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THE UNSEEN INDIA: BIZARRE RITUALS AND CUSTOMS EXPLORING THE LESSER KNOWN CULTURAL PRACTICES OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT :

The article examines the various and distinctive customs and rituals that have influenced Indian culture. It explores the cultural, religious, and historical influences on these customs and offers a thorough analysis of their meaning and symbolism.

The study looks at many different kinds of traditions, such as festivals, religious rituals, social conventions, and contentious customs. The text delves into the fundamental convictions, philosophical foundations, and societal ramifications of these customs, accentuating their distinct features and their role in shaping Indian culture.

The ethical issues and current discussions around some of these procedures are also covered in the study. It talks on the difficulties in keeping ancient customs alive in the contemporary era and the necessity of striking a balance between cultural preservation and moral considerations.

This paper presents a valuable overview of the unusual rituals and traditions of India, shedding light on the country's rich cultural legacy and continuous evolution.

Keywords: Legacy of Beliefs, Indian customs, violation of human rights, bizarre traditions, Social Conventions

INTRODUCTION :

The growth of odd rituals and traditions in India is intricately connected with the country's rich historical and cultural fabric. India has been influenced over the ages by a multitude of religious, social, and geographical factors, each of which has had a distinct impact on the customs that persist to this day. Indian traditions have been profoundly impacted by the influence of many religions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, and Hinduism. These influences have resulted in the blending of spiritual ideas with local folklore. For instance, customs such as the fire-walking festivals observed in Tamil Nadu have their roots in mythology and religious devotion and are symbolic of atonement and purification. Similar to this, local superstitions and Hindu beliefs coexist in regional rituals such as the feeding of crows during ancestral rites in Bengal. These traditions, while sometimes perceived as weird from an outsider's perspective, have evolved to represent the complex social dynamics and the blend of indigenous customs with external influences like as invasions, migrations, and colonialism. Because of this blending, Indian rituals have managed to stay firmly anchored in history while continuously adjusting to shifting cultural contexts. These traditions, while sometimes perceived as weird from an outsider's perspective, have evolved to represent the complex social dynamics and the blend of indigenous customs with external influences like as invasions, migrations, and colonialism. Because of this blending, Indian rituals have managed to stay firmly anchored in history while continuously adjusting to shifting cultural contexts.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS IN INDIA :

India's unique customs and traditions have evolved over time due to its historical, religious, and cultural context. Casteism, a system of occupational division, became strict due to religious and socio-political forces during the Vedic period. The custom of Sati, where widows burn themselves to death on their husbands' funeral pyre, began as an uncommon incident in the early mediaeval era but grew throughout Indian history. Strange rituals emerged due to the blending of local deities and folklore with general religious practices. Islamic conquests introduced new cultural influences, while native ceremonies gave rise to hybrid traditions. During the colonial era, reformer movements and outside inspection led to the elimination of some strange customs, while others continued, retaining their historical roots while adapting to contemporary standards.

1. Ancient Period (c. 2500 BCE – 500 BCE): Foundations of Early Traditions

Numerous traditions and rituals that would later develop into more formalised social practices first appeared during the ancient era. Though little is known about its social norms, the Indus Valley Civilisation (c. 2500–1500 BCE) established the groundwork for ritualistic activities such as fertility cult and nature reverence. The earliest caste-based divisions emerged during the Vedic period (c. 1500–500 BCE), first as a flexible system of occupational

division (Varna system), linked to religious and economic functions rather than strict social hierarchies. But as time went on, the Manusmriti and other writings solidified the duties of the several Varnas, making the caste system more and more rigid. Religious practises like as ancestor worship (Shraddha) and fire sacrifices (yajnas) were common and demonstrated the close relationship between religion and social hierarchy in early Indian culture.

2. Early Classical Period (c. 500 BCE – 300 CE): Rise of Social Stratification and Ritualistic Traditions

With the advent of Buddhism and Jainism in the later Vedic period, Indian society became increasingly stratified. Caste divisions were more pronounced, and customs like untouchability that later observers found strange started to become more obvious. New habits, such as the extreme ascetic practices of Jains and Buddhists, where self-denial and fasting to death were considered as pathways to spiritual liberation, were influenced by innovations in philosophy and religion. Several social norms were also codified at this time, with religious scriptures supporting caste-related ideas about pollution, purity, and division of labour. Additionally, gendered norms started to emerge, such as the demands made on widows to practise extreme austerity or remain unmarried.

