the banks of rivers at the same time and if this is arranged as an event; the desired result of re-vitalising river-human relationship could be neared. With increasing periodicities; a tipping point could be reached. At this point, authorities and bureaucratic machinery will have to take action including those of regular water release, cleaning of rivers, and prevention of waste dumping in the river.

Similarly, rationalists should understand that rituals may not be only religious. There could be like a ritual of river cleaning every weekend. Imagine a thousand or a million people gathered to perform a thanking ritual at the banks of river Yamuna on a specified date, time, and place. Of course, people could gather without performing any thanking ritual as well (only for environmental purposes i.e., river cleaning or pollution abatement). However, with the thanking ritual they would be interacting with the river, its water, geography, myths, history and actually thanking the river for its timeless and elfless contribution. This will create a lived experience and bring people back from the suppositional thankful state and reproduce it socially and culturally.

Conclusion

The Nadi Stuti Sukta has comprised, for centuries, the gratitude felt towards the rivers and also indicates a then higher, harmonious existence of the human race and river. Till recently, it had continued to exemplify the cultural picture of a harmonious river-human relationship prevalent since Vedic times.

Today's river-human relationship in India consists of three aspects: Ritual based religious tradition of worshipping rivers, Rationalist environmentalist thought, and Pollution. It should also be noted that even pollution is being reproduced within the society just like the tradition of river worship or environmentalist thought and action. It will be not wrong to say that technology in the case of India had actually aided in exploitation and pollution of rivers and its role in alleviation of rivers from the extant state is still to bore fruits.

Amidst this, the feeling of thankfulness towards the river and ritual performance have been the only departures and a constant behaviour in contrast to this culture of exploitation and pollution. The instance of rituals thanking the river Yamuna is essentially a pointer to the fact that there exists a ritualistic tradition of thanking rivers within the greater tradition of worshipping rivers in Hindu culture that has survived time and geography to this date. To perform rituals, people come to the banks of the river and create a social interaction with the river. This makes the otherwise invisible river visible to at least some people in the city.

Ironically, at the same time, the idea of thankfulness to the rivers, albeit being religious, ancient, strong and ubiquitous, is unable to bring people to its banks on its own. Most people are either content with the panoptical view or the broadcasted view of the river they receive through technology. While these people would be thankful to rivers on a whole, their visits to the river are like a spectrum spreading from nil to daily, with maximum skewed towards the nil side. But rituals are doing it. Rituals are bringing people to the river's bank and by doing so, engaging rivers in a social relationship and at the same time giving people a reality check on the physical condition of the river. However, at present, rituals performed are only religious in nature and are devoid of rational environmental concerns while environmental activism is at loss of having any ritualised activity.

Then why not tear down some religiosity from the rituals while adding some environmental activism to them? Why not make a ritual of thanking rivers by bringing more and more people to the river's bank on specific time, date and place? These rituals need not be an elaborate one. In fact, like the thanking rituals it can be as simple as coming to river banks, spending some time there and saying thank you to the river. Cleaning the river would be even better. Technology could help in mobilising people in large numbers, sufficient enough to make authorities count and also by devising

innovative means of social experience with the rivers as done in some examples from the western world. This eventually would lead to a better river- human relationship and could also be generating a culture of sustainability.

In conclusion, it can be said that the tradition of thanking the river Yamuna in the city of Delhi represents a distinct tradition of river worship that is nestled in mythology, local history, geography, and culture, and which can be used for a higher purpose of alleviating the river-human relationship and sustainability, although not without appropriate modifications, enhancements, and some rationalist elements in it. Meanwhile, one can go to the ghats of the river Yamuna in Delhi and wish for a pollution free river flowing majestically. But if the wish is granted, will we be performing a thanking ritual at the ghats of Yamuna?

Endnotes

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Singing Tales of the Brahmaputra: Bhupen Hazarika's Songs as a Symbolism of Axamiya Consciousness

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Introduction

Bhupen Hazarika is a household name across Assam and the entire Northeast India. He has often been called “the Bard of the Brahmaputra”, particularly because of his metaphorical and symbolic reference to the river Brahmaputra. A close study of his songs indicates the continuous reference to the river, all signifying the qualities he essentially urged the Axamiya people to search within themselves, especially in times of conflict.

This paper highlights his reference to the river Brahmaputra in two of his famous songs, *Bistirno parore* and *Mohabahu Brahmaputra*, and analyse how the river symbolises history, emotions, aspirations, and self-reflection .

Metaphors: Symbolism and Meaning-Making

In her 2012 paper “The Influence of the Extra-Musical on the Composing Process”, Shira Lee Katz describes how composers use metaphors, which are extra-musical domains, to link ideas inside and between domains. She describes how metaphor serves as a synthesising agent, indicating the link between two distinct domains (Katz 2012: 174). They serve as conductors, connecting and mapping concepts onto one another, and are not just language phenomena. Artists can clarify what is and is not significant by using metaphor and association to connect seemingly unrelated pieces of information.

Aristotle’s notion of metaphor, highlights how it is the act of giving a name to something that is a part of another object; an example of a metaphor would be the saying “love is a red rose”. According to Aristotle’s definition, the metaphor in this instance is centered around the noun “love”. However, “love” is an ethereal feeling that defies precise definition. Therefore, it is made more comprehensible by using the term “red rose”, which is less abstract. What takes place is the transition from an ethereal notion to a more palatable, concrete phrase (Butcher 1920: 5) .

In his 1970 book “The Myth of Metaphor”, Collin Turbayne (cited in Katz 2012) questions

this interpretation of Aristotle. According to Turbayne, a metaphor is defined by the “as if” or “make believe” element that is intrinsic to it. The metaphor “love is a red rose” in the example relies on how much the sentence is interpreted to signify that love is “as if” it is a red rose. For the metaphor to be understood clearly, a certain level of awareness is required. Understanding a metaphor is not achieved by equating love with a crimson rose. In actuality, what works is the recognition and understanding of the parallels between the two- that is, the understanding that events occur “as if” they are comparable.

However, Philip Wheelwright takes the stance that he articulated in his 1973 book “Metaphor and Reality” (cited in Katz 2012), which holds that metaphor is the most effective way to explain the close relationship that exists between language and phenomenal reality. Wheelwright takes a stance that differs from Turbayne’s, in that he stresses the close connection between metaphor and phenomenal reality. We are able to establish a close connection with “what is”, or “reality”, and the way it manifests itself to us, thanks to metaphor.

Therefore, metaphor should not be seen as a mere language embellishment that does not add any additional meaning or have anything to do with reality or how we relate to it. Paul Ricoeur, a prominent figure in the study of metaphors, contends that metaphors are original and have new interpretations, making them philosophically significant. Ricoeur offers a fresh perspective on perception, reference, and imagination while also giving it an emotive component. The main point that Ricoeur raises in “The Rule of Metaphor” (1975) is: “What does the metaphorical statement say about reality? This question carries us across the threshold from the sense towards the reference of discourse” (Ibid, 216).

According to Ricoeur, the proper name of a state of affairs is determined by the reference, which is conveyed from the proper name to the complete proposition (Ibid: 218). For this reason, it is critical to comprehend what metaphors mean before attempting to understand how they relate to reality.

Metaphorical language uses results in reference-level creativity. Language conveys an image of reality that is linked to the sensation of reality. Metaphor, then, is that which connects language and reality- a language that is fundamentally dynamic and an expanded reality. Here, imagination is helpful because it allows one to perceive connections between seemingly unconnected, even unrelated thoughts that eventually coalesce into metaphors.

Metaphors are important for this research because of how they are used in music, primarily in song lyrics. Indeed, the issues with compositions extend beyond simple aesthetic (and acoustical) arrangements, as Shira Lee Katz’s article has previously made clear. Even while the representations may not be exact or straightforward, songs can

certainly be understood as speaking about social facts and circumstances. According to Ricoeur, it is the composer's imaginative use of creativity to make references to "reality". And an ample number of examples can be drawn from Hazarika's compositions in terms of the creative usage of metaphors in music; the most significant one being his usage of the metaphor of the river Brahmaputra; sometimes as a father and sometimes as a powerful warrior. For him, the river, that he referred to as Luit, became a carrier of the aspirations of the Assamese society and at the same time a witness to its various trials and tribulations. Another constant metaphor that Hazarika uses in his songs is that of the "mother" (Axomi aai; meaning mother Assam). The image of the mother is referred to in a lot of occasions to remind the various tribes and communities that they collectively constitute the Assamese society, as the children of a same mother. Interestingly, the image of the "mother" is also used by the so-called "adopted children" of Assam- the ones who have assimilated themselves with the Assamese society, though belonging to a different culture- to reflect upon the generosity of Assam (particularly in terms of its historical developments).

These images might seem very random and inherently poetic in their rendering at the very first glance. But, to go by the rules of reading metaphors, the same images actually endorse a lot of latent meanings and messages that are left open for the audience to interpret. The interpretation might undoubtedly differ from person to person, but the dominant image leading the metaphor does clearly indicate how and between which elements the author seeks to draw a connection. And that connection is not necessarily a technical one. A person (the audience, that is) does not have to be a singer to understand the meanings subsumed under the words that are being used; the connections that are drawn very much relate to the real social world of which the listener is aware of and acquainted with.

The subsequent sections of this paper will highlight the usage of the image of the river Brahmaputra to delineate potent political messages to the community, especially during the times of crisis for the Axamiya society. But before getting onto the discussion of the songs, let us explore the political potency of orality and symbolism in music.

Poetics of Nationalism

It is commonly believed that poetry, painting, music, and other forms of cultural expression are the "soft" artefacts of a given society. Sociologically speaking, however, these are more than just artefacts; they represent a variety of facets of a society, including its history, beliefs, and, most importantly, the attitudes of its populace. It is possible to consider poetry and music in contexts other than aesthetics; these forms can also be described as 'national', reflecting a sense of 'nationalism'.

Renowned social philosopher, Sanjib Baruah, has made an effort to consider how Bhupen Hazarika's songs and music might be used to depict the strong feelings of Axamiya

(sub) nationalism that have emerged in Assam in the years following independence (particularly the period between late 1970 - early 90s). Baruah's apparent identification of an "aspect" in Hazarika's lyrics has been categorised as "poetics of nationalism" and needs to be interpreted in the context of Assam's post-independence political landscape.

Here, Nazneen Ahmed's research of how poetry and songs of the East Pakistani struggle to state persecution eventually led to secession and the birth of Bangladesh can be used to understand the concept of "poetics of nationalism".

When discussing the notion of "nationalism", we typically consult Benedict Anderson and his connection between the birth of contemporary nationalism and the novel (written words). By proving that print-capitalism need not always be the spark that ignites the imagination of the "national", Ahmed upended the conventional wisdom regarding the relationship between novel and nation. Poetry, or songs, are what create an imagined nation; this is typically not the case with prose, as poetry uses aspects like a common dialect and the construction of a national sublime to create an "adored nation" (Ahmed 2012:257). Ahmed contends that poetry's ability to spread orally is what makes it a possible medium for collective expression.

