

## Water: As a Social Order Decider in Central Himalayas

Dr. Sandeep Kumar

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Govt. Degree College Baluwakote, Uttarakhand, INDIA.

Corresponding Author: [history532@gmail.com](mailto:history532@gmail.com)



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### ABSTRACT

Any direct or indirect change in the physical, thermal, chemical, biological, radioactive properties of any part of the environment, by discharge, emissions or deposits of waste, so as to adversely affect any beneficial use or a condition which Hazardous to public health, safety or to animals, birds, wildlife, aquatic life or plants of all kinds.

- Environment Report 1986

The concept of the present paper begins with the concept of water, forest, and land, which has been an important motto and main goal of an important movement (Chipko movement)-

What is the blessing of the forest

(क्या है जंगल के उपकार)

soil water and wind

(मिट्टी पानी और बयार)

soil water and wind

(मिट्टी पानी और बयार)

basis for survival.

(जिंदा रहने के आधार)

When it comes to the basic three things that have been described as the basis of life - forest, land and water, these three have equal access to every community, class, caste. and do they have access at present? the present research paper focuses on water and its access. Is. Especially its access to the community which comes under the purview of the marginalized society.

**Keywords-** water, purity, impurity, deprived.

### I. INTRODUCTION

On the basis of the geographical structure of the Middle Himalayas, the cultural and social continuities of the residents residing here developed, as well as the signs of stagnation and stability were also established. Collectivism, inertia, naturalism appeared as separate characteristics. Farming was not possible in the high altitude areas of the Middle Himalayas. Rains seldom stagnate. The moisture of the snow provides the basis for the grasslands to grow in the summer. That's why the

residents here made animal husbandry the basis of their livelihood, and adopted the nomadic way of life. These communities, in their summer migration, take cattle-sheep, goats, yaks and roam in these grasslands in their amphitheater. Permanent populations are found in the valleys with slopes in the mid-elevation areas. The land being fertile is useful for vegetables and crops. The market was not easily accessible due to the difficult and inaccessible area. Therefore, relations with the people living in the higher regions were established but limited only to the exchange of goods. The foothills of the Central

Himalayas are made up of alluvial soils or fertile soils brought by rivers. Agricultural surplus has been produced from these areas.

These areas with different economic and geo-economic scenarios appear to be socially and culturally intertwined, but in fact small groups residing here have their own unique cultural and social characteristics, on the basis of which they consider their culture different from other cultures. Is. Cultures are definitely influenced by each other but not the same. Calling it cultural fundamentalism will not be an exaggeration. In its entirety it is exaggerated by words like Pahari or Himalayan culture. But there will be a substantial difference between them linguistically, religiously, and culturally. It can be understood from this example – the Shilpkar class will be seen in the form of a servant class in this entire area. This class has its own cultural characteristics, but the rest of the class cannot adopt these cultural characteristics because the Shilpkar is present at the bottom of the social stratification. In the same social stratification, the cultural characteristics of any class cannot be adopted by another class because either its social status may be in danger of being low or the upper class may resist the lower level on the basis of its decline in its level. Water also plays an important role in these social stratifications which is discussed here.

If we look at the existence of early human settlements with water, then this question would first arise?

- Identifying different forms of water?
- Recognize the colour, smell and taste of water?
- Identifying the source of water?

And along with it the development of water management system which would have led man to the availability of pure water for himself and his cattle and the method of segregation of impure water. A new story of water availability, assurance and quality must have started with the development mechanism of agriculture. Along with the concept of permanent governance, which is called civilized society in other words, the importance of water must have increased as well as the concept of stratification of society. The closer a society was to the availability and sources of water; the more economic and social status would have increased. The importance of water in the mythological narratives of indigenous people confirms these facts.

Plants and water are made for generations  
पौधें और पानी पीढियों के लिए बनते हैं  
-Rigveda Samhita<sup>[1]</sup>

Water represents wealth.  
जल वैभव का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है।  
-Arthavaveda Samhita<sup>[2]</sup>

water mothers were prayed that we should be purified by water mothers.