3. Late Classical Period (c. 300 CE – 1200 CE): Expansion of Religious Influence and Regional Customs

It was the Gupta Empire (c. 320–550 CE) and succeeding kingdoms in the region that gave rise to both strange and inflexible habit. As more specific regulations on social behaviour, marriage, and employment were established, casteism grew increasingly entrenched, with religion serving as a major justification for the status quo. During this time, the concept of the virtuous widow—which would eventually lead to the practice of Sati—came into being, especially among military societies such as the Rajputs. Tribal and local traditions were further assimilated by Hinduism, leading to the creation of rites unique to particular regions, like firewalking, severe penances, and animal sacrifices. The veneration of regional goddesses and deities grew more closely associated with ornate traditions such as ritualistic possession (called Theyyam in Kerala), in which followers thought they were momentarily possessed by celestial beings.

4. Medieval Period (c. 1200 CE – 1700 CE): Islamic Influence and Intensification of Traditions

Islamic and Hindu customs were combined during the Middle Ages, which were characterised by Islamic incursions, the founding of the Delhi Sultanate (c. 1206–1526 CE), and the Mughal Empire (c. 1526–1707 CE). While the caste system remained mostly intact, several Muslim communities also began to embrace regional practices. Certain strange traditions became increasingly intense, particularly as a result of social pressures. For instance, during times of war, Sati became increasingly common in Rajput society as women chose to self-immolate in order to preserve family honour rather than run the chance of being captured by invading soldiers. The growth of devotional practices that appeared radical to outsiders, such self-flagellation during Muharram in Shia Islam or ritualistic piercing during festivals honouring Hindu gods, was further aided by the rise of Bhakti and Sufi organisations during this time.

Regional customs kept changing at the same time. The influence of local folklore and oral traditions merged with mainstream religion, giving rise to practices like human-animal interactions during festivals (such as Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu), fire-walking during religious festivals, and the worship of peculiar deities through intense physical acts of devotion. These rituals were formed not just by religion but also by local social structures, political developments, and the blending of indigenous beliefs with entering cultural influences.

5. Pre-Colonial Period (1700 CE – 1757 CE): Resistance and Adaptation of Traditions

Many practices were a form of cultural resistance as the Mughal Empire started to fall and local rulers like the Marathas, Sikhs, and Rajputs reasserted their dominance. In regions like Rajasthan, the practice of Sati, already entrenched in Rajput warrior society, became a symbol of loyalty and defiance. As social mobility declined, the caste system became even more inflexible, and local groups held fast to their traditions to maintain their identities at a period of political upheaval.

By this time, strange rites had permeated local cultures and religious beliefs throughout different societies. Religious scriptures, local folklore, and Islamic and Hindu customs were combined to produce a tapestry of customs that, although unfamiliar to outsiders, had profound cultural and symbolic significance for the people that followed them.

IMPACT OF COLONIALISM ON INDIAN TRADITIONS :

Colonialism had a profound impact on Indian culture and traditions. The British colonial period brought about significant changes, both in terms of policy and social attitudes.

Some traditions were actively suppressed by the British, while others were adapted or modified to fit within the colonial framework. For example, the practice of Sati was outlawed by the British in 1829, reflecting their efforts to reform Indian society.

On the other hand, certain traditions were encouraged or tolerated by the colonial authorities, particularly those that served their political or economic interests. For example, the British supported the revival of certain Hindu festivals as a means of fostering loyalty and cultural identity among the Indian population.

The legacy of colonialism continues to shape Indian traditions today. While many have been preserved or revived, others have been lost or modified. The ongoing debate about the impact of colonialism on Indian culture highlights the complex interplay between tradition and modernity.