Indeed, a close examination of Anderson's writings reveals that he does not view the novel as the exclusive vehicle for the expression and growth of nationalist awareness. Instead, it is merely one of the many cultural expressions that actively contribute to the creation and manifestation of collective identity. Anderson contends that music does, in fact, have a significant impact. He makes particular note of the ways in which national anthems serve to foster strong bonds of solidarity among people who belong to a group that is too big for them to know one another well:

There is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests- above all in the form of poetry and songs. Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance. (ibid, 145)

But the sensation of unisonance is more than just the result of the anthems' seeming simultaneity. These "anthems" are produced using a variety of linguistic, sensory, poetic, and symbolic techniques that are necessary to effectively create a sense of an imagined community.

It follows that poetry and song have the greatest potential for mobilising a group due to their oral transmission. Together, they may express themselves politically. Even with all of the focus on the novel form, poetry and song have played a significant role in

nationalist expression throughout the history of liberation movements and have been essential components of anti-colonial political resistance and declarations.

Sanjib Baruah situates Hazarika's songs in the context of Assam's political circumstances following Indian independence by using this idea of poetry/ songs. According to Baruah, the songs of Hazarika are significant because of their intertextuality, or how they relate to discussions on the "state of the nation" that take place in Axamiya "private" and "public" life. According to Baruah, the political tenor of the Axamiya is constantly reflected in his music.

If countries and nationalities are "imagined communities", then Baruah describes this as a poetics that changes a place's topography into a primordial, sacrosanct, or homey space and changes a people into a collectivity with imagined kinship and beginnings. According to him, this can be found in Bhupen Hazarika's songs, which express the voice of the "common aspirations".

Baruah draws attention to the various motifs that appear in Hazarika's lyrics and analyses their deeper political implications. He mentions, for example, the song "Mother what offering can I make at your feet?" by Hazarika and discusses how the nationalist narrative's common motif of the nation as mother accomplishes several goals, including establishing a primal connection between the people and their homeland and implying a common womb, which in turn instils a sense of shared origins among the people (ibid, 655).

As per Baruah's argument, the song "Bohag is not just a season" portrays the Axamiya nationality as a collective entity possessing a memory and a will. It's not only about having fun. Instead, the notion of a country reflecting on its history and making plans for the future is one that has strong constitutive power (ibid, 656). The images in Hazarika's songs, such as the duties to "mother Assam", the "stock-taking" about the collective past of the Axamiya and their determination to act on their historically constituted collective will, and the obligations to honour the memory of martyrs, however, are what really matter here. These clues provide important insight into the "imaginative geography and history" that characterises the Axamiya's perception of themselves as a "nation". These pictures are aimed at the typical Axamiya.

The Songs and their Symbolism

Let us now turn our attention specifically to the songs that are the central points of analysis in this paper: *Mohabahu Brahmaputra* and *Bistirno parore*.

Mohabahu Brahmaputra

Swokiyo roop loi Bohag nu aahe koloi? Brahmaputra'r duyu paroloi nohoi jaanu? Ei Brahmaputra'r mohaani oitijyo ba ki?

(Translation: Where does Bohag arrive in its truest form? Isn't it to the two banks of the Brahmaputra? What might be the great traditional significance of the Brahmaputra?)

“The mighty armed Brahmaputra rolls on
The pilgrimage of the great meeting
Rolling on down the ages and showing
The meaning and worth of harmony
The Barobhuyans came from distant Kanyakunj
The fore bearers of our great Shankardev...
And Teg Bahadur from the land of five rivers
Built a sure bridge of faith
And revealed myriad forms of harmony.
Lachit engaged the enemy at Saraighat
Uniting all in bonds of patriotism
All races, faiths and tongues together.
Bishnu Rabha of the Kirata race
Gave life to native ways and mores
To reveal myriad forms of harmony.
Hundreds came braving the storm in the Padma
The Luit received them in either bank
To meet and merge, give and take
As did Rabindranath say.
It was here that Jyoti Agarwal
Cascaded down as light
Thwarting all evil mongers
With the might of his light”

This song was written in the year 1980 when the agitation of the Movement leaders had begun to take spark.

This song can be placed within the larger debates of “Who is an Axamiya?” that ensued during the Assam Movement; conflicts emerged amongst the Axamiya people itself as many began seeing Assamese language as its basis, some even attempting to bring a communal angle to it. At this juncture, Hazarika sought to remind the people of Assam as to how, historically, the banks of the Brahmaputra have assimilated various groups and communities. And how these various communities, though technically from “outside”, form an integral part of the assimilated and heterogeneous Axamiya society; hence the need to distinguish them from the concept of “foreigners”. The tactic that he adopts in arousing the emotion of “oneness” amongst the various groups that forms a part of the larger Axamiya society is by citing names of icons- beginning with Srimanta Shankardev to Jyotiprasad Agarwala- that are considered to be the cultural “forefathers” by the people of Assam. In doing so, Hazarika also seems to clearly state his own personal

understanding of who exactly is an Axamiya for him.

None of the figures that Hazarika refers to in the song has an origin in the Assamese society, if it is to be seen in terms of the Assamese language. Hazarika identified his mentors, Jyotiprasad Agarwala and Bishnu Rabha, with non-Assamese roots, too.

The most enticing part of the song is, nevertheless, the manner in which Hazarika mentions of the Padma River, signifying the people of Bangladesh. He uses the term *dhumuha* (meaning storm), symbolically to point towards the natural and the political upheavals that have marked the lives of the people dependent on it. Assam, as a worthy neighbour, has always welcomed the people seeking refuge at times of trouble. This metaphor can be taken as a point where Hazarika very subtly spells out his understanding of an Axamiya as against a “foreigner”. There have been a lot of people who have come from what constituted East Pakistan pre-1970. The ones who were forced by circumstances to leave behind their homes and adopt a new culture have been embraced by the Axamiya society as their own but the ones who have continued to come into Assam/India only for their personal benefits and have been used by political forces as their ‘vote bank’ are nothing less than “foreigners”. Amongst the ones who had come with the apparent ‘storm’ of the Padma, there have been people who have assimilated themselves with the Axamiya society and are called the Na-Axamiya (or New Assamese). They have become a part of what constitutes the Axamiya. But not all of them who have crossed over the border become an Axamiya by default. By extension, these are immigrants who are not desirable in Assam/ India and giving them a constitutional status is not acceptable. This distinction is further emphasised with the lines: *Kisu lobo lage kisu dibo lage, Jin jaboloi hole, Milibo lage, milabo lage, Rabindra Natheu kole*. (To meet and merge, give and take; As did Rabindranath say) which reflect what his mentor Jyotiprasad had once said: “With time, in new developments we need to give up a few old cultural obsessions and the ones who come (to our culture) too need to give up a few of theirs” (Mazid 2015: 87).

It is true that if such a situation arises where the rights of a citizen are hampered or taken over illegally by people, who are not citizens, it would make any citizen insecure in his/ her own homeland. And, in such a condition, the former has full rights to launch a protest. But if the protests are based on political short-sightedness, they are futile. As the Assam Movement began to take a significant upsurge, Hazarika visualised the importance of historicising the entire concept of the Axamiya Identity that was being debated upon, lest the youth who were actively participating in the movement lose sight of the main issue (i.e., of illegal foreigners, posing economic and political threat to Assam) and get caught up with unnecessary confusions and clashes. He supported the expulsion of foreigners in a constitutional manner and believed that every state had the constitutional right to be foreigner-free. The political interest of a few politicians led to the illegal franchise of immigrants, going against the constitutional right of every Indian citizen. That was condemnable and constituted the main issue of the movement.

Bistirno parore

Another significant composition of Hazarika that refers to the Brahmaputra elaborately is *Bistirno parore*. This song is the classic example of the metaphorical usage of the image of the river as an embodiment of an Assamese “patriarch”, the main guardian of a family called the Assamese society. In fact, the entire song is directed towards a personified imagination of the river who is asked to be answerable for the degradation of Axamiya morality and consciousness.

Stretched on the two shores where people live in crores
You hear their cries, still you remain mum and oblivious
Oh Burha Luit! Oh Burha Luit... why do you flow in silence

Even as you witness erosion of morality
Even as you witness downfall of humanity
Why do you still flow as lazy and shameless...

If you are indeed the Brahma’s son
This lineage only seems to be nominal
Why don’t you ignite inspiration? (ibid, 89).

Unlike *Mohabahu Brahmaputra*, the river in this particular song becomes an embodiment of expectations and responsibilities that a father/ guardian has towards the development and growth of the community. Composed originally in Assamese in 1952, this particular song is not contextualised in a political event like the Assam Movement, unlike *Mohabahu Brahmaputra*. It was inspired by Paul Robeson’s famous “Ol’ Man River” that was directed towards the river Mississippi and its indifference to racial atrocities. Similarly, Hazarika summoned the Axamiya patriarch, Brahmaputra, towards his indifference towards class divisions, gendered inequalities, and growing social spasms in the community. The same song was later translated into Bengali and Hindi, whereby the river Ganga was invoked as the matriarch that needed to be awakened. The imagination of the river is meaningful here in terms of suggesting that it signifies an entire civilisation. The rivers being invoked (in the Bengali or Hindi versions, too) are considered to be the lifeline of the people who have been residing on their banks for centuries. Invariably so, these people are imagined as the part of a larger family centered around the rivers as head-of-the-household. And much like every family, kinship ties to this super-patriarch/ matriarch also signifies embodiment of certain virtues and qualities that the people in these “families” ought to remember. Although Hazarika here does not necessarily go back to the history (mythology) of either Brahmaputra or Ganga, it is an implicit element of unification or even imagination of the “communities” that are being referred to. What is being signified in this song is the growing distance between the “real” nature that the river as a father has given his children as a lineage/ tradition and the morose ‘exploited’ reality of the children’s pathological behaviour. In such a