Aposasman matarah shundhyantu driten no dytpatah  
punantu  
(आपोऽअस्मान् मातरः शुन्ध्यन्तु दृतेन नो दृत्पतः पुनन्तु)  
-Shukla Yajurveda<sup>[3]</sup>

Water does not know or recognize any race, culture, ethnicity or religion, it is in the thought systems of all civilizations. The principle common to all of them is that water is considered as an element intrinsically linked to life and one with the world. Being like water for Buddhism is a unifying metaphor with nature that spread throughout the East 2500 years ago.<sup>[4]</sup>

Water has no colour, perhaps this has been the measure of its purity, the slightest impurity alters its taste, smell and identity, just as a slight change in caste hierarchy in the history of ethnic composition in India, social stratification It also changes the status of the person. Various processes of the human body are considered under the category of pollution? For example, menstruation, sexual intercourse, birth, disease, death and all bodily excretions (urine, feces, saliva, sweat, vomit, semen, nails, etc.). It is to be noted here that these activities, which are considered to be pollutant and infectious, emanating from the human body as a result of physical excretion, for some time only separate the activities of the same family for a short time, in contrast, a strong part of the economic system associated with manual labour production and the group is kept separate from the upper class/caste group of the social structure throughout life, especially in the social context. His touch and shadow have also been presented as the suffix of sin. Here it is necessary to pay attention to an important fact of the social approach, to secure one's place in the social hierarchy and to keep one's place higher than others, many times rituals are made the basis, such as take water only by sprinkling clean water. By sprinkling, you try to prove that now this place has become holy and that person has also become holy who has come in contact with a person of lower social status than himself, the author who writes likes this will probably never get rid bankruptcy of his mental superiority?

Considering the various aspects of purity and impurity, it is necessary to discuss its interrelation with water. People of different cultures experience three general manifestations of purity in the mountains through their thoughts- as the center of the universe, as the source of water and life. Edwin Bernbaum, in his article Sacred Mountains: Themes and Techniques,<sup>5</sup> gives some general characteristics of the sacred mountains present in different countries - the height has been taken under the first feature under the sacred mountain. Revered high in the mountains, Jomolangma, the Tibetan name for Mount Everest, is actually an abbreviation for the goddess worshiped in Tibet. Under the second characteristic, the

sacred mountain is defined as the center of the universe. Most of the sacred mountains are defined as Shakti, in both natural and supernatural forms. The high peaks of the sacred mountain are considered the abode of the gods. And they are defined as places of worship, for example the Tibetan Buddhist view Mount Kailas as the pagoda palace of Demchog, one of the supreme bliss, a tantric deity who symbolizes the ultimate Buddhist goal of enlightenment. In addition, various cultures view the high mountain peaks as heaven or garden. For example, Shiva resides in his heaven on the summit of Kailash. Apart from this, it connects the sacred mountains with the other world or ancestors. Sacred mountains have been displayed as a cultural or individual identity. People around the world view the sacred mountains as a source of blessings such as water, life, fertility and healing.

If we find these common features of the holy hill in the landscape of Uttarakhand, then many features will automatically arise. Similarly, in various river valley civilizations of the world, the river is defined as sacred or mother symbolizing purity. According to the beliefs of the Inca civilizations, the Urumba River on the green land of Peru was a collection point of earth's water, which then flowed into the sky. The Jordan River passes through Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. It is a holy river in Judaism and Christianity. America's Columbia River, Nigeria's Osun River, New Zealand's Whanganui River have long been sacred to the local Maori. Similarly, Ganga and Yamuna of India and Bagmati river of Nepal have always been considered holy.

If we look at the ancient civilizations from the point of view of archeology, then the importance of water in the ancient civilizations of the world – Xeric, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Harappan civilization etc. Wells, bathrooms, toilets, drainage management etc, confirm these facts that the concepts of pure and impure water had originated in these societies. Like other parts of the world and India, in Uttarakhand too, civilizations and cultures have developed on the bank of rivers. Many have been absorbed in the womb of the past and many still carry their past in themselves. Bhagirathi, Alaknanda, Pindar, Ramganga, Kosi, Kali and many other small and big water streams contain the footprints of many cultures. Following these footsteps of cultures, we will meet Dhare-Naula by introducing us to the rural cultures. Was every man accessible to these streams (dhare) and streams (naule)? Will these sources of water feed every farm? What can be grinded on the water miles (gharat) on the water sources, the food of every man? There are many such questions.