BIZARRE TRADITIONS FOLLOWED IN INDIA :

➤ RITUALS AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

1. Garudan Thoorkkam, Kerala

Kerala's Kali temples host a revered custom called Garudan Parava, where people dress up as mythological figures, Garudans, and perform a ritual to donate blood. The ritual, which involves dancing, singing, and entertainment, is believed to be performed by locals dressed as Garuda, the Hindu deity Vishnu's eagle vehicle. The Garudan Parava is celebrated on Makara Bharani Day and Kumbha Bharani Day, and is well-liked in the Bhadrakali temples in Kottayam, Alappuzha, Emakulam, and Idukki.

2. Lathmar Holi, Uttar Pradesh

In the town of Barsana, Holi is celebrated in a very different way. The festival involves hitting people with sticks. The story behind this goes back to the Hindu god Krishna, whose city Mathura lies just around 42 km from the town. Krishna is said to have visited Barsana, the village of his consort Radha. As he was wont to do, Krishna mischievously teased Radha and her friends, but the women of the villagers took offense and chased him away.

The practice of Lath mar Holi commemorates the story, with men from Nandgaon, the village where Krishna was raised, visiting Barsana to play the festival of colors. And in the Radha Rani temple of the town, women beat up the men with their sticks while others sing songs and cry in praise of Krishna. Interestingly, Barsana is home to the only temple that venerates Radha.

On the day of Lath Mar Holi, women armed with sticks (lathis) playfully hit men from Nandgaon who come to Barsana to celebrate. The men, in turn, try to defend themselves using shields, while also showering colors and singing songs. This playful interaction is filled with laughter and joy, embodying the spirit of Holi.

3. Thimithi, Tamil Nadu

Thimithi, an annual celebration in Tamil Nadu, involves walking on fire to offer prayers and chants to Draupati, the wife of the Pandava brothers. The event involves excavating a pit and lighting it with organic materials. The majority of participants travel with a priest. Thimithi is a unique Indian custom that reenacts Draupadi's walk across a bed of fire to prove her innocence after the Kurukshetra battle. In areas where Draupadi is revered as a village goddess, male devotees balance a pot of water or milk on their heads and walk across burning coal.

4. Cannibalism in Aghoris

Aghoris are a small group of Hindu ascetics known for their severe rituals, nontraditional lifestyle, and behaviors that often go against social standards. They are connected to the worship of goddess Kali and adhere to teachings that stress the fleeting nature of existence and the importance of accepting social taboos for enlightenment. Aghoris believe in transcendent dualities like good and evil, life and death, and purity and impurity. They seek liberation by facing anxieties and attachments associated with death, often eating human flesh. Aghori monks spend their days at cremation sites, smearing their bodies with the ashes of the deceased. They rely on the Ganga River for sustenance, clothing, and firewood.

The Aghori tradition, a fringe sect within Hinduism, is known for its extreme practices that challenge societal norms and taboos. They are characterized by their ascetic lifestyle, often involving living near cremation grounds, consuming human flesh, and engaging in other unconventional rituals.

The Aghoris believe in the philosophy of "Shiva Tattva," which emphasizes the acceptance of all aspects of existence, including death and decay. They view the human body as a temporary vessel and believe that by embracing its impermanence, one can attain spiritual liberation. The consumption of human flesh is seen as a symbolic act of overcoming fear and attachment to the physical body.

While the Aghori practices may seem shocking to outsiders, they are rooted in a deep spiritual tradition. Their unconventional lifestyle and rituals are seen as a path towards self-realization and transcendence. However, their practices have also attracted controversy and criticism, with concerns raised about public health and ethical implications.

5. Ambubachi Mela

Ambubachi Mela is a significant cultural event in India, held annually at the Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati, Assam. It honors Goddess Kamakhya's menstruation, symbolizing the Earth's rebirth. The temple closes for three days to symbolize seclusion, similar to other societies. The temple reopens on the fourth day, symbolizing the end of the goddess' menstrual period. The festival is believed to be a celebration of Sati, the goddess who experienced her menstruation during the event. The temple is believed to be red during this auspicious time, and devotees receive a cloth soaked in Sati's menstrual fluid upon the opening of the temple. Sadhus and tantrics also visit the temple during this event.