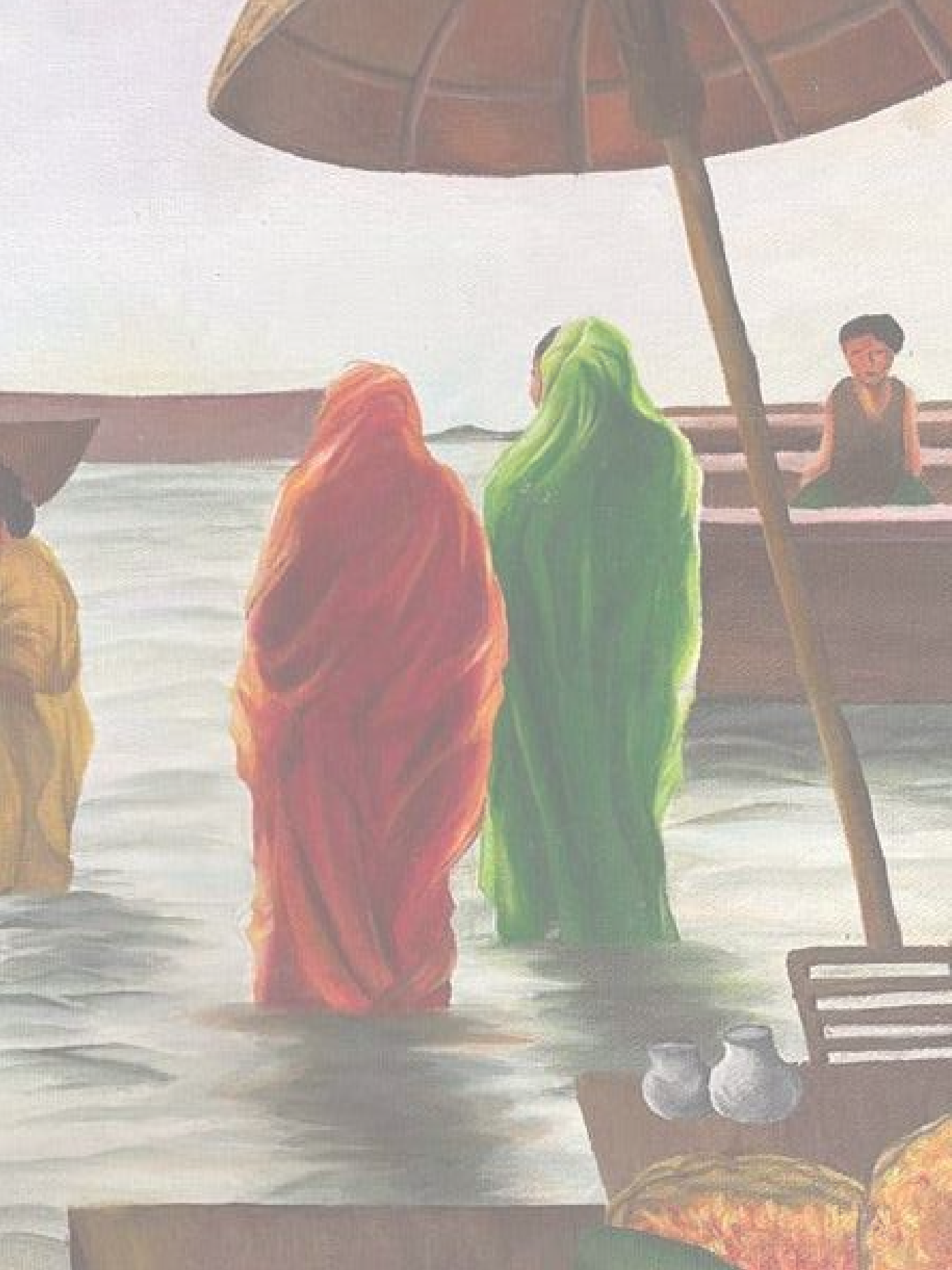
situation, recalling and remembering the father to perhaps discipline his children and remind them of the virtues he had imbibed in them is essential.

To conclude, both these songs adopt very different positions in terms of invoking the same river. The tonality, imageries, messages are different and are significantly contextualised in the political requirements of the situation. What is significant to point out here, however, is the fact that these songs still resonate with the Axamiya people, despite the contexts being entirely altered. The emotional appeal of these songs has neither faded nor lost their charm even with the newer generations of the Axamiya society. Rather, these (and many more) songs of Hazarika continue to be used as unofficial anthems of numerous protests and political mobilisations. The most significant trope of most of his songs being the river Brahmaputra that stands as a symbolic testimony to all the upheavals that the Axamiya society has undergone over the years. Indeed, Sanjib Baruah was correct to emphasise that an unofficial history of the (Axamiya) nationality, with its dreams, desires, and disappointments, may be built using the songs of Hazarika.

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सिंधु-सरस्वती नदी संस्कृति में संगीत वाद्य यंत्र: हड़प्पा संस्कृति के विशेष संदर्भ में

डॉ. चित्रा शंकर
संगीत-पुरावेत्ता, नई दिल्ली

संगीत की अधिष्ठात्री देवी माँ सरस्वती साक्षात् नदी रूप में इस धरा पर विद्यमान रहीं, जिसके किनारे वैदिक संस्कृति या हड़प्पा संस्कृति या फिर यूँ कहा जाए कि भारत की प्रथम नगरीय सभ्यता विकसित हुई। प्रारंभ में इस संस्कृति के स्थल सिंधु तथा उसकी सहायक नदियों के किनारे मिले थे, अतः जॉन मार्शल ने इसे सिंधु सभ्यता नाम दिया। चूँकि पुरातत्त्व में किसी सभ्यता के प्रथम ज्ञात स्थल के नाम पर उसका नामकरण किया जाता है इसलिए इसे हड़प्पा सभ्यता के नाम से भी जाना जाता है। स्वतंत्रता के पश्चात् पुरातत्त्ववेत्ताओं ने सरस्वती नदी (घग्घर, हाकड़ा, सोतर तथा नारा इत्यादि) के सूखे धारामार्ग पर इस सभ्यता के अनेक स्थलों की मौजूदगी सिद्ध की है, इसलिए अब इसे सरस्वती सभ्यता अथवा सिंधु-सरस्वती सभ्यता के नाम से भी अभिहित किया जाता है।

भारतीय प्राचीन ग्रंथों (ऋग्वेद, पुराण, महाभारत इत्यादि) में सरस्वती नदी की महिमा का खूब गुणगान हुआ है जिसमें इसे नदियों में श्रेष्ठ, देवियों में श्रेष्ठ, माताओं में श्रेष्ठ, अत्यंत बलशाली, ममतामयी, दीनहीन की दरिद्रता दूर करने वाली आदि रूप में महिमामंडित किया गया है।

नदी और संगीत का नाता इस पृथ्वी पर सदैव ही रहा है। भारतीय संगीत इतिहास की पुस्तकों में आज भी प्राकृतिक संगीत से ही संगीत का उद्गम माना जाता है, जिसमें झरनों की झर-झर, वनों की मर्मर, पक्षियों की चहचहाहट, भ्रमरों की गुन-गुन, सागर की तरंग-ध्वनि, विभिन्न पशुओं की भिन्न-भिन्न बोली इत्यादि के साथ ही नदियों की कल-कल बहती जलधारा को भी इसका एक कारक माना जाता है। ऐसी मान्यता है कि इन्हीं प्राकृतिक संगीत की ध्वनियों से ही प्रेरणा लेकर मनुष्य ने व्यवहारिक संगीत को अपने जीवन में आत्मसात् किया। इस दृष्टि से सरस्वती स्वयं संगीत की देवी के रूप में, उसके बहते जल से ध्वनि के उद्गम स्रोत के रूप में, वैदिक सभ्यता में शास्त्र वर्णित संगीत के रूप में तथा इसके किनारे बसने वाली सभ्यताओं के मध्य होने वाली सांगीतिक गतिविधियों के रूप में अपना विशिष्ट महत्त्व संगीत के क्षेत्र में रखती है।

तथापि भारतीय संगीत के प्रचलित शिक्षण क्षेत्र में संगीत के उद्गम को लेकर निश्चित रूप से तिथिक्रम अथवा सांस्कृतिक समन्वय के निष्कर्ष पर नहीं पहुँचा जा सका है। वर्तमान संगीत समीक्षक प्रो. मुकेश गर्ग का कहना है कि 'संगीत का उद्गम प्रकृति से मानने या आदिमानव की स्वाभाविक क्रियाओं से मानने के अतिरिक्त इस पक्ष में संगीत शास्त्रियों द्वारा आज तक कोई अध्ययन नहीं किया गया। केवल शास्त्रीय संगीत की दृष्टि से लिखित स्रोतों पर ही बल दिया गया है।' यह बड़ी विडंबना है कि संगीत के उद्गम को शास्त्र से बांधने की होड़ में वह समस्त तथ्य धूमिल हो गए जो वास्तव में उसके उद्गम से संबंधित रहे होंगे, जिनसे प्रेरणा पाकर ही संभवतः मानव जीवन में संगीत का प्रस्फुटन अलग-अलग प्रकार से हुआ होगा।

संगीत की उत्पत्ति भले ही किसी भी प्रकार से हुई हो, लेकिन यह निश्चित है कि यह फला फूला है नदियों के किनारे रहने वाली मानव सभ्यताओं की संस्कृति के मध्य। आज जब हम इन सभ्यताओं और इनकी संस्कृति की खोई हुई कहानी को जानने के लिए पुरातात्विक उत्खनन करते हैं, तो बहुत से पुरावशेष प्राप्त होते हैं जिनके आधार पर तत्कालीन संगीत को भी जाना जा सकता है। जहाँ लेखन के साक्ष्य नहीं हैं, वहाँ पुरा-संपदा के विविध रूपों में इनका अतीव दर्शन किया जा सकता है। पुरातात्विक खुदाइयों में उपलब्ध

होने वाले प्रमाण संगीत की बहुत कुछ कहानी कहते हैं। अब हम सिंधु-सरस्वती सभ्यता से संबंधित पुरातात्विक उत्खननों से कुछ चुनिंदा उदाहरण उठाएंगे और इस पूरी कहानी को ऐतिहासिक दृष्टिकोण से समझने का प्रयास करेंगे। चूँकि संगीत एक प्रदर्शन कला है और हमारे पास तत्कालीन कोई रिकॉर्डिंग होना (गायन/ नृत्य इत्यादि) संभव नहीं है और ना ही लेखन ही इसमें कोई मदद कर पा रहा है तो हम यहाँ संगीत के प्रत्यक्ष प्रमाणों के संदर्भ में सांगीतिक वाद्य यंत्रों को प्रमुखता दे रहे हैं अन्यथा संगीत को पहचानना थोड़ा कठिन है।

सांगीतिक वाद्य यंत्र

सरल शब्दों में सांगीतिक वाद्य यंत्र संगीतमयी ध्वनि उत्पत्ति का एक माध्यम है। संगीत के क्षेत्र में यह संभावना प्रबल है कि आदि मानव ने अपने सीमित साधनों के द्वारा सबसे पहले अपने हाथों से ताली बजा कर या पैरों की थाप के रूप में वाद्यों की पृष्ठभूमि तैयार की होगी। वाद्यों के उद्गम के संदर्भ में डॉ. लालमणि मिश्र के विचार उल्लेखनीय हैं- ‘मानवता ने संस्कृति के प्रारंभिक चरणों में ध्वनि उत्पन्न करने की विधियाँ सीखी होंगी- चोट करने से, थपथपाने से, हिलाने से, खरोचने से, रगड़ने से एवं फूँकने से, ततपश्चात् ही वाद्यों का रूप सामने आया होगा।’

भारतीय संगीत के क्षेत्र में महर्षि भरत ने चार प्रकार के वाद्यों के लक्षण को स्पष्ट करते हुए कहा है-