Different types of water are used in different religions, such as holy water, holy rivers and rain. Holy water cannot function without active deities, which point to a real approach, and rain rituals rely on benevolent deities and ancestors, which emphasize the rituals being performed, and require a functional approach. Points to it

is important here that holy water is common and is often associated with religious water. The powers and punishments of the gods for giving or withholding the life-giving water, and the human significance of the right amount of rain at the right time for a successful harvest, as in the case of life-death, are fundamentally within the realm of metaphysics. Such beliefs are not limited to traditional religions, but are directly related to religious ecology and the extent to which society at large is dependent on life-sustaining rain for successful crop harvests. Holy water has special qualities and divine powers as compared to divine water like life-giving rain. The unique feature of holy water is that the respective divinity of the religions has injected or energized that particular water with a divine substance. It is sacred because it contains parts of the power of the gods and thus may have various religious powers for specific cosmological purposes. The concept of holy water in Uttarakhand also revolves around these superficial features. On the basis of geological structure, most of the area being hilly, mainly humans have been dependent on agriculture and animal husbandry. If the concept of purity and impurity is to be discovered in this structure based on agriculture and animal husbandry, then on this basis, religious and other aspects will be substituted to strengthen this structure. The main basis for giving strength to this hypothesis is the folk deity here, from whom the common man expects that he should do their welfare and protect them from evil. Under the desire of welfare, it is necessary to discuss these two important facts- First - growth in agriculture, this is possible only when crops can get enough water, because being a hilly area, the land will always be limited, and the irrigation ecosystem. The development may have been minimal initially. Mainly rain would have been necessary for advanced agriculture. The local folk deities must have been present in their early form to protect against both famine and excessive rain. For example, Mostmanu, the god of rain in Pithoragarh district, Hun deity of Dhanari region of Uttarkashi, etc. The second important fact of welfare is animal welfare, with the increase in the number of animals, not only will agriculture get a strong base, but other economic resources will also be available. This fact is supported by the deities related to animal welfare like Chaimu, Badhan etc.

The question here is also of access to water and equally of its distribution. Generally, the sources of water in the mountains are springs, ponds, naulas. It is important to know here that every person needs at least two liters of water per day.

People involved in manual labor and production need more water than this. In Uttarakhand, the work related to manual labor and production was traditionally the share of women and shilpkar. They needed more water, for this the path of social degradation must have been chosen. Because water is not only necessary for the

fulfillment of the physical needs of human beings, but it must also have been necessary for the economic production system (agriculture and other production industries). Therefore, the idea of a monopoly on water would have also arisen for a monopoly on economic output and surplus, for this the social structure would have been determined and graded. It is not necessary that this idea first originated in the Indian perspective, any civilization of the world can be its starting place. The important thing is that in Indian society and Uttarakhand too, this idea was transferred from one generation to another permanently after it was born, and this system of social gradation has been given stability to establish control over the economic production system and surplus. Went.

In the contemporary social scenario, how the social fabric would have been woven for the monopoly on water, an important source of economic structure and production, can be understood on the basis of these two facts-

**First-** Monopoly on the sources of water.

**Second-** the concept of purity and impurity of water.

To understand the first fact, let us understand the structure of the villages of Uttarakhand. Two social groups reside in the villages, Beeth (Savarna), Bairsua (Un-Varna). The first class has control over the economic ecosystem of the village as well as monopoly on the sources of water. The residence of the second class is either separate from that of the first class, that is, separate villages of shilpkar or even if they live in the villages of the first class, then their residence and land will be below the place of residence of the first class. For this it is argued that in the social structure no Shilpkar can build a house above the upper caste class because according to the social structure the Shilpkar come in the lowest class. A detailed plan of its religious and mythological narratives will always be seen ready. Its economic scenario is rarely seen by social scientists. There is a shortage of land with the Shilpkar, but there is also an important fact that the main source of water in the mountain is rivers, streams, rivulets or springs, which come from glaciers in the upper Himalayan regions. Water will obviously come to the upland or agricultural land through various sources. On which the first class always has control, so that water will be available according to their physical needs, as well as there will be no shortage of water for agriculture. On the contrary, water will reach to the families residing in the lower land, but sometimes the way of water is changed by putting a barrier in the upper area, it is not allowed to reach below. Due to the availability of water facilities with the people living in the upper area, there is a strong possibility of getting both agricultural produce and surplus. On the contrary, the families living in the low-lying area also yearn for daily use water. Because of their low status in the social and economic structure, their