6. Kambala Race, Karnataka

The Kambala Race is a popular buffalo race in India, held in various regions from November to March. The race involves two buffaloes and one person training them to run the fastest. The rider who splashes the most water gets recognized. The event is a popular pastime among farming communities and has been controversial due to animal activists arguing it violates the 1960 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. The Indian Supreme Court outlawed the sport in 2014, but the event was allowed under the Prevention of Abuse to Animals (Karnataka Amendment) Ordinance, 2017.

7. Marriage with dogs and other animals

This is not a celebration, but it is nevertheless a strange custom that is carried out throughout most of India. The more widely accepted explanation for this is that some people are born under the Mangal Dosh, a very bad astrological conjunction. Mangliks are these people who are regarded as bad luck for anybody they marry. So they are forced to marry an animal, generally a dog or a goat, in order to escape the horrible fate that their husbands would have to bear. Even a tree, at times.

The Manglik is now free to marry whoever they desire after saying a brief prayer and making offerings to the gods. Other, less typical reasons for marrying animals include the girl's early arrival of teeth or some sort of facial deformity. Girls get the short end of the stick here, of course, but these customs are thankfully becoming less widespread these days.

➤ FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS

1. Banni Festival, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka

The Banni Festival is a unique custom in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, where followers beat each other to appease gods. Idols of Parvati and Shiva are transported to Neraneki, and cross-regional devotees serve as defenders and spies. The festival is hosted by the Devargutta temple in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, where hundreds of devotees assemble annually to remember the defeat of a demon by Mala-Malleshwara (Shiva). Despite being drenched in blood, the men continue the rite until daybreak, with medics and police officers present. The temple has been celebrating this festival for over a century, and although many people have been hurt, no fatalities have been reported.

2. Baby Tossing, Maharashtra And Karnataka

The annual ritual of throwing babies off rooftops in India, practiced by Hindus and Muslims for over 700 years, involves shaking and dropping babies from a height of 30 to 50 feet by a shrine devotee. The babies are then caught in a sheet held by men, and given back to their parents. Originating during a time of high infant mortality and limited medical expertise, the ritual is believed to bring prosperity, good fortune, and health to the child and family.

3. Koovagam Festival

One of the well-known transgender rituals in India is the Koovagam festival. In certain regions of Tamil Nadu, it is observed with appropriate reverence for its mythological significance. Legend has it that Aravan, Arjuna's son, wanted to get married before giving his life to ensure the Pandavas won the Mahabharata. Aravan's having to give up his life the next morning was the only exception. As a result, no woman desired to wed him; at that point, Lord Krishna granted one of the transgender people the ability to assume the appearance of a woman.

As a result of the transgender woman's agreement to marry Aravan, Aravan gave his life the following morning to ensure the Pandavas' victory. During this event, transgender people express their melancholy by getting married to the god Aravan in honour of Mohini's avatar. This festival also features dance and rhythmic music. There are several customs in India that will surprise you. Some things ought to remain a mystery deep within the foundations of Indian culture, even though you are unaware of the precise importance of these customs or why they are followed.

4. Thaipooam

From Andhra comes Tamil Nadu, a state well-known for its peculiar celebrations. We won't discuss the Jalikattu event, which courted controversy recently and is now widely known. However, another strange event that merits note is Thaipooam. Kartikeya, the son of Shiva and Parvati, is worshipped at this festival. In the south, he is known as Murugan. It commemorates Kartikeya's acquisition of his celestial spear, which allowed him to decimate Tarakasura's army, the demon king. The celebrations are intense as well, to honour such an incredible feat. Thaipooam entails a 48-day prolonged fast, following which devotees pierce their bodies with hooks, skewers, and lances. In certain regions of the state, devotees pull heavy objects—even tractors—while wearing hooks on their skin during road processions. Many of them dance in a trance-like manner to the sounds of other devotees' drums and piercings of the tongue and cheek.

5. Nag Panchami

In actuality, snakes play a significant and constructive role in Hindu mythology. A number of Hindu communities revere nagas, who are celestial entities that have been depicted as important figures in many mythologies. Nag Panchami, which is also observed in Nepal, occurs on the fifth day of the Hindu lunar calendar month of Shravana.