**ततं तंत्रीकृतं ज्ञेयमवनद्धं तु पौष्करम्।
घनं तालस्तु विज्ञेयः सुषिरो वंश उच्यते॥2॥ -भ०न० 28॥2**

इस प्रकार

1. **तत-** तंत्री वाद्य, तार युक्त होने के कारण इन्हें तत वाद्य कहा जाता है।
2. **अवनद्ध-** पुष्कर वाद्य, वे वाद्य जो भीतर से खाली तथा चमड़े से मढ़े हुए होते हैं और हाथ या किसी अन्य वस्तु के ताड़न से ध्वनि उत्पन्न करते हैं, अवनद्ध वाद्य कहलाते हैं।
3. **घन-** ताल वाद्य, वह वाद्य जो आपस में आघात करके बजाए जाते हैं घन वाद्य कहलाते हैं।
4. **सुषिर-** वंशी वाद्य, सुषिर वाद्यों में वायु के दबाव से अर्थात् फूँक के द्वारा स्वरों की निष्पत्ति की जाती है और वायु के दबाव को ही घटा-बढ़ा कर स्वर ऊँचा-नीचा किया जाता है। अतः फूँक कर बजाया जाने वाला होने के कारण इसका भीतर से खाली होना स्वाभाविक है।

हड़प्पा संस्कृति के संगीत वाद्य यंत्र

हड़प्पा सभ्यता में जो संस्कृति विद्यमान थी उसमें संगीत के प्रति पूरा रूझान रहा होगा, ऐसा मत हम उपलब्ध पुरावशेषों के आधार पर प्रतिपादित कर सकते हैं। इसमें हमें संगीत के चारों प्रकार के वाद्यों के ठोस प्रमाण मिलते हैं। इसे हम एक-दो उदाहरणों के साथ समझने का प्रयास करेंगे, सर्वप्रथम तत वाद्य।

तत वाद्य

भारतीय संगीत के क्षेत्र में धनुष को तत वाद्यों की उत्पत्ति का कारक माना गया है। तीर को छोड़ने पर धनुष की प्रत्यंचा में जो ध्वनि तरंगित होती है, उसमें एक झनझनाहट सी मिश्रित ध्वनि का आभास होता है, जो तत वाद्यों के उद्गम की ओर संकेत करता है- ऐसा कई विद्वान मानते हैं। स्वाभाविक है कि केवल एक तार का वाद्य होने के कारण शुरु में यह केवल सुर-लय देने के काम भर ही आया होगा, फिर ताँत या तारों की विभिन्न लंबाई में वादक ने विभिन्न स्वरों के उतार-चढ़ाव को समझा होगा और फिर धनुष में उसने कुछ और तार समानांतर लगाकर भिन्न-भिन्न सुर प्राप्त किए होंगे और यों धनुषाकार तंत्री वाद्य अस्तित्व में आए होंगे।

हड़प्पा संस्कृति में तत वाद्य के रूप में धनुषाकार तंत्री वाद्य के प्रमाण मिलते हैं, यहाँ से उपलब्ध मोहरों पर जो लिखावट मिलती है, यह आकार उसी का एक भाग है।



चित्र - 1 धनुषाकार तंत्रीयुक्त आकृति (तंत्री वाद्य?), मोहर, मोहेंजोदड़ो

क्या यह वाद्य यंत्र ही है या कुछ और या तत्कालीन लिपि का एक हिस्सा, इसकी वास्तविकता क्या है, निश्चित रूप से इस संदर्भ में कुछ भी कहा नहीं जा सकता। कारण, इस सभ्यता की लिपि को पढ़ने में अभी सफलता प्राप्त नहीं हो पाई है। लेकिन ऐसा माना जाता है कि यह लिपि सांकेतिक लिपि हो सकती है, तो यह भी हो सकता है कि यह धनुषाकार तंत्री वाद्य जैसा दिखने वाला आकार तत्कालीन सांस्कृतिक संपन्नता का एक प्रतीक चिह्न रहा हो।

हड़प्पा संस्कृति की मोहरों पर धनुष जैसा आकार भी मिलता है और जिसमें कहीं-कहीं एक लकीर खिंची हुई दिखती है, मानो धनुष के साथ तीर हो। अतः उपरोक्त आकृति को देखने के पश्चात् यह कल्पना करना सहज हो जाता है कि हो सकता है धनुष से ही यह आकार विकसित हुआ होगा।

लेकिन इसके वास्तविक प्रमाण हमें नहीं मिल पाते। चूँकि धनुष बाँस या लकड़ी का रहा होगा तो समय के साथ उसका नष्ट होना तय है, तथापि पुरातत्त्वविदों के अथक प्रयासों की जितनी प्रशंसा की जाए कम है। अभी हाल ही में वर्ष 2017-19 में सिनौली, बागपत में क्षेत्र-पुरावेत्ता डॉ. संजय कुमार मंजुल द्वारा किए गए उत्खनन ने अब तक के विश्व के सबसे प्राचीन रथ के साक्ष्यों को प्रमाणित किया, योद्धाओं के रथ के साथ उनके अस्त्र-शस्त्र भी प्राप्त हुए, जिनमें हमें विघटित धनुष की छाप के साक्ष्य भी मिले हैं।



चित्र - 2 धनुष की छाप, सिनौली, बागपत (2017-19)

ऐतिहासिक दृष्टि से यह खोज जहाँ धनुष के अस्तित्व को प्रमाणित करती है, वहीं धनुषाकार तंत्री वाद्य के इतिहास में भी एक नया मोड़ लाती है। पुरातत्त्व के रहते इन इतिहास परिवर्तनीय संभावनाओं से इंकार नहीं किया जा सकता, भविष्य में ऐसे प्रमाण भी मिल सकते हैं जो तंत्री वाद्यों की शृंखला को ऐतिहासिक दृष्टि से स्पष्ट कर सकें।

अवनद्ध वाद्य

यह सत्य है कि अवनद्ध वाद्यों के निर्माण की जटिल क्रिया मानव के मस्तिष्क में एकाएक नहीं आई होगी, वाद्यों को चमड़े से मढ़ कर जो भीतर से खोखला भी हो, उसे वादन योग्य बनाने का विचार समय के साथ पुष्पित हुआ होगा। संगीत के क्षेत्र में यह मान्यता है कि मनुष्य का आदिम संगीत वाद्य ताली था अर्थात् मनुष्य अपने शरीर के विभिन्न भागों पर हाथों के द्वारा आघात करके लय-रूपों की प्रस्थापना कर लेता होगा। ताली के कितने ही रूप बन सकते हैं। इन्हीं तालियों की प्रेरणा से अवनद्ध वाद्यों का क्रमशः अविर्भाव हो सका होगा। ऐसा माना जाता है कि इनके निर्माण के लिए वृक्षों के बड़े/छोटे भाग को खोखला करके पशुओं की चमड़ी या किसी



चित्र - 3 अवनद्ध वाद्य (ढोल?), मोहर, हड़प्पा

छाल इत्यादि से मढ़ कर अंतिम रूप दिया गया होगा।

हड़प्पा संस्कृति में अवनद्ध वाद्य के साक्ष्य भी मिल जाते हैं। प्रस्तुत मोहर पर एक मनुष्य आकृति को

गले में अवनद्ध वाद्य सरीखे वाद्य यंत्र को लटकाए खड़े होकर बजाते हुए दर्शाया गया है।

सांगीतिक दृष्टि से मूर्त साक्ष्यों में वाद्यों के आकार/ आकृति के आधार पर उन्हें कोई विशिष्ट नाम नहीं दिया जा सकता, जैसा कि उपरोक्त विद्वानों ने अवनद्ध वाद्य के आकार को ढोल/ मृदंग कहा है। संगीत की वर्तमान शिक्षण प्रणाली के क्षेत्र में यह कभी भी ग्राह्य नहीं किया जाएगा। जब तक उसके वास्तविक प्रमाण नहीं मिल जाते तब तक ऐसा नहीं हो सकता क्योंकि मूर्त साक्ष्य अमूर्क वाद्य की निर्माण विधि, सामग्री, वादन क्रिया, वादन शैली इत्यादि की कोई जानकारी नहीं दे सकते और यही वो कारण हैं जिसके परिणामस्वरूप इन मूर्त साक्ष्यों की अवहेलना वाद्यों के संगीत इतिहास में अब तक होती आई है।

अवनद्ध वाद्य का उपरोक्त साक्ष्य प्रत्यक्ष रूप से पहचाना जा सकता है लेकिन कई सांगीतिक वाद्य ऐसे भी हैं जिन्हें प्रत्यक्ष पहचाना नहीं जा सकता परंतु हैं वह वाद्य यंत्र ही। उदाहरण, हड़प्पा संस्कृति में हमें कई तरह के मृदंगां मिलते हैं जिनका प्रयोग बर्तन, भंडारण इत्यादि कई रूपों में होता था। इसका प्रयोग अवनद्ध वाद्य के रूप में भी किया जा सकता है।

हम आज भी लोकसंगीत में इसे ताल वाद्य के रूप में बजते हुए देखते हैं। वहीं दक्षिण भारतीय संगीत में घटम् का प्रयोग मृदंगम् के साथ किया जाता है। सिनौली के एक व्याख्यान में मेरे द्वारा पूछे जाने पर कि क्या योद्धाओं के शवाधान में उनके शत्रुओं के साथ कोई सांगीतिक वाद्य मिला है जो युद्ध में उनके द्वारा प्रयोग में लाया जाता हो? तो पुरावेत्ता डॉ. संजय मंजुल का जवाब था कि नहीं ऐसा तो कुछ नहीं मिला, लेकिन जो मृदंगां मिले हैं अगर उन्हें किसी तरह से वाद्य रूप में प्रयोग किया जाता हो, तो वह वाद्य यंत्र के साक्ष्य भी हो सकते हैं लेकिन यह सच है कि आज तक इस दृष्टि से सोचा नहीं गया है।



चित्र - 4 घड़ा (अवनद्ध वाद्य?)
करनपुरा, हनुमानगढ़

घन वाद्य

समस्त विश्व में संगीत के विकास का प्रथम चरण लय ही है। लय मानवीय व्यवहार का एक स्वाभाविक अंग है जिसे सीखने की आवश्यकता नहीं, यह अनायास ही समझ में आ जाती है। जब एक बच्चा स्वाभाविक रूप से अपने हाथ को किसी वस्तु पर पटक कर आवाज़ उत्पन्न करता है या ताली बजाता है, तो वह लय ही है। ध्यान देने पर ज्ञात होगा कि इस प्रकार की कोई भी क्रिया हम जब करते हैं तो एक नियत क्रम से ही करते हैं। वाद्य यंत्र पुस्तक के लेखक के अनुसार- 'लय सम्बन्धी तमाम क्रियाओं एवं चेष्टाओं में सम्मिलित रहने के कारण स्वभावतः सबसे पहला घन वाद्य तो स्वयं मानव का शरीर है।' लय का एक नियमित क्रम ही वास्तव में घन वाद्य का रूप है, फिर चाहे वह शरीर पर आघात करके उत्पन्न हो या किन्हीं दो वस्तुओं के आपस में परस्पर टकराव से। आदिम मानव ने घन वाद्य के लिए किन वस्तुओं का प्रयोग किया होगा कहना मुश्किल है। लेकिन हड़प्पा संस्कृति के संदर्भ में घन वाद्यों के साक्ष्य ठोस आधार के साथ प्राप्त होते हैं।