opposition always remains suppressed and crushed. There is also an important fact that the artisans have negligible fertile land along the river banks, that is, despite their important role in the economic structure, it has got a secondary status. An important fact is that after independence, many government claims have been made to improve the condition of shilpkar and files of many govt. schemes are present, even after decades of independence, there has been no major change in the situation. Also imagine the situation before independence when this community did not get any rights, then imagine what would have happened? The total number of holdings in Uttarakhand is 921554, and the total holding area is 847011696 hectares. In which the number 124085 of the holding of Scheduled Castes Section is 13.46 percent of the total number of holdings. And the area of Scheduled Caste Section holding is 67494075 hectares, which is only 7.96 percent of the total number of holdings. (Report of Justice Indu Kumar Pandey, p.-14, obtained from Shilpkar Sabha General Secretary Ramesh Chandra)<sup>6</sup> The above figures make it clear that The Shilpkar class is not a large landowner class in Uttarakhand. If the figures of the plains are removed from these figures, then the Shilpkar received after independence with the help of Khushiram, Hariprasad Tamta etc., then the Shilpkar will appear in a way as subordinate to the big Jotedars.

Like caste, gradation of water also has a psychological aspect. Reciting some holy mantras, a person at a higher level of caste becomes pure as soon as he touches water. The same holy water becomes impure as soon as it touches the important groups and individuals of the same manual labor and production system, who are considered to be at the bottom of the social grading i.e. Shudra, Atishudra.

Divine water has special significance in Indian culture. The concept of holy water has also been present in rituals (death by life) and religious rituals. The concept of sin and virtue is associated with water. Water is associated with this concept of purity and impurity in Uttarakhand and other hilly areas, although cultural differences will be clearly visible. Women are prohibited from entering the main sources of water in the villages during menstruation. On the contrary, the married couple goes to the water source and the newly weds make their first use of cooking in the kitchen at the in-laws' house with the water filled with copper pots. Giving five bronze or copper vessels as a gift to the bride is somehow associated with the purity of water as copper is an oriental technique of water purification.

The state of being the same natak (birth) or sutak (death) Even the water of a water source is associated with purity. In this concept of purity and impurity, there seems to be a huge fusion of social equality and distribution. The feeling of cultural pride is overshadowed by this feeling of inequality, under which both the Shilpkar and the

women, the lowest class of the social hierarchy, are buried. Various creatures in the form of Akshat (rice grains), coconut and animal sacrifices climbing in the temples cannot be accepted without testing the purity of the water. Thus, water has been important culturally, socially, religiously and politically for centuries. Water plays an important role in surplus production, social domination, economic control and politically.

Contrary to the concept of holy water, impure or waste water may have been considered the biggest factor in death or sin. Due to lack of proper system of water management, a section of the society, in other words, the deprived section (Shilpkar) must have been suffering from various diseases related to water. Due to scarcity of water and use of contaminated water, maximum outbreak of water-borne diseases- cholera, dysentery, jaundice among others came in this section. Apart from this, this class also suffered the most from various epidemics like plague, influenza, etc. in different decades. The reason is clear that this class must have come first in the grip of various epidemics due to being deprived and the lowest in the socio-economic level, as well as this class was the instrument of various social activities and experiments against these epidemics. How many of these experiments were successful and how many failed, it is in the womb of history, but it is certain that the loss has always been of the deprived class and the profit of the elite class. Whether a pregnant woman or an animal, the entire responsibility of giving birth to a child and after the birth of the child, all the contaminated activities (cutting the navel, cleaning the blood) were performed by the women of the deprived class, skinned the dead animals or Their disposal etc. was done by the deprived class only. The supply of pure water or drinking water for this work was negligible to this class. This is the reason that a large number of people who

suffer from various epidemics and diseases will belong to this class. However, till the latest update by social scientists, little has been written about the class most affected by these epidemics and diseases.

There has been no significant change in the concept of access and distribution of water in the decades since independence. There are many factors like globalization, urbanization, industrialization, climate change, uncontrolled development etc. which have increased the water crisis in Uttarakhand. In many big cities, people are getting water for only one hour every day, the condition of villages is also not very good, many villagers are still traveling on foot for many kilometers of water. It is not that the governments are not working in this direction, many ambitious small and big projects are going on for this, but even today clean drinking water is far from the reach of the deprived sections. The factors are many, but the most important is the socio-psychological aspect of water.

## REFERENCE

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