Most of the nation observes the holiday with the customary fast and prayers. However, in certain areas, devotees are observed giving milk and occasionally even rats to snakes. Temple priests sprinkle flower petals and other auspicious objects on the snakes as part of the rites. The biggest of all celebrations are reportedly held in the Maharashtra village of Baltis Shirale, purportedly featuring a large gathering of snakes.

6. Jallikattu, Tamil Nadu

Jallikattu is a traditional Indian bull-taming event where players tame bulls with gold or silver coins and flags tied to their horns. The sport dates back to 2,500-1,800 BCE and involves hundreds of men chasing a bull through a small opening to collect rewards. The sport has been outlawed by the Supreme Court of India and the Kambala in 2014 due to its harsh treatment of animals. However, in 2017, large-scale demonstrations called for the Indian and Tamil Nadu governments to legalize the sport, which has since returned and is now legal.

7. Bhoota Kola, Karnataka

Bhoota Kola is a worship rite in Karnataka, India, involving native Tulu speakers who perform in December and January. The ceremony, originating from nature worship, involves storytelling, colors, costumes, dancing, and music. The spirits, called paddanas, are invited to temporarily reside in humans, and the possessed dance to drum rhythms. The spirits bestow gifts and provide courage to confront challenges, sometimes mediating disputes. Although practiced by select families, others can attend and request blessings.

➤ SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES

1. Madey Snana, Karnataka

The Madey Snana ritual, a centuries-old Hindu custom in Karnataka, involves lower caste Hindus rolling over leftover meals of upper caste Brahmins. The ritual, observed annually during the Champa Shasti festival, is believed to cure various illnesses. Despite criticism, many people continue to observe the rite, with Dalits and other tribal people defending it as a devotion to their gods. The government overturned its temporary ban on Made Snana after protests.

2. Mandooka Parinaya

India's Mandooka Parinaya is a unique Hindu wedding ceremony where frogs are married to appease the rain gods. This custom is prevalent during the delayed monsoon season, causing drought in the country. The female frog, Varsha, is named after the rainy season, while the male, Varun, is named after the god of water. The ritual is deeply rooted in Indian culture and is found in several states, including Assam, Maharashtra, and Karnataka.

3. Gowardhan Puja, Madhya Pradesh

Following the races with buffaloes and the confrontation with angry bulls, this is yet another of India's more peculiar traditions. You're gonna get trampled by cows for this one! One of the strangest Indian customs is the Gowardhan Puja, which certain Madhya Pradesh villagers celebrate, in which participants lie facedown on the ground while a herd of cows charges over them at full speed. The animals have colourful paint jobs with garlands and bells as decorations. This custom, which dates back to the time of the royals, is supposed to bestow wealth and good fortune upon those who perform it. On the day following Diwali, the Gowardhan Puja is believed to have started when a man begged to be granted a son. After the tragedy, the people began to observe this as an annual rite. While minor wounds are bandaged with cow dung and urine, the locals dispute that anyone is seriously hurt during the procedure.

➤ SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES

1. female genital mutilation

The Dawoodi Bohra, a Shia Muslim sect in India, performs female genital mutilation (FGM) on young girls aged one to fifteen. FGM violates girls' and women's fundamental human rights, including health, security, and dignity. It can result in fatalities and long-term problems, including hemorrhage, shock, infection, HIV transmission, urine retention, and excruciating pain. Psychological effects include loss of faith in caretakers and persistent sadness and fear. Adults undergoing FGM have an increased risk of infertility or difficulties after childbirth. FGM violates laws of equality, non-sex-based discrimination, and children's rights.

2. Bhaag shaadi

In some regions of Bihar, there is an infamous and unusual custom known as Bhag Shaadi (also called Pakadua Vivah or Jabaria Shaadi) where men are abducted and forced into marriage against their will. This tradition has been widespread, especially in Bihar's rural communities where socioeconomic circumstances, dowry customs, and gender disparities have given rise to it.