चित्र - 5 मिट्टी के झुनझुने, घन वाद्य, बनावली, हरियाणा

हड़प्पा सभ्यता के पुरावशेषों में कई प्रकार के मिट्टी के झुनझुने खुदाई में प्राप्त हुए हैं। इनमें आवाज़ करने के लिए अंदर चंद दाने होते हैं, जो हिलाने पर आवाज़ करते हैं। साधारणतः इन्हें बच्चों के खिलौने कह कर छोड़ दिया जाता है। लेकिन वास्तव में यह घन वाद्य का एक रूप है और सांगीतिक दृष्टि से महत्वपूर्ण हैं। इस बात की पूर्ण संभावना है कि इनके बड़े रूप और अन्य प्रकार भी रहे होंगे जो संगीत के प्रदर्शन में अपना सहयोग देते होंगे।

घन वाद्यों के अन्य प्रकारों में से सबसे सरल वाद्य प्रकार पत्थर के दो टुकड़े हैं, जिन्हें आपस में टकराते हुए लय-ताल को दर्शाया जाता

है। आपने सड़क किनारे ऐसे लोगों को ज़रूर देखा होगा जिनके एक हाथ की उँगलियों में दो पत्थर के टुकड़े फँसे होंगे और दूसरे हाथ से उन्हें आपस में टकराते हुए बजाया जा रहा है। इसे हम वर्तमान करताल वाद्य का पूर्वज भी कह सकते हैं।

हड़प्पा संस्कृति की खुदाइयों में सबसे अधिक मिलने वाले पुरावशेषों में मृद्भांड के टुकड़े हैं, जिनमें से कई टुकड़े बड़े सलीके से तराशे गए दिखाई देते हैं, साथ ही कई पाषाण के टुकड़े भी मिलते हैं। यह तराशे गए टुकड़े घन वाद्य का रूप भी हो सकते हैं। झुनझुने के विचार तक पहुँचने से पहले संभवतः यह पत्थर/ मिट्टी के टुकड़े ही घन वाद्य के रूप में सामने आए होंगे। झुनझुने का विचार एक प्रौढ़ मस्तिष्क का परिचायक है।



चित्र - 6 मृद्भांड (पक्की मिट्टी) का टुकड़ा (घन वाद्य?), कुल्ली, पाकिस्तान

सुषिर वाद्य



चित्र -7 मिट्टी की सीटी, सुषिर वाद्य, करनपुरा, हनुमानगढ़

संगीत के क्षेत्र में ऐसा माना जाता है कि सुषिर वाद्यों का प्रारंभ संभवतः बाँस के खोखले तने से हुआ होगा। कभी-कभी बाँस-वनों में हवा बहने पर एक बहुत ही मधुर ध्वनि उत्पन्न होती है। ऐसा हो सकता है कि जंगलों में विचरण करने वाले मानव ने इसी की प्रेरणा से फूँक-वाद्यों की रचना का विचार सुझाया होगा। हड़प्पा संस्कृति में सुषिर वाद्यों के भी सौभाग्यवश उत्तम उदाहरण प्राप्त होते हैं।

पुरातात्विक खुदाइयों में सैंकड़ों की संख्या में सीटियाँ प्राप्त हुई हैं और ये आज भी प्राप्त होती हैं। झुनझुने की भाँति इन्हें भी खिलौना कह कर छोड़ दिया जाता है, इससे अधिक इनके सांगीतिक महत्त्व पर ध्यान नहीं दिया गया। यह सीटियाँ पक्षियों की आकृति में बनाई गई हैं, हो सकता है कि जिस आकृति में इसे बनाया गया है उसी की आवाज़ भी इनसे निकलती हो।

पुराविदों के अनुसार फ़ाख़ता की आकृति के जो खिलौने मिले हैं, वे खोखले हैं और उनमें पूंछ के पास पीठ पर छेद बना है। छेद पर मुँह लगा कर फूँकने से सीटी की तरह आवाज़ निकलती है। बच्चे इससे सीटी बजाते रहे होंगे और फ़ाख़ता की आवाज़ की नक़ल भी करते रहे होंगे। आज पंजाबी में 'घुगू' शब्द का अर्थ ही फ़ाख़ता की शकल की सीटी है। यह संभव है कि सिंधु सभ्यता में भी इसी परंपरा के अनुसार सीटियों को फ़ाख़ता की आकृति दी गई हो। सांगीतिक दृष्टि से उपरोक्त साक्ष्य के संदर्भ में यह सिद्ध हो जाता है कि हड़प्पा संस्कृति के लोग सुषिर वाद्यों की तकनीक से भलीभाँति परिचित थे।

हड़प्पा संस्कृति में सुषिर वाद्यों का दूसरा सबसे अहम साक्ष्य है शंख। यूनो हड़प्पा सभ्यता में शंख का प्रयोग कारीगरों द्वारा बड़ी दक्षता के साथ विभिन्न वस्तुओं यथा चूड़ियाँ, मनके, बड़े चमचे, तश्तरी, दिशामापक यंत्र, डिज़ाइन इत्यादि के लिए बड़ी मात्रा में किया गया, लेकिन इसका प्रयोग शंख ध्वनि के लिए भी



चित्र - 8 शंख, सुषिर वाद्य, राखीगढ़ी, हरियाणा



चित्र -9 मिट्टी का शंख, सुषिर वाद्य, राखीगढ़ी, हरियाणा

किया जाता

होगा, ऐसा कम ही कहा गया है। संगीत की विद्यार्थी होने के नाते मुझे पहली दृष्टि में वह सुषिर वाद्य शंख दिखाई देता है, जो कि वास्तविकता भी है, तत्पश्चात् इसके और क्या-क्या प्रयोग हो सकते हैं उस पर ध्यान जाता है। हड़प्पा सभ्यता में अमिकुंड या यज्ञवेदी के जो प्रमाण मिलते हैं वे हवन तथा यज्ञ बलि जैसी प्रथाओं के प्रचलन की ओर संकेत करते हैं। यदि यह सत्य है तो

शंख ध्वनि का प्रयोग धार्मिक अनुष्ठानों में होना स्वाभाविक है। इसकी ध्वनि का प्रयोग अन्य समारोहों तथा युद्ध इत्यादि में होना भी पूरी तरह संभव है।

हड़प्पा सभ्यता में हमें मिट्टी द्वारा निर्मित शंख भी मिलते हैं जो इस तथ्य का एक ठोस प्रमाण है कि हड़प्पा संस्कृति के लोग न केवल शंख को बजाना जानते थे बल्कि उसकी नक़ल करने की तकनीक को भी समझ गए थे अर्थात् सुषिर वाद्यों को बनाने की तकनीक को जान गए थे।

यहाँ वाद्यों के एक-दो उदाहरण को ही लिया गया है, हालाँकि इनकी संख्या और शृंखला विस्तृत है।

वाद्यों का ऐतिहासिक/पुरातात्विक महत्त्व

इतिहास लेखन में पुरातत्त्व का सहयोग अब निर्विवाद है, अकाट्य साक्ष्य प्रस्तुत करने वाले पुरावशेष अब तक के लिखित इतिहास में पुरातन मान्यताओं के खंडन एवं नवीन तथ्यों की स्थापना के लिए बाध्य हैं, या इसे लिखित इतिहास की समृद्धि के नज़रिए से भी स्वीकार किया जा सकता है। सिंधु-सरस्वती नदी संस्कृति में हड़प्पा सभ्यता के सांस्कृतिक पुरावशेष प्रस्तुत संदर्भ में भारतीय संगीत वाद्यों के ऐतिहासिक पक्ष पर कई मायनों में अपना महत्त्व रखते हैं।

1. वाद्य यंत्रों का ऐतिहासिक दृष्टि से महत्त्व

उपरोक्त जिन चार प्रकार के वाद्यों की बात की गई है, वे भारतीय संगीत वाद्यों का मूलाधार हैं, जिनकी अपनी एक विस्तृत शृंखला होना तय है। हम नदी संस्कृति में जिस भी सभ्यता पर शोध करेंगे उसके वाद्य यंत्रों की रूप रेखा अन्यो से भिन्न होगी तथा प्रत्येक वाद्य यंत्र के विभिन्न प्रकार किसी न किसी परिवर्तन के साथ ही सामने आएंगे। हड़प्पा जैसी महान नागरिक सभ्यता के भी अपने भिन्न-भिन्न क्षेत्र हैं जो नवीन शोधों के संदर्भ में सामने आते ही रहते हैं। इन सभ्यताओं में मूल से आरंभ होकर वाद्य यंत्रों ने सामाजिक एवं स्थानीय प्रभाव से जो विकास किया वह सांस्कृतिक परिवेश में विस्तृत शोध का रूप लेगा जिसमें लोकसंगीत के वाद्य भी आएंगे और उनसे विकसित शास्त्रीय संगीत के वाद्य भी आएंगे। फिर उनका विश्व की अन्य प्राचीन सभ्यताओं से क्या तारतम्य बैठता है वह भी देखा जाएगा, तब जाकर वाद्य यंत्रों का इतिहास परिपूर्ण कहा जाएगा।

लेकिन दुर्भाग्य से भारतीय संगीत की वर्तमान शिक्षण प्रणाली में वाद्य यंत्रों का ऐसा ऐतिहासिक पक्ष दिखाई नहीं देता। शास्त्रबद्ध दायरे के इतर वाद्यों का पुरातात्विक महत्त्व लगभग न के बराबर है। जो वाद्य शास्त्र की लेखनी से बाहर हैं वह लोकवाद्य हैं, सभ्यताओं के विकास के साथ उनका क्या संबंध है, यह अब तक ठीक प्रकार से चर्चा का विषय नहीं है। ऐसे में आद्यैतिहासिक जैसी सभ्यताओं अर्थात् जिनका आधार ही लेखन के विपरीत केवल पुरातत्त्व ही है, का पक्ष अनदेखा रह जाता है। तो फिर यहाँ नदी संस्कृति का तो प्रश्न ही नहीं उठता। इसे भारतीय संगीत एवं वाद्यों की ऐतिहासिक महत्त्व की हानि के अतिरिक्त और कुछ नहीं कहा जा सकता, इस पक्ष पर कार्य करने की आवश्यकता है।

2. वाद्य यंत्रों का धार्मिक दृष्टि से महत्त्व

हड़प्पा संस्कृति के निवासियों का धार्मिक जीवन कैसा था और वह किन परंपराओं से जुड़े थे, साहित्यिक सामग्री के अभाव में इस संबंध में निश्चित रूप से कुछ भी कहा नहीं जा सकता। किंतु विश्व की विकसित सभ्यता के तौर पर यह कहा जा सकता है कि उनकी धार्मिक एवं दार्शनिक विचारधाराएँ भी रही होंगी। पुरातात्विक स्रोतों से तत्कालीन धार्मिक विश्वासों या मान्यताओं पर कुछ प्रकाश अवश्य पड़ता है- जैसे, उत्खनन में प्राप्त मुद्राओं में से एक पर जानवरों से घिरे आसनारुढ़ एक मानव का चित्र अंकित मिलता है जिसे विद्वानों द्वारा पशुपति शिव कहे जाने की मान्यता, उपलब्ध नारी मूर्तियों को मातृदेवी से संबंध करके देखना, पाषाण/ मिट्टी तथा सीप

