



**Two-Days National Conference**

on

**Punyasloka Ahilyabai Holkar: Empowering Society through  
Values, Virtues, Compassion and Leadership**

**Organized by**

**Department of History**

**Kalindi College, University of Delhi**

**In Collaboration with**

**Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana Samiti, Delhi Prant**

**and**

**Study Circle, Kalindi College, University of Delhi**

**Date: 03-04 February 2025**

**Venue: Kalindi College, University of Delhi**

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**ABOUT THE CONFERENCE**

A National Conference on “Punyasloka Ahilyabai Holkar: Empowering Society through Values, Virtue, Compassion and Leadership” would explore the dual legacy of Ahilya Bai Holkar as both a progressive leader

who advanced women's empowerment and as a pivotal figure in the preservation and revival of sanatani temple culture. The seminar would likely delve into Ahilya Bai's significant contributions as the ruler of the Malwa kingdom in the 18th century, where she broke gender norms by taking on leadership roles traditionally reserved for men. Her administration was marked by a deep sense of justice, compassion, and efficiency, showcasing her as an early feminist figure who demonstrated the capabilities of women in governance.

The seminar would also examine her efforts in restoring and constructing temples across India, including the famous Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi and the Somnath Temple in Gujarat. These efforts not only preserved important religious sites but also reinforced Sanatani cultural identity during a period of political and social upheaval. By connecting her actions with the broader concept of feminism, the seminar would highlight how Ahilya Bai's leadership extended beyond traditional roles, empowering future generations of women and leaving a lasting impact on both cultural and societal structures. Such a seminar would be valuable for understanding the multifaceted nature of Ahilya Bai Holkar's legacy, emphasizing her role as a pioneer of both cultural preservation and women's empowerment.

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

The exploration of feminism in India must be understood as a deep-seated cultural and spiritual tradition, rather than a recent development influenced by the West. Historically, women in India enjoyed relatively higher status and freedom in the Vedic period. They were educated, could choose their partners (as seen in the practice of Swayamvara), and were involved in decision making processes within families and communities. Over time, foreign influences and societal changes diminished their status, but movements like Bhakti and figures such as Mirabai and Akka Mahadevi challenged norms. Ahilyabai's leadership reflects this tradition, embodying values of empowerment, cultural preservation, and the assertion of women's roles in society.

#### **Ahilyabai Holkar: A Civilizational Legacy**

Ahilyabai Holkar, the esteemed queen of Malwa in 18th-century India, embodies the principles of courage, leadership, and empowerment. Her reign exemplified the transformative potential of women in positions of power, offering a profound challenge to the patriarchal norms of her era. A Sanskrit shloka that embodies her bravery:

धैर्यं सर्वत्र सा धनम् । धैर्यं हि परमं बलम् ।

धैर्यवत्सु स्थिरं लक्ष्मिः । धैर्यं सर्वत्र रक्षति ।

Translation: Courage is the supreme tool in every situation. Courage indeed is the greatest strength. Fortune remains with the courageous. Courage protects in every circumstance.

Ahilyabai Holkar assumed leadership of the Holkar dynasty in 1767 after the passing of her father-in-law, Malhar Rao Holkar, and her husband, Khanderao Holkar. Despite significant political and social challenges, she emerged as a visionary ruler committed to justice and welfare. One of her most remarkable contributions was the revival of Hindu temple culture, which had suffered from invasions and neglect. She restored and reconstructed numerous temples across India, including the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi, the Somnath Temple in Gujarat, and the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain. Her dedication to these sacred sites was both a spiritual duty and a cultural mission, aimed at preserving the religious and social identity of the Sanatani community. These efforts went beyond her kingdom, signifying her commitment to the nation's cultural heritage.

Ahilyabai's governance prioritized public welfare and infrastructure. She funded the construction of temples, dharamshalas, wells, tanks, and ghats, ensuring a high quality of life for her people. Her capital, Maheshwar, became a center of cultural and architectural development, attracting scholars and artisans. Ahilyabai economically supported agriculture, trade, and handicrafts, reducing taxes for farmers and offering financial aid during droughts. Her initiatives strengthened the weaving industry, which flourished under her patronage. These measures ensured economic stability in her kingdom despite external threats.