The phrase "Pakadua Vivah" or "Bhag Shaadi" describes forced marriages in which a man is kidnapped (sometimes at gunpoint) and forced to wed a girl whose family has selected for her. It typically occurs when a suitable match is not found through conventional means or when the girl's family cannot afford the large dowry asked by potential husbands.

Reasons Behind the Tradition are Dowry System, imbalanced gender dynamics, Economic Hardship, social pressure for marriage.

3. Bride trafficking

Bride trafficking is defined by a researcher as trafficking that occurs before or after marriage with the intention of exploiting a woman or child for the purpose of marriage or under the guise of marriage. Forced prostitution is one form of exploitation.

In certain parts of India, women and girls are bought, sold, and trafficked with the intention of marriage a practice known as "bride trafficking." This type of human trafficking takes advantage of helpless women, frequently from low-income families, in order to sell them as brides to areas that are very short on women. The practice is especially common in places where there is a gender disparity as a result of social preference for male offspring and selective sex abortions.

Bride trafficking is the term used to describe the unlawful purchase and sale of women for forced marriages or fictitious marriages. Bride trafficking include women being kidnapped, seduced with false promises, or sold by their families because of financial difficulties, in contrast to traditional planned marriages when families consent and frequently negotiate arrangements. After that, these women are frequently transferred across state boundaries and forced into marriage with men in areas where there is a dearth of available women. Bride trafficking is most common in states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh

4. Sex Work as a Custom, The Banchhada Community

Sex labour is not only a career but also a long-standing cultural tradition in several parts of India. The Banchhada community, which is predominantly concentrated in the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, is among the most well-known instances of this. Here, having sex is a socially acceptable practice, and women are frequently the ones who use this trade to support their families. The practice has strong cultural origins that have evolved over time as a result of historical and socioeconomic circumstances. Originally a nomadic tribe, the Banchhada people eventually settled in communities throughout Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. They were thought to have entertained feudal lords and monarchs in the past with dance and music performances. However, the village was left with limited economic options as a result of the reduction in royal patronage and the transition to a more modern economy. Because of this, many families found that sex work was a feasible source of subsistence.

Sex work is so institutionalised in the Banchhada community that families frequently train their daughters for a career in the profession. The community does not view this as immoral or unethical; rather, it is accepted as a reasonable means of guaranteeing financial stability. In contrast to most other communities, where sex labour is usually frowned upon, in the Banchhada community, it is accepted and an integral part of society.

5. Natta Pratha

under some parts of Rajasthan, a widow or abandoned lady is compelled to marry her late husband's younger brother or another male relative under a custom known as natita prtha. The tradition was historically followed to protect family lineage and property within the same kinship group. It has its roots in patriarchal traditions. Even though the custom is less common now, women in rural and semi-rural areas are nonetheless impacted by it.

The feudal and agricultural systems of Rajasthan are closely linked to the roots of Natta Pratha. In the past, a family's ability to survive depended on their ability to manage their land and possessions. When a guy passed away, his wife was left in a vulnerable social and economic position. They would force the widow into a union with another male family member, generally her brother-in-law (devar), in order to keep her from remarrying outside the family and taking her late husband's possessions with her. This guaranteed the woman's financial support and the property's continued ownership within the family.

6. Kharu or Kashtiya Tradition

A peculiar and contentious tradition, the Kharu or Kashtiya tradition is followed in some rural areas of Rajasthan, especially by the Jat community. Testing a bride's chastity or purity before or after marriage if her chastity is questioned is part of the custom. This custom, which has its roots in patriarchal ideals, puts the onus of upholding family honour and reputation on the woman and requires her to defend her morality in front of the public. In order to demonstrate their virginity or fidelity, women are required to endure a physical or symbolic trial as part of the Kharu/Kashtiya ritual.

The tradition, which is founded on the idea that a woman's virginity is crucial to the family's honour, is frequently upheld by the bride's in-laws or other community members. It's sometimes done after marriage if the husband's family believes the wife is unfaithful.