के बने लिंग और छल्लों को लिंगपूजा तथा योनिपूजा में विश्वास की दृष्टि से देखना, मुद्राओं पर अंकित पीपल के वृक्ष तथा पत्तियों को वृक्ष पूजा या प्रकृति पूजा के विश्वास के संदर्भ में देखना, इसी तरह पशु-पक्षियों के अंकन को शक्ति का प्रतीक मान कर उनमें दैवी अंश को मानना इत्यादि।

हड़प्पा सभ्यता की इन समस्त मान्यताओं के परिपेक्ष्य में संगीत का होना स्वाभाविक है, जिसमें वाद्य यंत्रों की भी अहम भूमिका रही होगी। किस प्रकार की पूजा-अर्चना में या अन्य अनुष्ठानों में किस प्रवृत्ति का संगीत रहा होगा, यह अध्ययन का विषय है। किस देवता को कैसा संगीत प्रस्तुत किया जाए कि वे प्रसन्न हो सकें इसके प्रति भी सतर्कता रही होगी। दूसरा जैसा कि प्रकृति पूजा की बात कही गई है तो वर्ष के किस समय विशेष पर किस प्रकृति देव या देवी की आराधना करनी है, यह तत्कालीन प्रकृति चक्र या क्षेत्रीय वातावरण पर ही निर्भर करता होगा, हो सकता है इसमें नदी की भी पूजा की जाती हो क्योंकि यही वह मुख्य स्रोत है जिसने मानव को अपने किनारे सभ्यताओं की स्थापना के लिए प्रेरित किया। देखा जाए तो हर तरह के धार्मिक अनुष्ठान में संगीत की पैठ रही होगी जिसमें वाद्य यंत्र भी विकसित हो रहे होंगे, ऐसा कहा जा सकता है। इस प्रकार हड़प्पा सभ्यता के धर्म की दृष्टि से भी यह अध्ययन का विषय हो जाता है कि धार्मिक संगीत का रूप कैसा था।

3. वाद्य यंत्रों का मनोरंजन की दृष्टि से महत्त्व

मनोरंजन मानवीय जीवन का अहम हिस्सा तब भी था जब आदि मानव जंगली जीवन व्यतीत करते हुए प्राकृतिक गुफाओं में रहता था, प्रागैतिहासिक शिलाचित्र इसके जीवंत उदाहरण हैं। हड़प्पा सभ्यता के पुरावशेषों में मनोरंजन के अनन्य साधनों के साथ ऐसे साधन भी मिलते हैं जो संगीत से जुड़े हैं, जिनमें वाद्य यंत्रों की प्रमुखता है। हड़प्पा सभ्यता के पुरावशेषों में मिलने वाली सैंकड़ों सीटियाँ तथा झुनझुने इसके प्रत्यक्ष साक्ष्य हैं। मनोरंजन के इन साधनों में हड़प्पा वासियों ने संगीत को माध्यम बनाया जो इस बात की ओर भी संकेत करता है कि संगीत का महत्त्व वह भलीभाँति जानते थे और वाद्यों से ध्वनि उत्पत्ति की तकनीक से वह अच्छी तरह परिचित भी थे। इससे यह भी स्पष्ट होता है कि यह वास्तव में किसी बड़े वाद्य यंत्र की अनुकृतियाँ रही होंगी। बड़े समारोहों में या धार्मिक संगीत में इनका प्रयोग छोटे/ बड़े रूप में किया जाता होगा।

4. वाद्य यंत्रों का सामाजिक दृष्टि से महत्त्व

हड़प्पा सभ्यता के संदर्भ में उपलब्ध समग्र पुरावशेष यथा स्थापत्य, मूर्तियाँ, मुद्राएं, मनके, मृदांड, विभिन्न उपकरण, आभूषण, खिलौने, वाद्य यंत्र इत्यादि सीधे तौर पर तत्कालीन सभ्यता के कला-कौशल पर प्रकाश डालते हैं। जिससे यह भी स्पष्ट हो जाता है कि एक सुव्यवस्थित नागरिक सभ्यता के तौर पर संभवतः प्रत्येक कला को सीखने-सिखाने की कोई परंपरा सामाजिक स्तर पर अवश्य रही होगी। संगीत के संदर्भ में तो यह बात और भी महत्त्व की है कि तत्कालीन संगीत की भी कोई न कोई परंपरा अवश्य रही होगी, जिसमें न केवल संगीत सिखाया जाता होगा बल्कि वाद्य-निर्माण कला का भी प्रशिक्षण दिया जाता होगा। संभवतः संगीत विद्यालय भी अवश्य रहे होंगे, ऐसा मानने में कोई अतिशयोक्ति नहीं होनी चाहिए। गायन, वादन (तत, अवनद्ध, घन, सुषिर प्रत्येक का पृथक्) तथा नृत्य, सबके लिए अलग व्यवस्था की आवश्यकता रही होगी। अतः सामाजिक दृष्टि से संगीत में वाद्य-निर्माण, प्रशिक्षण एवं तत्पश्चात् प्रदर्शन संबंधी अध्ययन की भी सांगीतिक वाद्य यंत्रों के ऐतिहासिक क्षेत्र में आवश्यकता है।

5. वाद्य यंत्रों का पुरातात्विक दृष्टि से महत्त्व

उपरोक्त वर्णित परिचर्चा के अतिरिक्त पुरातात्विक उत्खनन से उपलब्ध अन्य पुरावशेषों से भी तत्कालीन संगीत एवं वाद्य यंत्रों की महत्त्वपूर्ण जानकारी प्राप्त होती है, जिनमें बहुत से तथ्यों का अभी स्पष्टीकरण होना बाकी है तथा ज्ञान की अन्य शाखाएं जो अभी अज्ञात हैं और ज्ञात होने पर जिन पर भविष्य में शोध किया जाएगा अर्थात् भावी पुरातात्विक उत्खनन की संभावना दिखती है। इस दृष्टि से तत्संबंधी शोध एक निरंतर चलने वाली प्रक्रिया साबित होती है, न जाने पृथ्वी की गहराइयों से अभी और कौन सी निधि

का मिलना बाकी रह गया है, यह कोई नहीं कह सकता। अतः इसके प्रति सचेत रहना और अपने विषय को संशोधित करना हमारा दायित्व हो जाता है।

उपयोगिता एवं मूल्यांकन

प्रस्तुत विषय पर विहंगम दृष्टिपात् के उपरांत इसकी उपयोगिता पर कोई प्रश्न चिह्न शेष नहीं रह जाता, जहाँ अब तक हो चुकी तत्संबंधी खोज/शोध विषय संबंधी प्रगति एवं इतिहास परिवर्तनीय महत्त्व पर प्रकाश डालती हैं, वहाँ वर्तमान में हो रहे पुरातात्विक उत्खनन एवं उनके परिणाम पूर्व तथ्यों को संशोधित करने का कार्य भी कर रहे हैं। भविष्य में होने वाली खोजों/शोधों का भविष्य तभी उज्ज्वल हो पाएगा जब पिछली तारीख तक के परिणामों से हम अवगत होंगे अन्यथा उनकी कोई उपयोगिता संगीत क्या किसी भी विषय के लिए नहीं रह जाती। भारतीय संगीत वाद्यों के संदर्भ में यह विषय गंभीर क्यों हो जाता है और आखिर क्यों इस विषय को चुना गया है इसे संक्षेप में यहाँ समझना अति आवश्यक है।

भारतीय संगीत का इतिहास सदियों से शास्त्राधारित रहा है (लिखित स्रोतों पर आधारित) एवं इतिहासकारों द्वारा प्राचीन संगीत का इतिहास विवरण साक्ष्यों के अभाव की भावना से ग्रस्त ‘अंधकार युगीन’ कहा जाता रहा है। परंतु अध्ययन के आधार पर एवं उपरोक्त वर्णित संक्षिप्त विवरण की पृष्ठभूमि इस बात को बलवती बनाती है कि अलिखित स्रोत की विद्यमानता संपूर्ण धरा पर अपना प्रकाश फैला रही है, कहीं धरती पर जिन्हें खोजा जा चुका है तो कहीं धरती के गर्भ में जो भावी खोजों के प्रयास स्वरूप उजागर होंगी ही। लेकिन आश्चर्य की बात है कि इसके बावजूद वर्तमान में भी भारतीय संगीत एवं वाद्यों के इतिहास विवरण में इनका जिक्र भी लगभग दुरूह है। आज भी इनकी मौजूदगी का कोई अस्तित्व इस क्षेत्र में दिखाई नहीं देता और यदि है भी, तो अत्यंत धूमिल है। यह कहने में कोई संशय नहीं है कि यह साक्ष्य ‘विरासत’ होते हुए भी संगीत इतिहास का हिस्सा नहीं हैं।

अब हम उन तथ्यों की ओर इंगित करने का प्रयास करेंगे जो तत्संबंधी साक्ष्यों को अब तक संगीत एवं वाद्यों के ऐतिहासिक संदर्भ की मुख्यधारा में सामने आने से रोके हुए हैं:

सर्वप्रथम कारण जो सामने आता है वह है संगीत को ईश्वर द्वारा निर्मित कला मानने की मान्यता, उसे मानव-निर्मित न मानने का कारण संगीत विद्वानों/इतिहासकारों द्वारा यह दिया जाता है कि प्रस्तर युग के मानव या प्राचीन युगों के मानव के गीत लुप्त हो चुके हैं और वाद्य इत्यादि नष्ट हो चुके हैं, इसलिए संगीत की उत्पत्ति जानने के लिए उपलब्ध सांगीतिक पुरावशेष प्रमाण भी पुरातन नहीं हैं।

दूसरा कारण है भारतीय संगीत के सूक्ष्म पक्ष का, जबकि पुरातात्विक साक्ष्य पूर्णतः स्थूल हैं, सूक्ष्म भाव का उसमें कोई स्थान नहीं। चित्र या मूर्ति के आधार पर तत्कालीन संगीत अर्थात् स्वर/राग/ताल को जाना नहीं जा सकता।

तीसरा कारण जो मेरी दृष्टि में उपरोक्त दोनों कारणों से भी प्रमुख है वह है ‘संगीत का इतिहास-शास्त्रीय संगीत का इतिहास’ की मान्यता। यह बड़ी विडंबना है कि भारतीय संगीत का इतिहास जो हमें विश्वविद्यालय स्तर के पाठ्यक्रम में पढ़ाया जाता है, वह संगीत के शास्त्राधारित होने का हवाला दे कर पुरातात्विक अर्थात् मूर्त अवशेषों से अपना किनारा कर लेता है, इसके अतिरिक्त लोक संगीत भी इस दायरे से बाहर हो जाता है।