Ahilyabai was also known for her inclusiveness. Her reign was peaceful, she maintained a strong, organized military to safeguard her kingdom, showcasing her administrative acumen. Ahilyabai Holkar's leadership redefined the role of women in society. At a time when women were largely confined to domestic roles, she governed a kingdom, led military forces, and undertook cultural preservation. Her actions demonstrated that women could lead with wisdom and compassion, challenging societal norms. Her temple restoration efforts not only revitalized religious practices but also reinforced the cultural identity of Bharat. Temples served as centers of social and cultural life, and her work ensured these traditions were preserved for future generations.

Ahilyabai's progressive policies, including opposition to Sati and support for education, reflected her commitment to social justice. She empowered others by embodying the ideals of leadership, showing that women could drive societal change. Her legacy remains a precursor to modern Indian feminist movements, emphasizing that true empowerment lies in positively transforming society. Ahilyabai Holkar continues to inspire as a model of courage, leadership, and cultural preservation.

A Sanskrit shloka that perfectly reflects her contribution to women empowerment is

स्त्री शक्तिर्जगतः आधारः । स्त्रियो हि समा जस्यस्तम्भाः ।  
नारीणां सन्मार्गेण नीतिर्यदि , तदा भवति राष्ट्रस्य अभ्युदयः

Translation: Women are the foundation of the world. Women are the pillars of society. When women are led on the path of righteousness, it leads to the prosperity of the nation.

**SUB THEMES FOR PAPER PRESENTATION:**

1. Ahilyabai's Values and Virtues in Governance
2. Legacy of Ahilyabai Holkar: Lessons in Modern Leadership
3. Ahilyabai Holkar role in the Women Empowerment
4. Concept of Dharma in Governance
5. Role in the Preservation of Sanatni Temple Cultural Heritage
6. Role in Strengthening the Maratha Confederacy
7. Social Reforms Initiated by Ahilyabai Holkar
8. Empowerment of Indigenous Communities
9. Vision of an Inclusive Society
10. Philanthropy and Public Charity
11. Role in strengthening rural economy
12. Popular Memory and Culture

<b>Abstract/ Paper Submission Guidelines:</b>		<b>Important Dates</b>	
<b>Font:</b> Times New Roman/kurti dev		<b>Last Date of Abstract Submission:</b> 15 January 2025	
<b>Language:</b> Hindi/English		<b>Date of Acceptance:</b> 16 January 2025	
<b>Abstract:</b> 300 Words		<b>Full Paper Submission:</b> 25 January 2025	
<b>Keywords:</b> 3-6 words		<b>Registration Date:</b> 27 January to 03 February 2025	
<b>Full Paper:</b> 3000-5000 Words			
<b>Registration fee for a paper presenter:</b>	<b>Academician/ Faculty:</b> 1000	<b>Research Scholar/ Students:</b> 500	

**Note: -**

1. Any additional topic relevant to the primary theme of the Conference with particular emphasis on Ahilyabai Holkar is welcome for consideration.
2. Research papers should be formatted as per APA Style and should be sent as MS Word
3. Accommodation for outstation participants will be arranged in nearby guest houses, and hostels to accommodate participants of the Conference.
4. Selected papers will be published in form of edited book after the approval of reviews committee.

**Principal****Prof. Meena Charanda****Teacher In-charge**

Dr Krishna Kumari

**Convenor**

Dr. Ram Sarik Gupta

Mobile: 9958566058

**Co-Convenor(s)**

Dr. Krishna Kumari

Dr. Punchok Tsering

**Co-Convenor(s)**

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Prof. Rajeev Ranjan, Ex. VC, Nav Nalanda Maha Vihar

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Prof. Prabhakar Upadhyay, AIHC &amp; Archaeology, BHU, Varanasi

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Dr. Pradeep Kumar Upadhayay, Department of Geography, Kalindi College, University of Delhi

Dr. Saurabh Kumar Jha, Department of Zoology, Kalindi College, University of Delhi

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Dr. Om Prakash, Department of History, Kalindi College, University of Delhi

Dr. Nutan Pandey, Department of History, Kalindi College, University of Delhi

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