7. Bonded labour system

People are forced to work under the Bonded Labour System, also referred to as debt bondage, in order to pay off debts. This system has a long history and is widely used throughout India. It perpetuates cycles of poverty and exploitation by disproportionately affecting marginalised people, such as Dalits, tribal populations, and lower caste groups. India and other South Asian countries continue to face serious human rights violations due to the Bonded Labour System. The system endures despite being against the law because of socioeconomic reasons, cultural norms, and ineffective enforcement measures. A multimodal strategy is needed to address bonded labour, one that breaks the cycle of poverty and exploitation by supporting marginalised populations, educating the community, and enacting legislative reform. Combating this deeply ingrained system of exploitation requires promoting societal reform and increasing awareness of the rights of bonded labourers.

8. Jogini/Basavi Tradition

The Jogini or Basavi tradition is mostly practiced in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, among other parts of India. In this custom, women are "married" or consecrated to a deity or temple, which frequently leads to their becoming prostitutes or temple dancers. The custom has profound effects on the lives of the women involved and is entwined with intricate cultural, religious, and social elements. The Jogini/Basavi legacy is a reflection of the ingrained social, cultural, and economic forces in India that support women's marginalisation. The Joginis' job as temple dancers was formerly respected and held historical value, but with time, the ritual devolved into a vicious cycle of abuse and exploitation.

9. Bachhawat Marriage System

A customary marriage ritual known as the Bachhawat Marriage System is mostly followed by a few communities in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. This system is a reflection of particular societal mores and marriage, family, and relationship practices. In general, "Bachhawat" refers to a type of marriage through capture. In this custom, a bride may be kidnapped by her family, frequently with their approval or cooperation. A groom may kidnap a bride under the Bachhawat Marriage System, a custom that is predominantly practiced in Madhya Pradesh, India, frequently with the approval of the bride's family. This system is a reflection of societal attitudes on marriage, which occasionally view capturing a bride as a romantic gesture. But since many women might not have much power in the circumstance, it raises serious questions regarding women's autonomy and consent. Although some may find it charming, the practice frequently upholds patriarchal standards and may result in human rights violations. NGOs and activists are working to promote more equitable marital customs and increase public knowledge of women's rights.

10. Vanandai System

In certain tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh, India, traditional marriage customs known as the Vanandai System are still in use. Families set up weddings under this system by exchanging brides, which means that one family provides a daughter to another and receives a daughter from the other family in return. Families' social ties are maintained and community links are reinforced with the support of this activity. On the other hand, because families usually make the decisions rather than the couples themselves, it frequently restricts the options available to women in marriage. Although it strengthens ties among the community, it also brings up issues related to women's rights and gender equality. These days, there is a push to promote more equal marital practices and to increase public knowledge of the significance of consent.

11. Kattu Kalyanam (Manglik Dosha)

A custom known as Kattu Kalyanam is carried out in certain South Indian groups primarily to treat Manglik Dosha, which is thought to cause problems in marriage. In this ritual, a girl is not wedded to a person but rather symbolically married to an object, such as a doll or a deity. This ritual's goal is to mitigate Manglik Dosha's detrimental effects and guarantee a happy marriage in the future.

The girl may dress traditionally for the wedding and carry out customs, such as wrapping the object in a mangalsutra, a sacred necklace, during the ceremony. This is being done in the hopes that it will help establish favourable marriage prospects and remove any barriers prior to her subsequently marrying a true spouse.

CONCLUSION :

India's distinctive customs and rituals are a reflection of its rich and varied cultural past. These traditions provide an intriguing window into the nation's past and present, ranging from the extreme customs of the Aghori heritage to the contentious Sati ritual.

The underlying beliefs, symbols, and social implications of Indian traditions provide witness to the historical, theological, and cultural influences that have shaped them. Even though some of these customs might shock or seem strange to visitors, they are ingrained in Indian culture and have greatly influenced the identity of the nation.

The ethical ramifications of these customs must be taken into account as India develops, and strategies for maintaining them while upholding contemporary ideals and concerns must be devised. The continuous discussions about customs such as Jallikattu bring to light the difficulties in striking a balance between ethical concerns and cultural preservation.

We learn more about India's cultural legacy and the intricate interactions between tradition and modernity by investigating its peculiar rituals and customs. These customs invite us to recognise the depth and complexity of Indian culture by providing a window into its vast and varied universe.

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