अब यहाँ यह तथ्य कि पुरातात्विक अध्ययन के आधार पर अब पुरातत्त्वविद् इस मत पर सहमत हैं कि हड़प्पा संस्कृति अर्थात् भारत की प्रथम नगरीय सभ्यता ही स्वयं वैदिक संस्कृति है, का कोई महत्त्व नहीं रह जाता। जबकि यह अब शोध का विषय हो जाना चाहिए था कि वैदिक संगीत को जहाँ तक संभव हो सके, इस सभ्यता के संदर्भ में पुरावशेषों के आधार पर प्रमाणित करके देखा जाए और उसे विश्व की अन्य प्राचीन सभ्यताओं के संदर्भ में भी देखा जाए। उदाहरण के तौर पर जिस धनुषाकार तंत्रीयुक्त वाद्य सदृश्य आकृति की बात शोधपत्र में सर्वप्रथम की गई है उससे मिलते जुलते साक्ष्य हमें मेसोपोटामिया, ईराक आदि में भी देखने को मिलते हैं, हमें अपने विषय को उस स्तर तक लेकर जाना है। अतः देखा जाए तो यह संगीत के पक्ष की अनिवार्यता है कि वह इस विश्व स्तरीय उत्तरदायित्व को लेके अपनी ज़िम्मेदारी के प्रति जागरूक हो। लेकिन अभी भी संगीत इतिहास की पुस्तकों में प्रागैतिहासिक युग

‘अन्धकार युग’ है, ‘आद्यैतिहासिक’ युग जैसा कोई युग है ही नहीं और यदि कहीं इनका जिक्र है भी तो इनके अस्तित्व को जितना धूमिल रूप से प्रकट किया गया है, उससे तो इन युगों की कल्पना भी असाध्य सी प्रतीत होने लगती है।

उपरोक्त कारणों से आप अंदाज़ा लगा सकते हैं कि इस स्थिति में भारत की किसी भी ऐतिहासिक नदी सभ्यता एवं उसमें समाहित संस्कृति में संगीत वाद्यों के खोज की बात क्या मायने रखती होगी। अतः यह सत्य है कि इस दिशा में प्रयास उस प्रकार से नहीं हुए हैं जो होने चाहिए और यही प्रमुख कारण है कि वर्तमान में हो रही तत्संबंधी खोजों से भी इस विषय का कोई नाता नहीं रह जाता।

उपसंहार

अंत में सिंधु-सरस्वती नदी संस्कृति में वाद्य यंत्र: हड़प्पा संस्कृति के विशेष संदर्भ में जैसे विस्तृत क्षेत्र को तत्कालीन सांगीतिक वाद्य यंत्रों पर केंद्रित करते हुए यह स्पष्ट हो जाता है कि भारतीय संगीत वाद्यों के इतिहास पर उपरोक्त वर्णित विचारों के आधार पर पुनर्विचार करना वास्तव में समय की मांग है। नदी संस्कृति में संगीत वाद्यों की खोज भारतीय संगीत को विश्वस्तर पर अन्य प्राचीन सभ्यताओं के संदर्भ में प्रस्तुत करने का मज़बूत आधार प्रदान कर सकती है, बस हमें संगीत वाद्यों को मात्र लिखित स्रोतों तक सीमित न करके अलिखित अर्थात् पुरातात्विक स्रोतों एवं लोकसंगीत को भी साथ लेकर चलना है। समग्रता के संदर्भ में ही वाद्यों का वास्तविक विकास अध्ययन की मांग रखता है, एकांकी अध्ययन में विषय का एक ही पक्ष सामने आ सकता है। समग्र को समाहित करके ही हम विषय को पूर्ण कह सकते हैं और विश्व परिपेक्ष्य में नदी सभ्यताओं की संस्कृति की प्राचीनता के संदर्भ में संगीत या वाद्य यंत्रों को प्रस्थापित कर सकते हैं।

कृतज्ञता ज्ञापन

प्रस्तुत विषय की संपन्नता के लिए मैं अपने गुरु क्षेत्र-पुरावेत्ता डॉ. संजय कुमार मंजुल जी के प्रति अपना आभार व्यक्त करती हूँ जिनके मार्गदर्शन से संगीत (गायन/ वादन/ नृत्य) के परिपेक्ष्य में पुरातत्त्व संबंधी ज्ञान और अधिक स्पष्ट हो पाया तथा विश्वस्तर पर अपनी पैठ को मज़बूत आधार प्रदान करने का शिक्षण प्राप्त करने का सौभाग्य प्राप्त हुआ।

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हिंदुस्तानी शास्त्रीय एवं उपशास्त्रीय संगीत के परिप्रेक्ष्य में नदी

सुश्री मधुरा प्रमोद किरपेकर

यूजीसी, जूनियर रिसर्च फेलो, संस्कृत एवं संगीतशास्त्र, सावित्रीबाई फुले पुणे विश्वविद्यालय, महाराष्ट्र

हिंदुस्तानी शास्त्रीय एवं उपशास्त्रीय संगीत भारत की महान सांस्कृतिक विरासत का एक श्रेष्ठतम प्रतीक है। प्राचीनकाल से यह कला गुरु-शिष्य परंपरा से विकसित होती आई है। हिंदुस्तानी शास्त्रीय संगीत की जड़ें ऋग्वेद काल से ही प्राप्त होती हैं तथा सामवेद द्वारा उस पर गहरा विमर्श दिखाई देता है।¹ वही संगीतसरिता विविध रूपों में आज तक हमारे भारतवर्ष में प्रवाहित है। ऋग्वेद की ऋचाएँ मानवी प्रतिभा और सृजनात्मकता के प्रथम आविष्करणों में से हैं जो उच्चकोटि के साहित्य से सारगर्भित और निरामय तथा आत्मरंजन से युक्त संगीत से पूरित हैं। इसी वेद में प्रथमतः ऋषियों ने नदियों की स्तुति कर उनकी प्रार्थना विविध ऋचाओं द्वारा गाई। इसीलिए भारतीय संगीत और नदी का गहरा संबंध वैदिक काल से ही दृष्टिगोचर होता है। वही संगीतसरिता इस संगीत द्वारा प्रकृति, धर्म, भारतीय दर्शन, संस्कृति, सभ्यता, मानवी गतिविधियाँ और मन तथा अध्यात्म जैसे विविध विषय चित्रित करती है। हिंदुस्तानी शास्त्रीय संगीत में प्रकृतिवर्णनात्मक, महतिपरक, आध्यात्मपरक, रूपकात्मक जैसे विविध आयामों में नदी की एक प्रमुख भूमिका रही है जो इस संगीत का एक अविभाज्य घटक है। हिंदुस्तानी शास्त्रीय संगीत राग-संगीत के द्वारा ध्रुपद, धमार, खयाल, बंदिश, तराना, त्रिवट, चतुरंग, रागमाला, सादरा, स्वरसागर आदि विभिन्न रूपों में प्रस्तुत होता है, तथा उपशास्त्रीय संगीत ठुमरी, दादरा, चैती, होरी, कजरी, फाग, सावन, बारामासा, टप्पा, भजन, अभंग, नाट्यगीत, भक्तिगीत आदि अनेक रूपों में गाया जाता है। उपशास्त्रीय संगीत में शास्त्रीय संगीत के साथ ही स्थानीय लोकसंगीत से आती माटी की खुरबू भी सुंदरता से महकती है।

हिंदुस्तानी संगीत के साहित्य का जब विचार होता है तो उसमें भगवान श्रीकृष्ण के गुणगान की मोहिनी सभी रचनाकारों को सबसे अधिक मोहित करती आई है। अतः श्रीकृष्ण के कारण हिंदुस्तानी संगीत और यमुना नदी का अटूट रिश्ता रहा है। विविध रचनाओं द्वारा यमुना नदी, उसके तट, घाट, ऋतुनिहाय, उसकी विभिन्न अवस्थाएँ, यमुना पर कृष्ण की बाल लीलाएँ, होरी तथा रास क्रीड़ा इत्यादि का वर्णन अत्यंत मनोहारी है। उदाहरणः राग भैरव में रचित बंदिश की पंक्ति- ‘जमुना में गेंद डार ग्वाल-बाल हारे’, इस प्रकार कभी कृष्ण की बाल क्रीड़ाओं में यमुना झलकती है, तो कभी कालिया मर्दन कथा के साथ दिखाई देती है। जैसे राग त्रिवेणी के विलंबित खयाल में ‘खेलत गोप के संग जमुना तट पर कालिया डरावत है।’² कभी कान्हा की मुरली धुन सुन कर यमुना पर जल भरने गई गोपिकाएँ सुध-बुध खो कर तल्लीन हो जाती हैं, और यमुना परिसर ब्रह्मानंद में डूब जाता है। राग जयजयवंती की द्रुत एकताल की बंदिश में यही चित्र दिखाई देता है- ‘जमुना जल भरन जात सखी राधा गोपी साथ। ग्वाल बाल सब मिलकर बंसीधुन सुनो।’ उपशास्त्रीय संगीत का सुप्रसिद्ध दादरा ‘जमुना किनारे मोरा गाँव, साँवरे ऐजय्यो’, इसमें कृष्ण को पुकारने वाले के घर आने का प्रेमपूर्ण निमंत्रण है।

सावन के महीने में यमुना का लहरों से उमड़ता हुआ जल और उस पर बरसती काली घनघोर घटा का चित्रण राग गौड़ मल्हार की बंदिश ‘सावन में जमुना पुलिन में’ में झलकती है। कुछ बंदिशों में यमुना घाट पर नटखट कृष्ण की गोपियों से छेड़खानी का दृश्य मिलता है, जैसे: ‘बरजोरी नाही रे कन्हाई पनिआ भरन गगरी मोरी गिराई करके लड़ाई। जमुना के तट पे गौए चरावत करत ठिठोरी मोरी गगरी फोड़ी रे कन्हाई।’ आग्रा घराने के भैरवी राग की इस बंदिश में कृष्ण से बरजोरी न करने की बिनती करने वाली राधा का यमुना तट पर चित्र आँखों के सामने स्वतः उभर आता है। राग श्याम कल्याण की एक बंदिश ‘श्याम सुंदर घनश्याम श्यामरंग राधा श्याम यमुनासह पुलिन श्याम सकल जगत श्याम - श्याम’ में कृष्ण और यमुना का साधर्म्य इस प्रकार रेखांकित किया है। इसके

अलावा धमार और होरी गीतों में जमुना किनारे खेली गई कृष्ण एवं ब्रजवासियों की होली की धूम और उसकी अनोखी रंगभरी शोभा वर्णित है।

धृपद हिंदुस्तानी शास्त्रीय संगीत का एक अत्यंत धीर, गंभीर और सबसे पुराना निबद्ध गान है। इसमें कई बार नदियों का बखान और उनसे जुड़ी कथाएं मिलती हैं। तोड़ी में तानसेन द्वारा रचित धृपद 'महादेव आदि देव' में शिव के गंगाधर रूप को नमन किया गया है।³ भारत की पवित्र नदी गंगा का उल्लेख विविध पौराणिक संदर्भों सहित कई रचनाओं में बारंबार मिलता है। गंगा नदी विशेष रूपेण भारतीयों के हृदयमें स्थित है। उसकी पवित्रता, श्रेष्ठता, व महानता का वर्णन भारतीय शास्त्रीय परंपरा के कई रागों की बंदिशों में पाई जाती है, उदाहरणार्थ: राग कल्याण की बंदिश 'सब देवन में महादेव बड़े हैं तीरथ में जैसे गंगा', राग मारू बिहाग का धृपद 'जटाजूट सिर गंगा' आदि।

महाराष्ट्र में नाट्यसंगीत गानविधा मराठी रसिकजनों के मन में विशेष स्थान रखनेवाली उपशास्त्रीय संगीत की वैशिष्ट्यपूर्ण धारा है जिसमें मंच पर अभिनेता कलाकार द्वारा नाटक के विविध प्रसंगों में स्वतः प्रत्यक्ष नाट्यपदों का गायन प्रस्तुत किया जाता है। विद्याधर गोखले द्वारा लिखित 'पंडितराज जगन्नाथ' नामक संगीत नाटक की नांदी 'जय गंगे भागीरथी' नाट्यपद से होती है। 'चिदानंद शिव सुंदरतेची पावनतेची तू मूर्ती। म्हणुनी घेऊनि तुला शिरावर गाई महेश्वर तव महती। जगदाधारा तव जलधारा अमृतमधुरा कान्तिमति।' इस नाट्यपद से पंडितराज जगन्नाथ की गंगालहरी मराठी काव्य में अवतीर्ण होती है और गंगा का जयजयकार करती है। 'गंगा रेती पे बंगला' दादरे में गंगा व यमुना का सुंदर वर्णन है।

इसके अलावा भारत की अन्य नदियां विविध प्रांतों के स्थानीय उपशास्त्रीय संगीत से प्रकट होती हैं। दीनानाथ नदीम का प्रसिद्ध कश्मीरी गीतिनाट्य 'वितस्ता' उसी का एक विशेष उदाहरण है। इस गीतिनाट्य के मिश्र भैरवी में निबद्ध 'संगरूव गाश' गीत में वितस्ता (विपाशा) नदी को नई नवेली दुल्हन माना गया है और उसके प्राकृतिक शृंगार का वर्णन किया गया है। महाराष्ट्र में नारदीय कीर्तन परंपरा के भजन उपशास्त्रीय संगीत का ही एक रूप है। इसी परंपरा के भजन 'ये रे कृष्णा तिरीच्या वसणाच्या' में श्रीगुरुदत्त के कृष्णा नदी तीर पर निवास का वर्णन कर कृष्णा तीर की महती उद्धृत की है। ग. दि. माडगुळकर द्वारा लिखित तथा सुधीर फडके द्वारा संगीतबद्ध एवं गाया हुआ 'गीत रामायण' मराठी की एक अभिजात कलाकृति है जिसकी शुरुआत में 'शरयू तीरावरी अयोध्या' गीत में सरयू नदी और उसके किनारे बसी अयोध्या वर्णित है। हिंदुस्तानी शास्त्रीय संगीत में सरस्वती, त्रिवेणी, सिंधु, रेवा, बिभास जैसे रागों के नाम नदीवाचक हैं।

महाराष्ट्र के वारकरी भक्ति संप्रदाय⁴ में संतों ने अभंगों द्वारा पंढरपूर के श्री विठ्ठल के गुणगान के साथ अपने धर्म और संस्कृति का रक्षण तथा समाज जागरण और प्रबोधन का महान कार्य किया। संतसाहित्य उपशास्त्रीय संगीत के तौर पर आज भी गाया जाता है। मराठी अभंगों में चंद्रभागा अर्थात् भीमा भक्तिरूप से प्रवाहित हुई है। पं. भीमसेन जोशी द्वारा गाए अभंग 'पंढरीचा वास चंद्रभागे स्नान आणिक दर्शन विठोबाचे', में वारकरी जनों ने विठ्ठल दर्शन जितना ही महत्त्वपूर्ण चंद्रभागा स्नान माना है। वारकरियों ने पंढरपूर को मायका मानकर कभी चंद्रभागा को माता माना है, जैसे, 'माझी माय चंद्रभागा', कभी बहन माना है, जैसे, 'माझी बहीण चंद्रभागा करीतसे पापभंगा', तो कभी उसे मोक्षदायिनी देवी मानते हैं। संत तुकोबाराय कहते हैं, 'सकळ तीर्थे घडती एकवेळा चंद्रभागा डोळा देखलिया' अर्थात्, चंद्रभागा देखने पर सभी तीर्थों के दर्शन एक साथ होते हैं। संत एकनाथ अद्वैत वेदांत का संदेश सामान्यजनों के लिए सरलता से देते हुए भीमा नदी और उसके तीर का रूपक सामने रखते हैं। जैसे, 'भाव भक्ति भीमा उदक ते वाहे, दया क्षमा शांती हेचि वाळवंट' दर्शन विचार के साथ ही समाज उद्बोधन का उद्बोध मराठी संतों ने उच्च रव के साथ किया है। 'खेळ मांडियेला वाळवंटी ठाई नाचती वैष्णव भाईरे। वर्ण अभिमान विसरली याती एक एका लोटांगणी जाती।' इस अभंग में संत तुकोबाराय कहते हैं, भीमा के तीर पर वैष्णवजन समूहित होकर भक्ति और आनंद से नाच रहे हैं, गा रहे हैं। इस चंद्रभागा के किनारे आकर सभी जन क्रोध, आपसी मतभेद, उच्च-नीच, गरीब-अमीर तथा अपनी जाति का वृथा अभिमान छोड़ आबालवृद्ध परस्पर के पैर छूते हैं, यही जानकर कि वही विठ्ठलरूपी परब्रह्म परमात्मा सभी में स्थित है। 'तत्त्वमसि'- यह उपनिषदों का बोध वारकरी अपने इस आचरण से कराते हैं। यह एकात्मता चंद्रभागा की साक्षी से इस अभंग में प्रकट होती है। संत ज्ञानेश्वर की पुण्यभूमि आळंदी में बहनेवाली इंद्रायणी भी अनेक

रचनाओं में दिखती है, जैसे, 'इंद्रायणी काठी देवाची आळंदी लागली समाधी ज्ञानेशाची।'

कई रचनाओं में नदी रूपकात्मकता से आध्यात्मिक अर्थधन से पूर्ण दिखाई देती है, विशेषतः नाथ संप्रदाय और कबीर के निर्गुणी भजनों में। 'गहरी नदीया आगम बहे धारा' इस पंक्ति में कबीरपंथ के संत धर्मदास आगम के ज्ञानप्रवाह को नदीप्रवाह बताते हैं। 'सतगुरु धारा निर्मल बाहै, बामे काया धोईरौ।' इसमें संत कबीर सद्गुरु को निर्मल नदी मानकर शिष्य को उसके द्वारा पावन होने का संदेश देते हैं। 'इडा पिंगला सुखमन नाडी जी, तिरवेनी पर न्हाऊँगा। निर्भय निर्गुण गुण रे गाऊँगा।' पं. कुमार गंधर्व के आर्त स्वरों में गाए इस निर्गुणी कबीर भजन में इडा, पिंगला और सुषुम्ना, इन तीनों के त्रिवेणी संगम की उपमा है। कभी कभी नदी के रौद्र रूप के कारण वह भयंकर प्रतीत होती है। तब 'नैय्या मोरी मचलाए भँवर में, तू ही करो रे बेड़ा पार', इस प्रकार संसार-रूपी नदी का बेड़ा पार कराने की ईश्वर से प्रार्थना भैरव राग के इस बंदिश में नज़र आती है। तो कभी नौकानयन के विहंगम दृश्य ठुमरी, दादरे से प्राप्त होते हैं, जैसे- 'गंगा में नाव डरावो रे', यह राग पीलू की ठुमरी की पंक्ति। पंजाबी लोकसंगीत से प्रेरित टप्पा- यह मुलतानी बोली का उपशास्त्रीय गान प्रकार त्वरित गति की तानें और वैचित्रपूर्ण स्वराकृतियों के लिए खास जाना जाता है। 'इश्कवाली नदी भरी है, आंदा जाणा सानु आके पार लगाजा धीरना वे मियाँ', इस प्रकार प्रेमिका के हृदय को प्रेम प्रवाह रूपी नदी बतलाकर प्रियतम से मिलन की आस बनारस शैली के इस टप्पे में व्यक्त हुई है।

ग़ालियर घराना शास्त्रीय संगीत के अनेकों वैविध्यपूर्ण निबद्ध गानों की खासियत से जाना जाता है। इसी घराने का एक गान प्रकार स्वरसागर या स्वरार्थ प्रबंध है, जिसमें बंदिश के स्वर अर्थात् नोटेशन- यही उसका साहित्य होता है। यह प्रकार कुशल कल्पकता एवं वाग्गेयकार की प्रखर विद्वत्ता का परिचायक होता है। 'नीर गगरी गिरी नार से', यह बाळाभाऊ उमड़ेकर की रचना नदी पर जल भरने गई गोपिका का रूपक लिए आध्यात्मिक अर्थ दर्शाती है। उन्हीं की रागसागर की रचना 'खंबायत की पनिहारी' में रागों के नाम काव्यविषय में ढालकर नीर भरने के बहाने कृष्ण से मिलने जानेवाली राधा को दर्शाया गया है। इसी प्रकार के वर्णन ग़ालियर घराने के अष्टपदी गायन में भी मिलते हैं। पुष्टीमार्ग के हवेली संगीत गानविधा में भी जमुना नदी और कृष्ण की रासक्रीड़ाओं का वर्णन है जिसका प्रभाव जयपुर-अत्रौली घराने के विविध अनवट रागों की बंदिशों पर पड़ा है। रागध्यान हिंदुस्तानी शास्त्रीय संगीत की मध्यकालीन रंजक संकल्पना है जिसमें निर्गुण, निराकार राग के स्वरूप को सगुण, साकार मानकर उसके लिए आराधनापरक संस्कृत पद्य लिखे गए। इसमें भी नानाविध पौराणिक कथाओं द्वारा गंगा, यमुना आदि नदियां उल्लेखित हैं। 'सूर सागर अपार रस की सरितन धार' इस अभोगी की विदुषी अश्विनी भिडे द्वारा रचित बंदिश में संगीत के रस धारा की तुलना सरिता की धारा से की गई है।

'नद्यः कस्मात्? नदनाः भवन्ति शब्दवत्यः' यास्काचार्य के नदी शब्द की इस निरुक्तिनुसार⁵ 'नादमयता', यही नदी की पहचान है। हमारे नादब्रह्मस्वरूप संगीत में नादमय नदी हमेशा ही प्रवाहित रही है। हिंदुस्तानी शास्त्रीय एवं उपशास्त्रीय संगीत में उद्धृत नदी संबंधित विविध विषय हमारी संस्कृति एवं सभ्यता के परिचायक हैं तथा हमारी धरोहरस्वरूप इस संगीत साहित्य में नदी महानता से शोभायमान, वैशिष्ट्यपूर्ण और अनन्यसाधारण है।

संदर्भ

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